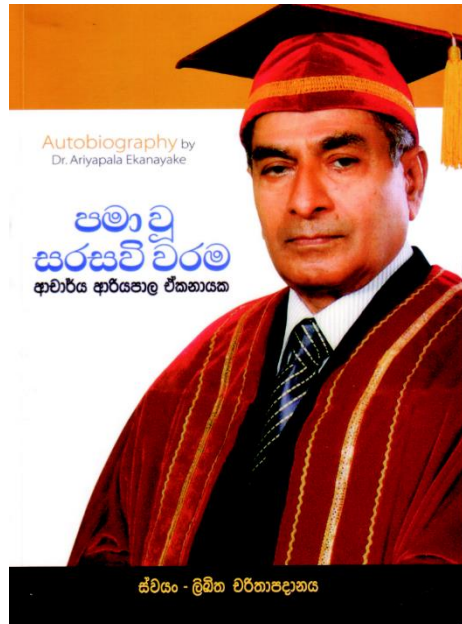


# ADVENTURES OF A RUSTIC



**AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

**BY**

**DR ARIYAPALA EKANAYAKE**

## **DEDICATION**

*Dedicated to my dear Parents, Teachers and  
more Particularly to Professor Linus Silva and  
Dr. V. Kaneshalingam who brought me up in  
the study of Public Administration.*



**Book Launch, 26 March 2013**

## Prologue

When a person is called a 'rustic' it means that either he was born or living in a place far away from the capital or an urban area. I am one of them. Ours is a remote, rural village. When I was young, even a bus trip from Kandy to our village took about three to four hours. Though there was a main road and a marketplace, it was nevertheless a rural area. The villagers there lived by paddy cultivation. School education was limited to the gaining of a smattering of reading and writing the mother tongue. Because of this remoteness, certain traditional good qualities persisted in the village. With the progress in transport, these virtues fell by the wayside. However, modernisation is now observable in the rural area.

Having born in such a village and while receiving primary education, the light of free education dawned. As a result, the way was paved to receiving secondary education in the English medium. This helped in seeking a government job. When the light of free education began to shine more radiantly, higher education too was possible. This work contains the story of a rustic who helped the continuous shining of that lamp.

The first Chapter contains briefly the location, climate, flora and fauna, livelihood, food, social relationships, customs, etc. of my village in my childhood. If I made an extensive description of flora and fauna, it would have run to a couple of chapters. Besides, I do not have the expert knowledge required for such an exercise being neither a botanist nor a zoologist.

The second Chapter contains details of twelve years of My Childhood. The first half deals with the roving life spent in the village. I began my primary education when I was six and a half years of age. A brief description is also given about my family, rural games, travels, and illnesses, etc. I reached boyhood with the passing of the grade five scholarship examination.

Chapter three about Adolescence gives information of six years until the end of my secondary education.

At the age of eighteen years, I finished school education and began to do jobs. Those experiences are described in Chapter four, under My life as a Youth. Traditionally, the period of youth extends up to about ten or fifteen years, but in my case, it ends in five years.

Chapter five deals with Married Life, with my marriage at the age of twenty-three years. This chapter contains details about the birth of my two elder children and transfers to various places. Although I have led a married life of fifty-one years, this chapter limits the information to only fourteen years. However, the chapters that follow also contain additional information of my married life.

Chapter six is entitled Adulthood, which describes my higher education. As I went for higher education while doing a job, information on that and the family are also given. It mentions about changes that occurred in the job. Because of acquiring higher education, I got employment as a university teacher at the age of thirty-seven years.

Seventh, eighth and ninth Chapters are devoted to include information on my twenty-eight years dedicated to university service. A major part of my professional life was spent on it. My foreign trips and a number of other experiences fall within this period. Although I encountered financial difficulties during the first period of my life, most of those vanished during the last ten years. Consequently, my two younger children were able to seek better employment opportunities.

The Period of Retirement begins after sixty-five years of age. Information pertaining to it up to 2012 is given in Chapter ten. My wife's illness and death are described in this chapter. During the last few years, I have been subject to more and more diseases that are natural in old age. I have given some information on those here, but I do not grieve over them. I have not included any information on my religious life in this work because it concerns my inner life. Nor have I given any information on various activities I have performed in the field of politics because I consider them as my follies.

I have learnt a couple of lessons in this exercise of mine. The first is that I am not exalted; the second is that I have tried to rid myself of vulgarity; the third is that, therefore, I am civilized. This is enough for me. I am beholden to all who helped me in achieving this task.

**Ariyapala Ekanayake**

## Foreword – Sinhala edition

There were several objectives in writing this book; the first was my wish to know whether I know enough of myself; the second was whether my children and grandchildren know about me and, if not, to make clear what they do not know; the third was to reveal to my pupils and friends, things they do not know about myself. After reading this, they might bring me down to the earth from the pedestal they have kept me on. When you have your feet firmly placed on the ground, you cannot fall any further.

Another objective was that, if my journey as a person born in a remote village up to being a university teacher has anything worthwhile in it, to be a possible guide to other rural children such as me. All these were mere thoughts that arose in my mind. I am not sure whether these are useful or not to others. But it would be sufficient if it provides the opportunity for me to augment my knowledge about myself.

Recently a friend of mine gave me a book written by scholar V.D. de Lanerolle entitled "*Hapankam, Modakam ha Purasaram.*" Although I have included in my book certain things on my triumphs and boasts, it is only nominally have I written about my follies. I have many follies to relate, but as they did not help me at all, I was rather reluctant to display them before others. Even my achievements and boasts I have toned down in my description lest I should be accused of being conceited.

I was motivated to write this biography after reading the article entitled 'What If' which appeared in the issue of Arunalu of September 2011. The award-winning writer Mr Ariyawansa Ranaweera, a retired officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, has written it. My grateful thanks are due to him. My friend Mr Savimon Urugodawatta rendered valuable service as editor. I thank him sincerely.

My thanks are due to Mr H.D. Premasiri, Chairman of Sarasavi Publications who undertook the task of publishing this book and doing it well and in time irrespective of the fact whether it has a ready market. My fatherly love is due to my distinguished pupils Prof Ramani Samaratinga, Dr H.M.A. Herath and famous counsellor Jagath Wijenayaka who helped me in this task.

May this be a complimentary gift to all those who helped me in numerous ways since my childhood to this date!

**Ariyapala Ekanayake**

65, Edirisinghe Road,  
Mirihana, Nugegoda.

04<sup>th</sup> June 2012

## Preface to the English Translation

It's been seven years since that day in May, the death of my beloved 'thaththa'. Memories do not fade, too many to fade. I went to work leaving my father home with the carer. I got a call within two hours and when I returned within fifteen minutes of the call, he was gone. I can still see him in my mind's eye, how he looked at that moment, wearing his white sarong and cotton banian seated in the living room chair, his lifeless peaceful form. I write with teary eyes and I know I will blot the paper on my table before I finish this note.

He wrote a book, so that his children, grand children and relatives get to know him. Did we know him? May be not well enough; Do we know him now, may be not enough. A lifetime with him but still missing him thinking what he will tell and do if he was around now. Often times I want to tell him my ideas, discuss things with him, ask for his wise advice. Oh, how I miss him. I know it's true with all my siblings.

He told me "Podi Duwa please complete my translation when you retire". He him self was able to translate the book upto Chapter seven, untill the day he passed away. We are keeping the promise Thaththa, even though it took a while and I am not retired yet!

Amma and Thaththa, (words for mother and father in Sinhala language) had been the strength behind the four of us and the path they showed us, to stand for what we believe is right for us and for the society, did not fail us. One may call it foolish in the modern context, and letting go is the more Buddhist thing to do. We were taught to grow up as principled independent human beings, not grow up as selfish self-centered men and women. We are what we are now, for better or the worse, because of the values we got used to at home. They lived by example, not so much verbal advice.

Thaththa says in his preface to the Sinhala Edition that he does not boast about his achievements, and he underplayed the few he mentioned in the book. We know the sacrifices you made, both of you, and there is no need to write a book for our benefit. However, we are glad you pinned your thoughts, experiences and facts and figures gained during eight decades. Your memory was excellent till the last day and something we all admired.

We are glad you had your dream of writing a book came true, we were able to launch it on your eightieth birthday, with an audience full of wellwishes, one year before you said good bye. We are sure thousands of school children from all around the villages in beautiful Sri Lanka will benefit from the record of your resilience, courage, patience, intergrity and perseverance in addition to the historical facts that are included in the book.

We now take care of children from your primary school and some other talented students and hold hands to make them wiser which is what you did during your life time.

This translation is an accolade to your life, and the memories of you Dear Thaththa.

Amma and Thaththa, may you both be blessed with the niramisa suwaya!

**Podi Duwa**

Thailand, May 12,2021



My grandfather was a man like no one I've ever known in his generation. Having known him properly only in his later years, I still saw the fire and spirit of a young man inside him. He was intelligent, inquisitive, always questioning and always exploring the world around him. His love for travel and seeing beauty in the world around him was something that influenced me from a young age.

I have fond memories of when he visited us in Australia when we were young, and how our little legs struggled to keep up with him on his "short walks". I remember his constant desire to learn new things like Australian wildlife and orientating himself in a new environment without using maps - this was a man who had retired, raised a family and now had grandchildren, who was still striving to improve himself and learn more.

The older I get, the more I understand how much of a trailblazer and a visionary he was in his youth. Moreso, the obstacles he would have had to face and the challenges he would have had to overcome in order to advance himself and his family; To be able to send his children abroad, and to be able to give me and my sister a life in another country through his sacrifice.

**Dineeth Liyanagama**

Brisbane

Australia



It is difficult to write a prologue to an autobiography without spoiling the autobiography itself. That is one of the issues I face as I write this. Growing up, I learnt my grandfather, my podi seeya, had an impressive career, was a learned scholar, and an honourable man.

But podi seeya was so much more than his accolades. When my grandma, my athamma, got older, he looked after her. I will not spoil the story of how they met – I will leave that for my podi seeya to tell you in his own words. But I can tell you what I witnessed of his love for her.

As my athamma's dementia was beginning to set in, he would accompany her on trips to visit us in Australia, making sure she got here safe. I remember him being patient with her, as her memory begun to fail her. On one of their trips, when they stayed at our house, my athamma couldn't recall which clothes were clean and which were dirty, and had resorted to them all. I, around 7-years-old at the time, asked why seeya didn't label one clothes hamper as clean and another as dirty. My seeya explained that this would not work – he was clearly used to her behaviours by then.

There was a time, during retirement, when my podi seeya and athamma moved together to his old home in Udadumbara. My podi seeya relished in tending to the gardens and the serenity of the secluded lifestyle. But my athamma aged in a way which made living in such a location not pragmatic, and my seeya moved them back to the hustle of Thalpathpitiya so she could get the support that they both needed. Seeya always made sure that she was taken care of. A testament to this was that, despite the fact that my athamma needed 24/7 care, she passed away at her own home, while living with my podi seeya. Not many people with advanced dementia have such an end to their life, and it was in part because of the care and dedication of my podi seeya.

My podi seeya was impressive in many ways. He achieved many things in his life, as you will shortly discover. But he also showed me love, from the day I was born, until the day that he passed away. He was an inspiration to me in so many ways, and I hope he inspires you also.

### **Savini Liyanagama**

Brisbane

Australia

## **Appreciations**

We are grateful to Mr Edmond Jayasuriya, who translated the original Sinhala book from Chapter seven to complete the task started by Dr Ariyapala Ekanayake. We are also grateful to Mr Carlton Samarajiwa, who had edited the English translation and then helped in getting the final version ready for publication.

We cannot forget about all the family members who helped in the publication and the book launch of the Sinhala edition, in spite of facing numerous challenges in optimising the health condition of our father, Dr Ariyapala Ekanayake, as well as helping with the English translation in numerous ways. They all deserve a special compliment and gratitude.

## I would be a Retired Farmer if not for *Free Education*



Doctor Ariyapala Ekanayake is a distinguished educator, researcher and a writer who was a long serving academic with the Department of Economics, Public and Business Administration under the Faculty of Arts of University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Benefitting from Sri Lanka's free education system, he became a respected educator to countless current and former experts in the field of economics and Management.

Following is an interview based on Dr Ekanayake's recently published Autobiography.

### **Question:**

**Having faced varying experiences in many positions you held, what made you look back at the past at this stage of your life?**

### **Answer:**

Following my wife's passing, I have been alone in our house overwhelmed by a continual stream of thoughts about the past. To put an end to the thoughts, I decided to record them in an orderly manner. I am not confident whether I know myself completely. Also, my students, relatives, children and grandchildren do not know a lot about me. I believe what I have recorded in the book has helped them to know who I am. Considering that my whole

world is within this body measuring about a fathom in length, this exercise has helped me to understand and increase my knowledge about myself.

There is another special reason. I am not aware of any records about our village which is situated on a plateau in the central hills about 100 miles (160 KM) from Colombo. Though there have been a large number of books written about the period during the second world war when Sri Lanka was a colony of the British, none contain any references to our village and the surrounding area. Only the poor villagers know of the damage caused to the village and the changes brought about due to the war.

**Question:**

**As a successful migrant from village to city life, to what extent did the village helped to shape your path in life.**

**Answer:**

You are correct. Though I have been away from the village for a long time, I am still greatly influenced by my village upbringing. As an example, I am still guided by the spiritual lives of my parents and elders. Although I am aware, modern generations do not believe in horoscopes and auspicious times, I have a strong belief in them.

When there was a threat of disease or harm, the villagers go to Chief Priest at the village temple to start a week of Pirith chanting. Young adults make up teams to play traditional games such as Gammadu, Porapol and Ang Edeema. At night, villagers traverse the village in procession, carrying flame torches entreating the Gods. The entire village was sprayed with blessed water. The Village Headman took the lead role in everything.

All this was absorbed by me as a child and etched in my memory. These experiences helped me guide my life.

**Question:**

**You have recorded extensive details about the village in your book. It is possible for a reader to wonder, whether there is a disconnect between these details and the content of the other chapters. What do you think?**

**Answer:**

I don't agree with that statement. I believe I will be seen as someone who has fallen from the sky, if I did not write about my village. There is so much more I recall about the village but I have made reference only to essential and important details. My village is my heritage.

**Question:**

**In his book "Ape Gama", Martin Wickramasinghe covered the southern province instead of being confined to his village. Given there are no similar works about the Central Province, would you consider writing something in the future?**

**Answer:**

I have been aware of the lack of such publications for decades. In reality, the only person who had the aptitude to do so was late T. B. Illangaratne. However, he spent all his life writing novels and short stories. This was an observation made by Martin Wickramasinghe. Further, I am not a writer capable of writing literary compositions of such depth.

**Question:**

**Writing style of your book is in third person narrative.**

**It seems to have been your intention to record the facts and details as is. We would like to know your reasons.**

**Answer:**

What you say is correct. My intention was to write a book that is accessible and can be understood by the general public, not to produce an acclaimed literary work. As I am not a linguist, I have used the language I am comfortable with and believe to be correct.

**Question:**

**Your professional life can be divided into two areas - public service and your academic career. What would you like to say about the past and the present of these specific areas?**

**Answer:**

I started my public service career in mid-November 1951. For 14 years I served in various districts in the Irrigation Department. In that time, there was significant respect towards and acceptance of public servants. That employment also allowed for associating with officers of similar grades, as well as opportunities to work with staff at lower grades such as labourers. Public servants in regional areas such as Minneriya were given accommodation in official bungalows. They were trained to respect senior officers and not act in a way that brought disrepute to their jobs.

The people I met at the university were quite different. They were an educated and intelligent group from various parts of the country. Though they had different ideas they will equalise over time. I always treated them like my children. Though some were disruptive due to external influences, it was the responsibility of the educator to guide them in the right direction. I have educated thousands of students over a period of 28 years. There are a number of them who have excelled at various levels of society. I am very proud of them. I am also delighted that a small number of them attended the launch of my book, whether invited or not.

**Question:**

**In writing an Autobiography, it is unavoidable to be self centered. But the introduction says that you have diluted such writing. Can you tell us what you meant?**

**Answer:**

An autobiography is a story about myself. However, it is a responsibility of the writer to not be too self-centred.

In the words of the scholar Lanarolle, I have underplayed bragging or self-aggrandisement.

**Question:**

**Your beloved wife has been a significant influence in your life and continues to be with you. Can you talk about that?**

**Answer:**

It is something very difficult for me to talk about. It is even more difficult as she is no longer with us. I must however say something in reply to your question.

The fifty-one years we were together can never be forgotten. It is customary to value the thoughts and deeds of a person while the person is alive. To a large extent, I have been able to fulfil my dreams due to the quiet and significant contribution my wife made. We have two daughters and two sons. She was very successful in bringing them up with good values and directing them on the right path with a good education. We are now enjoying the outcome of her efforts.

**Question:**

**You have achieved success in life as a direct result of the policy of Free Education introduced by the Honourable C. W. W. Kannangara. You have recorded that in the last chapters of your book. Could you say something about that.**

**Answer:**

In brief, it was highly likely I would be a retired farmer today if not for Hon. C. W. W. Kannangara's Free Education Scheme. As a result of the Scheme, I was able to study in the English medium, work in the public sector, complete my higher education and then serve as a university lecturer until retirement. It is not only a win for me but for all the poverty-stricken daughters and sons spread around Sri Lanka.

**(Published in "Rupana IV" of Sunday Divayina dated 12 May 2013)**

**Interviewed by Lionel Gange**

**Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake passed away on the 12 th May 2014, one year after this publication.**

## CHARACTER CHART

Myself	- Ariyapala Ekanayale (Ekanayake Rajapaksa Mudiyansele Ariyapala)
My Father	- Ekanayake Rajapaksa Mudiyansele Tikiri Banda
My Mother	- Abeysinghe Mudiyansele Bandara Menika
My elder Brother	- Ekanayake Rajapaksa Mudiyansele Muthu Banda (E.R.M. Banda)
Nanda Akka	- Abeysinghe Rajapaksa Mudiyansele Nandawathi Kumarihami (My elder brother's wife)
Prema	- Pragnawathi Wijesiriwardene (Ekanayake) (My wife)
Loku Duwa	- Chandini Tikiri Kumarihamy Ekanayake
Wasantha	- Wasantha Sumanasekera Liyanagama (Loku Duwa's husband) (My son-in-law)
Dineeth	- Dineeth Tharusha Liyanagama (My Grandson)
Savini	- Savini Dulanga Liyanagama (My Granddaughter)
Loku Putha	- Hemakantha Ekanayake
Nirmala	- Nirmala Jayasuriya (Ekanayake) (Loku Putha's wife) (My daughter-in-law)
Podi Duwa	- Dayani Bhadra Nilmini Ekanayake
Priyantha	- Priyantha Prema Kumara (Podi Duwa's husband) (My son-in-law)
Podi Putha	- Varuna Kosala Ekanayake
Melani	- Melani Halangoda (Ekanayake) (Podi Putha's wife) (My daughter-in-law)
Miura	- Miura Kaveen Ekanayake (My newest Grandson)

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# Chapter 1

## My Village in My Childhood

When an elderly person is all by himself, numerous streams of thought pass across his mind. Even a person with a rather unruffled mind, will find it 'roams all over', the moment it is distracted. On such occasions, my mind always wandered to my village where I was born. I lived in my village until I was about twelve years of age. After I entered a Central College, having passed the grade five scholarship examination, and left the village, I visited my village only during school holidays. Years later, as my family including my parents went to live in the Minipe Colony, the need to visit my village arose only but rarely.

I was wondering, whether any among the thoughts that frequently arose in my mind deserved permanent record. I decided to do so, as the relevant period belonged to the time of the Second World War that engulfed the world in the twentieth century. I thought it was apposite to record information about the village and villagers, who lived about one hundred miles (one hundred and sixty kilometres) away from Colombo, in our country, which was at the time, a British Colony.

So, I record here some of the facts that come to my mind about location of the village, climate, flora and fauna, livelihood of the villagers, the implements they used, their food and drink, costumes, money they used, beliefs, social relationships, health, education etc. In this description, I have used some words that were in use at the time in the village. I have used the present equivalent of those redundant words in certain places, I thought was necessary. I would request the learned readers, who would peruse these lines, to show me any lapses on my part or, as poet Alagiyavanna Mukaveti says, to ignore any such lapses, and take the essentials, like a swan that separates milk from water.

Ebavin sebehi viyatuni gunayuth pawara  
Kiriyaen diyara ven kala hasa men pathara  
Mavisin kiyana mehi waradak dutath hera  
Sathosin asau pada'ruth wimasa gambara"

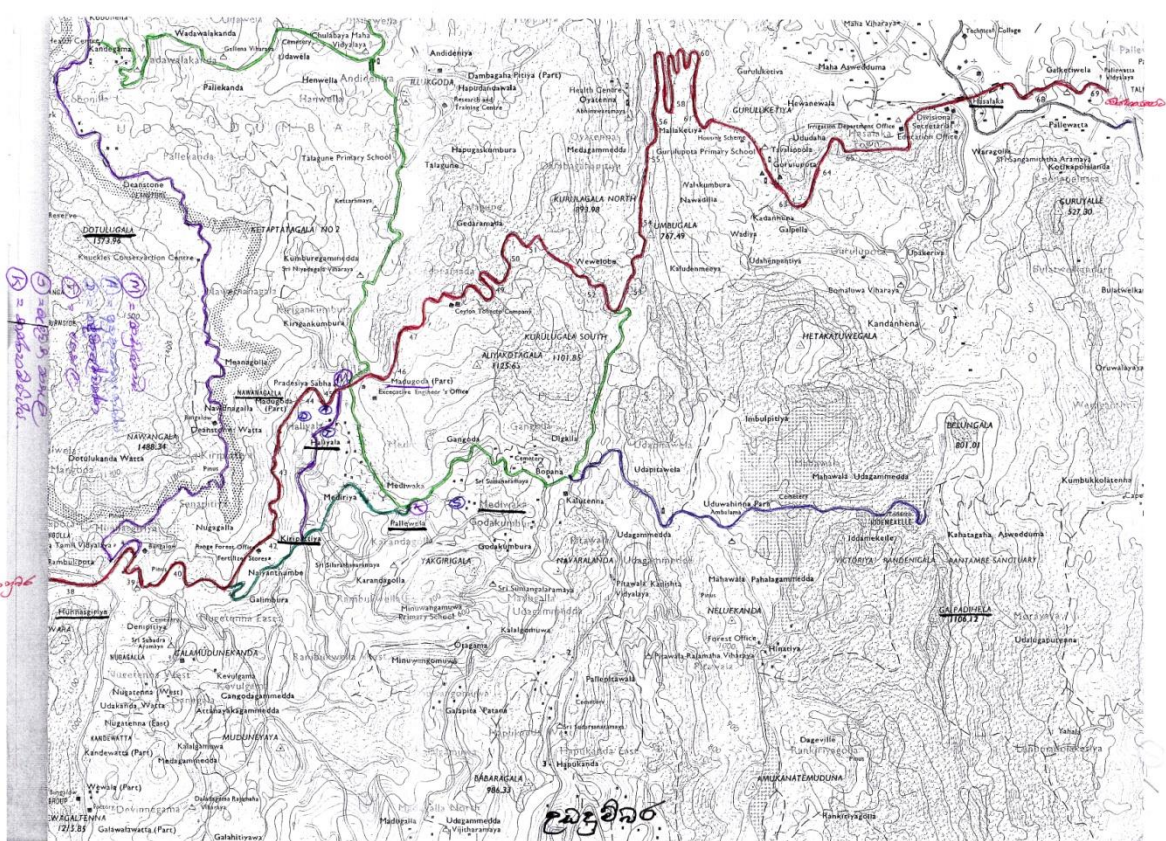
(Pandith Ven Weragoda Amaramoli edition -1960)

### Location

Halyala is a village in the Uda Dumbara Division of the Kandy District of Ceylon. The country was a colony of the British Empire from 1796, but was granted Dominion Status on February

4, 1948. With the promulgation of the Republican Constitution on May 22, 1972, the country came to be known as Sri Lanka.

Halyala is situated on the Kandy-Weragantota Road at a distance of twenty- eight miles (forty-five kilometers) from Kandy, on the Kandy – Katugastota – Madawala - Digana-Teldeniya – Hunnasgiriya - Madugoda road. On the Kandy – Tennekumbura - Digana-Teldeniya - Hunnasgiriya - Madugoda road it is twenty-five miles (forty- kilo meters) from Kandy. The village consists of four hamlets lying on hill slopes, with no valley anywhere to be seen. It is bounded on the West and North by the main road; on the East by the the Madugoda - Mediawaka (motorable) cart-road; on the South by Kiripattiya - Kanahampitiya road and on the South-west by the Kahatagolla Oya, which is formed by a few streams, flowing down from Dothalu Kanda, on the southern end of the Knuckles range of mountains, through Nawanagera Tea Estate, owned by Mr. Johnston, a British Planter.



Part of the Uda Dumbara Division showing the Kandy-Weragantota Road with the 18-hairpin bends

M-Madugoda; A-Amuthukolahinna; D-Devalewatta; T-Temple; S- School; K - Kanahampitiya

The road that went over our village across the hill on the west, went across the Udapathana hill on the north and reached the Madugoda bazaar, passing Amutukolahinna (in Red). The road goes forward and passing the 'Daha-Ata vanguwa' (eighteen bends) reaches Weraganthota across Gurulupotha and Pallewatta. The distance from Madugoda to Weraganthota is twenty miles.

The cart road from Madugoda runs towards Mediwaka, passing through the villages of Gangoda, Bopana, Kaluntenna, etc across the hill on the east of the village and meets Weragantota road at Tammitiyana (in Green). Another road begins from the 25<sup>th</sup> mile post of the main road, passing Kiripattiya, moves forward from the lower end of the village, and meets the cart road that comes from Madugoda at Kanahampitiya (in Blue). This road moves forward and turns at Kaluntenna reaching Mahiyangana through Uduwahinna, Mahawela, Getalagolla, Galpadihela. It is about fifteen miles from the village.

The four hamlets in the village of Halyala were Ihala Gammedda, Pahala Gammedda, Egodaha Gammedda and Mediriya, and had roughly twenty houses in Ihala Gammedda and ten houses in each of the other hamlets. There were few isolated houses here and there around the village. The Buddhist Temple was situated at the top of Egodaha Gammedda. There were Village Committee Roads (Gam Sabha Paara) crisscrossing the village to provide access to the households. One road starting from Madugoda ran across the middle of the village to Kiripattiya. Another, starting from the main road at the 25<sup>th</sup> mile post ran down the hill slope to join the Kiripattiya Road near Bussaranawatta. There were a number of foot-paths linking these roads and households. The paddy fields were accessible through the paths on the bunds of various canals.

Each of the houses in the hamlets had a name. Those that I now remember are Ihala Gedara, Dewalewatta, Mangokkawatta, Pattiyakumbure Gedara, Alutge (Alujje) Bussaranawatta, Egodaha Gedara, Udagolla, Hinnapita Gedara, Kirigankumbure Gedara, Gedaramada Gedara, Nelligasmulle Gedara, Kahatasgolla, Wataketiye Gedara, Udage, Yatihage, Mellaketiya Gedara and Gallena Gedara.

The main road from Hunnasgiriya to Weragantota traverses the eighteen hair pin bends (*daha ata wanguwa*). The Loolwaththa Road taking off from Hunnasgiriya leads through Nawanagala, Deanston, Kobonilla, Dehigolla, Loolwatte Tea Estates and Corbert's Gap to the remote village of *Meemure* lying at the foot of the Knuckles Range.

### **Sources of water**

A stream flowing down from the *Metihakka* hill on the western side of the village passed through the village below Dewalewatte and the Village Committee Road. This stream ran dry during *yala kannu* (dry season). There was a water spring at the south-western corner of Dewalewatte. This water was channeled to a spout (*pihilla*) from which many families in the *Ihalagammedda* hamlet collected water for domestic use (cooking and drinking). During the rainy season, they also bathed and washed their clothes at this spout. During the dry season when there was little water in this spout, the villagers of *Ihalagammedda* went to the spouts at Mahanaawatha, *Welepihilla* or *Heeniliyadda* for bathing and washing their clothes. Apart from the spring below Dewalewatte, there were two other springs, one at *Welepihilla* and the other at *Udagolla*. Clusters of trees (*gommana*) were allowed to grow around these

springs so that they did not run dry during *yala*. The paddy fields were located adjacent to the *Kahatagolle Oya* to the south and south-west of the village. These paddy fields were irrigated from Kahatagolle Oya through a number of anicuts constructed across the stream.

## Climate

Generally, the climate in the village is cool as is normal in the hill country. The rainy season (*Maha Kanna*) begins after September and continues till the end of March. At the beginning, rain is intermittent and it drizzles till about the beginning of December, when heavy rains begin to pour down. From January, the rain is again intermittent till the end of April. After May, the dry season (*Yala Kanna*) begins and is followed by roughly six months of heavy winds, resulting in the drying up of trees which do not seem to grow at all during this time of the year. Although there are drizzles of rain, it immediately dries out due to the heavy blowing. With the arrival of the rainy season, streams of silvery water flow down the hills around the village. The vegetation appears to have entered a new life and starts growing again. This pattern of the weather of roughly six months of rain and six months of wind, has a distinct influence on the life and livelihood of the people in the village.

## Vegetation

The upper slope of the hill to the west of the village was covered with *maana*, a grass fed to buffaloes and also for soil conservation on the hill slopes. At the end of the dry season, someone invariably sets fire to the dry grass which burns for days, but with the onset of the rains new shoots begin to grow providing fresh buffalo-feed. There were a few mud-holes in the *patana* (grassy tracts) providing resting places for the buffaloes at noon when the sun was hot.

There were, a variety of trees and plants that grew close to streams, in the shrub jungle and in the village gardens. Large trees such as *nelli*, *kahata*, *keena*, *kotadimbula*, *dimbul*, *mora*, *eramundu*, *gan sooriya* (two types), *bo*, *iththa*, *kosdan*, *honda pollan*, *karola kambellan*, *kenda*, *velan*, *damba*, *uguressa*, *kudu daula*, *mee*, *kekuna*, *kuru amba*, *rubber*, *kirikone*, *goraka*, and *daluk* grow naturally in different places. Trees such as *kos*, *del*, *pol*, *puwak*, *siyambala*, *jak*, breadfruit, coconut, arecanut, and tamarind respectively were grown by the villagers in their gardens. Trees such as *dewadaara*, *sabuk* and *ginisiriya* were found in some gardens. Several varieties of bamboo (*una*) were normally grown along the fences marking the boundaries.

A number of bushes of medium-sized trees were found in the shrub jungle. They include *aththana*, *keppettiya*, *naththasooriya*, *kurundu* (cinnamon), *karapincha*, *karakola*, *mella*, *pawatta*, *nika*, *nahadunu*, *pera*, *katupol*, *nelu*, *endaru* (two types), *embilla*, *getapooja* (mulberry), *karamba* and *yabara*. *Hinguru*, *eraminiya* and *kudumiris* were thorny creepers.

*Kalawel, pamba, honda, delhonda, kirimundan, anguna, and kiri anguna*, were creepers that grow in gardens as well as in shrub jungle. Thorny cactus was sometimes grown on the boundaries of gardens.

Weeds such as *nidikumba, hulanthala, manduruthala, thuththiri, iththeberiya and hendirikka* grew wild in gardens as well as in the jungle. Herbs such as *kuppameniya, amukkara, thippili, kalanduru, and sevendara* were grown or allowed to grow in gardens because of their indigenous medicinal value. Trees and plants grown in gardens were *murunga* (drum sticks), *kopi* (coffee), *dehi* (lemon), *narang, naththarang, sudu alakola, kiri ala, hulankeeriya, bussarana, araththa, kaha* (saffron), and *inguru* (ginger) for their food and medicinal value.

The villagers used these trees or their produce for various purposes. The leaves of *katu eramundu, dimbul, kara kola, anguna, kiri anguna, murunga, kopi, and sudu alakola* were cooked as a green vegetable (*mallum*). The ripe fruits of *damba, uguressa, mora, pera, katupol, embilla, gata pooja, karamba, yabara, delhonda, and karola kebella* were eaten by the village children, when they went foraging in the shrub jungle. During the season, *nelli* was plucked for sale, raw or dried to be used in medicines. The immature *kahata* fruits were used for cooking, raw or sun-dried for later use as *mallum*. Curry leaves and cinnamon were collected from trees in the wild. The juice of *kudu daula* leaves was used in combination with rice flour, to make a sweetmeat called *aassmee*. The yams of *bussarana* and *hulankeeriya* were boiled and eaten.

Well-grown *mee* trees or their branches and *gan sooriya* (rosewood) trees were sawn into planks and timber of various sizes, for house construction and furniture. The seeds of *mee (atiyal)* that were fallen around these trees daily, after the *mee* fruits were eaten in the night by bats, were gathered by the villagers. The kernels of these seeds were used to make an oil for medicinal and cooking purposes. These villagers had a simple oil extracting device; a wooden machine called a *sekkuwa*. The remnants or *poonac (muruwata)* could be used, for lighting and applying on feet and legs when walking around in leech-infested areas. The kernel of *kekuna* seeds can be stuck on an *eakle (malaketa)* and lit as candles. The long slim poles of *velan* trees were used as handles for planks used to level fields before sowing paddy (*ketaporuwa*) and to collect paddy on the threshing floors (*betha poruwa*). These poles with a hook at one end (*kekka*) were used to pluck fruits from the upper reaches of trees.

The leaves of *naththasooriya, keppettiya, ginisiriya and karanda* were used as green manure for paddy fields. They were also used to produce compost (carbonic) manure in paddy fields and for cultivation of vegetables and other plants. The roots and sticks of *karanda* were used to make tooth sticks (*dahati kuru*) to brush the teeth. The inner skin (*pattaa*) of *kahata, nahadunu* and *kalawel* was used for making ropes (*baan*) needed for various purposes. The branches of *waraw* bushes were dried and tied into *bolathu (brooms)* to sweep compounds and threshing floors. The remnants of *kurakkan* plants were tied into *ilapath (brooms)* used in houses. Selected branches of trees were used to turn out ploughs, yokes and *nagul lee*. Dried branches of jungle trees were collected for firewood.

## Animal Life

Many types of animals, serpents, birds, flies and insects frequent the village. *Wal oora* (wild boar), *weli muwa* (barking deer), *rilaw* (monkeys), *iththawa* (porcupine), *meeminna*, *lena* (squirrel) and *dandulena*, were some of the animals found in and around the village. Those harmful to the villagers were, the wild boar (*wal oora*), a species of monkey (*rilaw*) and porcupine (*iththewa*). They damaged *chenas*, home gardens and paddy fields. Barking deer was a species of wild deer that generally live in the shrub jungle but do not enter the village. *Lena* and *dandu lena* were two species of squirrels, that live near gardens. *Dandu lena* is a larger specimen which normally does not climb down from the trees which they frequent. There were cats and dogs but not kept as pets.

The serpents sometimes seen in the village were *polonga*, *naya* (cobra), *pala polonga*, *viper*, *thelissan* (small type of viper), *ehetulla* (whip snake,) *aharakukka*, *gerandiya* and *diya naya*. The harmless varieties were the *gerandiya* and *diya naya*. All the others were poisonous and a bite can cause death, sometimes instantly. Centipedes and scorpions, though not snakes are also venomous. There was a species of spider known as *diya makuluwa* or *divi makuluwa* (Tarantula) whose bite is poisonous and needs to be medically treated.

Bees e.g., *kanamee* make their hives in rock hollows. Wasps make their hives on the underside of branches of tall trees, and was easily visible. Hornets make their nests on tall trees but was nothing like hives in them. The most venomous of these was the hornet. If a large number of Bees and Wasps sting, it can also cause death. There was no such danger from *kanamee* or *danduwelbe* bees. *Danduwelbe* bee makes its hive on a small branch. No one bothers to collect the honey of either.

The birds found in and around the village were *bakamuna* (owl), *piyakussa* (a type of hawk), *eti kukula*, *kaputa* (crow), *magpie*, *sparrow*, *konda kurulla*, *myna*, *kaha kurulla*, *kobeiya*, *kondaya* (tufted bird), *neela kobeiya*, *kottoruwa* (brown-headed barbet), *pilihuduwa*, *battichcha* (babbler), *peni kurulla*, *vehi lihiniya* (swallow or swift) jungle fowl, *kiri vavula* and *penta*. *Piyakussa* is a bird that seems to belong to the hawk species and preys on smaller birds and animals. On sunny days, they fly in the skies, almost as if they are floating slowly. However, when they spot a prey on the ground, they would swoop down with lightning speed and grab it with their claws. *Eti kukula* is a crow-like bird which generally preys on snails which eat up plants and vegetation. Therefore, both *piyakussa* and *eti kukula* were considered friends of village cultivators. Crows were regular visitors to the village and were found in large numbers on days when paddy fields were ploughed, so that they could feed on small crabs (*kakkotta*) that appear during ploughing.

Nests of weaverbird were seen hanging on the branches of trees, in the centre of the paddy fields. They make a hole to enter the nest from its underside, so that it was difficult for a hostile party like a snake to enter it.

Only rarely was it possible to spot the wild fowl that lives within the jungle. You could only guess their whereabouts by the sound of their crowing. There was a sparrows' nest in almost every house. Quite often, the birds select the underside of the straw-thatched roof

to make their nest. Panta was seen on the fences of the range of paddy fields. Kahakurulla (golden oriole) and kobeiya (wood pigeon) were seen in home gardens. A kind of bird with brown feathers and long, festooned tail was also seen sometimes.

There were mada kakkuttan (crabs) in paddy fields. Outside homes, there were hekarellan (multipede) and kankundan. Under the lower edge of walls outside houses, there was a small kind of insect known as tanakurun. Perhaps it may be the same as “binkundo” found in a song by Nanda Malini.

Sometimes, a householder may keep a cockerel (*kukula*). It wakes people up when it crows regularly at 0300, 0430, and 0600 in the mornings. This was the means of noting the time, at a time when there were no clocks or wrist-watches. Only in one house, hens were raised for eggs. The other birds were exotic types. There were a few migratory birds that appeared in the first few months of the year.

A beautiful sight was the streams of thousands of butterflies (*samanalayo*) flying in one direction over the village, from north-east to south-west at a particular time of the year. These butterflies were mainly white, accompanied by a few yellow-coloured ones. They were believed to be going on a pilgrimage (*wandanawa*) to *Samanala kanda* (Adam’s Peak) and so the villagers call these butterflies *wandanawoo*(pilgrims).

Frogs were of two main types, *gamba* and *gas-gamba*, found in the gardens and paddy fields. Lots of *meeyo* (mice) were found in houses preying on the food of the villagers. Mice and frogs attract serpents that come to feed on these rodents.

House flies (*gemesso*), *ramessan*, *eye-flies* (*konduru*) were generally found in the households. A species of mosquitoes called *hohaputo* was found under bushes and in dark areas. *Koodello* (leeches) were a menace during the rainy season. Therefore, one needs to apply some soap or *mee muruwata* on one’s feet when walking around in leech-infested areas. There were large numbers of deliyo (a kind of small-sized cockroaches) in pots and pans kept on the *dum messa* above the fire place. There were also four species of ants called *thel kumbi*, *kalu kumbi*, *kuro* and *kadi*. *Kadi* were dangerous because they bite and cause harm. The ash from the fire-place can be applied to drive away these black ants (*kadi*). The small red ants (*thel kumbi*) also bite unlike *kalu kumbi* and *kuro*. The species of large red ants called *dimiya* and *aembalaya* were not much common here. *Aembalayas* were always attracted to places strewn with treacle or sugar syrup. The *dimiyas* make their nests by pasting together the leaves of trees they occupy. They would appear to be doing this pasting with their saliva or some secret chemical. There were many other tiny insects such as *konduruwo*, frequently seen during the dry season.

## Housing

There were three types of houses in the village. The oldest houses in the village may have been built somewhere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first type was the *maha gedara* or extended family house with a *meda midula* (open centre compound) facing the entrances to the rooms. There was a verendah around the meda midula to walk around. There was a



common hall at the entrance from outside. A large stone slab was placed at the centre of this hall for pounding paddy, when required. At other times this was a common living area. Two or three families shared this house, each family occupying one side of the rectangular building. When additional space was necessary for a room or a kitchen, the family which required such accommodation, built annexes to its section of the house. These houses were built with thick clay walls and the roof was usually covered with local tiles (*Sinhala ulu*).

When the number of families increased and the *maha gedara* could not accommodate all of them, a separate house or houses would be built as needed on a separate land.

This would result in the second type of house which was generally a two-roomed house with a long verandah, from which the rooms could be entered. The kitchen would be in one of these rooms or a separate unit outside the house (but attached to it). The roof would be of zinc sheets or local tiles. They were built with granite walls plastered with clay mortar. Those houses built in the twentieth century followed the style in estate bungalows and line houses.

The third type of house was the one-roomed house with a small open verandah. The roof would generally be thatched with *illuk* or *piduru* (a type of grass or paddy straw). A corner of the room served as the kitchen as well.

When the male children were old enough, at night they went to sleep to a house in the village, which had enough space (one with a bigger veranda) or else they built a new house.

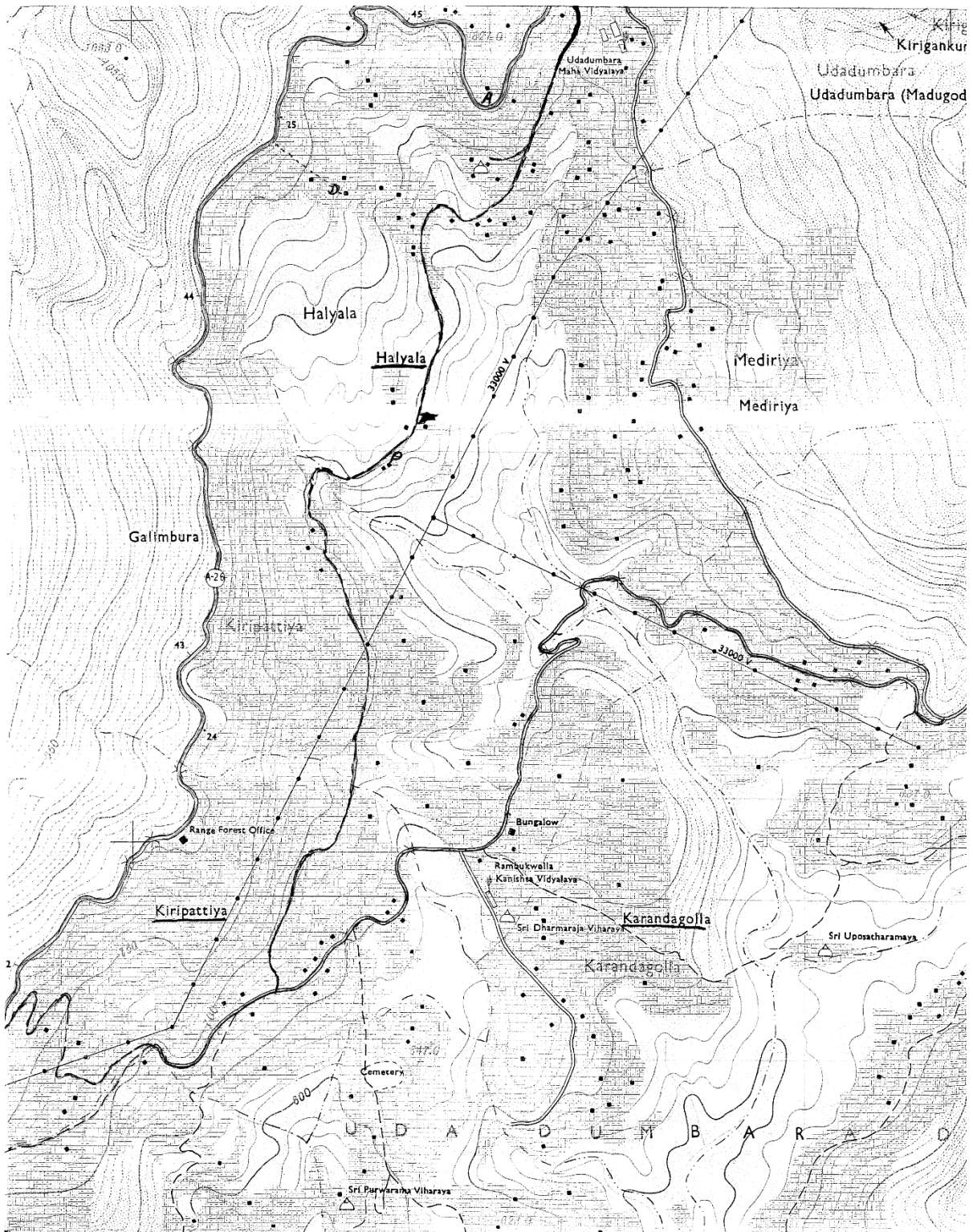
Most of these households had their home gardens adjacent to their houses or a little away but within the village. These home gardens were used to grow a few durable trees as well as short term crops, which provided them food items either as curry and substitutes for rice or kurakkan. The long-term tree crops included jak, breadfruit, coconut, arecanut, tamarind, goraka, murunga, kathuru murunga, lemon, karapincha (curry leaves), anguna and kirianguna (a durable creeper). Minor crops included ginger, saffron, a variety of dambala (indigenous beans). All these provided the villager some vegetables for curries and green leaves. Some jak trees were perennial fruit bearers and therefore provided the owner with food right through out the year. Partially ripened jak can be boiled and eaten as a full meal or cooked as a curry. When it is fully ripened, Jak turns sweet and can be eaten as a desert/fruit. Mature breadfruit can be boiled or cooked as a curry. Some variety of plantain (banana) trees would be grown some of which were for curry (ash plantains) while some were for ripened fruits. Sweet potatoes and tapioca (manioc) were grown as major substitute for rice which would provide a good breakfast or even a main meal. The only problem with them was their attraction to wild boar and porcupine which attack these two varieties of crops when yamming takes place. Consequently, some villages setup trap guns for wild boar which if killed would provide the villages with pork curry for a few meals.



Thiththawelulla paddyfield is the top most in the centre. Amuthukolahinna is the bend at the far end of the Mahiyangana road. Below that is the Temple, among the trees. Mediwake road can be seen running across the Hill.



***Ihalawela and Ihala Gammeda of Halyala Village.*** *Dewalewaththa* is hidden behind the large trees adjacent to the nearest paddy field -Paddalanda. The *Ella* paddy fields are at the top of the far end. Mahiyangana road can be seen across the hill.



### Halyala Village

A-Amuthukolahinna; D-Dewalewatta; P-Pahalagedara

## Agricultural and Household Implements

Several basic implements were required for paddy and highland (*hena*) cultivation. The Sinhala *udella* (*mammoti*), *kaeththa*, (*sickle*) *daekaeththa*, *kurahan kaeththa*, *wak pihya* and *heewala* were turned out by the village smith for which pieces of iron had to be provided or borrowed from the *galladda* (smith). The wooden implements included the *nangula*, *viyagaha* (yoke), *mada poruwa* (harrow), *keta poruwa*, *betha poruwa*, *ukunugaha* and *bolaththa*. The appropriate wood for these implements was collected from the jungle and timber was sawn into planks. They were turned out by experienced and competent villagers.

A bent log for the plough, a bent piece of wood for the *nimuna* (the plough handle), and a log for the Yoke were cut from the jungle. A 'nimun kurulla' had to be fixed to the top of the plough handle. A suitable piece of timber or a buffalo horn was used for this purpose. To Yoke the buffaloes and to tie the Yoke, a 'baan' (strong rope) was necessary. It was woven with barks of the trees (Coir was not used). To fix the plough to the Yoke-pole 'amutu baan' was woven with a strong creeper.

The board (*poruwa*) necessary to level the soil in the paddy field was made of wood about two inches thick, about fifteen inches broad and about three feet long. To move it there were two pieces of wood and a handle. To join it to the Yoke-pole a 'nagul leeya' was necessary. Both *keta poruwa* and *betha poruwa* were similar. A *poruwa* was made by drilling a piece of timber in the centre and fixing a long handle to it. For the work in the threshing field, 'ukunu gaha' was necessary. A pole with a curved end and about four feet long was used for this. A *kaeththa* was necessary to cut trees in the *chenas*. Villagers got the village smithy to make the blade to which they fixed a long, strong handle. An axe was rarely necessary. To turn the soil in a *chena* or a paddy field a 'rata udella' (foreign made) was necessary; a 7 x 10 *udella* was often used. The blades of these *udelu* and axes had to be bought from a shop.

A *kulla* (winnow) was an essential item to winnow the paddy (*betha*), *kurahan* and pounded paddy and rice. These winnows were turned out of reed extracted from a variety of bamboo found in and around the village. Most households had their own wooden ladders (*inimanga*) and *kekka* (long-poled hook).

Kitchen and other utensils that any household must necessarily have include, pots and pans such as *mutti*, *heli*, *appalla*, *madakku*, *nembili*, *koraha*, and *ethili*. *Sembuwa* and *sembu muttiya* were water receptacles, out of which householders drank (*bunne*) water. Some houses may have a *labu gediya* which was used to carry water to the fields or *henas*. The desire of every housewife was to have a *piththala kalagediya* (brass water-carrying utensil), but only a few households could afford them. Similarly, every householder dream of acquiring some items of brassware such as *bulath thattuwa* (betel server), *padikkama* (spittoon), *pahana* (oil lamp either hanging or pedestal). Some of these items were small while there were also large specimens. These items symbolized the wealth of the household, served as a store of value, and were unbreakable unlike clay utensils. Generally, there were very few items of furniture.

Mats woven with reed such as *galleha*, *havan* or *wetakeiyya* were used for sleeping, mostly on the floor. Tattu, petti(baskets), bulath thattu and vatti were also woven with the same.

Vatti used to dry things on the sun and petti were needed to store grains. Pillows made with *kotta pulun* (kapok wool) were used to rest the head while sleeping. A few plates and cups of enamel were available. To eat food off banana leaves, 'tattu' were used. Some villagers used the *madakkuwa* (a clay utensil) as a substitute for plates. Instead of a plate, a *thetiya* turned out of brass was used by some elders. To keep the plate, chairs made of sticks tied together with rattan were used. Kolombu (stools) cut out of a log like a short bench were used for sitting within the house. Sometimes coconut shells (*pol katu*) were used for drinking purposes. All houses had lamps turned out of tin. Some had imported chimney lamps. Most houses also had lanterns used for going out in the night or when threshing paddy at night.

## Means of livelihood

The main occupation of the villagers was paddy cultivation and hena (highland) cultivation. Those who did not have any land, provided their labour for daily wages to villagers who needed such labour, worked on roads under the P.W.D. overseer or on the tea estate at Nawaganala. None of the villagers were in government employment except for the village headman (Arachchi mahaththaya) and the vel vidane (Muladeni mahaththaya). The latter was not a paid servant of the government.

### Paddy Cultivation

The extent of the village paddy fields was said to be about *hetapas amuna* (one hundred and thirty acres) covering the upper tract (*ihalawela*) and lower tract (*pahalawela*). The total area of paddy land could be cultivated in the *maha kanna*, major rainy season, but only about half the area could be cultivated in the *yal kanna*, low rainy season. The paddy fields cultivated for the *yal kanna* were called *manda kumburu* (muddy fields). Some of the *puran kumburu* (uncultivated fields) were used for the cultivation of vegetables such as tomatoes, beans, knol khol and radish (*raabu*). Some villagers cultivated tobacco in the *puran* fields for sale to the multinational tobacco company.

The *vel vidane* was responsible for ensuring that the cultivators cleared the canals and paddy fields in readiness for the ensuing cultivation. Each paddy field owner, cuts down the boundary hedges, the leaves of which were used to manure the field. The ridges (*niyara*) were repaired to enable adequate water to be retained in each terrace (*liyadda*). A few days before ploughing begins, water was diverted to the field from the lead canals, so that the hardened ground was adequately softened to facilitate smooth ploughing.

The necessary implements such as *udella*, *nangula*, *mada poruwa* and *keta poruwa* must be ready to begin the cultivation. Two buffaloes and a plough were required to plough an

extent of half an acre (*wee pela/bushel*) in a day. In this village, only buffaloes (*mee harak*) were used to draw the plough, unlike in some other parts of the country where cows and bulls (*ela harak*) were also used for work in paddy fields. *Ela harak* resent working in watery or muddy areas, unlike buffaloes which love to wallow in the mud. Ploughing and other work in a field, started from the lowest terrace (*liyadda*) and gradually reached up to the highest terrace, at the end of the day when ploughing ends. This was to retain as much water as possible within the field. Three or four men have to work to slice the ridges and repair the ridges (*niyara bendeema*), and to level the terraces (*liyadi keteema*). This activity follows the same sequence as ploughing, starting from the lowest terrace (*liyadda*).

The sowing of paddy was done after two or three weeks, allowing the weeds and leaves to decay and mix with the mud. The normal practice at this time was to sow the paddy directly into various terraces rather than transplanting, a practice that was introduced much later. A few days before sowing, the seed paddy was soaked in water in large containers for two days, after which the water was drained out, and the seed paddy was laid out in a corner of the verandah or in a room, on some broad leaves spread out on the floor and covered with similar leaves, over which some gunnies or old mats were placed and weighed down with some heavy timber or stones. In about three days the white roots of paddy seeds come out entangled with each other. On the day of sowing this (*pela mul*) seed paddy was uncovered, entanglements removed and taken to the field for sowing.

On the day of sowing, the terraces have to be adequately muddied, the water drained out and properly leveled for sowing. If the field was hardened for some such reason as inadequate water, the terraces need ploughing before levelling with the *mada poruwa* (harrow). After this, the terraces were levelled (*udellan karanawa*) with mammoties (*udella*) and a *keta poruwa* was used for further levelling and making appropriate small canals to drain out any extra water left in the terrace (*liyadda*). After all this, an experienced person carried the *pela mul* in a container (*wap pettiya*) and the process of sowing begins from the top most of the terraces, going down gradually from each terrace to the one at the lowest level in the field.

The *pelamul* sown in the field need protection from birds (*wee kurullo*) until the plants grow up to two or three inches, when the water can be turned on to the terraces. These birds invade the field at certain times in the morning and afternoon. Therefore, some one had to be around to scare the birds. In about three weeks after sowing, the vacant spaces were filled and the weeds removed by women. They did it leisurely singing *nelum kavi* (transplanting verses) which are part of the folk songs of the country. In my childhood, I could never understand the words in the *nelum kavi* recited by my mother and others in the village and therefore even now, I do not know what they sang except that the way they recited these verses was a sort of music in my ears.

The cultivator of the field had to walk along the ridges (*niyara*) almost daily and close any crab-holes that may cause water leaks from the terraces. It may take three or four months for the growing paddy plants to start seeding (*kiri wedeema*). When the seeds start maturing, the birds (*wee kurullo*) again begin to feed on them and had to be chased out at specific times of the day, in the morning and afternoon. There was a device known as *dandu holmana* which was turned out of bamboo and set up at a *wakkade* (a place where the

water falls from a higher terrace to the next lower terrace), so that when the water fills up one side of the bamboo device, it lowers to empty itself and falls back on a stone placed at the other end, making a big noise to scare the birds and drive them away. *Baala wee* fields were ready for harvesting (*koladima*) before the new year in April but *koladima* in those fields where *mookala wee* (longer duration paddy) is sown, was after the new year, perhaps in May (*Wesak maha*).

The threshing floor (*kamatha*) was prepared before harvesting. In some fields, there were permanent threshing floors. Where no such *kamatha* was available, a suitable part of a terrace (*liyadda*) was used for the purpose. On the day of the *koladima* (harvesting), before the harvested paddy plants were brought into the threshing floor, a round stone (*arak gala*) was placed at the centre of the threshing floor, where a peculiar decoration is made with ash. A piece of iron and a pig's tusk were also placed near the *arak gala*. At the edge of the threshing floor, a pyramid-like hut was set up with jungle sticks, over which straw was spread after threshing to form a roof for the hut.

There was division of labour between males and females during harvesting. The males reap the (*goyam*) paddy with sickles, leaving the reaped paddy (*uppidi*) on the terraces. These were collected by the women, engaged in *kola bandeema* (gathering the reaped paddy *uppidi*), tied together in large bundles with strings (*kola lanu*) and carried on their heads to the threshing floor. Someone using an *ukunu gaha* (a strong long stick with a slanted end), mounds up the *goyam* brought on to the threshing floor to ultimately form a pyramidal mound of harvested paddy plants.

The threshing was done normally in the nights. A few buffaloes were tied together and were driven round in a circle over the mound of paddy plants. The pyramidal heap begins to flatten on the threshing floor. When it was fully flattened the males, who participate in the threshing process (*kola medaweema*) using their *ukunu gas*, remove the kole to build up a circle around the threshing floor, thus exposing the paddy seeds (*betha*) gathered at the centre. The paddy strewn around is collected and carried to the centre of the threshing floor with the help of a *betha poruwa* and a *bolaththa* (a broom made of branches of the *waraw* tree). The straw in the circle around the threshing floor is thrown back to the centre over the exposed paddy (*betha*). When the *betha* is adequately covered with straw, the buffaloes were driven around over it while the straw was all thrown to the centre. This process of clearing the centre and covering it up again goes on about three times, until the paddy is fully separated from the straw. When the straw was clear of paddy, it was thrown out of the threshing floor for the last time thus clearing the centre and exposing the *betha*. Such rubbish had to be removed by sifting in a winnowing fan or holding against the wind. By the time this process is over, the next day has dawned; sometimes it extends beyond sunrise. The straw removed from the threshing floor was dried well, tied into bundles and removed home for thatching roofs or as food for cattle. If there was no such need, it was allowed to rot in the paddy field itself, so that it could be used as manure.

The number of people participating in this activity was dependent on the size of the *goyam kolaya* that has to be threshed. They were all provided with food (main meal) and refreshments with some sweetmeats such as *pusnambu* and a drink of tea or coriander water.

The *betha* needs to be dried in the sun adequately for storage. Finally, the paddy was measured with a *laha* or *karthuwa*, filled up into gunnies or containers (*petti*) woven with reeds such as *galleha*, *havan*, or *wetakeyya*, and carried home for storing in those containers themselves or in an *atuwa* (a storage device built with wooden planks). The Vel Muladeni's share was handed over at the threshing floor itself when paddy was measured. Some of this paddy was used for home consumption and some sold to earn an income but an adequate quantity was preserved as seed paddy for the next cultivation season.

During the Yala season, when there was little rain and water for irrigation, only some of the fields were cultivated with paddy. Some uncultivated tracts were used for vegetable cultivation. As yal vehi (light rain) falls even in this season now and then, watering the plants was necessary only for a few days until they take root. These vegetables were for home consumption as well as for sale. On days when the vegetable harvest was gathered, some traders come to a certain spot on the main road or in the township at Madugoda. These traders send their vegetables to the Kandy market. Tomatoes were packed in wooden boxes; beans, knol kohl etc were packed in gunnysacks. During the Second World War, the government Marketing Department sent its lorries regularly to buy vegetables from cultivators, thus ensuring a reasonable price for their produce.

### **Chena (Hena) Cultivation**

Most villagers were engaged in highland cultivation of crops such as *kurakkan*, green gram (*mun eta*), black gram (*undu*), maize (*bada iringu*) long beans (*mekaral*), broad beans (*dambala*) pumpkins (*wattakka*), cucumber (thiyambara), gingerly (*thala*), mustard (*aba*) or even tobacco (*dunkala*). The villagers have ample time in between paddy cultivation seasons to take up hena cultivation. Usually the shrub jungle (*landu kele*) close to the village was used for this purpose, but some villagers who did not have appropriate land close by, would go to a thick jungle (*mookalana*) further away from the village.

A long-handled knife (*kaeththa*), turned out expertly by the village smith, was required for clearing the jungle for the *hena* cultivation. The clearing started at an auspicious time, normally in the month of July, when there was no rain, and the cut down trees dry up properly for burning in August. Before setting fire to the dried jungle, the cultivator goes round his tract, shouting out to chase away animals to save them from getting burnt. Setting fire to the dried jungle was also done at an auspicious time. The unburnt wood was used for fencing around the tract (*hena*). A *pela* (one-roomed hut) was also constructed at a vantage point in the tract, for the cultivator and his family to live while cultivating and harvesting, protecting the growing plants and yield from wild animals that destroy them.

The main crop that was grown in the first season in tracts close to the village was maize and some other vegetables in suitable locations. Seeds of fence gourd, bottle gourd, ash gourd, pumpkin, thiyambara, kekiri etc were planted. When they germinated, the vines were trained to go upwards (*yan karanava*) along sticks. Varieties of *dambala* such as *daluk dambala*, *halmessan dambala*, *brinjals*, *ladies' fingers*, *tomatoes* and *radish* were planted here and there. Green chillies were plucked in the first few months for sale. Towards the end of the cultivation, the chillies were allowed to mature to produce dry chillies for use at home until the next season. Therefore, most of the villagers did not have to buy dry chillies.



Maize as well as vegetables were for home consumption. Any surplus was sold. A few beds of red onions were also grown close to watering spots in a hena or in the threshing floor of the paddy field, as onions need water daily while growing. The onion crop (bulbs not leaves) was also for home consumption. Any tobacco that was grown, dried for use by the cultivator for smoking or betel chewing. When tobacco was grown as the main crop in a tract, it was sold to the agents of the Tobacco Company.

The tract (hena) in which chillie and other vegetables were grown during the main rainy (maha) season was used for *kurakkan* (a millet-like grain) cultivation during the yala season when there was very little rain. When sowing *kurakkan*, some black gram (undu), green gram (mung dhal), mustard and long and flat bean seeds were mixed with *kurakkan*, so that the cultivator saved time planting the different seeds separately. Some maize was planted here and there and when these plants grow up, the long bean creepers were made to twine up and around them. The tracts of thick jungle (*mookalana*) were used for growing *kurakkan* and maize and the mix of seeds referred to above. After about a month several green vegetables grew naturally in these *henas* so that the cultivator living in the *hena* had no lack of edible items. When the maize plants produced pods after about two months, *kiri iringu* (unripe pods) was available as food. When the maize ripened, it was allowed to dry in the plants themselves and then plucked and tied together in bundles, together with their covering (*henuhu*) until they were used. Maize can be pounded in a mortar with a pestle to produce flour which was then cooked as *roti* (flat bread) or as *thalapa* (thick porridge). The residue which cannot be pounded further to produce flour was cooked as corn rice (*Iringu buth*). *Iringu buth* cooked mixed with long bean seeds (*mee eta*) was a delicious item of food.

When the *kurakkan* had sufficiently ripened in the hena, a medilla (type of threshing floor) was prepared to pound the *kurakkan* pods which were cut off from the plants with small sickles (*kurahan kethi*) by farmerwomen. They were often fed with "dohoi" made early in the morning by the owner of the hena. These pods which were spread on the *medilla* to dry in the sun, was gathered into heaps and beaten with suitably turned-out poles, by men gathered around the *kurakkan* heaps and going round these heaps in the process. When the seed was properly separated from the pods, women gather them in winnows (*kulla*) to separate the chaff from the seeds. These seeds were then dried properly in the sun, before storage in gunny sacks or boxes.

A large yield from the *hena* in the *mookalana* may require a *tavalama* (caravan of oxen) to transport it from the farm to the village. These caravans of oxen carrying gunny bags of equal weight, filled with hena produce packed on their backs, as a saddle (*goni heta*) could be seen in remote unmotorable roads and foot paths. Small bells (*mini gedi*) and wooden clappers (*sokada*) were tied around the necks of the oxen, to produce a kind of music heard over long distances as the caravan approaches. This was the means of transport available in the country before a system of roads were constructed, first for bullock carts and then for motor vehicles.

## Wage Labour

Wage labour was the main livelihood of the villagers who did not have any paddy fields or highland of their own. During the cultivation season these villagers would work in the paddy fields or henas and be paid in cash or kind. When money was scarce, the payment would be made with an appropriate quantity of rice or paddy. The labourer would be satisfied with such a payment as his daily bread was the main purpose for which he worked.

When the villagers had no cultivation to do, some of them would either work on Public Works Department (P.W.D) roads or in the Nawanagala tea plantation. The road maintenance programme of the P.W.D. Overseer in Madugoda, required the services of casual labour and offered opportunities for people in our village, which was the closest to Madugoda. Labourers were required for metal crushing. Stone on the hill side by the road was quarried for this purpose. Some experienced person would bore the rock on the upper side of the road. The implement used to bore the rock was an iron rod of about one and a half feet, which was made at the village smithy with a point at one end. This rod was placed on the rock and beaten with a suitable four-pound hammer. The rod was systematically turned around the hole that was made by boring the rock. Water was poured into the bore hole to cool the steel rod and ease the boring. When the bore hole was of adequate size (one foot), a competent person would put in the required quantity of gun powder or gelignite, placing also a length of fuse wire (*wedinoola*) alongside the gun powder and with a sufficiently long piece of fuse wire (one to one and a half foot), protruding the bore hole. This is covered with a rag on top. The gun powder was safely tightened inside the hole with a ram rod (*rama rottuwa*). Once this was done, two workers on either side of the road shout out, warning to people “gal wedi, gal wedi” not to come close and then, an experienced person sets the fuse wire alight and runs away to a safe spot. The explosion should not make a big noise (“pus wedi”) as it explodes within the hole blasting the rock. The blast normally breaks up a large portion of the rock which falls down on to the road side. This rock was broken into smaller pieces with the “kulu gediya” (sledge hammer) and hammers into several sizes of metal used for repairing the roads. These were stacked into cubes by the side of the road.

Annually, a steam roller with an iron plough and cart covered with iron sheets on the roof and four sides, arrived in the area to attend to the repairs to the road. The plough and steel cart were parked by the side of the road where there was adequate space. The cart served as the sleeping deck and kitchen for the steam roller operator and his assistant. The steam engine of the road roller, may have been a later version of that which Robert Stevenson invented, and ran the first train from Stockton to Darlington in England.

Early in the morning the road roller assistant fills up the boiler in the engine, puts firewood into the burner and lights it, so that the water boils and produces steam that powers the operation of the engine. The steam passed through copper tubes of various sizes to facilitate the operation of various parts of the engine. The smoke in the burner was directed up a chimney, so that it did not inconvenience the roller operator. A whistle attached to the hood of the roller operated with steam power. The roller operator sounds the whistle by pulling a string attached to it.

The village children gather near the road roller, gazing with amazement at this strange machine. Having seen this engine, I was not surprised when I first saw the steam engines of the railway trains. The difference was that the railway engine ran on two rails while the road roller moved on the tarred road. The steam engines were also used in Ceylon in the tea factories and power houses for the generation of electrical power.

Those parts of the tarred road that need replacement were ploughed up and cleared away to lay newly broken metal, levelled by the workers and rolled down by the large wheel-like rollers. Boiling tar was then poured to cover the rolled down metal. Sand or gravel was spread over the tar, to avoid the tar sticking to the wheels (tyres) of vehicles that pass up and down the repaired road.

Mr. Gangoda, the P.W.D. Overseer at the time, was in overall charge and supervised the road repairs. Each overseer placed in charge of a certain length of road was to ensure proper repair and maintenance of that stretch of road. He employed workers for the purpose and paid their wages weekly. The daily wage of a worker at this time would have been about 40 to 50 cents. A measure of imported rice would have been about 10 cents, so that if a labourer got six days' work in a week, his income of about three rupees would be just sufficient to maintain his family. Of course, there would be no savings.

Some villages went to work in the Nawanagala tea estate that was owned by Mr Johnston, a British planter. The work that was available was weeding (*karandigema*), raking soil, manuring and some such unskilled work. Children did only weeding. Weeding along the rows (*nera*) of tea bushes was done with a "karandiya" a simple implement turned out with a piece of zinc sheet of about two inches wide to which a wooden handle of about three/four feet was fixed to enable weeding under the tea bushes and the rows in between.

The villagers went to work on the estate, climbing up the *metihakka* hill behind the village reaching the work site not later than seven thirty in the morning. The lunch interval was between twelve and one in the afternoon. The workers gathered at a spot with a flowing spring of water for their lunch. Some would have a *buthgediya* (a pack of rice and curry) packed in kadjan leaf (the big leaf of a withered arecanut branch fallen down was cut off, peeled and prepared to pack the rice) and would exchange their curries so that each would have several curries to add to his meal of rice. Those who did not have rice would partake of a meal of roti *made of* either *kurakkan* or wheat flour. Wheat flour was a commodity that became widespread during the Second World War. The workers would end their day's work at five o'clock after which they returned home. The various times were made known by a trumpet (*sanguwa*) blown at the planter's bungalow, the sound of which could be heard far and wide. This bungalow was located at a vantage point from which a large part of the estate was visible. Cardamom was grown under the shade of large trees in the upper reaches of dothalu *kanda* which had a very cool climate and was generally misty most of the time.

On their way back from work in the evening, the workers would have a bath at a spout, many of which were found in the village. By the time they reached home it would be nearly dark. On Sunday morning each week, they would go to the house of the *Kangany* (minor supervisor), under whom they worked on the estate to collect their weekly wages. Each

male worker would receive about three rupees, if he had worked for six days. The boys would get about two rupees and fifty cents. This provided the income necessary to buy those items which the villagers did not produce within the village. To those who had paddy lands and highland for cultivating food items, the income earned from working on the estate or on the road, enabled them to reach a higher standard of living. Apart from the normal wage, the *Kangany* would get a commission (*pensa kasi*) of three cents per day per worker he had enrolled for work on the estate.



**A view of Dothalugala and Metihakka.** Matihakka hill is in front. Nawanagala Estate is between these two hills. Halyala is at the foot of Matihakka. The Thavalanthenna is near the area covered with trees. Whose face do you see at the peak?

### **Use of Money**

Before the second world war, the villagers made only limited use of money. Many of the transactions were done in kind. Payment to anyone providing wage labour was made with paddy or rice. Anyone who did not have money would sell some rice to the boutique from which to buy any items. Much of the currency used at this time took the form of silver coins to the value of five, ten, twenty-five, fifty cents and one rupee. The one cent coin was of copper. There were copper coins for half a cent and a quarter cent. Currency notes were available to the value of five rupees and above.

The history of the use of coins in this country goes back to the Anuradhapura period. Currency notes had been introduced under British colonial rule. At the beginning of British rule, English currency of pound, shilling and pence was used but this changed on January 1, 1872 with the introduction of rupees and cents.

Many villagers used some terms derived from early times to denote currency. *Thuttuwa* was a coin introduced by the Dutch and later came to denote one and half cent. The word *panama* (fanam), which appeared to have been introduced by the Portuguese and used under the Kotte and Kandyan kingdoms, was widely used to denote six and a quarter cent. Therefore, twenty-five cent was called *panam hathara* (four panam), fifty cent *panam ata* (eight panam), seventy-five cent *panam dolaha* (twelve panam), and one rupee and twenty-five cent *panam wissa* (twenty panam). Following the start of sterling currency usage ten rupee was called *pawma* and therefore fifty cent was a *silima*, one rupee and fifty cent *siling thuna* and two rupee and fifty cent *siling paha*.

With the onset of the Second World War there was a change in the currency, coins and notes used. The silver coins were replaced with currency notes, except the one cent coin which became half the thickness of the previous coin. Notes were issued for five cent, ten cent, twenty-five cent, fifty cent and one rupee.

The size of the five rupee and ten-rupee note was reduced. The five-cent note was perforated to be torn in the middle to be used as two and three cent pieces. This note soon went out of circulation perhaps because of the inferior quality of the paper used and therefore got worn out quickly. These notes came to be replaced with two, five, ten, twenty-five and fifty cent coins, minted with a metal similar to brass. The two-cent coin was of the same shape as the ten-cent coin but smaller in size. Although there were notes for one hundred, five hundred and thousand rupees, they were not in general use. A ten-thousand-rupee note was issued in 1947, but this was used only for inter-bank transactions.

During the war the use of money by the villagers increased because of the higher prices paid for their produce as well as high wage rates. Paddy which the government purchased for six rupees under the compulsory purchase scheme, could be sold to plantation workers for fifteen to twenty rupees. Money transactions replaced the earlier barter system.

The capitation tax of one rupee per male adult per year was abolished in 1947. Those who could not pay this tax had to work on such things as road construction. Because of this there were several minor roads constructed during the colonial period, so that the capitation tax came to be known as *paara badda* (road tax).

### **Health and Sanitation**

Generally, the villagers would clean their teeth and wash their mouths before the first meal in the morning. They would chew a piece of charcoal to brush their teeth with a finger. Hardly anyone used foreign tooth brushes; some would improvise such brushes with *karanda kotu* or *mul* (a tree of medicinal value). Indigenous physicians use the roots of the *karanda* tree for orthopaedic ailments. This may be why these roots were used for brushing the teeth. They not only clean the teeth but also strengthen them. Chewing betel was a common practice among the villagers, so that it was very difficult to keep their teeth white.

In the olden days the use of soap was not widespread but there were substitutes. Boiled lemon or a herbal fruit called *hondapollan* was used to wash the head and hair. *Mee muruwata* (a kind of poonac left after extracting oil) was also used as a substitute for soap. Dirty linen was boiled in what is called *wella heliya* by launderers to wash it clean. Not many

households had toilet facilities of their own. Therefore, a main task assigned to Sanitary Inspectors was the encouragement of the villagers to construct individual lavatories for each household so that they would not use the streams and jungle as toilets.

The villagers sought medical treatment from the government dispensary (which provided allopathic treatment) and from native physicians. The treatment at the government dispensary was by registered medical practitioners as there were no medical graduates with MBBS degree attached to these dispensaries at that time. During the second world war, a male and a female ward was opened for in-patients at Madugoda hospital. There was an MBBS doctor at Teldeniya hospital with wards for in-patients, but surgical treatment could be obtained only at the Kandy General Hospital.

The indigenous medical practitioners included two general physicians, a wound specialist who was also the village coroner, an eye specialist, and a snake poison specialist. Treatment for burns was provided by a *nachchire*, a female of the blacksmith caste. They were considered to be specialists in this type of treatment. Occasionally a patient would seek treatment from physicians in other villages if they were considered more experienced and competent.

## Food and Beverages

The harvested paddy, *kurakkan* and maize need to be processed before preparing edible food items from them. Paddy was pounded on a flat stone embedded on the floor at a suitable place in the kitchen or the hall of the house. After the outer chaff (*dahaiya*) was removed, the resulting rice was pounded in a mortar with pestles to polish it, by removing the inner chaff (*kudda*). Some villagers preferred boiled rice which was boiled in a large pot and dried until suitable for pounding. Rice flour used for *roti* (flat bread) or sweetmeat was processed by soaking raw rice in water for a few hours and then pounding it in a mortar with pestles. The flour so pounded was sifted in a sieve (*peneheraya*) to get grainless flour. *Kurakkan* flour was produced by grinding dried and cleaned *kurakkan* in a grinding stone (*kurahan gala*). Maize soaked in water for a few hours was pounded in a rice pounder to produce flour. The residue that cannot be converted to flour was used to cook *iringu buth*.

The staple food of the villagers was rice, partaken three times a day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The breakfast would be *heel bath*, *diya bath*, *hoonsal bath*, *unu bath* or *kiri bath*. *Heel bath* was the rice left over from dinner. This left-over rice over which some water was poured and kept overnight in a clay pot was *diya bath*, mixed with some coconut milk, chopped red onions, salt and lemon and mixed well with the fingers. *Heel bath* and *unu bath* (rice cooked in the morning) was eaten with *pol sambol*, *thakkali sambol*, or some watery curry (*hodda*). Rice cooked in the morning can be converted into *kiri bath* by adding an adequate quantity of coconut milk and salt. This was eaten with *lunu miris* (red chillie sambol). Maize or *kurakkan roti* also served as breakfast. This was common particularly among those who did not have rice.

The villagers with an adequate supply of paddy and rice would have rice and curry for both lunch and dinner. Curry made of *kos*, *polos* or *del and* a green leaf *melluma* and watery curry (*hodda*) would form a full meal. This would be supplemented with fried dry fish (karawala *beduma* or *melluma*) when available. When vegetables such as tomato, *bandakka* (ladies' fingers), *wetakolu*, *maekaral* (long beans), *kaekiri*, *thiyambara* (cucumber), *labu*, *puhul* and *wattakka* (pumpkin) grown in *puran* fields or highland *henas* were available, one or more of them would be cooked as curry. For some villagers lunch or dinner or both would be *kurakkan* or *iringu thalapa* or *roti*. Occasionally, *pol kiri kenda* (coconut milk porridge) may be eaten for dinner instead of a heavy meal. Villagers who had no paddy or rice of their own but with some income, bought imported rice available in the township boutiques. This was white rice or milchard imported from Siam and Burma. Boiled jak, breadfruit, sweet potato and tapioca formed a full breakfast, lunch or dinner.

At the beginning of the rainy season, there would be some varieties of mushroom on the heaps of paddy straw left over in and around the *kamatha* (threshing floor). Villagers do not normally buy vegetables at the market as there was no such need. Occasionally one would buy a cabbage to cook for an alms-giving or a wedding. They buy items such as potato, lentils, big onions, dried fish and condiments such as coriander, fennel seeds, etc.

Several special dishes were prepared for occasions such as alms-giving to Buddhist monks and weddings. New Year in the middle of April was also a time for special curries and sweetmeats. *Katu Embula* (ash gourd cooked according to a special recipe) and *Polos Embula* were two special dishes, one of which was an essential item. Curries of cabbage, potato, lentils, green gram, and dried fish *melluma* formed the main dishes. *Achcharu* (pickle) was also an essential item for weddings and the New Year. *Hath maalawa* was a curry cooked for the New Year lunch with a mixture of seven vegetables, consisting of *dalu* (shoots) - kohila, kakilla, spinach etc, *kola* (leaves)- *kirianguna*, *cabbage* etc, *gedi* (fruits) - gourd, pumpkin etc, *aeta* (seeds or gram) - undu, green grams, dhal etc, *manda* (kernels)- cashew etc, *bada* (inner core of banana trees), and *ala* (yams) - potatoes, hingurala, dehi ala etc. Meat and fish were never available even for special occasions.

Meal times changed during the paddy cultivation season. After an early morning breakfast (*heel kema*) the cultivators work in their own fields. At about ten in the morning, they have another meal of rice and curry and proceed to the day's work again in the fields of others or in their own fields. When they work for others, it was exchange of labour (*aththam*) and not for payments in cash or kind such as paddy or rice. Such payment was offered only to those who did not have their own fields and worked for a payment. On days the fields were ploughed, lunch (*maddahana*) will be around two o'clock in the afternoon. It consists of *kekulu* or boiled rice, a jak, breadfruit, pumpkin or some vegetable curry, dried fish *melluma* and a *hodda* (watery curry). This lunch cooked at home was carried to the field by the respective field owner's spouse or a female child. On days of sowing (no *maddahana* or lunch), a meal similar in content to lunch was partaken of after work in the evening at the home of the respective field owner (after a bath).

On days when there was no field work, lunch and dinner in some houses will be *kurakkan thalapa*, which was eaten with an *anama* of green gram, long bean seeds, or *kollu* seeds. A

piece of dried fish like kumbala or keelan was roasted as a “bite”, when swallowing thalapa. There would be households where kurakkan roti was served for all three meals as they do not have any rice. Some times, there were occasions when they drank “lunu kanda”(porridge) or polkiri kanda. During the world war, the food habits of the villagers who did not have an adequate supply of paddy and rice of their own, changed considerably. White rice or milchart - Imported rice - from Siam and Burma was not available after the Japanese invasion of South East Asia. A different type of rice -sticky rice-was imported from Egypt for distribution on the ration. Occasionally whole wheat grain took the place of rice. The wheat grain was polished with pestle and mortar to remove the coarse outer skin, and cooked like rice. The use of wheat flour also proliferated. Those who did not have *kurakkan* flour used wheat flour to cook *roti* (flat bread). Imported rice was scarce and was largely substituted with wheat flour.

Lunch for those engaged in the harvesting of *kurakkan* in the *henas* sometimes consisted of *dohoi* (*those*) and *pol sambal*. *Dohoi* is a flat bread of rice flour and black gram (*undu*). The dough prepared the previous night was allowed to ferment. Early the following morning the housewife prepares the *dohoi* using a hot clay pan (*dohoi gala*). This enables the housewife also to participate in the harvesting during the day, without interruption for the preparation of the lunch. A mixture of rice flour and black gram flour together with treacle (*kitul* or coconut), or sugar syrup was used to steam a sweetmeat called *pusnambu* (wandu appa). They were cooked on a kadapimma (cloth covering on an earthen vessel with boiling water).

A variety of sweets was made for occasions such as the New Year, weddings and almsgivings. These included *kewum*, *kokis*, *undu wel*, *aasmee*, *aluwa* and *weli thalapa*. *Kewum* was of several types such as *hendi kewum*, *athiraha*, *naran kewum*, and *mun eta kewum*. Some of these were taken during visits to relations. When such visits were not special, some would take a loaf of bread with half a pound of sugar.

Drinking tea was not widespread but households would keep some tea and sugar to offer any visitors. Occasionally herbs such as *ranawara*, *polpala* and *iramasu* would be boiled for drinking like tea. Boiled ginger, coriander or garlic was taken for the common cold. Inhaling the steam eases off the cold and breathing difficulties.

Those who had milch-cows would milk them early in the morning. Children as well as adults drink boiled fresh milk in the morning and any milk left over was poured into a clay pot (appallaya) and allowed to turn into curd which was taken with rice the following day. These villagers did not normally take curd as a dessert. In order for the milk to form curd, it was necessary to add a little curd (*muhun*) from the previous day. If there was no such *muhun*, a little bit of sugar was used for the purpose.

Although some villagers ate meat and fish, they were not readily available. In the event of a cultivator trapping a wild boar some would get a portion. There were no deer or antlers around the village. They were normally found in Bintenna (Mahiyangana) where one could get dried version (dadamas). The closest place where one could buy fish was the Kandy market which was twenty-eight miles away.

Hardly anyone consumed alcohol both because it was not available and because society discouraged its' consumption. One or two villagers tapped *kitul* trees to produce treacle and



*hakuru* (a hardened sweetener). The *kitul* sap could be allowed to ferment to produce toddy but this was illegal and would be done only on the sly. One could see an inebriated New Year reveller walking around unsteadily after consuming a little too much of toddy.

Every household would celebrate the New Year as best as it could (*kona kema*). Various sweets such as *kewum* and *kokis* were prepared two or three days in advance. A full or part of a dried fish was bought. *Polos embul* or *katu embul* was cooked the previous night. *Achcharu* (pickle) was also prepared in advance. Ripe bananas would be bought from a boutique. Of course, not every household would have all these things because they need money.

Traditionally there were certain auspicious times as determined by astrologers and indicated in the almanacs printed at the beginning of the calendar year. They were followed to perform the various New Year activities. There was an interim period (*nonagathaya*) between the end of the old year and the beginning of the new year, determined by the phases of the sun. When it was the end of *meena rasi* (*Pisces*) the old year ends. The new year begins when the sun enters the *mesha rasi* (*Aries*). The most important auspicious time was for lighting the hearth in the New Year for cooking *kiri bath* (milk rice) to be partaken at the auspicious time set for the first meal of the new year. Most households started this process with the housewife filling the *kalaya* (clay pot) at the spout (*pihilla*) and carrying it home, before other activities begin.

The *kiri bath* together with *kewum* (oil cake) and other sweetmeats were laid on the table, if there was one, or on a clean mat spread on the floor. At the appointed time, the chief occupant would start work usually by cutting a sod of earth with a mamoty (*udella*) and then eat a piece of *kiri bath*. The chief occupant normally feeds all the other members of the household with pieces of *kiri bath* and perform *ganu denu* (exchange of coins) with the spouse and children. The housewife with the help of other females in the house would start cooking the main meal, lunch or dinner as the case may be, depending on the particular auspicious time for that year. This meal will consist of rice and curries such as dhal, green gram, potato, dry fish *melluma* and *hath maluwa*. The food items cooked for this meal were exchanged among neighbours. This helped to get over any ill will that may have arisen in the course of the past year.

Most villagers would take some dry provisions and sweets to the temple before the New Year. Two or three days after the New Year all the villagers gather at the temple and offer alms (lunch) to the monks. The villagers would perform this function before they undertake any other activity in the New Year.

## **Raiment and Ornaments**

The raiment of the villagers was simple. Male children wore a kind of collarless shirt long enough to extend below the knees and tied at the back of the neck with two small straps to avoid the shirt slipping down. When they grew up and reached school-going age, a shirt and

a sarong of the appropriate size would be worn. No one wore jumpsuits or trousers. Young girls would wear a frock but as they grew up, they wore cloth and jacket particularly when they reached school-going age (seven or eight years old). Shoes and slippers were not worn.

Women wore cloth and jacket. A three-yard piece of chintz sown into two pieces and a white jacket was their household dress. Those who were better-off would wear *osariya* (Kandyan saree) with a four-piece chintz cloth and jacket of white poplin, when they get about in the village. A towel (*saluwa*) or a piece of cloth of similar size would be worn around the shoulders by most women when they go out. Women with some means would wear a more attractive cloth such as a *kambaya* (a checked cloth) with perhaps a lace jacket. The Indian saree was not worn except by low-country women. The jewellery worn by women when they go out was turned out of silver but sometimes gilded for a better appearance. Some elderly women wore large earrings (*bera*) similar to those worn by South Indian women, perhaps a practice that came into existence during the time of the *Nayakkar* kings of the Kandyan kingdom. Usually, girls and women wore ear studs but some women would wear larger ear rings (*karambu*) for weddings and important visits. The practice of borrowing jewellery such as bangles and necklaces to be worn for weddings was very common.

The ordinary dress of males was the sarong and long-sleeved shirt (similar to the tunic worn by Burmese men). The shirt was turned out of a coarse cloth known as "*lankeen*". Some would sew them with white poplin. The sarongs were checked coloured or white "*palayakat*" imported from India. On visits outside the village some men would wear a coat. Some of them would wear a sarong over which they would wear a tweed or white cloth. A few wore silk sarongs. Those who wore sarongs and cloth would tie a broad black belt or a silver chain (*hawadiya*) *rond the waist*. Most had a *diya lanuwa* around their waists to tighten the sarong or the loin cloth (*amuda lensuwa*). All males always wore an *amuda lensuawa* when going about in the village, but when on visits outside they would also carry a towel on a shoulder. The more respectable and richer people would wear sandals or shoes to a wedding or on a visit to such places as Kandy. None of the villagers wore trousers. The prevalent view was that one should be able, at the least to speak English to wear trousers. Those who wore trousers were considered *mahaththuru* (gentlemen), reflecting perhaps the colonial relationship between subjects and rulers.

Most adult males wore a *saruwale* (a trouser-like garment extending a little below the knee) when working in the fields or *henas* as well as when engaged in *kulee weda* (*wage labour*). *The saruwale* would be worn like a sarong around the waist and tightened with the *diya lanuwa* or *hawadiya*.

Both men and women wore white clothes (*sil redi*) on *poya* days when they observe the eight precepts (*ata sil*). *Women wore a white cloth and another white cloth as a satakaya*(shawl). *They wore a white jacket and went to the temple with a pathkada* (a cloth for sitting) in hand. *Males were dressed with a white sarong, a white vest, a white shawl and carried a pathkada*. There are four Poya days in a lunar month depending on the position of the moon, such as seven days after the waxing of the moon (*pura atawaka*), fifteen days of the waxing moon (*pasalos waka*), seven days after the waning moon (*awa atawaka*) and

fifteen days after the waning moon (*amawaka*). Most devotees observe *ata sil* on all these poya days. Some would observe the eight precepts only on the full moon Poya day. When they observe *sil* they avoid solid meals after midday until the following morning, observe celibacy during the whole period of *ata sil*, in addition to six other forms of abstentions. During day time, these devotees engage themselves in discussing the *dhamma* and listening to the discourses preached by Buddhist monks or knowledgeable devotees. As most of the villagers, both men and women, were unable to read, someone literate among the devotees would read from *dhamma* books such as *jathaka* stories or *pujawaliya*. Most of the night was devoted to sermons by Buddhist monks. *Sil pawaranaya* (ending the observance of the eight precepts) was done the following morning, by reciting the five precepts which every Buddhist layman was expected to observe right throughout life.

## Social Relationships

The villagers belonged to three castes which appear to have been based in the past on some useful function which they traditionally performed. Most villagers belonged to the *goigama* caste, that produced food essential to society. Although it was the *goigama* people who were the main cultivators, they were not precluded from cultivating their own land or being share-croppers or offering their labour to those who needed it for cultivation purposes.

The *goigama* people fell into the *radala* (upper) sub-caste and ordinary sub-caste. Even within the latter there were several gradations. The distinction between these two sub-castes was reflected in the terminology used by others to address them. The *radala* people were *bandara mahaththaya* (males) and *walannanse* (females) to those of the low castes. The ordinary *goigama* people would address *radalas* as *appo* (males) and *kumarihamy* (females). To address each other the adults used terms such as Nilame, Menike, Kumarihamy, Banda, Upasaka Unnehe, Veda Mahattaya, Bass Unnehe etc as was appropriate. The residential premises of *radalas* were the *walawwa* (manor) whereas all other houses were *gedaras*.

There were a few families belonging to the *duraya* caste. Traditionally they provided such services as carrying the pingo (*kada-sweets and banana baskets*) by the male (*duraya or hewayya*) and the container (*kuruni pettiya*) of sweets (*kewum, kokis* etc.) and the suitcases by the female (*kollammoo- kollange amma-mother of boys*) on the head at wedding processions. The bag of betel leaves would also be carried by a *kollammoo*. The person who blew the trumpet (*horanewa*) at the temple services was a male from the *duraya* caste. In addition to this *rajakariya* (ceremonial service) their services were obtained for labour work as well.

The other caste in the village was *the berakarayo* (drummers). Two families of this caste who lived close to the temple performed the *thewaawa* (drumming services) at the temple. Their *rajakariya* was to play the drums, *davul* and *tammattam*. 'Aluyam dure' (playing in the early dawn), 'handedure' (playing in the evening), drumming the *hevisi* when *gilanpasa*(refreshments) food were offered to the Buddha and on the alms giving days were

done by them. For doing this they were allowed to work the paddy fields of the temple. They also received food and sweets from houses offering alms giving. The other families of this caste lived away from the temple. Some of them were skilled as physicians, astrologers, dancers, etc. They were called "berakarayo" and "nenda" for males and females respectively.

The village did not have anyone of the washer caste living within it. The washer family lived at Kiripattiya. The washerman was called *henaya* (or *hena maamaa*) while the female was called *ridee* or *redi nenda*. They would occasionally visit the houses to which they provided their services such as laundering soiled clothes, decorating houses (*viyan bandeema*) when there was a wedding or pirith chanting, providing *piruwata* (clean white clothes) for girls who have attained puberty and for women after child birth. Their services were rewarded with rice or paddy. They would usually visit the houses of their clients a few days before the New Year so that they could receive some rice and sweetmeats.

The village smithy was close to the main road at Madugoda. The Black smith was called *galladda* or *gurunanse* and his wife was called *naachchire*. This *galladda* did only iron work and turned out such items as mammoties (*udella*), tree-cutting knives (*wakpihiya*), *kaeththi* used for clearing forests for *henas* and *heewalas*, the flat iron that was fixed to the harrowing part of the wooden plough. A family of this caste who made jewellery lived in the adjoining village, Pallewela.

The potters (*badahelas*) lived in an adjoining village known as Hanwella. They would visit the other villages with loads of clay pots and pans before the New Year and received rice or paddy in return for their pots and pans. The items required by the villagers included such things as water-carrying pots (*kalagedi*), *mutti* (rice-cooking pots), *appalla* (curry-cooking pots), *ethili* (hopper-making open pots), *dohoigal* (flat pottery items) to make the flat bread known as *dohoi* and *sembu mutti*, small pots for drinking water from. They would also supply very large clay pots called *haeli* to boil water and paddy, and to cook rice for large gatherings.

Occasionally, a type of wandering beggar of the *rodiya* caste known as *hulawaaliya* visited the village. He carried a box tied to one end of a Yoke pole. No sooner than they were seen at the entrance (*idikada*) of the garden, they would be given some paddy and made to go away for fear that they would charm the women. These were perhaps spies in the time of kings in this country. There was a royal dictum that *rodiyas* should be given some paddy when they visit the village which was the means of livelihood of these spies. So much for the caste system. It is necessary to discuss other social customs observed in this village.

The form of address prevalent in the village needs to be mentioned. One's mother was *amma* usually called *ape amma* (our mother). The elder sister of the mother was *loku amma*, and the younger sister of *amma* was *heen amma*. Younger female cousin of *amma* and step mother was *kudamma*. The mother's brother was *maama*. The husbands of *nendammas* were also *maamas*. The wife's father was *maamandie*.

The father was *appachchie*. The word *thatha* was not prevalent except among those of the few families of low country traders. The father's elder brother was *loku appachchie* and the younger brother was *heen appachchie*. The father's younger male cousin was *kudappachchie*

as was the step father. The word *bappa* came into use much later. The father's sister, wife's mother, and *maama's* wife was *nendamma* (not *nenda*).

The father of the mother was *loku aththa*, so was the father of the father. The mother of the father was *heen aththa* as was the mother's mother. All other grandfathers and grandmothers were *aththas*. In general, all elderly females of one's caste were *ammas* and males *ammandies*.

In general marriages among the youth were the result of proposals agreed upon by the elders (parents). The Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths lived in the adjoining village, Mediwaka. These marriages were normally registered under the Kandyan law and could be annulled by mutual consent when it was reported to the Registrar. Although divorce was very easy and did not have to be determined in court (as with low country law), such divorces were rare. Of course, a divorcee particularly women, did not find it a stigma and could easily re-marry. Marriages out of caste were never heard of. A *goigama* couple that eloped and came back after some time was accepted by the parents, built their own house and lived in the village, without any hindrance.

Everyone, young and old, respected their elders, irrespective of caste relationships. No one would talk or behave in a way that would hurt the feelings of others. If anyone said anything unbecoming, it would be pointed out by any elder in the village. Thus, there was social control of the behaviour, particularly of the young. Although there would be quarrels among the neighbours, they would not lead to physical harm. Even when there was ill will, they would be settled during the New Year period when the exchange of food and sweets took place among the neighbours.

Mutual cooperation was common among the villagers. It was very seldom that the services of others were paid for in money or kind. The system of *aththam* (exchange of labour) prevailed. A person working in the field of another villager, accumulates credit according to the number of days worked and would be repaid with the labour of the person in debt. Only those who did not have any fields of their own would be paid in kind for their labour.

If the field or *hena* of a villager could not be worked due to ill-health or other reason, the villagers would offer their labour free to such incapacitated villagers, when invited with the distribution of betel (*bulath deema*). The only reward they get would be some food or refreshments as appropriate. *Bulath deema* can be done when there was foundation laying for a house, etc. Neighbours were invited to help in the thatching of a roof with *illuk* or paddy straw (*piduru*). This service was provided free of charge.

## **Religious and Other Beliefs and Practices**

All the villagers, whatever their caste, were Sinhala Buddhists. The village temple was the centre of many religious activities. After the New Year the villagers gathered at the temple to perform rituals of obeisance and worship, before they undertook any other activity.

*Vesak Poya* is a thrice hallowed day signifying the birth of Lord Buddha as Prince Siddhartha in Lumbini under a sal tree, attained Buddhahood (enlightenment) under the bodi tree at Buddha Gaya at the age of thirty-five years, and passing away (*parinirvana*) at the age of eighty years at Kusinara under a sal tree. All the villagers offered *kiripidu daanaya* (milk rice) at the temple in memory of Lord Buddha. Drummers dressed in their special attire performed *poya hevisi*, sometimes in competition with each other.

Three or four days after the New Year in April, some villagers would go on pilgrimage to Adam's Peak (*Sri Pada*) or Mahiyangana. Those going to Sri Pada would travel by bus to Kandy, by train to Hatton and from there by bus to Nallathanniya. From this point a pilgrim had to walk some distance through a tea estate and up the mountain to reach the peak. On the way they would wash or bathe in a stream called *Seethagangula*. After this, the climb was very steep, past two places on the way called *Idikatupana* and *Mahagiridambe*. At the peak was the spot where Lord Buddha had placed his footprint, which was worshipped by Buddhists. Devotees of other religions also visit this peak. For Christians and Islamists, the footprint is that of Adam. For the Hindus it is perhaps the footprint of one of their myriad deities. Some pilgrims would wait for the sunrise which is a breath-taking sight, as the sun comes up out of the eastern hills and clouds, which are visible from the peak at a lower level.

Most pilgrims would carry a packet of rice with pol mallow (*buth gediya*) wrapped in a cleaned arecanut leaf. They also carry a bag of *aggala* (balls of a sweetmeat made out of rice flour mixed with sugar syrup or treacle), which was a good substitute for a meal on the way. The pilgrims usually wear white apparel, take a sheet or blanket for protection from the cold and a towel (sumbaraya-jatawa) to cover the head. Those who had them would, of course, take a woollen scarf and pull over. When they return to the village, some of those who did not go on the pilgrimage would apply some oil and massage the tired legs of the pilgrims, thus earning merit. The pilgrims themselves would offer merit (*pin anumodan kireema*) to those who did not go on the pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage to Mahiyangana was on foot through the villages of Mediwaka, Gangoda, Bopane, Kaluntenna, Pitawala, Uduwahinna, Mahawala and reaching Getalagolla Oya for the midday meal of rice carried in the *bath gediya*. After lunch they would walk the short distance to the *belungala* (observation rock) for a panoramic view of the Bintenna plains where Mahiyangana is situated. At this point a twig of a live branch was broken and hung on a branch as a kind of offering to *Saman deyyo*, the deity "in charge" of Mahiyangana and Adam's Peak. From there the pilgrims walk down the Galpadihela, a flight of stone steps built in the olden days by a person called *Bulatha Yodaya* (Bulatha, the giant), who was also said to have constructed the *Soraborawewa* (tank) close to Mahiyangana. As the pilgrims descend to the plains below, they reached Mananna Oya, a large perennial stream flowing down on their right. Then they arrived at *Morayaya*, a part of the *Minipe* colonization scheme. Passing this area and wending leftwards, they proceeded to the left bank of the *Mahaveli River* at *Weragantota*. They take turns in getting on to the *oruwa* (craft) to carry them across the river. If the water level was low the pilgrims wade across to reach the right bank on which side is situated the Mahiyangana shrine. On the right bank they bathe or wash themselves clean, wear fresh clean white clothes-piruwata (if available) and proceed

to the shrine. This shrine had a ruined (*garawetunu*) *dagaba* known as the *Miyuguna Wehera* or Mahiyangana Chaiththya and a Bodhi tree.

The story goes that when Lord Buddha made his first visit to Mahiyangana during the early days of his Buddhahood, he gave Saman Deiyo a handful of hair (*kesa dathu*) which was enshrined in a *riyan dagoba* (A *riyana* is a length of one and a half feet). An *Arahat* thera had later lengthened this to twelve *riyana* enshrining the *greewadhatu* (collar bone) of Lord Buddha. The *dagoba* was further enlarged by King Dutugemunu in later years during his rule. It is this large *dagoba* that had gone into ruin over the years due to neglect.

The poem *Dahatu Vistara* describe Mahiyangana in the following manner.

Maiyan kale deviyo veda inta matu	Deiyan budun eka tena pavathinta matu
Koian lesin vath vanda vanda inta yutu	Mahiyangane pihitiye shriva dhatu
Ahasa palak benda muni raja veda sitiye	Desa desavala budures pathira giye
Vehesa nathiva lovthuru muni veda sitiye-Kesa dhatu mahiyangana mul adiy	
Kesa dhatu pihita dageba benda	Indunil miniyen sath riyanak benda
Bendi dageba me-thun lova parasidda	Vandithi ethane sema deviyo novaradda

After worshipping the shrine, the pilgrims would proceed to a *pin saalaawa* (ambalama-resting hall) for the night before dark (with the help of light from the fire place or candles), where they prepared their dinner in small pots and pans carried in their travel bags. They also carried miniature coconut scrapers on such trips. A small quantity of rice, some condiments and pulses like lentils provided these pilgrims with a meal of rice and curry as they would not normally patronise boutiques/restaurants for their meals. After the night's rest, they would wake up early the following morning, cross the river and returned home along the same route, this time however without any breakfast (if no *hulanviskotu*, *viskirinna* -biscuits-or *appa-hoppers* available). Really tired and hungry after climbing up the *galpadihela*, they would drink the fresh clean water of *getalagolla oya* to quench their thirst and hunger before reaching home around two or three in the afternoon for a late lunch. The distance covered was about fifteen miles one way.



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**Miyuguna Temple**

**Mahiyangana Dagaba after Restoration**

At this time there was only one motor bus run by the Silverline Bus Company to travel from Kandy to Weragantota. None of the pilgrims from this village would depend on the bus, but walk the whole distance, both ways. The bus was an open-body type with three doors on the left and one at the back, which was common before the World War. By the time it reached Teldeniya, it was over-loaded making it necessary for some passengers to travel on the hood after passing the police station at Teldeniya. However, it was an interesting journey on a narrow winding road passing through Moragahamula, Urugala, Hunnasgiriya, Madugoda townships and reaching Tispahahe Kanuwa, after which the track of about four miles down the steep slope of Moraketiya Hills, runs through the eighteen hair-pin bends (*daha ata wanguwa*) to reach Gurulupotha. Weragantota is about another ten miles from there.

After the New Year (*kona kema*), the remaining paddy fields would be harvested (*koladin*) and during the interim period after the end of the harvest and the beginning of field work for the *yala* season the villagers were free to participate in religious activities. One village temple among the many in the surrounding villages would be chosen for bana preaching in a particular year. This season also falls between the Vesak and Poson full moon days when



Buddhists celebrate the birth, enlightenment, and passing away of Gauthama Buddha on Vesak full moon day and the arrival from India on Poson full moon day, of Arahant Mahinda (son of Emperor Asoka), who introduced Buddhism to this country in the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa.

There was *bana* preaching every other night in the designated temple for about a fortnight. Devotees from each neighbouring village would come in a procession beating drums (*hevisi*) with cries of “*Sadhu Sadhu*”, indicating how happy they were to participate in the procession and listen to *bana* (sermons).

The monk who preached the sermon on a given night (*tiss peya*- thirty Sinhalese hours) was carried from the *sanghawasaya* to the preaching hall, in an improvised *athputuwa* (chair of hands) formed by two strong adults facing each other and holding their hands in a particular manner. This was accompanied by the beating of drums. The monk was seated on a special dais (*dharmasanaya*) made of wood, which has curtains drawn on all four sides. The devotees were seated around the preaching dais and a person who responds from time to time with “*ehei hamudunne*” (yes, your lordship), when the monk pauses at intervals while delivering the sermon, was seated in front of the preaching dais. As there was no electricity at this time, the preaching hall was lighted with what was called “petrolmax lamps.” When the lamp was filled with kerosene and inflated, it gets heated and the vapour that rises up through a tube burns inside a mantle.

As the preaching continued through the night, every now and then (once in three to four Sinhala hours), the monk paused for some rest and refreshments (*gilanpasa*) such as tea and a chew of beetle. There was a beating of drums to mark this interval and to wake the devotees who may have fallen asleep. For others it was an opportunity to ease their limbs and have some refreshments themselves. At dawn the following day, the preaching ends and the monk was carried back to the *sanghawasaya* where he was offered breakfast (*heel danaya*), after which he returned to his temple if he was from another village. The devotees go home and attend to their chores and having rested that night, they go to the temple the following night to listen to the sermon. This will go on during the fortnight of the *bana* season. The following year this programme will continue in another temple in an adjoining village.

It was the practice to offer alms (*dana*) limited to the priests in the local temple three days and seven days after a funeral. Those who can afford it offer alms (*saangeeka dana*) to over five monks on the twenty first day after a funeral. This alms-giving requires a few days' preparation in advance. Sweets (*avulpath*) such as *kewum*, *kokis*, *unduwel*, and *aasmee* were made two or three days before the alms-giving. Curries such as *polos embul* or *katu embul* need cooking a whole night on a low fire to give the desirable colour and taste. Other curries were cooked early in the morning on the day of the *dana*. These together with an adequate quantity of boiled rice in containers such as *kuruni petti*, *galleha*, *haven*, and *wetake petti* covered with a lid and white cloth (*piruwata*) were carried to the temple, on the heads of female devotees (*upasikas*) accompanied by a procession of drummers and trumpeters. On the eve of the *dana*, a procession proceeds with oil, flowers and refreshments from the *dana* house to the temple for *mal poojawa* accompanied by *hevisi drumming*.

The monks required for the alms-giving were invited by the monk in the village temple. Around eleven in the morning *the Buddha poojawa* (alms to the Buddha) was offered. This was a token of alms offered at the shrine room, where there was a statue of Lord Buddha. This was indicated by the beating of drums such as *getaberaya*, *daula*, and *thammettama*, and the blowing of the trumpet (*horanewa*). The monks were offered alms after the offerings to Lord Buddha. After the monks had partaken of alms, invoked merit (*pin peminaweema*) and the *pooja padaya was done* (final beating of drums for the day), the alms giving process comes to an end.

During the period of three months of the rainy season (*wassanaya*), the monks carrying their bowls go from house to house in the forenoon for alms (*pindapatha*). The householders would normally have some rice and curry ready when the monk arrives but if they do not have anything ready by then, they would say '*ahara boi*' when the monk would proceed to the next house. At the end of the *wassana* season, the villagers would hold the *Katina pinkama* (ceremonial offering of robes accompanied by offering of alms). In the morning of the *Katina* day, a senior monk would cut the white cloth into the required number of pieces according to regulation, and then sew the cut pieces together on a sewing machine and produce the robe (*Katina cheewaraya*). This robe would then be taken in procession to the temple well, washed, and soaked in the required colour (*pandu peweema*). It was allowed to dry in the sun after which it was taken to the temple and offered to the monk, together with alms for all the monks who had gathered in the temple. All the villagers normally participated in the *Katina pinkama*.

During the Poson festival, a group of people who arrived at the *pin salawa* in the Halyala village, ran a *dansala* to offer food and refreshments to pilgrims who walked along the road to the Mahiyangana shrine. One could see a stream of devotees walking along the road that passes through *galpadihela* to Mahiyangana.

*Pirith* (*suthras* or formulas preached by Lord Buddha or his chief disciples) chanting was done to ward off evil and illnesses. Although this was the preserve of Buddhist monks, in this village *pirith* chanting was done by lay devotees too. An area enclosed with a structure known as the *pirith mandapaya* was set apart in a suitable corner, inside the house where *pirith* chanting was to take place. The ceiling of the *mandapaya* was covered with white cloth (*udu viyan*), a network of threads was tied below the *viyana* for hanging twigs of betel, *siviya* leaves and arecanut flowers. The four sides of the *mandapaya* were adorned with a matwork of *gokkola* (tender coconut leaves) or paperwork. A small pot filled with water (*pirith paen*) was placed on a stool or table at the centre of the *mandapaya*. The devotees chanting *pirith* sit inside this enclosed area, around the centre table or stool. Inside the *mandapaya*, there were coconut oil lamps or candles. Lanterns and petromax lamps light the area outside the *mandapaya*. Those listening to the chanting sat on mats or low seats outside *the mandapaya*. The chanting which begins at about eight or nine in the evening, continue till early the following morning. At the end of the chanting, *pirith nool* (threads) and *pirith paen* (water) were given to those who need them. The procedure ended after the *heel danaya* or breakfast.

Some villagers resort to *baliyaga*, *yakun naeteema* or *adukku pideema* to ward off illness and evil spirits. *Baliyaga* involved the making of a *baliroopa* (figure of a deity) with clay and painting it in appropriate colours, and night-long dancing by *bali* dancers in front of the *aathuraya* (sick person), who was seated facing the *baliroopa*. As they dance, the dancers recite verses in praise of Lord Buddha or other powerful deities. Two young persons or women sitting on either side of the sick person would shout “*aayubo*” waving twigs of arecanut flowers as and when the dancers pause.

Devil dancing was performed by *yakdessas*. A few weapons were placed on an improvised high pedestal before which the dancers dress in some form of simple ceremonial costume to the beating of a drum (*getaberaya*). Off and on the *yakdessa* becomes possessed, when he mutters the cause of an illness or any other evil possession, and also prescribed remedial measures.

Offering alms to some deities (*adukku pujawa*) and those who are or were mothers (*kiriamma warunge danaya*) was another form of appeasement of evil spirits that may have caused illnesses in members of the household. In the case of *adukku puja*, the pounding of rice flour and preparation of food items was done by males dressed in white clothes (*piruwata*). The cooking of *kiri roti* was an essential ingredient of this offering.

Some form of entertainment was provided by such things as *sokari* and *soowisi* dancing. *Sokari* was a type of drama performed by a group of Bangali men and women who visited Sri Lanka in the olden days. There were both male and female characters, all played by appropriately dressed men. *Sokari* and *kaali* were female characters and *guruwa* and *paraya* were male characters. There was also a chorus of men singing the verses describing the actions of these characters. The play goes on through the whole night with a few intervals.

Occasionally, *soowisi* dancing was done in the temple premises to collect funds for temple construction activities. This dancing goes on for several nights, and revolved around the twenty-four Buddhas, who attained enlightenment before Gautama Buddha. Apart from dancing, there were also fairs (*salpilas*) to raise funds. There was intense competition in bidding for whatever items are put up for the auction, even if they were ordinary items for daily consumption.

Some adults in the village observed the eight precepts (*ata sil*) on all four poya days of the month. As noted earlier there is a poya day in each week which was also a holiday, even if *ata sil* is not observed by anyone. The devotees who observed *ata sil* will wear white clothes (*sil redi*) and go to the temple early in the morning, to participate in the observance of the eight precepts led by a monk. These devotees spend a full twenty-four hours (sixty Sinhalese hours) in the temple listening to the sermons preached by monks and to readings of the holy scriptures by those who had the ability to read. There would also be dhamma discussions. These devotees go home in time for lunch (before midday). Once they return to the temple after lunch, they remained there till the following morning. There will be no dinner as such, but some light refreshments such as tea, coffee, or boiled coriander water, until breakfast the next morning.

## Educational Facilities

The school closest to the village was Kandy/Mediwake Vernacular Mixed School (swabhasha Mishra pasela) which was two miles away, established in 1913. Prior to this there was a small school at a location 500 yards away called Kabattiya. The school at the present location had four buildings. It appears that the main school building and the teachers' quarters were built first. A temporary building to house the weaving and handicraft section had been constructed later. It also accommodated the English class room. The roof of this building was thatched with *iluck* and paddy straw. Another one class-room permanent building had been added later. All the classes from the Lower Kindergarten to Grade 8 were accommodated in the main building with the tile roof. When the single-classroom building was constructed, the Grade 5 class was shifted to that building with the weaving and handicraft section and the English class.

The entrance to the school premises was on the western side, through a gate by the side of a large rock called *Wedahitigala* on which the Sinhala king was said to have rested during his circuits in the area. There was a flight of steps from the entrance to the approach road to the main hall and a playing field on either side of this access road. During the second world war, the playing field was dug up to plant sweet potatoes. An L-shaped trench was also dug as an air raid shelter.

**{This old school was damaged by a land slide in 2016 and a new school was built in a new location in the same area.}**

Before the war there were five teachers in the school, they included the Head master, the English teacher, another male teacher and two female teachers. One of these were weaving and handicraft instructress. Except for the Head Master all the other teachers were from the area and they had been in this school for many years. Consequently, they were known to the people in these villages and were well respected by them. Three new teachers came on transfer during the war. They became popular among the students for various reasons. One teacher who was interested in Music and Drama guided the students towards these areas. Students were trained for term end school concerts. There were three Head Masters from time to time, during the period 1939 to 1945.

The prevailing practice at the time was to call the first year of schooling Lower Kindergarten (pahala balansaya) and the second year Upper Kindergarten -grade One - (ihala balansaya). The third year was Grade Two and so on. The ninth-year class was Prarambhaya or Preliminary Year for Monitorship which qualified a student to be a trainee teaching assistant. The only youth who had then passed the 'prarambhaya'-8th grade -had gone to work as the clerk to the Rate Mahattaya of Mahiyangana (Bintenne). English was taught as one subject from Standard Three, so that by the time a student reached Standard Five, he would have some knowledge of English. Promotion from one class to the next higher class was on the results of the year-end promotion test. A student who failed this test could sometimes be in the same class for several years. The number of students in the higher

classes was small as some of them would leave school because of domestic problems or because they fail the promotion tests. Eventually, the number of students in the higher classes would be limited to three or four. Others would by now have become village cultivators and housewives. Only a very few girls went to school at that time and therefore most of the womenfolk were completely illiterate.

Under the British colonial administration, the official language was English. Therefore, in order to get a government job or proceed to higher education, one had to study in English for which it was essential to get admission to an English medium school. The closest place where such schools were available was Kandy, twenty-eight miles away. The employment available to those who studied in the vernacular was either to be a vernacular teacher or a notary. Although there were a few persons such as the Post Master, Medical Practitioner, Rest House Keeper or the P.W.D. Overseer, who could be considered to have a knowledge of English, they were all at Madugoda and not in the village. Therefore, if a villager received a telegram or an official letter in English, he had to seek the help of one of them. The most sought-after person was the Post Master.

## **Village Administration**

The village headman (Arachchi Mahaththaya) was in charge of the administration of the village on behalf of the colonial government. Arachchi Mahaththaya intervened in disputes among the villagers. There were very few disputes which made his task easy. His duties increased with the onset of the Second world war. The distribution of ration books and the assessment of surplus paddy yields of the villagers, involved additional responsibilities. The ration books which were initially for an equitable distribution of rice was extended later to the distribution of clothes as well. The paddy yield of villagers in excess of a certain quantity allowed to each family, depending on the number of members in the family, was purchased by the government at a fixed price, i.e., Rupee six per bushel at the time. The regulation of irrigation facilities in the village devolved on the *vel vidane* (muladeni mahaththaya). He ensured that the village canals were properly maintained by the cultivators and supervised the distribution of water to the paddy fields particularly during the *Yala* season, when there was little water in the main canal.

A *korale mahaththaya* (chief headman) supervised several village headmen belonging to the korale (county/shire). Halyala came under the Gampaha West Korale. The chief headman of this county lived in the adjoining village of Mediwake. There was a division under which there were several korales or counties. The official administering the Uda Dumbara Division was a Ratamahaththaya. He was responsible to the Government Agent of the Central Province through the Assistant Government Agent of the Kandy District. In 1938 the Ratamahaththayas were replaced by Divisional Revenue Officers (DROs). The office of the first DRO of the Uda Dumbara division was located at Nugetenna in Hunnasgiriya. The first DRO was Mr. D.B. Welagedara, who later became a Member of Parliament for an electorate

in the Kurunegala district. Under the Donoughmore Constitution, the Uda Dumbara division came within the Dumbara constituency of the State Council.

Each of these functionaries had a separate room in their manors for their official duties and to meet the 'subjects', as it were, who came to them for some service. The only exception was the office of the AGA or the GA which was a reasonably large establishment with several staff officers, clerks, and peons (minor employees). These offices were called Kachcheries. This is said to be an Indian word which meant the place where the chiefs met their subjects.

A Division Day was held once a month by the Ratamahaththaya which was attended by the officials such as village headmen (Gam Muladeni), korales and vel vidanes dressed in their official uniforms, worn in the Kandyan area at that time. The Ratamahaththaya wore a dress similar to that of a Basnayake Nilame in the Kandy Perahera. The *korale mahaththaya* wore a white cloth (tuppotti) with a styled white Kandyan shirt and a four-cornered white cap. The dress of the village headman and the *vel vidane* was without a shirt for the upper part of the body but with a white cap and silk *lensuwa* (scarf) worn over the shoulders. After the introduction of the DRO system, these official uniforms became defunct. Those in the village met at the Village Council (gamsabha) Courts building.

## Second World War

The Second World War had a strong impact in several ways on our village, although it was in a remote area. This impact was more marked after the Japanese bombed Colombo on April 5, 1942. A military camp was established at a place called Thawalantenna, on the Kandy-Weragantota Road, about five miles from Halyala and the Madugoda township. The camp was on a sloping hillock which provided a panoramic view of the Bintenna plains to the east extending to the far horizon towards Batticaloa.

There was constant movement of military vehicles which provided transport for troops moving to and from the military camp towards Kandy. Off and on, one could see the movement of artillery and battle tanks. This road where only two buses a day and a lorry or two plied prior to the war, now saw the movement of a large number of vehicles. The market place became busy.

Women who went about on the road to look for firewood and to the Sunday fair (*sandapola*), stopped going out for fear that they might be molested. There were European, African (Kaffirs), Indian (Marati) and Australian soldiers among the troops that moved on this road. The villagers had not seen uniformed soldiers before. Now it was commonplace. Some of these soldiers would partake of some bread and plantains at the boutiques in Madugoda, but the boutique owners were afraid to ask for payment, but would be happy when a payment was made.

Aeroplanes were never seen before, but now it was usual to see small sparrow-like squads of planes flying above the village almost daily. Early one morning a large number of planes were seen flying low across the village emerging from the east and disappearing in the western horizon. These may have been the Japanese planes that bombed Colombo on April 5, 1942. A prisoner-of-war camp was opened in Minipe for Italian prisoners within the first two or three years of the war. A water bowser came to the Kahatagolla main channel, several times a day to fetch water for the prison camp.

A few young men from several villages in the area joined the military forces. Some of them were said to have gone abroad to other countries for the war. When such a soldier in uniform returned home, he would alight from the omnibus and walk with some pride holding his becaped head high.

A rationing scheme was introduced to ensure the equitable distribution of food. Ration books were issued to households. These ration books were categorized into worker, ordinary, child and infant making them entitled respectively to two, one and a half, one, and half measure of rice per week. Occasionally wheat grain instead of rice was also issued. The measures used at the time to measure grain were the *hunduwa*, *neliya*, *seruwa* (*one measure*), *karthuwa* (*eight seru*) and *busala*, that was, a quarter measure, half measure, measure, quarter bushel and bushel respectively.

A locally prevalent measure called *laha* was also used. Eight *lahas* made a bushel. The rice distributed on ration was imported white rice or milchard imported from Siam (Thailand) and Burma (Myanmar). When the Japanese invaded South East Asia, a sticky white rice imported from Egypt was distributed. Wheat grain was pounded in a mortar with a pestle to remove the coarse outer coating and cooked like rice. The widespread use of wheat flour began with the onset of the war. Although there were bakery products such as bread, buns, roasted bread, a kind of long biscuits (*viskireenna*) and rusks (*hulan viscothu*) made out of wheat flour, the consumption of flour was limited. The people of this area bought a loaf of bread only when they visited someone such as a relation. It was customary for bread to be supplemented with half a pound of sugar. When the quantity of rice issued on ration was reduced the villagers were compelled to buy more wheat flour to make flat bread (*roti*). There was also increased consumption of bread.

When rice became increasingly difficult to import largely because of the Japanese invasion, the government compelled those who had a surplus paddy harvest to sell the paddy to the government. The quantity of paddy that a cultivator could retain was determined by the number of family members and the balance had to be sold to the government at six rupees a bushel. The cultivators did not give a correct account of the paddy harvest, and the surplus so retained was sold to such people as plantation workers for up to twenty rupees per bushel.

The measure to weigh such items as wheat flour, sugar, tea leaves, potatoes and onions consisted of the visuma (half an ounce), ounce, quarter pound (four ounces), half pound (eight ounces), one pound (sixteen ounces), a hundredweight-hondaraya- (cwt) (112 pounds) and ton (20 cwts). The metric system of weights and measures was not in use at the time.

With the escalation of the war, the import of textiles was also affected. Therefore, the rationing scheme had to be extended to textiles as well. At the beginning, a ration card was introduced for textiles but eventually the textile coupons were included in the rice ration book. Each household was entitled to a sarong, two yards of chintz, and two yards of poplin (white cloth) per year and therefore some members of the household had to go without any new clothes in some years. Consequently, one observed some villagers wearing banians sewn with the coarse material of bags used to import wheat flour. The measurements used for textiles was the yard and half a yard (*riyana*). The units of measurement of distance (length) were the inch, foot (12 inches), yard (three feet), cubit (*bambaya* -6 feet), chain (66 feet) furlong (10 chains) and the mile (8 furlongs = 5280 feet = 1760 yards).

With the cessation of hostilities in 1945, after the Americans dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the Second World War which broke out on September 1, 1939 came to an end. Normalcy began to be restored in the area with the dismantling of military camps at Thawalantenna and Minipe. Particularly women felt free to go about their daily chores without having to look over their shoulder, to see whether there were any foreign soldiers who could never understand the fears and frustrations of the local people.

## **Conclusion**

Various facts were included in this description under the location of the village, climate, vegetation, customs, beliefs etc and livelihood to portray the situation that existed seven or eight decades ago. Even some of the words used here may not be in use now. Although the geographical location of the village may be as it was, there might have been many changes within it. The number of houses has increased, so that low jungle is no more. Footpaths have increased and customs have changed. The description here may be “news” even to the present residents of the village.



## Chapter II

### My Childhood

The myriad events of a life time pass through the mind as isolated incidents, but because of the extremely fast speed at which the mind works, these thoughts appear to flow in an unbroken stream. The speed at which thoughts change makes it extremely difficult to record them, without repeatedly pondering over them. One can remember only those events that had some major impact, some of which give rise to pleasant feelings while others may be extremely disturbing. The ordinary events that happen every day are easily forgotten but an insight into these can be drawn if a curve is drawn linking the significant events that linger uppermost in one's memory.

The earliest event that is registered in my memory relates to a journey from a remote *hena* called Eldamporuwa to our home at Dewalewattha in the Halyala village. My mother carried me across a stream on our way home. On the way, near the third hair-pin bend in Daha Ata Wanguwa, a European couple had parked their car by the roadside and were taking a view of the Bintenna plains in the far horizon. An adult male in our group asked the couple for an empty bottle which they gave him. I still remember that it was a dark green bottle. I would have been about three years old and was being carried by this adult on his shoulders. The distance we covered on foot would have been about fifteen miles, but I cannot remember any other thing about reaching home. I came to know later that the stream we crossed was the Rathna Ella Oya, which has a waterfall visible from the Mahiyangana Road. This perennial stream flows down through Hassalaka and falls on to Mahaveli Ganga, a little below Mahiyangana. I relate this incident to indicate the nature of my memory, but let us begin at the beginning.

#### The Family

I was born at 8.57 in the morning on Sunday, March 26, 1933 at Dewalewatta in the village of Halyala, as the fifth child (second son) of Ekanayake Rajapakse Mudiyansele Tikiri Banda (Appachchie) and Abeysinghe Mudiyansele Bandara Menika (Ape Amma). The other surviving members of my family were my brother Muthu Banda (born in 1914), elder sister Palingu Menika, second sister Kalawewe Akka, third sister (Heen Akka) Badrawathie, and my younger sister (Nangie) Udulawathie. A male child had died in infancy before I was born.

My father was born in 1889. His father who was a Village Headman had died when my father was fourteen years. Since then, he had shouldered the task of providing for a family of four, including his mother and two brothers. Therefore, his schooling had abruptly ended and he was compelled to cultivate the paddy fields for their livelihood. Eventually, he was

recognized by the villagers as a competent cultivator. He cultivated a number of paddy fields located here and there within the village of an extent of seven *wee pelas* in the *Maha* season and four *pelas* in the *Yala* season (A *pela* was about half an acre). The yield from each *pela* was about twenty bushels of paddy, so that there was an adequate supply of food for the family throughout the year.

When land development under the Minipe Colonization Scheme began in the mid-nineteen thirties (of the twentieth century), he was a pioneer who accompanied Rambukwella Dissawe, the Ratemahaththaya of Uda Dumbara at the time, and participated in clearing the jungle in the Handaganawa area. This was a highly malarial area at the time and it was a 'miracle' that these pioneers escaped the deadly malarial fever. The reward was that my father received five acres of paddy land (*wee daha pelak*) under D. Channel 21 and three acres of highland in the Minipe Colonization Scheme. The residential quarter was located in the highland tract which was about one and a half miles from the paddy field. Appachchie went to develop this land, and the income he got was much higher than what he got at Halyala. Therefore, he settled down in Minipe with the whole family. The paddy fields in Halyala had to be given to share-croppers (*anda kaarayo*). The climate in Minipe was much harsher than in Halyala. Appachchie died in January, 1959 at the age of seventy years.

My father had two brothers and a sister. The two paternal uncles were my Loku Heen Appachchie (Heen Banda) and Bala Heen Appachchie (Abasin Banda). They were both younger than my father. I called my paternal aunt (Bambaradeniye Nendamma -same age as my brother), because she was married to an uncle from the village of Bambaradeniya in Udunuwara beyond Kandy.

My mother, Ape Amma was born in 1894 and died at the age of eighty-three years in June, 1977. She was an efficient housewife, economical and thrifty. She lent quantities of paddy to those of the village who needed to borrow to feed their children. They returned what they borrowed with a small interest. During the Second World War when food was scarce, plantation workers from Nawanagala Estate used to come to our village to buy paddy or rice. Ape Amma would sell some surplus paddy to these people and saved the money so earned and deposit it in a brass box (*heppuwa*) and hide the box in an opening on the underside of the table.

I was brought up under the care of my mother because my father was a sort of task master whom I did not like very much at the time and also because he went away to Minipe when I was about four years of age. I was breast-fed till I was three years old. One day when I wanted some milk, I had asked mother to wash her mouth clean because she had eaten meat that day. She used to tease me innocently in later years recalling this incident. I never ate meat even after I was grown up.

My mother had three sisters and three brothers, all younger than her. The elder maternal aunt was called *Pitawala Heen Amma* (Pitawala Aunt) because she was married to an uncle from the village of Pitawala. The youngest aunt was *Dewahandiye Heen Amma* (Dewahandiye Aunt) because an uncle from that village had married her. The other aunt was simply *Heen Amma*. She was married to *Bala Heen Appachchie*, so that I had a dual link to that family.

The eldest maternal uncle was called *Loku Maamaa* or *Dewahandiye Maamaa*. He had moved to Dewahandya and married an aunt from that village. Eventually, they moved to a colonization allotment at Morayaya under the Minipe Colonisation Scheme. When their daughter who had married the allottee of that land had separated, she was given that allotment.

The second maternal uncle entered the Buddhist priesthood in 1925 and was named *Halayale Sumanatissa*. He studied at the Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda, Colombo. It is understood that he was at first living at *Sri Sumangalaramaya* in Borella and later at *Sri Jayawardhanaramaya*, Cotta Road, Borella when he was studying. After graduation as a *Pandit*, he moved to Wattegama and started the *Dharmadweepa Pirivena* around 1945. Later he moved to Asgiriya in Kandy and started the *Asgiri Maha Vihara Pirivena* and was its *Parivenadhipathi*. Eventually, he became the *Anunayake* of the Asgiriya Chapter of the *Siyam Nikaya*. He died on February 17, 1988 and was cremated at the Asgiriya Police Grounds on the 21<sup>st</sup>. (see also Chapter III below).

The third maternal uncle was called *Heen Maamaa*. He lived in an isolated house he built at *Kahatagolla in Halyala*. Later, he migrated to *Ulpothagama in Hasalaka* under the Minipe Colonization Scheme. I had lost contact with him after I left my birth place for secondary education and employment but I know that he had three daughters and a son. The eldest daughter was married to the second son of my Loku Heen Appachchie and they lived at Pallewatta in the Minipe Colony. Their son, my nephew Tilakaratne, was employed in the Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation and is understood to have now retired and living at Balagolla in Kundasale.

The villagers seem to have recognized that my parents were guided by their religious beliefs and precepts, so much so that my father was addressed by some villagers as 'Upasaka Unnehe' meaning a well-behaved religious person. During the period he was in Halyala, he observed *ata sil* (eight precepts). My eldest sister (*Loku Akka*) also observed the eight precepts on Poya days together with my maternal grandparents. On these days *Ape Amma* stayed at home and prepared lunch for the *sil karayas*. She appeared to be happier to serve them on Poya days rather than observing *ata sil* herself.

In 1933, the year I was born, my brother, who was about nineteen years of age, went to Mahiyangana to serve as the clerk to a gentleman known as Madugalla, the *Ratemahaththaya of Bintenna* division in Badulla district, Uva Province. From 1938, he served in the Office of the Divisional Revenue Officer (DRO), Bintenna (with DRO's Alawaththegama, M.B. Rathnayaka, Wimalarathna Wathuregama), at Ekiriyankumbura, Potawa, and Mahiyangana. In 1952, he was transferred to the office of the DRO, Uda Dumbara in the Kandy District. The last lap of his government service was at the Kandy Kachcheri (Office of the Government Agent). After retirement he served the temple of the Tooth Relic (*Dalada Maligwa*) until his death in 1985, when he was a little over seventy years of age. Until his marriage in 1945, Aiyya brought new clothes for us for the New Year. He also brought fire crackers (made in China). These crackers were very safe even for small children to handle, so that there were hardly any injuries at that time from fire crackers.

*Loku Akka* (my eldest sister) was married to a young man from Pitawala, a village about five miles from our village. *Loku Akka* also migrated to Minipe in the course of time and lived

there until her death. She was given a one-third share of the paddy land and high land at Minipe, which has now been inherited by a daughter of *Loku Akka*.

My second sister *Heen Akka*, married a cultivator in the Kagama colony in *Kalawewa* and settled down there and was called *Kalawewe Akka*. She came home for the birth of her first child. The delivery took place at the government hospital in Madugoda but the baby died within a few days. After the delivery of the second child, *Kalawewe Akka* died within about twenty days. After child birth, she became seriously ill and was treated by the village physician (*Veda mahaththaya*). Off and on, she had fits causing considerable suffering, which was a cause of deep shock and sorrow for me, a child of twelve years. After the death of *Kalawewe akka*, her child was brought up by *Ape' Amma*, so that she was called "*Ape' Amma*" by this grand daughter as well. After the demise of *Appachchi*, a one-third share of the Minipe property which *Ape' amma* kept for herself was given to this granddaughter, who was married and had many children. She has also died at the age of about sixty years.

The third sister, who was my immediate senior came to be known as *Heen akka* after *Kalawewe Akka*. *Heen akka* was given in marriage to a youth from *Wendaruwa*, a village about thirteen or fourteen miles from our village. To reach this village, one went seven miles by bus and walked the rest of the distance, on a road going up and down a couple of steep hills. Within a short while, she came back home and the marriage became null and void. Having migrated to Minipe with the rest of the family, *Heen Akka* was married to a hardworking colonist who had received five acres of paddy land under D. Channel 26 and three acres of highland at Handaganawa, about one mile from *Appachcie's* allotment. She had two sons and five daughters from this marriage. She died in 1977 at the age of about forty-seven years.

My younger sister (*Nangi*) is about three years younger to me. When she was very young, perhaps about three or four years of age, she suffered from a very serious illness which persisted for several weeks. Although she was treated according to the prescriptions of the local physician (*Veda Mahaththaya*), no cure was at sight. I remember one day she was so badly ill, that *Appachchi* invited the local Buddhist monk to come home to chant *pirith* (Buddhist stanzas), which Buddhists believed would contribute to healing various ailments. Miraculously *Nangi* appeared to recover and within a few days she was on the way to complete recovery. Along with *Ape Amma*, *Nangi* also migrated to Minipe, and was eventually married to a young man from Poddalgoda. *Nangi* inherited the balance one-third share of the property. She had two sons and three daughters who are doing reasonably well in various occupations. *Nangi and Poddalgoda Massina* (brother-in-law) continue to live at Handaganawa looking after their paddy land and deriving a comfortable income.

My maternal grand parents lived a long life and died after I found employment. My paternal grandfather had died long before my birth but my grandmother was around when I was a child and was living on her own in a room in the *maha gedara*, parts of which were occupied by the families of two of her sons. Although I respected this grandmother, there was not much of affection, unlike for my maternal grandparents. I may have been influenced by the attitude of my mother.

This grandmother did not appear to have any illnesses. One evening, she had heated some water to wash her feet, gone to sleep and did not wake up the following morning. The demise of the grandmother came to light early the following morning, because the two uncles also lived in that house. We came to know later, because by then we were living in a separate house at *Dewalewatta* about half a mile away.

The funeral of this *Heen Aththa* was held two or three days later. It was the practice at this time in our village, for those with some competence in carpentry to collect some planks and make the minee *pettiya* (casket) to carry the dead body to the cemetery. A few villagers would go to the cemetery and dig a pit to bury the dead body. All this work was done voluntarily. The only immediate reward was some food and refreshments.

When Heen Aththa's remains were about to be carried away, the relations began to cry and shed tears profusely as was the practice on such occasions. Although I did not feel any sorrow or remorse, I thought it was indecent not to cry when all, young and old, were crying. Therefore, I also started crying and eventually, tears started flowing as if to make my deception real.

*Bambaradeniya Nendamma* from *Udunuwara* attended the funeral. She was the only daughter of the deceased grand mother. She had a son who was of my age and she was a very affectionate aunt. Therefore, I was very happy that she was present at the funeral. Having left after two or three days, she came back for the twenty-one days' alms giving. She was clever at preparing sweetmeats such as *unduwel*, *aasmee*, and *kewum* and therefore was entrusted with the task of making them.

On the eve of the alms-giving, a procession of devotees carrying flowers, coconut oil and refreshments for the monks, proceeded from the *maha gedara* to the temple which was about a mile away. The procession was complete with the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets (*horane*). On the day of the alms-giving, the required food cooked the previous evening as well as early in the morning, were carried in boxes covered with white cloth, by the womenfolk accompanied by a procession of drummers and devotees. The alms were first offered at the shrine of Lord Buddha around eleven in the morning after which the Buddhist monks were served with alms (lunch). When all this was over the lay devotees came back home and had their lunch.

Both my paternal uncles (*Heen Appachchis*) continued to live in the *maha gedara* with their families. It was a house with a meda *midula* (central compound) and could accommodate two or three families but *Appachchi* had built a house at *Dewalewatta* and gone into occupation around the year 1933, when I was born and my brother had left for employment at Mahiyangana.

The younger of the two *Heen Appachchis* married my mother's younger sister (*Heen Amma*) and therefore my affinity towards the cousins of that family grew much stronger than towards those of *Loku Heen Appachchi*. Because of this, whenever I went to the *maha gedara* or *pahala gedara*, I was drawn towards the house of *Heen Amma* rather than to that of *Kudamma*. Bala Heen Appachchi's family had also migrated to Minipe, because he also received an allotment of land adjoining that of my father.

## Our House and Garden

Our house at *Dewalewatta* was located at the top of *Ihala Gammedda*, in Halyala. It had two rooms and a long hall (*salawa*), equal to the length of the two rooms in the second type of house mentioned in Chapter I. Its roof was of zinc sheets, the walls were made of granite (*kalugal*). The kitchen was a separate unit outside the main house. The roof of the kitchen was thatched with *illuk* and straw, had wattle and daub walls. The latrine was located away from the house at the boundary of the garden. The garden in which this house was located was about half an acre in extent, bounded on the west, north and east by the Village Committee Road (*gam sabha para*), separated by a stone fence. The southern boundary was a live fence. On the southeast end of Devalawatta, there was a fountain, which was directed towards a stone spout outside the garden. The residents of Ihala Gammedda obtained their drinking water from this spout. *Dewalewatta* was on a hill slope as was the whole village and therefore part of the land was terraced into three levels below the house. Another part of the land remained unterraced. In front of the entrance to the hall, a large rock slab had been fixed to the ground, stepping on it you could wash your feet.



**Dewalewaththa in 2012. A new house was constructed on the site of the original house.**

The vegetation in the garden consisted of a variety of large trees, such as jak(*kos*), breadfruit (*del*), *kitul*, *gansooriya*, *kududaula*, three varieties of bamboo (*una*) at the hedge on the right, and small trees such as indigenous coffee, araththa (a plant similar to cardamon) *sudu alakola*, *hulankeeriya*, *bussarana*. A number of herbs and weeds grew in the garden. Some of these were used as herbal medicines for various ailments. There were two varieties of citrus trees (*heen narang* and *naththarang*).

Dewalewaththa was accessible from the motorable road through the Village Committee (V.C.) Road (*Gam Sabha Paara*) which begins at the 25<sup>th</sup> mile post and winds down through shrub jungle, touches the village at our house. The V.C. road goes down to join the road from Madugoda to Kiripattiya which runs across the middle of the village. There was a network of foot paths linking the houses and providing access to the V.C. road. You can go out of the front door, turn left and walk along the yard, pass the stile that was in the north and enter the Gamsabha road. You could hear from our house, the sound of a vehicle going towards Kandy passing the Amuthukolahinna junction to the east of the village. There were occasions when as children, we would run up to the road hearing that sound, and board the bus.

We had a few milch cows. A cowshed to accommodate these cows at night was at the top corner of the garden, from where the cows could go out to the shrub jungle for grazing during the day. Milking was done early in the morning so that we had warm milk to drink at breakfast. The milk left over was boiled and preserved in a clay pot to produce curd which was consumed with lunch the following day.



ROAD TO DEWALEWATHTHA FROM THE MAIN ROAD 25<sup>TH</sup> MILE POST.

### Neighbours

Apart from our house there were four others in our immediate neighbourhood. On the left of our house was that of *Yakada Dingiri Banda* and a little beyond was the house of *Nanduwa Duraya* whose wife was *Dingirie Kollamoo*. On the right of our house were two houses that belonged to *Mudiyanse* and *Passi Dingiri Banda*. There was a house immediately above ours belonging to *Ondara Dingiri Banda*. Therefore, we had three Dingiri

*Bandas* as our neighbours. All these families had two or three children each, except *Passi Dingiri Banda*. I cannot remember this family having any children.

## Sporting Activities

In my childhood, I grew up with my sisters under the protection of my mother. As there were no other male children at home, I used to play with Heen Akka, my immediate senior. Something that we did almost daily was to cook rice and curry (with some sand and wild leaves) in coconut shells in a corner of our compound, and pretend to consume the meal served on some large leaves.

Children, both girls and boys, from the neighbouring houses would gather at *udaha gedara* (the house located above our house) for a mock Buddhist procession. The children would pick up some *makul* (a whitish soil) and mixed with some water turn out tiny Buddha images. We marked the eyes with well-matured and blackened hinguru berries. Digging out a hole in the hill slope behind the house, the images would be placed inside the hole imagining it to be the image house (*vihara ge*). The children would then offer flowers and light a *pahana* if a piece of candle could be found.

Drums (*dandu bera*) turned out with pieces of bamboo were hung round their necks with pieces of some creeper (*wel potak*) tied together. The drum was played with two pieces of sticks. Trumpets (*horane*) were turned out of the leaves of *gansooria* (rosewood). Shot guns were turned out of small bamboo sticks. A barrel and an *achchu kura* were inserted into the barrel. *Iththa* or *kosdan* seeds were inserted into the barrel (*achchu bataya*) and pushed with the *achchukura*. When a second seed was inserted and pushed the air between the two seeds, the first seed was pushed forward and out of the barrel with a sound of gunfire. With these improvisations the children went round the house making a noisy procession. They also carried some flowers in the procession and reached the 'image house' crying 'sadhu sadhu'. The bigger the number of children, the greater the noise. As the adults were out in their fields or *henas*, there was none to prevent the children making a big 'racket'.

There were no playgrounds in the village. Therefore, after paddy harvesting, the village children would select an appropriate field with a large terrace (*liyadda*) for playing a game similar to baseball but with local variations (similar to "elle"). The *liyadda* was suitably prepared with seven cleared circles, at equal distances from each other around the terrace. The children divided themselves into two groups of equal number. A ball of old rags covered with the latex of local rubber was used for the game. A stick (*Bolapatta*) of about one and half feet (*riyana*) was used to strike the ball out into the field. The player who hit out the ball, first ran round the playing field and stopped at a cleared circle if he could not run round the full *liyadda*. The player of the opposite team, who collected the ball out in the field would throw it to the centre and if it hit the player who was running round the *liyadda*, he would be run out. So, the play goes on until the last player of the side runs out. The other side would then take over the occupation of the playing *liyadda* and repeat the process until dusk.



Another game was the *gudukeliya*. This required two pieces of stick, one about one and a half feet long and the other about four inches long. An elongated hole was dug in a compound or *liyadda*. The short piece of stick (*kuttiya*) was placed across the hole and the long stick used to shoot the short stick as far away as possible. The short stick was thrown back to the hole, when the player with the long stick hit the *kuttiya* to go as far as possible. This was done thrice and the *kuttiya* shot far, *gudu adeema* was done. Later, two players of the opposite team would hold the *kuttiya* and run to the hole, the other players of the team following them shouting out some slogan.

*Amba kottan paneema* was another game that even a single player could take part in. A square divided into several smaller squares was drawn in the compound and using a mango seed (*amba aetaya* or a piece of tile or pottery-kottama) put into a square, each player jumped from square to square on one foot, kicked out the kottama and return back. *Amba kottan paneema* had two variations and the squares used varied according to each variety.

Chasing arecanuts was another game (*puwak gaseema*). A circular hole about four or five inches deep was made in a compound and the players, standing about five or six feet away from the hole, throw arecanuts into the hole and the order in which each player participates was determined by the distance of each player's arecanut from the hole. The first player carried all the arecanuts of the participants and standing at the appointed place throws the arecanuts at the hole. Any arecanuts that fall into the hole belong to the player. He was shown an arecanut that lies outside the hole, which he had to chase with a wooden *silla* (circular device). If in the process he hits another arecanut he gets out giving way to the next player.

*Aththam keliya* was another game. The participants touch the outstretched hand of one and run away. The first player would chase after the others and if he catches one of them, the player who gets caught had to chase after the others. So, it goes, providing an opportunity for running round and yet avoiding being caught. Whenever I wanted to go home, I would run up the road until I reached home.

Sometimes, at weekends I would with my confidante *Sundaraa*, who lived near our house go out foraging in the shrub jungle and pick edible fruits such as *karolakembellan*, *pera* (*guava*), *del honda*, *karamba*, *geta pooja*, *hinguru*, and *uguessa*. On such trips we saw *wandanawoo* (butterflies that flew in an unbroken row). *Sundara's* mother pounded paddy for us, and she got her breakfast and lunch from our house. Her fee for pounding a bushel of paddy was about a measure of rice. *Sundara* had two older brothers and two younger brothers.

Even though some children would sometimes quarrel with each other while playing, they would not complain to their elders. Even on a rare occasion when such a complaint was made, the elders would not interfere but let the children settle the problem among themselves. This therefore becomes a training ground for tolerance and compromise.

On several occasions my village playmates told me, that there were ghosts (*holman*) in the night on the footpath between our garden and the stream, that flowed below our house. One evening I decided to test the veracity of this story and waited with my playmates till late in the evening. When it was quite dark, I walked home along that path but did not meet any ghosts. However, when I came on to our garden, I saw my mother waiting for me with a

burning firebrand and threatened to burn me if I got late any more. I pleaded with her and promised not to be late in future. I am now certain that she would never have executed her threat, although I was really scared at that time.

### **Food Habits**

My food habits or those of my family were not any different from those in the village (as described in the previous chapter), except that we had a daily supply of milk and curd and we had something to eat in the afternoon (tiffin) at about four o'clock. This would be either *heel bath* (left over from lunch) or some boiled yams such as *bussarana* or *hulankeeriya*. During the rainy season my mother and sisters who were engaged in weaving mats, etc. would turn out pop corn to serve as a bite.

Occasionally, Ape Amma would prepare hoppers (appa) for breakfast. Although the process of making appa was somewhat tedious, mother seemed to have enjoyed it. At the time, appa was cooked in clay pots. A gini kabala was also necessary to keep over the pot. An additional clay pot was used as the gini kabala. I remember that two appa made by mother filled my stomach. Sometimes, *kiri roti* would be prepared for which a special pan with an embedded circle at the centre was required. *Kiri roti* was made with coconut milk or *kiri peni* (coconut milk mixed with sugar syrup). Because of the regular meals with curries such as jak, breadfruit and *polos* combined with curd and fresh milk at breakfast, I was adequately nourished. We did not face any food shortages even during the war. But this situation changed considerably after I left home at the age of twelve years, for my secondary education in a school twenty miles away, where I was boarded in the school hostel.

### **Illnesses**

I do not remember having any major illnesses in my childhood except for a few injuries. If I had a stomach ache (which I frequently had), I would be asked to munch a piece of raw ginger. If this was not effective, Ape' Amma would pound some herbal leaves called '*haal bambiya*', mix its juice with a bit of salt and ask me to drink. This was an extremely bitter juice but very effective. Once a year, worm treatment would be given at the government dispensary resulting in loose motions several times and even passing a worm or two. No lunch was given on such days but a light dinner in the form of well boiled rice with a '*thambun hodi*' of spices, chillies and garlic was given. The drowsiness during the day vanished with this treatment.

Twice prior to school-going age, I had two major injuries. Once when returning home from a hena with Ape' Amma, I slipped down and fell on the stump of a cut down bush injuring a rib. Immediately Ape'amma carried me to the government dispensary where my wound was dressed; it healed after two or three weeks of treatment. A much more serious injury occurred some time later. One afternoon, I accompanied *Dingiri Kollammoo* and her children to Kahatagolle Oya when they went to collect firewood. As the elderly woman was gathering firewood, we were stepping from rock to rock in the stream. I slipped on one because of the dry leaves on it and badly injured the back of my head. When I touched the

back of my head, I felt that one of my fingers could be inserted under the torn skin. Those who were with me rushed me to the government dispensary which was about a mile away and got the wound dressed. My mother who was at home, came rushing to the dispensary as she had got a message sent by the *Dingiri Kollammoo*. It would have taken about two weeks for complete recovery. The scar is still visible and no hair grows on it.

On several occasions when I went bathing at *Mahanawatha*, I slipped on the moss-ridden rock at the spout and suffered head injuries. The treatment was to apply some resin (*dummala*). The wound dried in two or three days.

One's toes can be injured by knocking against the stone steps of the VC road. Two toes in each foot were twice Injured. I would not go for treatment immediately because it hurt when the medicinal powder is applied, but eventually it was necessary to seek treatment when pus began to set in. The wound specialist in our village cleaned the wounds and applied some medicinal powder which caused me extreme pain when the powder was applied but, in a while, it was soothing, drying up the wound in two or three days. Even now the nails of those toes are split.

Once, when I was walking on some dried leaves in the garden a tiger spider attacked one of my feet. I was bed ridden for three days because of the effect of the venom. The snake bite specialist in our village *Kankaanam Maamaa* treated me with a chant (*mathireema*) and some herbal treatment.

I had suffered from measles, chicken pox, mumps and sore eyes in my childhood long before schooling began. Of these the most painful were mumps and sore eyes. One side of the face swells with mumps and feels sprained and highly irritable. The remedy for this was to apply a wet paste of white sandalwood. Sore eyes turn the eyes red, make it difficult to face sunlight, and the eye lids stick together at night during sleep. The eye specialist in the village extracted a juice from some herb and applied it to the eyes causing terrible pain, but in three or four days the eyes returned to normalcy.

Once, a fever epidemic swept through the village, during the world war. I was the first to suffer in our household. After my recovery, my mother fell ill making it difficult for her even to cook some food for me. When she asked me to cook some rice, I took the plunge although I had never cooked anything before. Putting a bit of raw rice into a (pottery utensil) *nembiliya*, I strained the rice to separate the sand from the rice. Then I put the rice in a small clay pot and placed it on the fire for the rice to cook. When I began eating the boiled rice, there were stones in almost every mouthful but because I was so hungry, I continued to eat while separating the stones one by one at the same time. The following day, I strained the rice two or three times. That day I had a good meal without stones. Eventually I also learnt how to cook a curry, and so this emergency helped me to become a reasonably good cook in my adulthood and in later life as well.

My brother who was employed under the *Bintenna Ratemahaththaya* at Mahiyangana had attacks of malaria because it was a malarial area at that time. He would come home whenever he suffered long spells of fever and seek treatment from indigenous physicians. Attacks of malarial fever begin in the afternoons with a shivering cold and rising temperature. He got treatment from a *Siddhayurveda* physician at Teldeniya.

I cannot remember my father suffering from any illness except that once he suffered from a wound at the back of one of his hands. *Ape' amma* constantly suffered from some stomach ailment for which she underwent a surgical operation sometime later but no physical evidence of any illness had been found. One wonders whether it was a type of rheumatism from which she suffered.

Once a pirith chanting by lay devotees was held in our house at *Dewalewatthha*. It was never our practice to resort to such things as devil dancing or the offering of alms to deities. I remember that once a *baliyaga* was held for my maternal grandfather at his house. It involved the turning out of the figure of a diety with some clay and painting it with appropriate colours. The raw material for the paint was found within the village itself by way of juices of some leaves from various trees. The final product was a beautiful balirupa. The figure of the diety was mounted on a reed mat and placed upright against a wall. The *aathuraya* (patient) was made to sit in front of the *balirupa* and *balithiyannas* (*bali* dancers) performed their chanting and dancing throughout the night. The performance ended the following morning.

Although there was no devil dancing in our premises, I have watched one performed on a *kamatha* (threshing floor in the paddy fields). I went to see a *sokari* drama performed in the compound of our immediate neighbour Yakada Dingiri Banda. I also watched a *soovisi* performance in the temple premises.

## **Beyond Village Boundaries**

A person whose life is confined to the bounds of his village would experience new vistas even if he visits an adjoining village. When the exploration is further away, the experience is much more vivid. I can remember many trips outside the village before my departure for secondary education. They included visits to Pallewela, Hunnasgiriya, Thawalantenna, Mahiyangana, Minipe and Wendaruwa. Let me narrate these visits in some chronological order as far as my memory goes.

My earliest visit with my mother was to our relations in the adjoining village of Pallewela, about two miles away. This visit was to the home of Pallewela *Maama* who was the *vel muladeniya* of that village. He had married an aunt from Karalliyadda, a village close to Teldeniya. My mother and Karalliyadde aunt had close affinity and would visit each other frequently. I was taken on such a visit when I was a very young child, perhaps about four years old. I was enamoured of a tiny brass *sembuwa* (receptacle for drinking water) which the aunt had bought for my cousin, Nawaratne Malli who was about one year my junior. I started crying asking for the *sembuwa*, but promising to buy me a new *sembuwa*, the aunt presented me with an enamel mug and pacified me. There were a few other homes in Pallewela of our relations, but they were not as close as Karalliyadde Nanda's family. She had a daughter, Nanda, who in due course married my brother. Another girl of the same age as Nanda *Akka*, who was her aunt, later married an uncle from Bambaradeniya. Those in the

adjoining house of Pallewela Maama, were also our relations. It was *Rambukwelle Ge* that had two adults and two young girls living there.

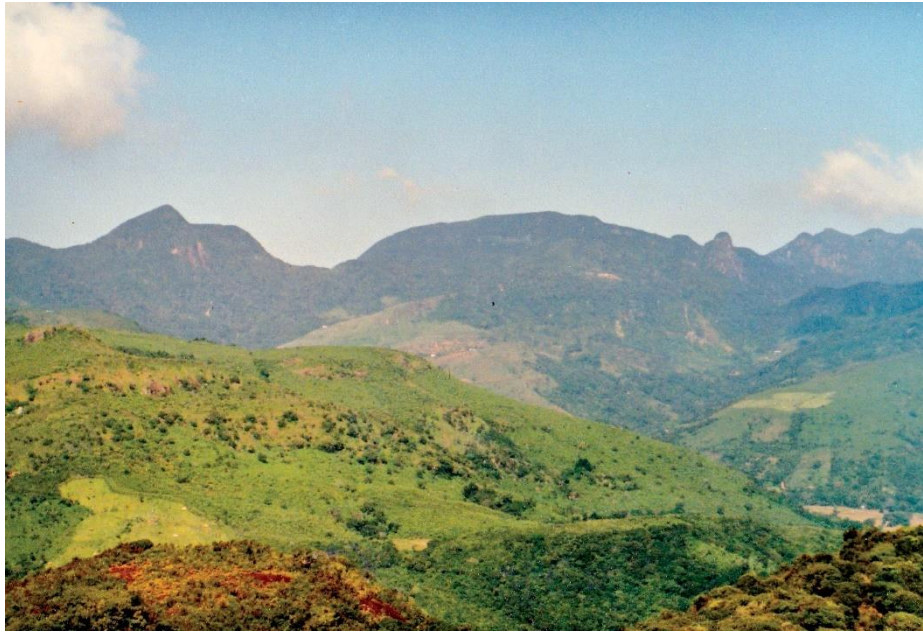
I had occasion to visit the Pallewela temple with my cousin Nawaratne whenever I went to that village. This was the main temple in Uda Dumbara where the chief monk of the area resided. He was from Giddawa and therefore popularly known as 'Giddawa Nayake Hamuduruwo'. Another novice monk also lived in the temple. Giddawa Nayake Hamuduruwo had several pupils. They included *Bopane Sumana*, *Halyale Upatissa*, *Talagune Seelarathana*, *Halyale Indajothi*, and the resident monk at the Rambukwella temple. Some of these monks had some connection with the *Sri Jayawardhanaramaya* at Cotta Road, Borella, and therefore spent some time there when they were studying at various *Pirivenas* in and around Colombo.

During the Second World War, there was a severe drought which affected paddy cultivation in several surrounding villages and therefore the Pallewela temple authorities decided to launch on a '*hathda pirith*', i.e., the chanting of Buddhist stanzas over a period of seven days continuously. I remember to have gone there one night with my parents, when I saw that the Divisional Revenue Officer of Uda Dumbara Mr. D.B. Welagedara also had come to listen to the pirith chanting.

The other visit to a place close by was to Hunnasgiriya which was four miles away from our village. The first such visit was for a hair cut at a barber saloon run by some Tamils. There were no other barber saloons close to our village and also there was a paucity of Sinhala barbers at that time. The charge for a boy's hair cut at that time was fifteen cents and for an adult was twenty-five cents. I went to Hunnasgiriya on Sundays with those going to the Sunday Fair (*sandapola*).

Women in our village went to sandapola taking rice along with them. They carried rice of a bushel of paddy (12 measures) in a wetake box, sold it to Hawadiya Mudalali and got about a rupee. They would then buy betel, arecanut, lime, tobacco (black variety from Jaffna), coconuts, dried fish etc. Every item was priced at a few cents. A coconut was three cents. Therefore, a rupee could buy many essentials. The day I went to sandapola with my mother, I remember she bought me 'Bombai Motai' from a bombai motai seller. This vendor also sold a sweet called 'Seeni Kooru' (sugar skewers). On days when mother went to sandapola, she brought some such sweet for us, so that was a joyful day for us little ones.

After the war when the military camp at Thawalantenna was dismantled, accompanied by a few other boys, I went to see this place on a New Years Day. The distance was about five miles one way. The camp was located on a hillock sloping towards the main road from east to west. As we went on to the top of hillock, we could get a beautiful view of the Bintenna plains with Soraborawewa in the east. Immediately below the hill were the villages of Panawelulla and Thispaha (35<sup>th</sup> mile post) and a little beyond were the eighteen hair pin bends (*Daha Ata Wanguwa*) on the Kandy-Weragantota Road. The flora near the jungle at Tawalantenna was similar to those at Horton Plains. On our return journey, when we reached Madugoda having passed Kovilmada, Maussawa etc, we were utterly exhausted with fatigue, hunger and thirst.



***SLEEPING DUTCHMAN, THE KNUCKLES RANGE AND MEEMURE VILLAGE***

On our way back we got a good view of the Knuckle's Range of mountains which was to the west and north-east of our village. No one had told us earlier about this famous mountain range. On one end of the range was the *Dothalu Gala* and at the other end was the Corbert' Gap, below which was the village of Meemure, five or six miles from this gap and about eight miles from our village. *Nawanagala, Kobonilla, Deanston, Dehigolla and Loolwatta* Estates were on the eastern slope of *Dothalukanda*. Most of them are abandoned now.

In my later life when I owned a motor vehicle, I drove through this range along a jeep track from *Rangala-Thangappuwa* to Corbert's Gap and from there to Loolwatta and Hunnasgiriya. Midway between Thangappuwa and Corbert's Gap we had a breath-taking panoramic view of the Bintenna plains with Soraborawewa in the east. On the way from Loolwatta to Hunnasgiriya one can have a look at the mini-World's End down Deanstone Estate. On this trip, I was accompanied by my wife, Sarath Putha and Neranjala Duwa and their daughter. At the top of the hill, we enjoyed a snack of sandwich toast prepared by Neranjala which was a very welcome refreshment at that hour. This area could easily be developed as a tourist attraction by the Central Provincial Council.

The pilgrimage to Mahiyangana with my mother was my most memorable childhood trip before I started school. The description of the route is as shown in Chapter I, under the sub-heading Religious and Other Beliefs and Practices. The group of devotees who participated in this pilgrimage, started from our village early in the morning reaching *Getalagolla Oya* for lunch. Half way down *Galpadihela* there was an *ambalama* (resting place with a building) with a spring of water and a *pinthaliya* (a large pot to fill water for drinking). I remember my hair had been completely shaven before going on this trip. After worshiping the sacred shrines (stupa, Bodhi tree and Saman dewalaya), my mother took me to see my brother

who was living in an annexe of the Madugalle *Walawwa*. This annexe was also the office of *Bintenne Ratemahaththaya*. We returned to the pilgrims' rest (*pinsalawa*) for the night where dinner was prepared and partaken of. Waking up early the following morning, we returned on empty stomachs reaching home around two in the afternoon. On the way *Ape' Amma* bought me some rusks (*hulan viskothu*) from a wayside boutique at Mahawala or Uduwahinna.

A few years later, I accompanied my father who was taking two buffaloes on this route from our village to Handaganawa in the Minipe colony. We set off early in the morning from the village, reached Getalagolla Oya, had lunch, and then set off again. We travelled on the same track up to Galpadihela after which we had to follow the winding gravel road because the buffaloes would not go down the stone steps of Galpadihela. Eventually we reached Morayaya from where we turned right to proceed to Handaganawa along the gravelled motorable road of the Irrigation Department. As we reached the *havarinuge* it started raining and we had to take shelter under this vast banyan tree for about one hour. After the rain ceased, we covered the rest of the distance of about two miles to reach Allotment No.33 of Distributory Channel 21 of the Minipe Colonization Scheme. I cannot remember how I returned to my village Halyala but it must have been by bus.

Another relatively long journey was when I was about fourteen years of age, with *Kalawewe Massina* (husband of my sister who died in 1945) to Wendaruwa, a remote village about fifteen miles from our village. We travelled by bus from Halyala to Moragahamula, a distance of about eight miles. From there we had to walk along a gravel road climbing up and down a couple of hills for about seven miles, finally reaching our destination at the bottom of one hill and across a perennial stream. We passed the villages Ambale, Dunuwila and passing paddy field of Ihalagammedda of Wendaruwa. The house of our relations was situated in what was called *udagammedda*. From there it was a short distance down to Mahaveli Ganga, the longest river in our country. The Victoria Falls were also close by. We returned home the following morning. The villagers of Wendaruwa appeared to be growers of tobacco in *henas* which made the land infertile requiring them to shift from one tract to another annually.

One evening, accompanied by a few other boys, I went to the Bopana temple in a procession from Madugoda to Bopana to bring Venerable Halyale Sumanatissa to preach a sermon (*banā*). The distance was about four miles. After listening to the sermon, we went round the temple compound where there was a *wankagiriya* (a model of a winding road mentioned in *the Vessanthara Jathakaya*). Towards dawn we were returning home when we saw a white cloth floating in a pool of water in a stream near a culvert. On closer examination we saw that it was the dead body of a blind person known in the area, who had fallen down the culvert into the stream and died. We were extremely scared and ran a distance until we reached a roadside boutique. However, without telling anyone about the dead person we came home as soon as we could.

I used to accompany my mother to the temple in adjoining villages where there was *banā* preaching, but fell asleep even before the sermon began and would wake up only to come back home. Yet this did not prevent me from going to such temples all over again.

## Miscellaneous Events

Once when my brother was home for a holiday, I took one of his sarongs and wearing it over my baby shirt walked out on the road. He appeared from somewhere and saw me wearing an adult's sarong. He asked me whether I liked to wear sarongs. When he came for the New Year holidays, he brought me a tiny sarong and a shirt. I think this was the sarong and shirt I wore on my first day to school in September, 1939. During that time whenever my brother came home for the Sinhalese New Year, he brought new cloths for everyone in the family. He also brought fireworks for the Sinhalese New Year. They were of various sizes and attractively covered, and were manufactured in China. The tiniest was 'heen miris' which had to be ignited all together. The big fireworks were called 'gundu', was about three cents. They were put on the ground and ignited with a firebrand. When a child in the village who could not afford fireworks was given a few, he seemed delighted.

My father cleared a shrub jungle on the hill slope at Ella, above the main road and the irrigation canal from the Kahatagolla Anicut to the paddy fields and did a *hena* cultivation in one season during the war. A horde of monkeys from the adjacent shrub would invade the *hena* and destroy the vegetables. Someone had to be in the *hena* to chase these marauding monkeys away and protect maze, thiyambara, fence gourds, ladies' fingers, mekaral etc cultivated there. I was dead scared of monkeys, particularly the well grown ones as some of them would be aggressive. However, I agreed to go to the *hena* at the weekends and remain there from morning till evening. It provided me an opportunity to watch the various types of vehicles plying up and down the main road which was visible for a distance of about a mile from the vantage point of our *hena*. Anyone coming from home to the *hena* would walk along the canal bund in the fields down below and come up to a culvert of the main road. My sister Heen akka, who brought my lunch, would come to the culvert and crossed the road at a sign given by me from above, that the road was clear of any military vehicles. Lorries of the Weerakoon company that came to collect vegetables were washed at the main channel below our *hena*. A water bowser from the Italian prison camp in Minipe came to this water spot several times a day.

There was a small *wewa* (a water tank) at the top of our tract of fields which filled up particularly during the *Yala* (dry) season when there was little water in the main channel. This provided an opportunity for the village children to resort to a bit of swimming in the afternoon after lunch. One day, as I was going towards the tank, I saw a heap of dry paddy straw on a threshing floor and set fire to it with a fire brand I had with me. As the fire began to spread, I got scared and ran home to hide. However, my father who was on his way to the *hena* together with another adult, saw the fire and inquired from a few children who were near the tank as to who set the fire. The children had told him that I was the culprit. On hearing this my father came home, caught hold of me, tied me to a tamarind tree and with a twig from that tree itself beat me out of my senses. He told my mother not to untie me, so that I had to spend the whole afternoon tied to the tree. When they came back the other adult Passi Dingiri Banda untied me. My father punished me not for setting fire to the paddy straw but because that it would have killed thousands of tiny insects. Although I have no remorse for the punishment, his advice is deeply embedded in me.



As years went by, taking a small mamoty (*udella*), I went to a paddy field that was being ploughed and participated in the field work. My father never asked me to do so but I did so on my own. On a day of threshing paddy in the same field (*Thiththawelulla*), I went in the night to drive the buffaloes round the threshing floor, but as the night wore on and drowsiness set in after dinner, I went to rest on the stacks of straw outside the threshing floor. Off and on I would wake up to gaze at the clear blue sky above. In one such a moment, I saw an arrow-like shaft of light moving extremely fast in the sky above. People called these “*ramasera*” but they were asteroids falling towards the earth.

## Savings Activities

I remember starting to collect one cent copper coins in my pre-school days, my mother and others gave me. The war time one cent coin was about half the thickness of the pre-war coin. Therefore, I liked to collect the pre-war coins. I would not get coins of higher value. One could buy a coconut for three cents. A child could buy a fistful of tiny lozengers (hoonu bittara-tiny sweets like gecko eggs) for one cent. I had a few half-cent coins and a single quarter-cent coin which was a rarity as the quarter-cent coin was not in circulation by that time. Before the war there were five (square coin), ten, twenty-five, fifty cents and one-rupee silver coins. Later, coins mixed with brass came into circulation and a two (smaller) and ten (larger) cent coins with a border also came into circulation.

When I was about nine years old, I resorted to my own means of earning money. One was to grow tomatoes, in a small stretch of terrace adjoining an area where the elders grew vegetables in *puran* fields during the *Yala* season. The tomatoes would be sold to the Marketing Department lorry for a few cents. When I had collected something over twenty-five cents, I went to the Post Office and obtained a Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) pass book in which one could deposit even twenty-five cents at that time.

This was supported by another money-making activity. This was to work in the Nawanagala tea estate, about half an hour climb up Matihakka hill. Some village elders went to work there when they were free between the cultivation seasons. The gang of village workers were taken there by an uncle of ours called *Punchi Banda Kankanama*. When the elders went to work on the tea estate, the adolescent boys also went to work there leaving no one in the village to play with. Therefore, one day I told my mother that I also liked to go to work. The following morning *Ape’amma* prepared a *buthgediya* (packet of rice and curry) for lunch. So, I started going to the tea estate because that would also help me to earn some money to deposit in the POSB pass book. The work given us boys to do, was weeding with a tool called *karandiya* (a flat zinc sheet two inches wide) fixed to a wooden stump of about three or four feet long. This was used for weeding in between tea bushes and under them (*karandigema*). On the first day, I found the work extremely tiring because of lack of experience, but as the days went by, I got used to it and even found it a pleasant experience. As the journey in the morning was slow, the possibility of leech bites was high. Therefore, some applied soap or meemuruvata (juice of refuse of grain) on their legs before

the journey. At lunch time we would gather at a place with flowing clean spring water and have our lunch sharing the curries, so that each one of us had more than the number of curries we took from home. Some had only *kurakkan* (wheat flour flat bread) *roti* for lunch and the others shared their rice and curry with them. By the time we returned home, along the footpath running down the Matihakka hill in the evening, shivering after a refreshing bath at a spout, it was nearly dark and time for dinner. On Sunday mornings we went to *Kankanam maama's* house to get our payment for the week's work. I would have received about two rupees. Since I did not have to give any money for expenses at home, I would deposit the full amount in my pass book.

I could not continue with this programme of savings after I went away for secondary education. But my father took my pass book and deposited money off and on, so that at one stage, I found that there was a sum of three hundred rupees deposited in the pass book. What happened to this money is another story which will be told when we come to the relevant period.

Apart from the opportunity to earn some money, my exposure to the tea plantation served a useful educational purpose. The male estate workers were put on such work as pruning tea bushes and digging up with forks and applying fertilizer. They would also get tracks of the tea estate for weeding on a contractual basis. Some of them would also have a tiny home garden. The female workers plucked the "two leaves and a bud" and tossed them into a basket hung behind with a strap going round the head. The experienced workers were very fast and would pick about 20 to 25 pounds of tea leaves each day. Each track was plucked at least once a week and more frequently during the rainy season.

The green leaves were taken daily by lorry to the Tea Factory at Gallekele Estate owned by the Johnston family. The processing of tea was done in the factory under the supervision of a Tea Maker. The green leaves were allowed to wither on gunny racks inside the factory building. Then they were fed into the grinding machines and then to the driers. The partially processed tea leaves were again put on racks for wind drying. When they were well dried, they were graded, by sending them through a series of strainers. There were several grades of tea such as Orange Pekoe, Broken Orange Pekoe (BOP), BOP Fannings, and Dust. The highest grade would be Silver Tips which fetches very high prices. There was a distinction between low grown, mid grown and high grown teas. Most of this tea was sent in bulk to European markets where they blend it with tea from other countries but sell as "Ceylon Tea" because this was considered to be the best tea in the world.

The plantation workers of Indian origin whose lives were restricted to the estate, spoke a language (Tamil) different from that of the villagers (Sinhala). But when the villagers went to work in the estate and when the plantation workers came to the village for their needs, the initial antipathy disappeared. They began to speak each other's language which facilitated better communication and understanding. Although both communities had caste differences, they were largely ignored in their inter-relationships. The caste-conscious villagers were not prevented from relating to the "estate Tamils." To the villagers all adult plantation workers were '*ayyas*' or '*ammass*' and vice versa. These terms denote a highly respectful form of address. Most villagers who went to work on the estate learnt to speak

Tamil even if it was rudimentary. The plantation workers who visited the village frequently were able to use at least a few words of Sinhala which helped better understanding.

This helped me in my later life to have cordial relations with any Tamil, be they Indian, Jaffna or Batticaloa. Of course, the language of communication then was English rather than Sinhala or Tamil. I met a few students from the plantation community while teaching at the university. They were very fluent in Sinhala so that I had no difficulty in communicating with them. If most of us learn at least to speak each other's language, better understanding is bound to emerge.

## Primary Education

I was introduced to the Sinhala alphabet by my father. A printed book with the alphabet, a slate and a slate pencil had been brought home earlier and at an auspicious time one morning, my father introduced me to the process of reading with the words '*swasthi sidham*' and then the alphabet ending with the words '*siddhi rasthu*'. I never knew what those words meant but understood that they were some important words which were recited on such occasions. I was also made to write a letter or two of the alphabet but cannot remember whether any figures too had to be written.

**Admission to School:** After some time one morning, I accompanied my father to the school in the adjoining village, about two miles away, called Mediwaka to which I was admitted on September 1, 1939, **the day the second world war broke out**. My admission number was 1229. I was six years and five months old. Why I was not admitted to the school in January, (as was the practice at the time) when I was nearly six years of age was difficult to understand. Perhaps it may have been due to the position of some inauspicious constellations. My father was a firm believer in astrology. The school was known as K/Mediwaka grameeya swabasha mixed school, was one of the oldest in the region, built in 1913. My father as well as my elder brother had studied at this school.

The head master (*Loku Mahaththaya*) of the school was a pleasant gentleman by the name of Wimalasena. He would have been about six feet in height and wore what was then called the *Arya Sinhala* suit - a white cloth and banian with a *saatakaya* round the neck. I did not know where he was from, but he lived in the head master's quarters in the school premises during school term.

I was admitted to the Lower Kindergarten (*pahala balansaya*). The class teacher, as far as I remember, was a lady from Godakumbura, an adjoining village and we called her '*Godakumbure Nonamahaththaya*' (Godakumbure Madam). She was a motherly lady who seemed to treat all the children in her class as her own. In fact, her son was also a pupil in the class. He continued with me in all the classes up to Standard Five. I cannot remember who my class teacher was in the Upper Kindergarten.

By the time I was promoted to Standard Two at the end of 1940, a new head master had come to the school. He was our class master in 1941. He was called *Pitawala Mahaththaya* and was a shortish person. He wore his hair long with a tiny knot at the back. His dress was a tweed cloth with a jacket (coat). He wore a pair of spectacles. He had a cane on his table and would use it if any student played truant or misbehaved in class. His grandson also was in the class but that made no difference. One of his sons had joined the military forces during the war and had gone abroad. He was very proud to mention this to us young children. He retired from service after his tenure at this school.

The next Head Master was Mr. J.K.P. Banda, popularly known as *Dambulle Mahaththaya*. He was a complete contrast to the previous head master, and a kind fatherly gentleman.

My class master in Standard Three was Mr. Rambukwella, popularly known as *Rambukwelle Mahaththaya*. He wore a cream cloth, shirt and coat. He administered the five precepts (*pansil*) to the whole school every morning. Although there was a cane on his table as well, he never used it, but would cup his hand and give a noisy whack on the back which would not hurt but would be remembered. He was known for his oratory even at public meetings. Once during the war at a meeting at Madugoda, seeing the bread 'epidemic', he said that hungry children who hitherto asked their mothers for rice would in future ask for bread because of the widespread use of wheat flour and its products.

The subject of English was introduced to us in Standard Three with a text book titled New Method Reader. Mr. K.B. Mediwaka, who lived next door to the school, was our English teacher (*Ingrisi Mahaththaya*) till grade five. His eldest son was in my class in grade five. He used to wear a sarong, shirt and a coat to school, but when he went out, he wore long trousers complete with a polo hat. His competence in English and teaching methodology used, enabled us to write letters and short essays by the time we completed two or three years of study. This helped me to write a letter to a bookshop in Colombo in English and get down a book on Intelligence Test/General Knowledge as an aid to the grade five scholarship exam. All the subjects other than English and handicraft were taught by the class teacher.

The class master in standard four was Mr. Weerasinghe who had come on transfer during the war time. He was a very popular teacher not only because of his pedagogic skill but also because he encouraged children to engage in aesthetic activities such as song and drama. He trained a few of us in a historical drama called *Dhatusena* and staged it at the end of a school term. Over two consecutive years, he trained two of us to participate in the annual malaria week variety show held at the Urugala school. Once we both received a big towel each as a gift for the performance. Urugala (Meda Mahanuwara) was seven miles away. We were taken there by our *Ingrisi Mahaththaya*. We went to Urugala from Hunnasgiriya (three miles) by bus. Among the many things *Weerasinghe Mahaththaya* taught, I remember his advice, that except on slates and books one should not write things here and there. The other was the *introductory sloka* (stanza) from Prathya shatakaya:

<i>Akrodhamarogya jithendriyathwan,</i>	Angerlessness, healthiness, awareness,
<i>Dayakshama sarva janappriyathwan,</i>	Kindness, forgiveness, universal popularity,
<i>Nirlobhi datha bhaya shoka mukthir,</i>	Greedlessness, charitability, fearlessness,
<i>Gnaprabheda dasa lakshananie.</i>	Sorrowlessness, are the ten signs of wisdom.

Our class master in Standard Five was Mr. T.B. Galagoda who had also come on transfer during the war. He was a tall gentleman who wore a white cloth, shirt and a coat to school. He was an extremely competent teacher but a relentless task master. He made no distinction between girls or boys, if they were slack in their studies. There were about ten or twelve students in the class. Some of the students in the class I now remember were Pusaratne, Podimenike and her brother, Punchi Kumarihamy and her brother, and Jayasinghe. Podimenike was the daughter of the head master of the Urugala school at the time. Punchi Kumarihamy was the daughter of the Korale Mahaththaya of the Gampaha West Korale. Jayasinghe was the daughter of the Rest House Keeper at Madugoda. We had joint desks and benches. A box covered with a lid to keep books when closed, served as a writing table. Pusaratne was my classmate sitting next to me, who gave me some competition, as one of us always came first in class at term tests. Eventually, the two of us passed the Fifth Standard Scholarship Examination in 1944 and went to secondary school together in 1945.

There was a weaving section for girls housed in a temporary building. It was headed by an instructress, who also guided male students in other handicrafts such as clay work and rope making from barks.

### **Text books used in Primary School**

Some of the books used in our primary education come to mind. In the lower kindergarden, we used the 'Hodi Potha'. We had two books printed at the Government Press. They were text books for the Upper Kindergarden and Standard Two. Poorer students were given these books free of charge but they had to be returned at the end of the year. Two lessons I can recollect were the stories relating to the crow, fox and piece of cheese and two monkeys. A fox seeing a crow with a piece of cheese perched on a tree, praised how beautiful the crow was and wondered how sweet it would be if it sang a song, whereupon the crow opened its beak to sing, but unfortunately the piece of cheese fell down and the fox ate it. The story in the other book was about two monkeys. One monkey wanted to quarrel with the other and showing a length of stick suggested that the other monkey should say that that stick was his, so that the ensuing argument would lead to the quarrel. But the second monkey replied, "If it is yours you take it" and went away preventing a quarrel.

A geography book by L Mc.D. Robison, who was a Director of Education, was used in Standard Three. A book of verses called '*Mahaveli Nandiya*' authored by two brothers N.B.W. Mediwake and K.B. Mediwake was used in Standard Three. The former was one-time Principal of Vidyartha College in Kandy and became Member of Parliament for the Minipe seat in 1956. He was our "Ingrisi Mahaththaya." He also contested the Minipe seat at the first Parliamentary Election in 1947 but it was Mr. H.B. Rambukwella, one-time *Ratemahaththaya of Uda Dumbara*, who won the seat. *Mahaveli Nandiya* describes the course of the Mahaveli river and had some beautiful descriptions of Victoria and Rantembe Falls, among other things. Another book had a story about Prince Mahinssasa for grade four. I cannot recall the name of that book.

The book of verses (*kavi potha*) for Standard Five was *Subhasithaya* of Alagiyawanna Mukavetithuma. According to Venerable Weragoda Amaramoli Thero, Alagiyawanna was a great pundit who emerged after the Seethawaka period. This author is said to have been a Christian at some stage, but at the time he compiled *Subhasithaya*, he would have most certainly been a Buddhist, as is evident from the first verse itself.

<i>Siyapatha siya siyapatha siya patha</i>	<i>namandu</i>
<i>Satha wetha patha metha sangahasa sevi</i>	<i>pasindu</i>
<i>Avanatha sura matha minithara sara</i>	<i>pubudu</i>
<i>Diguratha'ngili dala pela mok suwanda</i>	<i>randu</i>

*In subsequent years, some of the verses have formed the basis of some songs.*

*Negetat avara giragin dinakara mandala  
Seletat senera pavanin sedetat anula  
Pipetat giri mudun helmali piyumupula  
Boru nettemaya mahatun pavasu tepula*

*The last verse is given below;*

*Niti supasanna sarasavi randi muva tambara  
Kavi gajabinna kala ekasara kesara yura  
Alagiyawanna Mukaveti nameti kiviya  
Yutu pada sanna me kavi keleya amayura*

Although not a prescribed book by any means, having seen an advertisement in a newspaper at the time, I wrote a letter in English to a bookshop in Colombo, W.M.A. Wahid Bros of Dam Steet, to send me by value payable post (VPP), the book titled "*Buddhi Parikshana ha Samanya Deneema*" (Intelligence and General Knowledge). This was an aid to the fifth standard scholarship test. When the book arrived at the Madugoda Sub Post Office, I paid five rupees and rushed home to read it. The book opened up a new area of knowledge which I had not learnt before. Therefore, having quenched my thirst for knowledge in a day or two, I gave this book to my classmate Pusaratne as well. I am sure that in addition to the coaching of our class master, this book also helped me to pass the scholarship examination. When the results of the scholarship examination were out, several teachers congratulated me. Even before, a student of our school had passed the exam and entered the Central College.

My education at Mediwaka School was limited to five years and five months from September 1, 1939 to February 5, 1945. On the day of admission, I went to school with my father, but came back home with other children from our village. I could take one of three routes to the school. The first one was from home on a footpath up to a bridge on the Madugoda-Mediwaka road and from there on the cart track to Kanahampitiya. There were two paths from home to the Kiripattiya Road on either side of the stream, one on the left and the other on the right. The path on the left passed down below Mediriya and by the *Gallenagedara* down to Kiripattiya Road. The path on the right went down the one-time Village Committee Road up to *Pahalagedara* and from there down canal bunds through the

track of fields of *Pahalawela* to Kiripattiya Road. From there one goes up to Kanahampitiya junction to join the road from Madugoda. It was about another half a mile from there to the school.

On my first day to school, I carried a satchel sewn with coarse cloth with a shoulder strap. The satchel contained the book, the slate and an enamel plate. The last item was to have my lunch of rice and dhal curry, which was given free but came to an end with the progress of the war. Lunch was resumed with wheat flour *roti* which was later replaced with a piece of bread. During the time the school meal was discontinued, I took a kurahan rotti from home.

The school was over at 12 noon for the two Kindergarden classes, but classes from Standard Two continued till 2 p.m. with an interval for lunch. On the way back from school, we used to pluck anything edible from the wayside trees. They included *mora, pera, karamba and yabara*, some of which were seasonal. With the onset of the rains, *iramasu* creepers start growing on either side of the cart road. The roots of these creepers are edible and also medicinally efficacious for constipation. If we had any money, we would buy some lozenges or any other edibles from the boutiques of Muslim ladies at Kanahampitiya. There were also two boutiques close to the school. The Wijesekara family opened a boutique at Kanahampitiya. Whatever we bought was shared with the others in our clique. By the time we reached home it would be around three in the afternoon. I would put away my satchel, change my school clothes, and have a meal of rice and curry together with curd which was regularly available for lunch. Then, I would go out to play with other children either in the paddy fields or some compound which was spacious enough. At dusk on the way home, we took a wash at the wayside spout. Dinner would be ready after which I went to sleep. We did no studies at home. Early the following morning I would wake up, have breakfast with a bowl of fresh milk and go to school.

At school, I was fully attentive to and clearly remembered what the teachers taught. The only books I read at home would have been the one I got down from a book shop in Colombo for the scholarship examination and two other books which were at home. One was *Wadan Kavi Potha*, which included *Gana Devi Halla*, a description of the Hindu god of wisdom, and with the Sinhala alphabet and grammar. The second book was *Piruwanaa Poth Wahanse*, the book of Buddhist stanzas, to ward off evil and illness. At the beginning, I found reading these books difficult because of some complicated words and terms but as the years went by, I managed to read them easily. This kindled my desire to read books other than text books.

My mother and sisters, who could not read or write, compelled me to read from *Dhathu Vistharaya* and *Yosodarawatha* at bed time. They had memorized several verses from these books by listening to those who could read. At first, I could not recite them to a melody, but listening to the way mother recited them, I also got used to it. *Dhatuvistaraya* begins as follows;

Sara sankap lakshaya perum pura  
Gora mara dina budu bava lat pavara  
Deera bala gunati apa munindu lovutura  
Nera ath mudun dee vandimi pada sara

The Brahmin named Drona distributed the holy relics, left over after cremation, among eight kings. The locations to which the relics were taken and enshrined in stupas are also described in one verse as follows;

<i>Rajagaha nuwara saha vesali nuwara</i>	<i>ya</i>
<i>Kapilawasthupura saha allakappa</i>	<i>ya</i>
<i>Ramagama wetadeepya pawei</i>	<i>ya</i>
<i>Kusinarapuraya yana menuwara ata</i>	<i>ya.</i>

*Yasodharawatha* is a book of 130 verses describing the thoughts and actions of Queen Yasodhara, Prince Siddhartha's wife.

The first verse is as follows;

Sarasanka kap lakshaya perum pura  
Solosa sankha kap lakshaya perum pura  
Suvisi sankha kap lakshaya perum pura  
Mora pubudu mala lesa budu vu lovtura

A verse which made my very sensitive elders nearly cry was as follows;

<i>Kele thibena koi dewath rasawe</i>	<i>wa</i>
<i>Male bambaru lesa piriwara ethiwe</i>	<i>wa</i>
<i>Auwe thibena res mala aduwe</i>	<i>wa</i>
<i>Gawwen gawwa diwa maliga sede</i>	<i>wa</i>

However, sentimental these verses were, I would fall asleep while reading them. These exercises ended with my departure for secondary education. My sisters also were dispersed in different places. When I came home for school vacations, only my mother, younger sister and a baby niece were at home. The next chapter narrates my adventures during the period of my secondary education.



## Chapter III

### Adolescence

#### Secondary Education

Although, a person of school going age receives knowledge about subjects from school teachers and reading books in the respective classes, he receives understanding of life, society, environment etc from the outside world. Knowledge gained during primary education from the environment was enhanced during secondary education. The description here, includes various experiences I received within the school and outside during the relevant age confines. All these were conducive in shaping my life. By nature, I always liked to earn a good name and it curbed my occasional tendency to be obstinate, so I tried my best to keep concealed and secretive, most of the things that I did impulsively.

During that time, there were many individuals, both big and small, who influenced my thoughts and ambitions. Their love and kindness helped me to continue my formal education without a break. Because of the help I got from genuine and unassuming people, I got the courage to overcome the severe pressure I was subjected to, at the beginning of my secondary education. Perhaps the people mentioned here were unaware of that situation. Had I written this description at the time the incidents took place, it might have been a mere report and not have indicated so clearly, my indebtedness to them. I include my various experiences during my secondary education, because all such things invested me with courage and determination.

My success at the Fifth Standard Scholarship Examination, led to a new chapter in my life at the age of twelve years. I gained admission to Walala Central School established in the Dumbara seat of the State Council, twenty miles (thirty-two kilometres) away from my village. From Kandy, it was about eight and a half miles across Katugastota, Navayalatenna, Polgolla and Madawala. The school was built on a large land cultivated with cocoa, coconut etc which belonged to a Ratwatte Nilame of Galkanda Walawwa, situated on the Walala – Napana road. The Walala Central College has been launched under the auspices of Mr Abeyratne Ratnayaka who represented the Dumbara seat at the State Legislative Assembly. He was a member of the Executive Council under the chair of Minister Dr C.W.W. Kannangara. I was awarded a bursary of Rupees 12 which entitled me to be admitted to the school hostel. This resulted in my being removed from parental care and protection, from a remote genuine rural atmosphere and introduced to a completely new semi-urban environment, where I had to spend time with my peers. The Sinhala medium education in the primary school changed to the English medium at the central school. It also resulted in much more severe competition because all the pupils in my class were of almost equal

ability. I had to change over from a sarong to trousers. All these led to changes in attitude and behaviour which required a long time to adjust to. Let me begin at the beginning of my secondary education.

***Journey to Walala:*** I left home at dawn one day, wearing a pretty little checked sarong and a bluish shirt sewn with a checked cloth of tiny squares and a handkerchief in the breast pocket. An ample spread of coconut oil was necessary to comb my curly hair. Asked to proceed to the main road until my father came, I knelt at my mother's feet to take leave and left home perhaps in the darkest hour before dawn. When I had gone a little distance on the main road my father joined me. He carried the metal trunk which was a valuable possession in our house. It contained my clothes.

We had to walk four miles along the motorable road to get to Hunnasgiriya for the bus. When I felt my hair, it was like a coconut shell. The oil had frozen in the cold and did not return to normalcy until we had travelled some distance in the bus. By the time the bus started, the sun was rising above the eastern hills. Until we got to Urugala passing Galekelle tea estate owned by the Johnston family, it was familiar ground for me as I had gone to the Urugala school a couple of times. Although I did not realize it then, a new vista was opening before me.

As soon as we passed the Urugala township, we saw the Urugala School on the lower side of a paddy field. A little beyond the school on the steep hill slope of Meda Mahanuwara, was a large tamarind tree. The manor of *Udupitiye Rala* is said to have been located there. This was the manor in which the last king of Kandy, Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe, sought refuge when the British soldiers invaded Kandy. Unfortunately, some Sinhala soldiers had taken the King and Queen (and perhaps also the King's retinue) captive and handed them over to the British authorities in Kandy. The King was deported to India and imprisoned in the Fort of Vellore. He is said to have bidden farewell to Mother Lanka in verse from the ship in which he was deported. The last line of the verse was:

*Ithin aayubowan lak mawuni garoo.*

Our bus proceeded for another mile and reached the township of Moragahamula. The sloping hillside road passes the *Guru Oya* bridge, at which the road reaches more or less level ground and runs parallel to *Guru Oya* until it reaches Huluganga. The two streams enter the *Mahaveliganga* at Victoria Falls.

The road takes a right angle turn and follows a stretch of about one mile of straight road which to the bus driver would have been a welcome relief from the winding road through which he was driving all this while. Beyond this stretch of *Siyambalagastenna* is *Rambukwella* village, *Yakamulla* cemetery, and *Teldeniya*. This town stretches on to the two sides of Huluganga. Past the bridge, the bilingual school was on the right and the hospital on the left. Past the post office and the police station behind was the rest house. This police station covered even remote areas like Minipe and Bambiya. We soon reached the Teldeniya bus stand where we waited for some time until the Time Keeper initialed the time sheet. He would not allow a bus to proceed before time even if it had arrived early.

We travelled another three miles through coconut and cocoa plantations passing Wewegama, Anchikade, Mahaberiya Tenne and Galambalama to reach *Digana* at which point the road bifurcates into upper road and lower road. The lower road passes through *Rajawella, Kengalla, Pallekele and Kundasale* before crossing the Mahaveliganga to reach *Tennekumbura* and past Boowelikada to reach Kandy. But we travelled on the upper road which passed through *Malpana, Tenth Mile Post, Madige* and arrived at Menikhinna. The driver and the conductor of the bus had refreshments at a restaurant here and started the onward journey passing Hurikaduwa, in about ten minutes. Within about five minutes (or even less) we arrived at *Walala* and got off to walk to the school. The time would have been around 8.30 in the morning.

### **Walala Central School**

Walking up a minor road to the left of the main road, we reached the main hall of Walala Central School. There were some people who apparently were new students and their parents. We also joined them. Having got the children to stand in a row, a pleasant looking gentleman gave some instructions to the students and also addressed the parents. One thing that the parents appeared to have been told was to pay twenty rupees if a bed was required.

The pleasant looking gentleman was wearing a garment which I had never seen before. He wore what looked like a banian (of the *Arya Sinhala* type) and a sort of verti wrapped round the legs. One end of the verti was inserted in the side pocket of the banian. This gentleman wearing this Bengali dress was the headmaster of the school Mr. Tennakoon Vimalananda. He had lived in Calcutta from his childhood and had adopted the Bengali dress. He was the son of the Village Headman of Napana and was among a number of children taken to India by Anagarika Dharmapala and educated there. A graduate of the University of Calcutta, Mr. Vimalananda appeared to have been appointed Headmaster of Walala Central School by Dr. C.W.W.Kannangara, the Minister of Education at the time, probably on the recommendation of Mr. Abeyratne Ratnayake, member of the State Council for Dumbara.

The main hall of the school accommodated three classes. They were not partitioned. There was an office room adjoining the school hall. The staff quarters attached to the main building had a verandah, a living area, two bed rooms, a small dining area and a kitchen. To the right of the school building was another permanent building at a lower elevation without a cemented floor. This was used as the boys' hostel. A little below this, a temporary building with a roof thatched with coconut branches, housed the kitchen, dining hall and girls' hostel. Below the school building at a lower level, there was another building for the primary school for which there was a separate access road from the main road. The primary school had its own headmaster.

Opposite the school premises on the other side of the road were the houses of the Dambagalla and Herath families. A little further down the road on the same side were the houses of the Weerabahu and Kahawatta families. On the school side of the road two bus drivers, Haramanis and Francis, had their houses and beyond them was another house occupied by the teacher who was the needlework and embroidery instructor. The office of

the Village Committee of Pallegampaha was located on the same side. The VC Chairman at the time was Mr.U.P.Y. Jinadasa of Udagama, Menikhinna. Sometime later he was elected Member of Parliament for Kundasale. Near the school, there were a few families engaged in pottery.

The drinking water was obtained from a well near a kumbuk tree in a tract of paddy fields. Although there was a well in the school premises, its water was not drinkable. Part of the school garden between the primary school and the main road was a cocoa plantation but this was later used as a playground.

**Change of Uniform:** The boys wore short trousers to school. It would have been only a very few of us who wore sarong on the day we went to meet the Head Master. My father went with me to Gunadasa Mudalali's tailoring mart at Menikhinna, and placed an order for a pair of trousers. They were ready in a few days, but it had only one pocket and that too on the right-hand side. I encountered some difficulty because I was left-handed. However now I had a pair of trousers. The change over from sarong to trousers was not difficult but it took several years to adjust to the requirement to speak English fluently. I continued to patronize this tailoring mart which later produced two/three pocket trousers for me. It took several years more for me to wear socks and shoes.

Ours was a mixed school in which most girls wore the half saree (*lamaa saariya*). Those who wore this saree also wore jackets with frills (*mantha*) round their necks that covered their chest. One or two girls wore frocks.

After placing the first order for the trousers we went to the **Ganadevikovila Temple** nearby. The chief incumbent of this temple was Rev. Thalagune Dhammapala. He had two pupils living in the temple. They were Rev.Watapana Somananda and Rev. Thalagune Sumanatissa. *Watapana Hamunduruwo* was a cousin of my father. Therefore, he was my paternal uncle (*Bappa*). I met him for the first time and found him to be a kind and helpful monk. He treated us with some sweetmeats and tea. My father did not as a habit eat or drink anything from temples, but I thoroughly enjoyed the treat. *Somananda Hamuduruwo* also told me to tell him if I wanted anything while at school or at the hostel. This was a kind of God-send for me which I exploited to the hilt, as would be clear presently.

The records still available with me indicate that I was admitted to Walala Central School on March 1, 1945 as *Ekanayake Rajapakse Mudiyanseelage Ariyapala (E.R.M. Ariyapala)*. My Admission No. was 222. There were two classes, 6A and 6B. The first batch of students admitted to the school in 1944 were in 6A. I belonged to the second batch admitted in 1945 and was assigned to 6B. Some of the pupils who were in this class with me were Pusaratne from my school at Mediwake, Menikhamy and another pupil from Dagewilla School, Wije Banda and Weerasekara (female) from Hanwella School, Sugathapala from Polgolla, Premadasa from Yatirawana and Katunathilake from Dambarawa. They were all bursary holders and hostellers. The day scholars included Y.M.W. Badara and Y.M. Tilakaratne from Hurikaduwa, Ekanayake and Ranatunga from Walala, and Ranatunga from Udagama. There were numerous other boys and girls whose names I cannot recall now after sixty-seven years.

On my first day at school, I went to the male hostel with my steel trunk which contained my clothes. I was entitled to a bed because my father had paid for it. It had been turned out of some cheap (*gini sapu*) timber and planks. I had my own mat and, pillow. I had to buy a bucket for washing and bathing. Since it was still wartime, buckets were turned out of biscuit tin and other such material and therefore they were not heavy enough to draw water from a well. I was used to bathing and washing at spouts and it took some effort to get used to drawing water from wells.

The hostellers were provided with free meals. We were given flat bread (*roti*) of wheat flour for breakfast, some rice and curry for lunch and roti or regular bread for dinner. We went to the dining hall (open verandah) of the girl's hostel for meals. We were seated cross-legged on mats with our backs leaning against the walls. Two girls who appeared to be a little older than others served the meals. I remember them to be Sumana Wijesinghe and Beatrice Silva. The warden of the girl's hostel Madam Kathiriarachchi supervised the serving of food. Occasionally the Head Master would also visit us at meal times.

World War 11 was still raging and therefore food shortages continued. We handed over our ration books to the school to enable them to purchase the items issued on ration at controlled prices. The items available on ration were rice, wheat flour, and sugar. Because a bursary holder received only a monthly allowance of Rupees 12 at that time, it was not possible to buy some of these items at controlled prices. I began to feel the pangs of hunger after I became a hosteller. At home I never experienced it.

### **Ganadevikovila Temple and its Environs**

After a few days in the hostel, I ran away to Ganadevikovila Temple immediately after school at three in the afternoon, and did not come back for the night. At the temple the monks do not take any solid food for the night. Somananda Hamuduruwo ensured that I would get an adequate quantity of food even though it would not be rice and curry. I went back to school the following morning and repeated the process in the afternoon. I was violating the rules by leaving the hostel without permission, but this was the only solution I saw at the time to overcome the pangs of hunger as well as isolation, I felt living away from my mother and sisters. I had found a substitute for them in some neighbours of the temple. I had not yet adjusted myself to living with schoolmates of my age in the hostel.

I had the freedom to visit neighbouring houses when I went to the temple. The house of *Gamagedara Vedamahaththaya* (a native physician) was similar to my own. The *Vedamahaththaya's* wife was like my mother. There were also two sisters. '*Sudu Akka*' was particularly kind to me. There were two girls who were my classmates. One was *Heen Menika*, the daughter of *Vedamahaththaya*. The other was *Weerasekara* from Thalagune, a village adjoining ours, a relation of Rev. Thalagune Sumanatissa of Ganadevikovila temple.

Nearby was the house of the *Kapumahaththaya of Gana Devi Kovila* adjoining the temple. He had a son of my age. His name also was *Weerasekara*. He also had two sisters. All of them were very kind to me, mainly because I was the nephew of *Rev. Somananda*, but perhaps also because I was a pleasant young boy. They called me '*malli*' (younger brother).

The Sanitary Inspector of the area lived in a house nearby across the main road. His wife was alone during the day. They had a gramophone and some records. I went there to listen to

songs played on the gramophone. Although they were Tamil songs the meaning of which I did not understand, I developed a liking for them. The lady of the house also treated me like her own brother. Off and on she would give me a cup of tea. However, we had very little communication with each other because of the language barrier. The smattering of Tamil I had picked up at Nawaganala Estate helped a bit.

The love and kindness of these simple people helped me a great deal in getting over my feeling of loneliness and isolation having left my mother and sisters. I suffered from a severe attack of tonsillitis (*semgedi*) at this time and was treated by the *Gamagedara Vedamahaththaya*. He kept me in their house until I recovered, and was nursed by the mother and sister (*Sudu Akka*) of the house. *Sudu akka* also bathed me after I had recovered.

The Hostel Warden who came to know that I was not staying at the hostel stopped me from going away and from then onwards I stayed in the hostel and gradually got used to the environment. Once in a way I went to the temple at weekends obtaining permission to go to Menikhinna. If it was the forenoon, I would get a good meal of rice and curry (*dane*). Earlier, when I went to the temple for the night what I got for dinner was some bread. So, there was no difference, as far as dinner was concerned, whether I stayed in the hostel or not. When I stopped going to the temple my visits to the neighbouring houses also came to an end.

The solution to my incessant hunger was to have some tea with a bun or bread from a wayside boutique near the school. I did not have the money for this everyday. So, I resorted to giving whatever money I brought from home to the boutique keeper in advance. He would set this off against whatever was due from me each time I had tea. By the time my deposit was over, the boutique keeper found me to be a good customer and therefore was prepared to give things on credit. As long as I settled my dues regularly, I was considered to be a good customer. Because I had found this solution to the problem of my hunger there was no need to go to the temple.

I had to go home at least once a month to bring the money to settle my account with the boutique keeper. I would go in the afternoon by the Madugoda bus, which reached the place where I had to get off between 5.30 or 6.00 in the evening. On some days it would be even 7.00 p.m. either because of any changes in the time table or in the seasons or both. On such days, I had to walk down the footpath for about quarter of a mile to reach home. Midway between the main road and home there was an elongated rock about ten feet high. This place was used occasionally by the village devil dancers for their performances. Thus, there was a belief that ghosts frequented this place and no one would pass it alone, particularly in the night. I was aware of this story but I had no alternative but to walk past this place. My earlier experience on the footpath below our house gave me a feeling that there were no ghosts. Yet my increasing palpitation, did not go down until I reached home. I had no such problems on my subsequent trips.

I did not ask Rev.Somananda for any money because I felt he did not have any money to spare. Whenever I wanted some money, I went to *Dharmadveepa Pirivena at Wattegama*. That is another story for later in this chapter.

## Teaching Staff

When I entered Walala Central School in 1945, the headmaster was Mr. Tennakoon Vimalananda. He was married and was living in his house at Napana, which was about two miles from school. He used to walk the distance to and from school. He spent some nights at the school quarters. On such days he would wake the male hostellers very early in the morning and get them to run for about two miles. The school garden had cocoa and coconut trees on either side of the driveway to the main road. Therefore, it was pretty dark here early in the morning. I would hide in the shade of this darkness and join the others when they came back running so that no one knew whether or not I had run the whole distance.

Reverend Halayale Sumanatissa, the Principal of Dharmadweep Pirivena at Wattegama, was my maternal uncle. One day he came to the school accompanied by Rev. Somananda and met Mr. Vimalananda, presumably to tell him about me and our relationship. Consequently, Mr. Vimalananda would take me home occasionally. There were a number of girls and boys putting up at his house; they were probably his relations. Seated around a table these children were engaged in their studies before dinner. I was asked to do the same. Early the following morning he would wake me up and ask me to accompany him to the bathing well at the edge of the paddy fields. He would ask me also to take a bath after he had done so. Although it was pretty cold, I dared not refuse to do so. It was a blessing in disguise as the wells close to the school were running dry.

During Mr. Vimalananda's time, he had adopted a song beginning with the words, "*Jana sema mana adipathiyeni thuthiwe' rakinu menavi Lakmatha*" as the school song which we sang daily at morning assembly. The tune of this song was based on Ravindranath Tagore's song "*Jana gana mana adhi nayake ja he' bharatha bhagya bhidatha*", which was later adopted as the national anthem of India. The school song tried to inculcate in our young minds, the importance of amity between the various communities such as "*bhauddha, hindu, cristiani, mohammath*" that lived in this island. A national anthem for this country had not yet been adopted.

In 1945, there were eight members of staff. Apart from the Headmaster the others were Mr. P.I. Perera, Mr. M.C. Cabraal, Mr. H.B. Pethiyagoda, Mr. S. Malagamma, Mr. Fernando, Mrs. B.M. Tennakoon and Miss Kathiriarachchi. Messrs Pethiyagoda, Malagamma, and Fernando were weaving instructor, dancing instructor and handicraft instructor respectively. Although weaving was taught to both male and female pupils, needle work and embroidery were taught only to girls which was a bit of a contradiction considering that the instructor was himself a male. Also, dancing at that stage was confined to boys. Mr. Malagamma tried his best to kindle some aesthetic values in us by training us to recite the *vannams* such as *naiadi, gajaga, thuranga, and hanuma vannams* of the eighteen *vannams* while making the relevant movements of hands, legs and the body to depict the various dances.

Mrs. Tennakoon was our class teacher in Grade 6B. She also taught us Sinhala language and literature. The two books for prose and verse were *Ummagga Jathakaya and Dahamsonda Kavya*. Both were jathaka stories, one to demonstrate the wisdom and the other the sacrifice of *bodisathva* (the one who was aspiring to Buddhahood). The text book for history was a book by G.C. Mendis. This subject was taught by the headmaster himself. Apart from

Sinhala, all the other subjects were taught in the English medium. For us who had been taught in the Sinhala medium, this change of the medium resulted in our being similar to pigeons who are turned and twisted before they are thrown out to fly. We were thoroughly confused. The first year was devoted to parrot-like learning without anything being absorbed. Therefore, I cannot even remember who taught us the other subjects. The major difference was that in the primary school, all the subjects were taught by the class teacher while they were taught by different teachers at the central school.

Mr. Vimalananda left us in 1946 to join the University of Ceylon as a lecturer. Later in Colombo, I met him several times and he always emphasized the need to pursue higher education. This advice I think kept a light kindled in me to seek higher education by whatever means possible.

Mr. E.St.C. Rode, a Burgher gentleman and an Oxford graduate with a Master's degree in English, succeeded Mr. Vimalananda as the second Head Master of our school. Messrs P.I. Perera and M.C. Cabral were transferred and a lady teacher joined our school. She appeared to be a ferocious person. One Mr. P.A. Perera came on transfer to the school, and was in charge of the hostel as well. He was from Talangama and his father was said to be a native physician. I remember going to that native physician's house known as '*Siri Veda Paya*' with a schoolmate of mine, Giddawa Abeyratna (who was serving as a jailer in the Welikada Prison), when we were working in Colombo, but I cannot now locate the place. In one class, Mr. Perera taught us a subject called Rural Science or General Science. That was for me an introduction to Botany because one lesson was about *hibiscus rosa sinensis (vada mala)*. Mr Perera continued his studies privately while at Walala and passed the Intermediate Examination of the London University and was preparing to sit the degree examination.

Mr. Rode was said to have been at St Antony's College, Kandy, before coming to Walala. By appearance as well as by action, he was a saintly and fatherly person. He lived at the *Galkande Walawwe* with his family and walked to school daily, a distance of about a mile. *Galkanda Walawwe* was a large manor amidst a cocoa plantation on the road from Walala to Napana and was said to have been owned by a Ratwatte Nilame but later acquired by Mr Henry, the owner of the Kandy Town Bus Service. The girls' hostel was also housed in Galkande Walawwe because it was a large building. I had gone to this manor on some errands of Mr. P.A. Perera, when he was our Warden.

It was Mr Rode who requested the Buddhist monk at the Walala temple which was adjacent to the school to administer *pansil* (five precepts) on Mondays at morning assembly. The pupils were encouraged to participate in sports. Girls were trained in netball. The members of the school volleyball team were given a supplementary meal of bread with onion sambol for some additional nourishment. Hostellers whose rice meal for lunch was inadequate were given an additional quarter loaf of bread if anyone wanted it. When the construction of the playground was completed, football was introduced. Cricketing material was brought to the school but there was no coach.

Miss D. Bowling who was a teacher at the time trained students to participate in inter-house sports meets, and took the students to Bogambara Grounds in Kandy to participate in the annual provincial sports meet and physical training display. Three houses called Ratnayake,



Kannangara and Sandeman were started. The house colours were maroon, blue and green respectively. Sandeman House was later renamed Nugawela House. I was in the Sandeman/Nugawela house and competed in the then prevalent under sixteen 100 and 220 yards events and came first in the school competition. Appuhamy was the winner in the under nineteen category. He joined the Ceylon Army established in 1949 and was in the first batch of soldiers. One day he came to the school in uniform and saluted Major Henry de Silva who was our class master at the time, who had been in active service during World War 11.

### **New Buildings, Classrooms and Teachers**

In 1946, I was promoted to grade seven and was in 7B, while those who were in 6A were promoted to Grade 7A. There was also a movement of students seeking admission to higher classes such as the Senior School Certificate (SSC) Examination class. This increase in the number of classes and the number of students necessitated the construction of new buildings. These buildings had cemented floors, half-walls constructed with planks and roofs thatched with cadjans. Thus, a temporary building that was so constructed accommodated Grades 7A and 7B in 1946. Another temporary building was constructed to accommodate three classes in 1947. In that year I was in Grade 8B.

The master in charge of our class, 7B, was Mr D.C. Mayadunna. He resided in a room in the staff quarters and occasionally went home to Alawathugoda for weekends. He taught us Arithmetic. By this time, a separate building had been constructed for carpentry. Mr Liyanage was the carpentry instructor. One Miss Rupasinghe came on transfer as an additional weaving instructress. The dancing instructor Mr. Malagammana went on transfer and was replaced by Mr. Sundarasena. I remember a group of girls trained by him going to Radio Ceylon to broadcast a few folk songs.

With the transfers and additions of teachers to the staff, Messrs. Jayasekara, Gunawardhane, Ranhotty, Kumarasinghe, Manthilake, Senevirate, Herath, Henry de Silva, and Kulasekara came on transfer. A science graduate, Mr H.R.P. Rupasinghe and an untrained teacher, Mr. Wijeratne also came to the school. Mr. M.C. Ahmed from Batticaloa succeeded Mr. P.A. Perera as our Hostel Warden. He was in turn succeeded by Mr. Bandaranayake from Kurunegala. He started the Junior Cadet platoon, and was its commanding officer.

I still remember a history lesson taught by Mr. Jayasekera in Grade 8. One day he drew on the blackboard matchstick warriors (*ginikuru minissu*) of Prince Mugalan encircling Sigiriya and explained that lesson to us. Unfortunately for us, he did not continue in our school but went as a lecturer of a training college. I thought that he was a very efficient teacher.

Mr. Gunawardhane who came on transfer from the Yatirawana School, a tallish gentleman, was our Sinhala teacher. A book used for prose was '*Katha Tharanganie*' which had a character called "*Vethaalayaa*." On seeing Mr. Gunawardhane approaching the class, some students would remark that "*Vethaalayaa*" was coming, which was a reference to Mr. Gunawardhane, but he did not know this. I did not like this, because I thought that we students should not spin jokes about teachers.

Afterwards, it was Mr. Manthilake who was our Sinhala teacher. He continued to do so even in our H.S.C and U.E (Higher School Certificate and University Entrance) class. He used *Baddegama* as a text book. He was from the village of Kengalla and was an uncle of Jayasinghe who was our Senior Prefect. Mr. Manthilake came to school on a push bicycle. I remember going to his house with Mr.P.A. Perera, our Warden. We walked the whole distance of about four miles each way from the hostel to Kengalla. Mr. Manthilake was the Principal of Walala A. Ratnayake Central College in 1966 when a few of us met him to form a past pupil's association. The Central Province Provincial Councillor Ms. Chitra Manthilake is his daughter.

Mr.C. Ranhotty lived in a house near the church at Trincomalee Street (now D.S. Senanayake Vidiya) in Kandy and travelled by bus to and from school. The one-way bus fare was 25 cents. When he came to school, he wore a full suit complete with tie and felt hat. He was the English teacher for several classes. Once he trained a few of us for an item in a term-end variety show, and the line I had say was 'Where the bee sucks there suck I'. Some time later, Mr. Ranhotty rented out a house belonging to Mr. Herath just opposite the school. He was also the Acting Headmaster for some time during that period.

Mr. Kumarasinghe was our Mathematics teacher after Mr. Mayadunne. Three text books for Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry used were those by Hall & Stevenson. Mr. Kumarasinghe was the only person who wore bush coat and trousers that was becoming fashionable at that time. He was boarded in the large bungalow of *Jayasekara Mudalalie of Atekanuwa* (8<sup>th</sup> mile post).

Mr. Herath also was boarded in that house. He taught us Civics, using a book by S.F.de Silva, who was one time Principal of Maharagama Training College and later Director of Education. Off and on, Mr. Herath demonstrated some aggressive behaviour at school. They were considered to be reactions against injustice; though some thought that he had some mental aberrations. However, I thought that he was an efficient teacher. Mr. Kulasekara, who was a shortish person, came to school on a push bicycle from Katugastota. He was in charge of the sports section when I was in the SSC class and so did not have occasion to interact with him. Mr. Seneviratne of Hurikaduwa also came to school on a push bicycle. Messrs. Seneviratne and Wijeratne did not teach us any subject, but they were exemplary teachers who maintained good relations with us.

Besides the Principal, the only graduate teacher was Mr. H.R.P. Rupasinghe. He was a science graduate. Some equipment necessary to build up a science laboratory started arriving at the school but they were not of any use to us as we did not study any Science subjects. The only contact we had with any chemicals was the sight of a strange light from some exposed phosphorus at night in the school compound. A parcel which contained phosphorus had been damaged spilling some on the school compound.

Major Henry de Zylva was a teacher who had a lasting influence on me during the last two years of my school career. He came to our school after the Second World War and was an exemplary teacher. He was about six feet tall and had an impressive personality. He wore a pure white shirt, trousers and a coat. For most of us he was a role model. We tried to

imitate his handwriting, some with success, parted our hair from a side and combed it flat. He was boarded at the manor of *Halangoda Korale Mahaththaya*. This was on the Walala-Wavinna road. Usually, he walked, but would use his car on a rainy day. He had a pre-war Standard Eight car, but when the import of cars began after the war, he bought a brand-new Ford Prefect car. The price of these cars would have been about six or seven thousand rupees (six or seven hundred pounds sterling). He was a bachelor but eventually married Miss Ratwatte who was the Warden of the girls' hostel.

**Excursion to Colombo:** The first educational trip ever undertaken by us was also during the time of Mr. Rode. It was an excursion to Colombo sometime when Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara was still the Minister of Education, that was, before the General Election of 1947. In readiness for this trip, I requested my friend Appuhamy to buy me a pair of shoes. It was a dark tan pair bought for Rupees ten from Fancy House in Kandy. A pair of white socks had also been bought. Having got up early in the morning, I was walking up and down the school compound to practice wearing shoes for the first time in my life. The special bus in which we travelled belonged to P.S. Bus Company. I had not travelled beyond Kandy before this, so that it was a new world to which we were going. After passing Dawson Tower in Kadugannawa, we were descending fast towards the low country leaving behind the Kadugannawa hills. We did not know then that we had to pass *Mawanella, Kegalle, Tholangamuwa, Warakapola, Pasyala, Nittambuwa, Yakkala, Kadawatha and Peliyadoga* before we reached Colombo. We went first to the Dehiwala Zoological Gardens. Most of the animals, birds and serpents I had not seen before. The jabbering parakeets, growling tigers and lions, gibbons and babbons, the giraffe, zebra, camel, and hippopotamus were some of the animals we saw. There were also a variety of snakes such as cobras and pythons. From the zoo, we went into a garden by the sea side to have our lunch. I had not seen the sea before this, as had many in our group.

Our next stop was Lake House where the newspapers - Daily News, Sunday Observer, Dinamina and Silumina were published. A new type of machine to compose the pages, linotype, had just been introduced and an operator demonstrated to us how the machine worked. He operated something like a typewriter key board and the machine produced strips of lead with words or sentences that the operator had typed. As we came out of Lake House, we found a number of vendors around the bus trying to sell us ice chocs and ice cream perhaps because it was a very warm day.

By this time, it was late afternoon when we were taken to the State Council premises. We went up to a visitor's gallery from where we could get a good view of the well of the House. At that time the member who was speaking was Mr.G.G. Ponnambalam. He was presumably an opposition member and we saw a few ministers like Messrs D.S. Senanayake, S.W.R.D. Badaranayaike and Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara in the front benches on the other side. Having come out of the building, we went on to the steps facing the sea outside the House. Dr. Kannangara, Minister of Education, stood with us for a photograph. By then it was slightly dark and there was a drizzle. We soon got on our bus and started our return journey. It was pretty late when we reached the school. Although I was physically tired, there was a feeling of satisfaction that I had gone to the capital city of Ceylon and seen some important places in Colombo. Miss Bowling appeared to be the live-wire behind this successful excursion.

## **1947: Some Important Events**

Some important events occurred in 1947. Some of them such as the general strike and the floods had an immediate impact on our lives but others such as the Education Ordinance passed by the State Council and the general election had a slow but lasting influence on the lives of the people as well as the country.

## **1947 Floods**

The major floods that occurred in August, 1947 caused extensive damage in areas in and around Kandy. The rain that fell continuously over several days resulted in the Mahaveli over-flowing in places such as Peradeniya, Getambe and Katugastota and causing extensive damage. The railway bridges at Peradeniya and Katugastota were damaged. The monk at Getambe temple was said to have saved his life by climbing up the Bo tree there. School activities were completely disrupted and we, as students, were left to ourselves. A few of us decided to go towards Nawayatenna to see the floods of Mahaveliganga. We walked along the main road passing through Madawala and the Polgolla Training College. When we reached the bend beyond the Cooperative School, we found that the road towards Nawayatenna was completely submerged and impassable. The flood waters of the river which appeared to flow at a very high speed caused some fear in us and we therefore decided to return. We had walked about four miles to Polgolla and our walk back was extremely tiring. The only saving factor was that because of the cloudy skies, we did not have to walk in the scorching sun. We were back at school for lunch.

## **The Twenty-mile Walk Home**

The beginning of school holidays, during the period of not only the floods but also of a general strike in the country created a problem for us. In the absence of any motor transport our problem was how we could go home. I was from a village twenty miles away. There were several others who lived even further away. The answer was for us to walk the whole distance. Therefore a few of us in the hostel decided to embark on this adventure.

The heavy rains had given way to intermittent drizzles. We started the journey after lunch on the day the holidays began. The group included Godakumbure Jayathilaka, Mediwake Pusaratne, N.B.A. Mediwake, Halyale Karunadhipathy and myself, all hostelers. I cannot remember if anyone else joined us. We were wearing shorts and shirts and carried small parcels of a sarong and a shirt each. It would have been around two in the afternoon when we started. There was no one to stop us or advise us.

In a short while we passed Menikhinna, and in about another fifteen to twenty minutes we passed Tenth Mile Post and Malpana. The latter had a couple of lime kilns. Beyond that was the Rajawella cocoa plantation which produced fine cocoa beans, a basic ingredient for

chocolate production. When we reached Digana, we would have spent about one hour on the road. The stretch of road between Digana and Teldeniya passed through Gal *Ambalama*, *Mahaberiya Tenna*, *Anchikade* and *Wewegama*.

At Teldeniya we passed the bus stand, police station, post office, hospital and school and crossed the Huluganga on the bridge to reach the turn off from Rangala Road to Weragantota Road which was a right-angled turn. After travelling about half a mile, we passed the Yakamulla cemetery beyond which was the Rambukwella village and its temple. A little ahead was a long stretch of more or less straight and gradually descending Siyambalagastenne road. Darkness was setting in as we approached the confluence of Guru Oya and Huluganga. Close by on the Guru Oya was an anicut across it.

Now we were on the road to Moragahamula about four miles away. We approached a culvert which was said to be haunted by a ghost (*yakshanee*) called **Pokutie**. The story was that anyone walking along this road would be accosted by a beautiful maid carrying a baby who requests the traveller to hold the baby until she tightens the cloth she was wearing. She would feign that her cloth was loose and falling down. If the traveller sympathised, he would fall prey to the demon. We knew this story and therefore made a bit of a noise as we approached the culvert. We found that there was no such devil perhaps because there were four of us even though we were adolescents.

However, we felt very relieved not to find a ghost; and having regained our spirits each one of us related some yarn or other and proceeded ahead passing the footpath to Wegala and the Hindu kovil near the Guru Oya bridge. So far, we had travelled on more or less level ground but after passing the bridge the road began ascending towards Moragahamula, Urugala and Hunnasgiriya. In less than half a mile we reached Moragahamula, a townlet of about ten boutiques on either side of the road, where the establishment of M.K.M. Aliyar *Mudalali* was a leading organization with a few lorries. But all these were closed for the day by the time we arrived there. Therefore, we proceeded up to Udatenne and then to Urugala. By now we had walked nearly twelve miles from Walala and six miles from Teldeniya more or less in the dark and were tired and hungry. But we did not have anyone known to us at Urugala. None of us would have had much money to have a good meal. Of course, we did not care to ask each other how much money each one had.

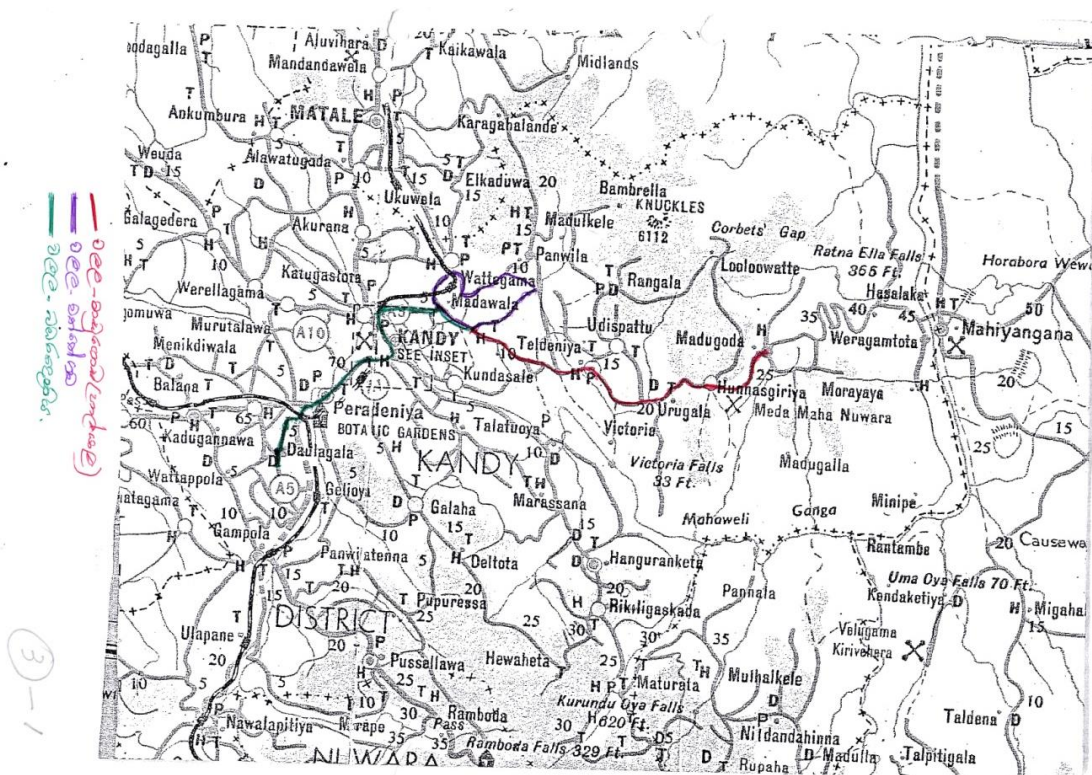
Therefore, we proceeded on and soon passed an elbow bend at which there was a gravel road to Dodangolla Estate. After about another one mile we came to the double elbow bends and a little beyond that was the turn off to the village of Mangoda and a tea estate. About half a mile from there was the Galekele Estate. The proprietor's bungalow was on the right up a hillock and right opposite it across the road on our left was the minor road leading to the tea factory. Immediately above the factory was the tea maker's bungalow. The tea maker at that time was the father of one of our school mates. We did not know this nor did we know him. Therefore, the idea of seeking any help from him did not strike us at all.

Another half a mile ahead was one of the three bazaars of Hunnasgiriya. The Sunday Fair was held at this place. There were a few boutiques including restaurants but they were all closed for the day. In our onward journey we came to the middle bazaar in Hunnasgiriya to find the situation no different from the others. The wholesale depot owned by the brother

of M.K.M. Aliyar of Moragahamula, M.K. Muthalib was located here. Muthalib Mudalali was the Managing Director of the Silverline Bus Company which ran omnibuses on this route. He also had a few lorries stationed at Hunnasgiriya.

When we went to the third bazaar in Hunnasgiriya located at what was called *Kandakepoothera* (place where the hill was cut down to construct the road), there was a solitary restaurant that was still open. The time would have been around nine in the evening. The owner (co-owner) of this restaurant which was called Dumbara Hotel was at the cashier's counter. We explained our plight to him. He agreed to accommodate us for the night and arranged some camp beds upstairs for us to sleep. We were grateful to him, had something to eat for dinner, and lay down to sleep. The person who helped us was *Heen Banda Mudalali of Denapitiya*.

We woke up early the following morning to complete our journey. I had to cover four miles to reach home. Turning off from the main road at the 25<sup>th</sup> mile post, we went down the V.C Road and reached my house in less than five minutes. Karunadhipathy had to go to another hamlet in the village down a foot path for a distance of about half a mile. The other two of my school mates, Pusaratne and Mediwake, had to go about another one and a half miles to reach their homes in the adjoining village of Mediwake. I would have covered a twenty-mile stretch of road on foot albeit with a night's rest on the way. For others it was a little more. All in all, it was an experience for us lads of fifteen years of age never to forget.



**The Twenty-mile Trek from Walala to Madugoda**

## 1947 General Election

Ceylon was governed under the Donoughmore Constitution from 1931. The Governor was the representative of the British crown. There were three officers of the state in charge of the main functions of government. They were the Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and the Legal Secretary. The State Council had 54 members: five appointed members and the other forty-nine representatives elected by the people of territorial electorates in Ceylon. These members were assigned to seven executive committees. Their chairmen were designated Ministers. These committees were for (1) Agriculture and Lands, (2) Local Government, (3) Transport and Works, (4) Labour, Industry and Commerce, (5) Health, (6) Education and (7) Home Affairs. The Minister of Education was Mr. C.W.W. Kannangara, who held this portfolio from 1931 to 1947. All other ministers except of Agriculture and Lands changed from time to time during this period.

With the agitation for constitutional reforms, a commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Soulbury. That commission, recommended the reforms that were said to have been embodied in the Soulbury Constitution. It was the view of some that this constitution was in fact drafted by Sir Ivor Jennings, the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon. The new constitution, provided for the establishment of a Parliament to replace the State Council.

Parliament was to consist of two Houses: The Upper House called the Senate with 30 members and the Lower House called the House of Representatives with 101 members. Of this number, 95 members were to be elected by the people from 89 territorial electorates. Some of these were multi-member electorates such as Colombo Central, Wellawatta-Mount Lavinia, Beruwala, Ambalangoda-Balapitiya, and Balangoda. Walala Central School was situated in the Wattegama electorate. Some of the electorates adjoining Wattegama were Minipe, Akurana, Galagedara, and Kandy.

It was to elect members for the House of Representatives that an election was held in September-October, 1947. Mr. Abeyratne Ratnayake, the member of the State Council for Dumbara contested the Wattegama seat. He was instrumental in the establishment of Walala Central School. He contested as a member of the United National Party. The leader of that party was Mr. D.S. Senanyake. All the ministers in the State Council contested as members of the United National Party. The Minipe seat was contested by H.B. Rambukwella Dissawe, the former Ratemahaththaya of Uda Dumbara. He played an active role in the construction of the Minipe Colonization Scheme.

The Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) candidates for Wattegama and Minipe seats were Mr. Nanayakkara and Mr. K.B. Mediwake respectively. The latter was my English teacher at the primary school in Mediwake. Some of us who were in standard eight at school were supportive of the LSSP candidates. We hoisted a few red flags around the classroom. Some of our teachers advised us to keep off 'politics'. They said that the teachers as government servants were also prevented from taking part in politics. This advice did not prevent us from following our own whims and fancies. Mr. Abeyratne Ratnayake and Rambukwella

Dissawe won the Wattegama and Minipe seats respectively. We were not committed to any political party with any understanding of their policies and programmes, and therefore the victory of the members of the United National Party and the defeat of other candidates was of no consequence to us.

### **Defeat of Dr. Kannangara**

Unfortunately, however, the defeat of Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara, the Father of Free Education, was disastrous for the poor people of this country. Many supporters of the United National Party were against free education at the time and therefore also against Dr. Kannangara. They would have voted against him at the election. The left oriented voters would have voted against him because he was a UNP candidate for the Matugama seat. His educational reforms encountered formidable opposition. After his defeat, Mr. A. Ratnayake, who was a great supporter of Dr. Kannangara and a member of his Executive Committee, was said to have requested the portfolio of Education, but was given another ministry (food and co-operative) later. In spite of the fact that this country had many competent educationists, Dr. H.W. Howes from Gibraltar was brought down and appointed Director of Education in 1950. This seems to have pacified all the enemies of the educational programme of Dr. Kannangara.

Some time later Dr. Kannangara was sent to Indonesia as Ambassador to start a new embassy in Jakarta. He came back for the general election of 1952. Although he won his seat the portfolio given to him was that of Local Government. He did not contest the 1956 general election. He had been compelled to appeal to the Speaker of the House of Representatives for help when he did not have the money to meet his medical expenses later. A person who deserved to be treated as a deity was steeped in poverty. How ungrateful we were?

### **The Role of Dr. Kannangara**

Dr. Kannangara was instrumental in introducing some significant changes to the educational system in this country during his tenure as Minister of Education from 1931 to 1947. The direct payment system introduced in the early thirties liberated the teachers of assisted schools from the clutches of managers/proprietors of these schools. Until then the grant for the payment of teacher's salaries was paid to the managers who used that money for various other purposes. It is said that sometimes the teachers were not paid their salaries for months causing considerable inconvenience and forcing them to be subservient to the managers.

The Education Ordinance of 1939 provided the basis for the educational system of this country even today, although several amendments were introduced from time to time. The Special Committee on Education chaired by Dr. Kannangara investigated the changes that were necessary and one of the most important decisions was the recommendation that education should be free from the kindergarden to the university. Some recommendations resulted in the Education Ordinance of 1947 under which the central school's system was consolidated, and free education made meaningful to those who could not afford to pay for education in the English medium. To this end he introduced central schools from the year



1942 and by the end of 1947 there were 54 central schools spread throughout the country. The Fifth Standard Scholarship Examination was introduced to select pupils to be awarded bursaries and to be admitted to Central Schools. This relieved the bursary holders of activities which they would have had to perform if they remained at home while at the same time exposing them to much more intensive competition from other bursary holders. He established the University of Ceylon in 1942 and found a location for it at Peradeniya.

The introduction of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction from 1946 in the kindergarden and going up to the higher classes year by year resulted in unfathomable consequences. One major consequence was the need to introduce Sinhala as the official language although both the local languages should have been declared official languages as has now happened, though belatedly. These were only some of the major changes, but there were several other measures that were introduced by Dr. Kannangara to improve the system of education in this country.

Consequent to the approval that Dr. Kannangara had obtained in the final year of his term in the State Council, the free issue of clothes for bursary holders in Central Schools throughout the country was launched. Each male student received two trouser lengths of khaki cloth, two shirt lengths of airtex cloth, two sarongs, and a cake of soap. Girls were given half sarees (lamsaree) and jacket lengths. In the following year, boys were given blue trouser lengths. The monthly stipend of twelve rupees was increased to twenty rupees.

## **1948 Independence Celebrations**

The Maritime Provinces of Ceylon which were under Dutch occupation were ceded to the British East India Company in 1796. But the Company handed them over to the British Crown in 1802. The Kandyan kingdom was annexed on March 3, 1815. Ceylon was a Crown Colony until February 4, 1948 when Independence was granted after long years of agitation for constitutional reforms by the political leaders of the country.

This was a memorable day for the people of this country. The government as well as the people celebrated this event in various ways. I was nearing fifteen years of age. A marathon from four corners of the country to converge in Colombo was organized. The race from Batticaloa to Colombo passed through Wattedegama, Madawala, Katugastota and Kandy. Two of us from our school carried the flame for half a mile from a point in Madawala to a point towards Polgolla on the Kandy Road. Appuhamy, the under nineteen champion and Ariyapala, the under sixteen champion in sports, were the two who took part in this lap. Mr. Kumarasinghe, our Mathematics teacher, accompanied us to and from Madawala/Polgolla. This was pretty late in the evening.

I went to Kandy on Independence Day and found that the streets were decorated with lion flags and streamers. The national flag had not been adopted yet. Therefore, the flag used

was said to be an imitation of that of king Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe. It had no bars representing the different communities in the country. However, that was not an important consideration at the time. I was shown a gentleman in the Millers building who was said to be Lord Soulbury who had come to watch the Kandy Perahera (procession) which was specially held for the benefit of the visitors as well as in celebration of the day.

A commemorative stamp with the image of Hon. D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of the country, was issued and was in wide circulation for some time.

### **Post-independence events**

I suffered from a bout of whooping cough, was prevented from attending school and sitting the first term test. Therefore, together with three others, I was assigned to what was called the 'Practical SSC class'. The four of us could not study some of the subjects in the regular SSC class. Instead, we had carpentry and lacquer work as practical subjects. Carpentry was of course useful for us even in later life but lacquer work did not carry us anywhere except to understand the intricacies of the craft and appreciate its value. The following year we were assigned to the regular SSC class, which means we could not continue with carpentry, had to pick up work in such subjects as English Literature in one year whereas others had two years for it. The result was that I could not pass the SSC Examination in this subject.

### **Excursion to Anuradhapura**

This trip was undertaken in the second term of 1948. I have a feeling that it was immediately after my recovery from whooping cough, when we were at the hostel at the Eighth Mile Post (*Atekanuwa*). It was my last excursion while at school. I wanted to go on this trip but had no money. Therefore, I borrowed ten rupees from a hostel mate who was a sort of a money lender. After the excursion, I brought money from home and repaid the loan. The person who lent me the money did not go on this trip.

We started early in the morning and passed Wattegama and Ukuwela on the way to Matale. A group of girls began to sing Saranagupta Amarasinghe's "*Weera male' ron geniyanna*" based on a Hindi tune 'Dheera sagana' akiyaname'. It was the first time that I heard this song and felt it was very sweet indeed. Perhaps the sweetness was in the voices of the bevy of girls because when I heard the original sung by Amarasinghe I felt it was an anglicized version of something. The next town after Matale was Dambulla. Here we walked up the rocky hill to see the cave temple. At that time there was no electricity and therefore we had to see the Buddha statues under candle light which did not give a clear view of the statues. At one point inside the cave, there was a drop of water that fell into a container kept for the purpose. This appeared to emanate from a tiny spring on the roof of the cave and said to be perennial.

We then went to Sigiriya, the rock fortress of Prince Kasyapa, a son of King Dhatusena, who built Kalawewa. When we climbed up a spiral staircase, we saw the frescoes of some beautiful ladies painted inside small caves. After coming down the spiral staircase, we began the climb up by the side of what was called the Mirror Wall on which were the graffiti of

visitors of yore. According to the renowned archaeologist Dr. Senerath Paranavithana, these are verses of visitors of by-gone days who were enthralled by the sight of the frescoes.

At the entrance to the fortress, we saw the ruined figure of a large lion through whose mouth we had to climb up the steps to the top. We were cautioned not to disturb the wasps lest they stung us. The climb up from this point was very difficult. Although there were small steps carved into the rock there were no handrails. We had to climb up on all fours. Fortunately, there was no strong wind as is the situation during certain times of the year.

At the top of the fortress were the brick foundations of some buildings which were apparently of the palace complex of Prince Kasyapa. In the centre was a pond with greenish water. The panoramic view around extending to the distant horizon in all directions was fantastic and indescribable. The descent was relatively easy and would not have taken more than ten or fifteen minutes to arrive at the bus halt.

The next stop was the Kekirawa Central School where we had our lunch. This school had a couple of temporary buildings for classrooms. After lunch, we went to Kalawewa and Aukana. Our bus could not proceed up to the Buddha image. We had to walk barefoot about half a mile, crossing the railway line on a path full of thorny weeds called *nerinchi*.

The standing image of Lord Buddha at Aukana was carved on a rock and appears to be facing Kalawewa. The image was exposed to the elements, but any attempt to provide any cover would diminish a clear vision of it. I have visited Aukana several times as an adult but never tired of looking at the image.

We came back to the Kalawewa bund and saw the sluice to the Yoda Ela carrying water towards Anuradhapura. The gradient of the channel is such that the flow of water is not visible. This is the best example of an irrigation engineering feat of our ancient kings and their subjects.

When we reached a pilgrim's rest at Anuradhapura for the night it was nearly dark. I was tired and hungry. When someone gave me some bread and dhal curry, I was half asleep but gulped it down and went to sleep.

The following morning after breakfast we set out to visit some sacred places in Anuradhapura. The first stop was at Thuparamaya built by *King Devanampiyatissa* which was the first such structure in this country. We then went to *Ruwanveliseya*, the most popular pagoda in Anuradhapura. This was built by King Dutugemunu. Its story is narrated in the classic Thupavamsaya. From there we went to worship the sacred Bodhi Tree (*Jayasri Mahabodiya*), the most venerated place in Anuradhapura, and perhaps the oldest tree in this country. This is a branch of the sacred Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya under the shade of which Prince Siddhartha Gauthama attained Enlightenment. This was brought to this country by Arahant Sangamitta, daughter of Emperor Asoka of Dambadiva (India), during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. Arahant Sangamitta was the sister of Arahant Mahinda who brought Buddhism to this country.

The Abhayagiri Dagaba was the next sacred place we visited. The upper section of the stupa was largely in ruins and big trees had grown over it. On our way back we had a look at Jethavana Dagaba, which also was partly in ruins but not as much as the Abhayagiri Dagaba.

Our last stop on this trip was Mihintale, which had to be climbed on a series of stone steps. All along the path we saw a number of buildings. The brick foundation of what was said to be a *dana sala* (alms hall) and a *bath oruwa* (stone rice container) were seen on the way up the hill. Beyond this up towards the peak is the temple in which the present-day monks live. From there, we had to climb a steep rock to reach the peak. Arahant Mahinda who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka accompanied by a few other monks and a layman, is said to have spoken to King Devanampiyatissa from this peak. The king had gone deer hunting and was chasing a deer, when he was asked to stop by the Arahant Mahinda.

When the king heard his name 'Tissa' being called out, he looked up to see who it was, so bold as to call out his name in his kingdom. Seeing Arahant Mahinda at the peak the king asked who he was, whereupon the Arahant replied:

<i>Samana mayan maharaja</i>	O king, we are monks
<i>Dhamma rajassa savaka</i>	who are disciples of Dhammaraja (Buddha)
<i>Thameva anukampaya</i>	with compassion to you
<i>Jambu deepa ida gatha.</i>	we came here from <i>Jambudeepa</i> (India).

Thus, began the history of Buddhism in this country.

When we came down from the peak and reached the bus, it was late in the afternoon when we started our return journey. I was again tired and hungry. Seeing a cardboard box under our seat, I opened it to find some ripe plantains in it. The organizers may have put it there but had forgotten about it. This was a godsend for the few of us who occupied the last seat of the bus. We enjoyed the fruits without let or hindrance. We were back at the hostel pretty late in the evening. Though tired it gave me the satisfaction of having visited the present capital of Ceylon and now seen our ancient capital and its grandeur. We were accompanied on this excursion by Mr. P.A. Perera, our teacher and Warden of the Senior Hostel, Miss Gunawardhane, Warden of the Girls' Hostel. Mr. H.R.P. Rupasinghe came with his family in his own car which was a new Morris Eight.

### **Senior Hostel in Private Houses.**

The hostel located in the school premises was divided into junior and senior hostels. The senior hostel had been shifted to a private house at the Eighth Mile Post in Walala. When this was shifted, I was at home because of my whooping cough. However, my steel trunk with some of my clothes was at the new location when I returned, but I had lost the advantage of a bed. In fact, there were only four or five beds in the new hostel although there were about twenty hostellers. Therefore, I was not the only person who had to sleep on a mat. The hostel warden was Mr. P.A. Perera, but Mr. Pethiyagoda, the weaving instructor, was also occupying a room in the senior hostel. His son was a student of the school and lived with him. There was a good well at a lower elevation with enough water for bathing and domestic use. We had to walk about half a mile to school, back to the hostel for lunch,

then to school for the afternoon session and then back again. If we wanted to use the playground, it meant one more trip up and one down. But we were children who could endure these inconveniences.

Some of those who were in this hostel were K.B.J. Edirisinghe of Dewahandiya, E.W. Jayawardhane of Teldeniya, Rambukwella, Mudiyanse of Wewegama, Teldeniya, Abeyratne of Giddawa, Karunadhipathy of Halyala, Dharmadasa of Amupitiya, Gunasena of Giddawa, Sirisena of Galpihilla, Weerakoon of Nattaranpotha, Sugathapala of Polgolla, Premadasa of Yatirawana, W.W. Pusaratne of Mediwake, and E.R.M. Ariyapala of Halyala. We were a motley crowd belonging to the first two batches of bursary holders admitted to Walala Central in 1944 and 1945. Most of us were either in Standard Eight or Pre-S.S.C.

The owners of the house in which we were living occupied a section at the back of the house. They had an ample garden with a number of coconut trees that were being tapped by a Kochchi tapper. Coir ropes were used to connect several trees that were being tapped, one rope was used for the tapper to walk from one tree to the other while another at a higher level was used to hold on to during the rope walk from tree to tree. The tapper was fairly old and wore spectacles; it was scary to watch his perilous unsteady rope walk.

After some time, perhaps at the end of 1948, the senior hostel was shifted to a house closer to the school. The property in which this house was located was called *Bangalawatte*, which had a cocoa and coconut plantation. It was accessible from the edge of the school garden across a paddy field, but on rainy days and when the field was being ploughed for cultivation the ridges on which we had to walk were muddy and slippery. There was another circuitous path to the school. Although part of this path was also slippery, we could walk on fallen cocoa leaves by the side of path and avoid falling down on the slippery path. This second path also made it possible to go to the boutiques on the main road which were normally out of bounds for us. Since this hostel was much closer to the school most of us used the school play ground regularly after school.

The hostel garden on one side was full of a weed we called *kahambiliya*. We had to be very careful not to come into contact with this weed. If unwittingly one came into contact with the weed, one would have to go on scratching the part of the body that came into such contact. This will indeed be very painful and the skin will turn red. However, these weeds became very useful for us to solve a problem that we encountered. It will be relevant to narrate this story before we proceed to other things.

***Kahambiliya Treatment.*** There was a school bus plying between Teldeniya and Kandy. It went past our school carrying children going to some boys' and girls' schools in Kandy. A few students of our school also travelled in this bus between Teldeniya and Walala. It appeared that those going to colleges in Kandy considered us to be some inferior species because we were receiving free education whereas they paid fees. Each time they passed our school and saw some of us they shouted '*pinbuth*', a, epithet which implied that we were feeding on 'free rice' and was meant to insult us. Those of our schoolmates who travelled on this bus could have been tormented by such abusive remarks. We understood that the Principal of our school who travelled in an old car from Nawayalatenne to the school had also been subjected to indecent remarks when he passed their bus on the way.

Those of us in the senior hostel decided to take some remedial action. One morning, armed with some twigs of *kahambiliya*, we stationed ourselves at different points on the bus route. When the bus stopped to drop those coming to our school or pick up others going to Kandy, those inside the bus began their usual harassment. Our colleague who was at the first point climbed up the rear ladder by which one could go up on to the hood rack of the bus and gave those in the rear seats a bit of *kahambiliya* treatment. This went on at several points further up towards Kandy. At one point a large log was placed across the road to prevent vehicles passing.

The bus driver who was an elderly sober person, came down to the road blaming those inside the bus and having pacified us, got the log removed and proceeded on his journey. From that day those young 'gentlemen' travelling on the school bus stopped their abusive behaviour and became our friends. After all, we were all school children.

### **Hunnasgiriya Hill Climb**

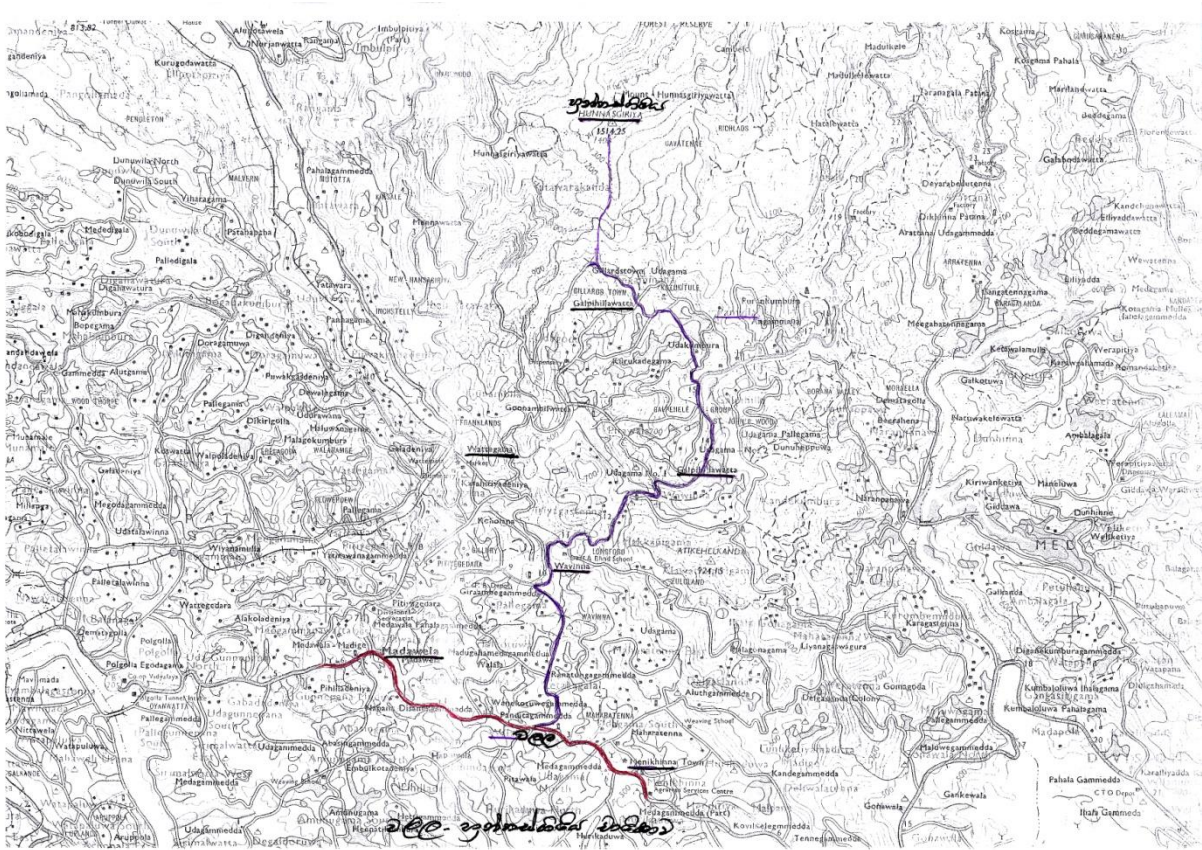
Senior hostellers went on a trek up Hunnasgiriya, the highest peak at the northern end of the Dumbara valley. Our hostel warden also participated in this trip. We started off after breakfast one morning. The route we took was from Walala junction to Wavinna and from there on the main road towards Panwila. At Galpihilla we walked up an estate road within the Galpihilla Tea Estate.

At one point on this road, we came across two wire shoots to the tea factory, to transport green leaves from a lower elevation to a height of about 500 feet, where the factory was located. Gunny bags with green leaves were latched on to the wire rope with pulleys and sent up to the factory. The empty bags would be returned to the lower point through the reverse process. This was a convenient method of transporting green leaves. If human labour was employed it would have been a tedious task requiring a large number of workers. Processed tea was transported from the factory in lorries on a motorable road linking it to the main road.

We continued our trek up the steep hill reaching the factory with some effort but the climb beyond this point up, was much steeper. At the edge of the tea plantation, we came on to a jungle path along which we had to walk up to reach the peak. By then, we were both tired and hungry. We had taken bread and caramelized onion curry (*seeni sambola*) for lunch. So, we began to eat our lunch on the move.

Once we reached the top of the mountain, we were enthralled by the breathtaking scenery below. It extended to the four corners of the horizon right round the Hunnasgiriya Peak. On to the east was the tea plantation that we had already passed. But to the west and north was the Kandy-Matale railway line past Wattedagama stretching beyond Ukuwela. Fortunately for us there was also a train with three compartments going down towards Ukuwela, which appeared to us from the peak like a set of match boxes or a toy train. The green vegetation and paddy fields were a beautiful sight. The weather was very fine, the sky was cloudless and there was no mist at the peak, so that the vision was very clear. We spent about two hours enjoying the panoramic view.

The vegetation on the top of the hill consisted of dwarf trees as seen on Horton Plains. There were no tall or large trees at the peak or around it. Proud that we had climbed up the highest mountain in the area, we began our descent down to the tea factory from where we took the motorable road down to the main road at Galpihilla. After walking down, the main road up to Wavinna junction, we took the minor motorable road to Walala junction. By the time we reached the hostel it was past six o'clock. As usual on such trips I was tired but happy that I had participated in a new adventure.



### Hunnasgiriya Trek

#### Visit to Dharmadweepa Pirivena

On a number of occasions when I went to Wategama, I walked along the same road up to Wavinna and took a left turn, either to walk along the main road or on the foot path down the rubber plantation and across the paddy fields along the ridges to reach the main road near the Vidyadardhana Pirivena. From there I walked along the main road and past the bridge above the railway line, on to the junction of the Madawala-Matale road. Taking a right turn and passing down the bazaar, I walked up to the railway crossing and went into the premises of the Dharmadweepa Pirivena. Walking up the steps on a steep hill I arrived at the *pirivena* building.

Reverend Halyale Sumanatissa was the principal of the *pirivena*. He was a brother of my mother. After his education at *Vidyodaya Pirivena* at Maligakanda, Colombo, he came to

Wattegama and took residence at *Vidyadharshana Pirivena* in 1945. This was the year I was admitted to Walala Central School. He held an alms-giving in honour of his teachers. A number of relatives from Halyala including my mother and father participated in this offering. I also had the good fortune to be present.

Some time later a philanthropist donated some land to build a new pirivena. The new pirivena was called *Dharmadweepa Pirivena* to which Rev. Sumanatissa shifted after its construction.

Whenever I was broke, I used to go to the pirivena and was given five or ten rupees depending on my need. Considering the value of money at that time this was a big amount. Once when I wanted some money to meet the tailoring charges of trousers and shirts, made out of the free quota of cloth I received from the government in that year, I asked for twenty rupees. I remember that a boy named Jayasekara who was at the pirivena at the time, being given a hundred rupee note to be changed at the railway station and asked to give me twenty rupees. I came back by bus from Wattegama through Madawala very happily. Each time I got some money I came back by bus, although on the way out I walked the whole distance of about four miles.

Once on my way to Wattegama, I saw an elderly person fallen down by the wayside, close to the Pitiyegedara junction of Wawinna Road, opposite the residence of Halangoda Korale Mahattaya. I went close to the fallen person and asked him why he was lying down by the wayside. He appeared to be very weak, and whatever he said was inaudible. Assuming that he was hungry, I went to the boutique close by, bought a bun and some tea and fed him. At the end of the meal, he appeared to feel better. I could not have done any thing else.

Out of the twenty-five cents I had with me when I started the trip, I spent fifteen cents to feed the elderly person. Although I was left with only ten cents, I felt very pleased with the opportunity to help a feeble and hungry old person who appeared to be helpless. I walked to Wattegama because I did not want to spend the money, I had on bus fare. I have had occasion to offer alms and help others in my life but I still consider this event as one of the most rewarding experiences.

### **Cinematic Escapades**

When I went to Dharmadweepa Pirivena on one occasion I spent the night there. Towards evening, I heard the sound of a loudspeaker across the direction of another hill opposite the one on which the pirivena was located. I made inquiries from Gunathilaka *Malli*, a cousin of mine who was at the pirivena at that time, about the sound of music from the other hill. I was told that it emanated from a cinema tent put up on that hill. This kindled my interest in this new phenomenon which I had never experienced before, except that I had seen an open-air film shows at our school at Walala. That film was about a 'House That Jack Built' and would have run for about half an hour.

Wondering how I could watch a film show in a cinema, it struck me that Samarapala, a hostel mate staying with his brother, had a small shop in the bazaar. On the pretext that I was returning to the hostel, I met Samarapala on the way. When he heard about my interest, he agreed to accompany me to the cinema that evening. Having spent the day with



him, we went in the evening to the tent up the hill to watch a film being screened there. It was a Tamil movie which I assume was 'Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp.' There was a person who skipped from a lower floor of a building to a higher one and back again. These were stunts I had never seen before and they thrilled and stunned me considerably. The movie also kindled an interest in me to watch movies in cinemas such as Wales, Wembley and New Empire in Kandy. Therefore, on another day I went to the Empire Theatre with Polgolle Sugathapala and watched an English movie. I could not understand anything in the film both because of the accent of the film stars and the excessive noise in the hall, which was constructed with zinc sheets and located at a site close to the present Senanayake Library.

The next movie I watched was 'Chandralekha', a Tamil film screened at the newly constructed New Empire Theatre (present Regal) at Mulgampola. I went to see this film three times for several reasons. First of all, I liked the plot. The younger son of a king usurped power by imprisoning his parents and elder brother (M.R. Radha) who was the rightful heir to the throne. The usurper also forced his brother's fiancée (T.R. Rajakumari) to become his queen. On the day of his coronation, a dancing ceremony was performed with massive drums, which opened up while the dance was in progress and a large number of armed soldiers loyal to the king and to the heir streamed out of the drums. A battle follows and the usurper was ultimately subdued. The parents were released from prison and the elder brother and his fiancée were crowned Maharajah and Maharani of the princely state. There was a circus in the movie. I had never seen a circus before this. The heroine also performed in the circus in the process of building up forces loyal to her fiancée. The renowned comedians of the Tamil silver screen at the time, Krisnan and Maduran, were two important characters in the movie playing a vital role in supporting the heroine. Above all, my youthful adulation of T.R. Rajakumari, who in appearance was like my elder sister (*Heen Akka*), would have been the factor that contributed most to my attraction to Chandralekha.

Whenever I wanted to see a movie, my course of action was in a way irresponsible. I left the hostel without telling anyone else and without permission. I did not tell any one because that would have entailed an additional burden of bus fare and movie fare. Had I requested the Warden for permission, he would never have allowed me to go. My usual procedure was to leave the hostel alone, and go to Kandy in time for the six thirty show. The bus fare to Kandy from Walala was twenty-five cents. I would walk from the Kandy bus stand to the New Empire Theatre at Mulgampola, although I could have taken bus for 10 cents. A second-class ticket for the cinema was one rupee and twenty cents. Immediately after this show was over, I would buy another ticket for the nine thirty show. When that was over at about 12.30 a.m. I walked up to the Kandy Railway Station. On the way I would have something for dinner at a late-night restaurant. By the time I arrived at the station it would be around 1.30 a.m. when I would buy a first-class ticket for seventy cents to travel to Wattegama by the Matala train. This train would be parked at a particular platform from about two in the morning.

The first-class compartment would always be empty which made it easy for me to get about two and a half hours uninterrupted sleep. The train left Kandy at 4.30 a.m. and arrived at Wattegama in about half an hour. I would normally be awakened when the train passes the

bridge over the Mahaveliganga at Katugastota. Getting off the train at Wattegama, I would walk up to a restaurant at the junction on the Madawala-Matale road to have some breakfast. By the time this was over, a bus going to Kandy would arrive so that I could go to Madawala and from there, take a Teldeniya bus to Walala. By the time the other hostellers were up, I would already be in the hostel.

But one day this plan did not work exactly the way it normally happened. I woke up only after the train arrived at the Matale station. I had over-ridden from Wattegama to Matale and that too in a first-class compartment. Officially I would have had to pay a heavy fine, but I had only five rupees with me. So, I marked time till all the passengers went out of the gate and walked up to the gate-keeper. I offered him two rupees to allow me to go without a fine. Having finished his work at the gate, he accompanied me to a nearby restaurant, got my five rupees note changed and left me minus two rupees. I was relieved that I was able to get over the problem with two rupees and in any case, I was out of the railway station. When I came back to the hostel by bus from Matale to Madawala and then to Walala, it would have been around eight in the morning, but as it was a weekend no one noticed my absence.

### **Bambaradeniya Visits**

As a Walala student I went to Bambaradeniya on numerous occasions. The first was my very first year at Walala. Once Bambaradeniye *Nendamma* (aunt) who was my father's sister visited us with her elder daughter (*Nanda akka*). This was during one of our school vacations. My father had received a letter from our Headmaster to the effect that the money paid earlier for a hostel bed would be refunded. *Appachchi* (my father) requested my aunt to go with me to the school on her way back and collect the money. So, the three of us (aunt, her daughter and myself) went to the school on the appointed day, met the Head Master Mr. Vimalananda, collected twenty rupees and went to Bambaradeniya. I remember going to Kandy and from there taking a bus belonging to the P.S. Bus Co. to go to *Daulagala*. We walked about two miles to reach home, the route being partly along the motorable road to *Welamboda*, and then along a path that ran down a hill towards a paddy field close to the *Embekke Devale*, after which it led to a path leading up another hillock before we reached home.

On the following day I went to Kandy with *Bamabaradeniye Maamaa* (Uncle) to buy some schoolbooks with the money that we had got from the headmaster. We went to the *Sithumina* Bookshop to buy the books. I came to know later that its proprietor was Mr. T.B. S. Godamunne. Because of these two trips from Kandy to Bambaradeniya, I was able to go there on my own.

Thereafter, whenever I got the opportunity, I went to Bambaradeniya because of the acceptance I enjoyed there. There were two boys who were more or less my age. The elder one, Karunaratne *Aiya*, became my pal. The eldest in the family however was Nanda akka (I called her *Bambaradeniye Akka*), who was a pretty maid. I now feel that I was attracted to her and even adored her. But the most important of all was that my aunt (*Nendamma*) appeared to be highly attached to me because she had the habit of treating the children of

her brothers with considerable affection. I would have been at the top of the list for her affection and love.

Once when I went to Bambaradeniya for a weekend, she took me to the well to give me a good bath and a complete scrub down because bathing at the hostel was irregular due to the shortage of water in the wells there. Off and on she would take me with her on her visits to her relations of some importance. One such visit was to *Ganhathe Vedamahaththaya*, a native physician whose wife was introduced to me as a cousin (*Ganhathe' Akka*). On another occasion, I went with her to *Polgahaange* on the Peradeniya-Gampola Road. I was told that they were also my cousins. Her elder son Karunaratne Aiyya became a close friend. He was studying at the Bilingual School at Penideniya, close to the Peradeniya railway station. Once the two of us took a village path, part of which passed through paddy fields, and walked about four miles to reach his school. From there I took a bus to Kandy and then to Walala.

On my visits to Bambaradeniya, I found that the people around that area depended on tea cultivation for their livelihood much more than on paddy cultivation. A good plot of tea would provide a reasonable income for the sustenance of the family. Normally green leaves were plucked once a week and in an emergency one can get some money in advance from the person who purchased the green leaves. My aunt also had a fair extent of tea land. There were eight members in the family at that time: two adults, three girls and three boys. The weekly food ration was inadequate for such a family and they would have to depend on purchases outside the government rations, if they did not have paddy fields. Although I did not realize it then, now I think that this family had their share of difficulties in this regard.

### **Motor Vehicles During and After the War**

When we were at the hostel in the school premises, we spent our leisure time after school in the area intended for the playground or on either side of the road leading to the primary school from the main road. There was in fact no proper play ground. It was constructed over two years from 1946 to 1947. Therefore, for a while it was our hobby to identify the different vehicles plying on the main road. The majority were military vehicles, as it was still the final days of the war and not many civilian vehicles except an occasional bus was seen on the road. There were two military camps, one at Polgolla and the other at Kundasale. Some vehicles from these camps transported civilian workers from villages in the vicinity, so we saw those vehicles plying up and down in the mornings and evenings. Military personnel also would travel about in their trucks and jeeps.

It was not easy to identify their country of manufacture or the make but one suspected they were all British vehicles, since we were a British colony at the time. The vehicles available for civilian travel and transport were all pre-war and therefore fairly old. The buses plying on this route belonged to the Silverline Bus Company. These were old open-bodied buses plying between Kandy and such places as Teldeniya, Hunnasgiriya, Loolwatta, Madugoda and Weragantota. The buses plying on the Kandy-Kundasale-Teldeniya route went to Teldeniya and Rangala and were owned by this company. The bus company system was introduced to Ceylon in 1938. Prior to that, individual owners ran their buses. In some areas this led to cutthroat competition. The introduction of the bus company system led to

monopolies on the routes assigned to the respective companies. The companies were required to operate buses according to a predetermined timetable.

Besides the Silverline Bus Company, other companies such as Town Bus Company, United Bus Company, Sinha Bus Company, P.S. Bus Company and Madyama Lanka Bus Company operated from Kandy. They had their head offices in Kandy. The Kandy-Colombo bus service was operated by the Sri Lanka Bus Company headquartered in Colombo.

The design of the bus body changed after the war. The new design was called 'Nelson body.' The several entrances in the open-body buses were done away with, and only one entrance was provided on the front left-hand side of bus in line with the seat of the driver or thereabout. The open-body bus had a number of canvas curtains to protect passengers from rain. They were rolled up when there was no rain. The new model provided glass window shutters that could be pushed down into sockets when necessary. When the shutters were pulled up the passengers could get a view of the surroundings of the route through the glass panes whereas with the canvass curtains one could not see the surroundings. However, the bodies of these new buses were built on chassis of military vehicles that were auctioned at the end of the war. This was the situation for a long time after the war. The only bus company that imported buses as such was the South Western Bus Co. which operated buses between Colombo and Galle. We had the habit of assigning our own identification for the Nelson body buses that plied in front of our school.

After about 1946 new vehicles began to be imported to Ceylon. These vehicles were Austin, Ford, Morris and Vauxhall models manufactured in England. Three of our teachers, Mr. Palipane, Mr. Rupasinghe and Major Henry de Zylva bought three new cars - Vauxhall, Morris and Ford - respectively.

### **Dramatic and Related Skills**

There were hardly any opportunities for us to develop our aesthetic skills in our school at Walala. Mr. Weerasinghe, our teacher in the primary school, trained me for a major role in a play staged at the end of the school term. Because of this, I got the opportunity to develop my singing skills. Otherwise, my skills would have been limited to reciting some poems.

In a boutique close to our school there were some books of poems. They were in fact monthly issues of *Dedunna*, *Mee Wadaya*, and *Amba Wanaya*. I used to buy them for a few cents and this gave me access to the poetic world, although I could not proceed beyond learning to appreciate the poems. The dancing lessons, in the first year at Walala helped me to develop some aesthetic skills, but unfortunately there were no dancing classes after the first year. Yet there were opportunities to sing and demonstrate my ability in this direction by participating in end of term variety entertainments. I played a small part in *Kuveni* and in an English play staged by our class.

My entry into the world of Sinhala song began when I heard the following simple song:

*Kaakayo piyambathee eha meha ude'- thaama aeyi nideemathey nangeetinu' ithin*  
*Koo ku koo kiyaa kuku'lu ke gasath ude. thaama aeyi nideemathey nangeetinu' ithin*  
*Paasalata yannata' velaa aevith ude, thaama aeyi nideemathey nangeetinu' ithin.*

I do not know who sang it but I have never forgotten it although many other songs I learnt to sing are mostly forgotten now. The next contact was with the songs of Ananda Samarakoon such as *“Wile malak pipila”, “Endada menike mamath diyambataa”* and *“Siri saru sara kethe goyam paeseela mahime”*. The songs of W.D. Albert Perera (Pandit Amaradeva) such as *“Pihinamukoo kalu gange”* were becoming popular. Then came the songs of Sunil Santha. Two of them were *“Olu pipeela wela lela denawa”,* and *“Handapaane., kiribebalena handapaane”*. In the meantime, the songs sung in films such as *Asokamala, Kadawunu Poronduwa and Kapati Aarakshakaya* were also circulating. It must be said that during this period the only way a song would go into circulation was through the gramophone which was not widely available. Nor was the radio available to everyone. Some of us in the hostel got together in our free time and sang some of the popular songs, which gave us practice.

My introduction to Tamil songs was through the gramophone of the Sanitary Inspector at Menikhinna. Karnataka music was also heard over the radios in all Tamil restaurants in most bazaars. Watching Tamil movies such as Chandralekha also helped me to appreciate Karnataka music and Tamil songs.

In the meantime, the installation of radio receivers in schools were going ahead because of the Educational Service of Radio Ceylon. The radio provided to our school was installed in the office room of the main school building. In 1949, our classroom was adjacent to this office room. Our classmaster would switch on the radio at 12 noon to receive the programme of the Sinhala service till 1 pm during our lunch interval. The Sinhala service broadcast Hindustani songs for forty-five minutes from midday. This was my introduction to Hindi songs. I would run to the hostel immediately after the bell rang for the interval, gulp my lunch and be back near the radio within ten minutes. Although I understood not a word of Hindi, the sweet music and the sound of the songs kept me spellbound. Some of those who sang these songs were Saigal, Surayya, Noor Jehan, Geetha Roy and perhaps Latha Mangeskar (in her early days). Since then, I was enamoured with Hindi songs, particularly those of the films of the forties and fifties (20<sup>th</sup> century).

### **Senior School Certificate (S.S.C) Examination**

This was a public examination conducted by the Education Department (Examinations Branch) in both Sinhala/Tamil and the English medium. For us, the examination was in the English medium except of course the two papers in Sinhalese Language and Literature. Passing the English medium examination was a gateway to most of the positions in the Public Service including the Divisional Revenue Officers’ Service. It was to provide such opportunities, to those who could not afford to pay for education in English schools in urban areas, that Dr.C.W.W. Kannangara established fifty-four central schools all over the country. Bursaries were given to those who passed the Fifth Standard Scholarship Examination and were admitted to the Central Schools and accommodated in hostels.

There were some students who sat the S.S.C examination in 1948, but they were those who had joined the school some time in 1947 or the beginning of 1948. They were Jinasena and Gunathilake of Kandy, two Ratnayakes and Silva of Nawayalatenne, Perera of Pitiyegedara, Ranasinghe of Menikhinna, Samarajeewa and Yasapala of Teldeniya and Miss Manthilake of

Wewegama. The first two batches of students to enter Walala Central School (in 1944 and 1945) became eligible to sit the SSC examination in December, 1949. Some of them (as far as I recall) were: Sumana Wijiyinghe, H.A.C.D. Perera, H.W. Pragnawathie, Amara Ratnayake and Seelawathie (girls); E.W. Jayawardhane, M.M. Ran Banda, S. Karunadhipathy, Gunasena, Sirisena, Y.M.W. Bandara, E.R.M. Ariyapala, W.W. Pusaratne, Ekanayake, Ratnasekara and Rajapakse (boys).

Our class master was Major Henry de Zylva who was also our English teacher. The text book used was Practical English by W.H. Samaranayake. Every day one chapter of the book was set for homework. One important component of this exercise was to construct sentences with the words set in the chapter. The sentences should be such that the meaning of the word used would be understood as the sentence is read. In the case of slipshod work, the student was sure to be scolded in the open class irrespective of gender. One word used by the Major on such occasions was 'buffalo'. This probably was the language used by him as a military officer in the South-east Asian battle front during the war.

I would go to the hostel immediately after school was over at 3 p.m., have my afternoon cup of tea and begin my home work. Although I did not have a dictionary or some such help, I managed to complete the work within about one hour and then run to the playground. I avoided being scolded and remember being told at the final review before the examination, that I would somehow manage to pass the examination. This was a great encouragement which gave me complete confidence regarding my capabilities. Fortunately for us, this was the only subject in which we got home work.

Our Sinhala teacher was Mr. P.P. Manthilake. The text books used for Sinhala literature were *Thupawansaya and Guththila Kavya* for prose and verse respectively. *Thupavansaya* was the story of the construction of Ruwanveliseya by King Dutugemunu. *Guththila Kavya* was a book of poems which narrated a dispute between an accomplished pupil (Moosila) and his elderly teacher (Guththila). Pandit Guththila with some divine help was able to defeat his pupil at a veena contest in the presence of the ruler of that kingdom. Although this book of poems was a fairly lengthy one, only part of it starting with the following verse was prescribed for our examination:

*Baranes nuwara sita-udenee nam nuwarata*

*Pura badu gel pita-regena giye welendu welandamata.*

Our principal was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He was our geography teacher. No particular text book was used. He himself was like a text book. He would draw freehand the map of the world on the blackboard in less than five minutes. The book used for Civics was by S.F.de Silva, one time Principal of the Maharagama Training College (English) and later Director of Education. In a Kandy bookshop, I came across a brand-new history book by S.F.de Silva. Because of my inquisitiveness, I bought a copy of this book although it was not a prescribed text. I must admit that it helped me in my Civics paper, to answer a question on the cooperative movement. It may have helped in my English paper as well. A quotation I came across in that book I had memorized was as follows:

“The greatest hope for the salvation of rural masses from their crushing burden of debt, rests on the growth and spread of a healthy and well-organised cooperative movement based on the cooperation of the people themselves” (from an Indian Commission on Agriculture and Cooperatives).

When the results were announced in March 1950, I found that I had passed the examination. One had to pass in six subjects to qualify for a full pass. The subjects in which I had passed were English Language, Sinhalese Language, Sinhalese Literature, Buddhism, Civics and Geography. The others who obtained full passes were E.W. Jayawardhane, Y.M.W. Bandara, Sumana Wijesinghe and H.A.C.D. Perera. There were a few others who had been referred in one subject, which they could sit in 1950 or later and complete the examination. It was usual for the S.S.C results to be published in the newspapers. Our results were published in the *Ceylon Daily News*.

Of the five of us who passed the examination, Miss Chitra Perera (H.A.C.D) accepted a teaching appointment and went to teach in a school at Ulapane. Mr. Y.M.W. Bandara went to Dharmaraja College in Kandy to continue studies for the University Entrance (U.E) examination combined with Higher School Certificate (H.S.C) examination. Three of us E. W. Jayawardhane, Sumana Wijesinghe and Ariyapala remained in the school for some time, because the principal made us understand that he would seek approval from the Education Department to start the H.S.C and U.E class. After some time, Jayawardhane left us to join St. Sylvester’s College, Kandy to pursue studies for H.S.C & U.E. What happened to me will be clear from the section on *Farewell to Alma Mater*.

## **A Turning Point**

The New Year holidays in April 1950 was a period of some joy for all of us at home, mainly because I had been successful at the S.S.C examination. By then our whole family had shifted to Handaganawa in the Minipe colonization scheme, and were living in the house meant for lot 21/33, the access to which from the bus route was along a path up the *Wisihathare Ela*, to the main channel bund and walking about 500 yards on it to reach home. Our maternal aunt (*Heen Amma*) and paternal uncle (*Heen Appachchi*) had settled down with their family in the adjoining house. *Heen Amma* appeared to be happier than even my mother about my success. One day she had made some oil cake (*kewum*) especially for me (This was a particular method of expressing happiness about a person’s achievement). No one else either in the extended family or even in our village had passed an examination, higher than the Junior School Certificate (8<sup>th</sup> standard). I was perhaps the first in the Minipe colonization scheme to pass the S.S.C.

The second term at school went by without much activity. I think it was in this term that we were put in charge of the tuck shop organized by the teachers. One could buy a bun, tea and a toffee for a few cents. The three of us in the H.S.C & U.E class, found some money among ourselves to have buns and tea at the short Interval around 10 am. When Jayawardhane left for Kandy, the class was reduced to two of us.

It was in this background, that I went home for the August vacation. One morning my father railed at me for something and went to the field. I was so annoyed by this outburst that I decided to run away from home. I did not have any money with me; so, I opened my father's steel trunk (by striking the lock with a wire nail), took my POSB pass book and ten rupees and left home in spite of the pleas of my sister and mother. I took a route away from the main road and reached Weragantota in time for the afternoon bus to Kandy. I went to Walala and looked for Heen Banda, the cook in our hostel. The following day I went to the Hurikaduwa Post Office, got a form certified by the Post Master to withdraw fifty rupees from my pass book at the main post office at Wattegama. On several subsequent weeks, I withdrew at the rate of fifty rupees per week to meet my expenses for food and travel. I spent the night at the hostel. One evening when I went to the hostel, Heen Banda was not there, so that I had to spend the night in the verandah sleeping on a strip of cadjan I found close by. Once, Heen Banda took me home for dinner. His mother and a younger sister lived in that house near the eighth mile post, just below our former hostel.

In the meantime, I was looking at the possibility of getting a job somewhere because some source of income would be essential when my savings dried up. Once, I went to Gampola looking for a job and tested my chances in several boutiques. That experience gave me the feeling that no one was willing to employ a complete stranger. From there I went to Nuwara Eliya. As the bus climbed up the Ramboda Pass and was nearing Nuwara Eliya, the drop in the temperature began to be felt more and more, as I had not worn any warm clothing. In the town, when I started shivering, I walked into a restaurant and requested a warm drink, where upon I was given a glass of some drink. Not knowing what the effect would be, I gulped down the drink. Within a few minutes a strange feeling came about me leading to dizziness, I had not experienced before, because I had never consumed any alcohol before.

Therefore, I decided to return to Kandy by the next bus available and settled down in a corner in the bus. By the time the bus reached Kandy, I had got over the dizzy feeling. This was the Perahera season in Kandy, and I was in time to watch the procession that night. I had come to Kandy from Walala accompanied by a few hostel mates to watch the Perahera on several occasions earlier in the previous years. What we did was to have early dinner at the hostel, travel by bus to Kandy, see the Perahera and walk back about five miles through Lewella, Sirimalwatte, Gunnepana, and Napana to Walala. But now I was alone and therefore took the bus to Walala and went to sleep in the hostel. The first time I saw this procession, there were about fifty elephants in the five sections of the procession, namely, the peraheras of Dalada Maligawa (temple of the tooth), Natha Devale, Vishnu Devale, Katharagama Devale and Paththini Devale. The Dalada Maligawa is devoted to Lord Buddha while the others are devoted to four deities respected by the people from ancient times.

This escapade continued for about fifteen days. One day when I went to the Walala junction, I met *Abeyratne Aiyya of Pallewela*, who was a relation of ours. He had come with the hope of meeting me and told me that my mother was highly aggrieved about my absence and wanted me to go back home. He suggested that if I did not like to go home, then I could go to my brother. Two or three days later I went to Weragantota by bus and was crossing the river, when half way through, I saw my father (*Appachchi*) on the other bank waiting for the boat (*oruwa*). I steeled myself to face any situation. When the boat



reached that bank, I got down and went to my father. He asked me where I was going. When I replied that I was going to my brother, *Appachchi* queried as to where my brother was. When I told him about Potawa, *Appachchi* said that my brother and his family were at the Mahiyangana Rest House and therefore the two of us went there.

When we went to the Rest House it was past lunch time; so, my brother had to order lunch for me and my father. During lunch my brother said that the Headmaster of Udatthawa School had said that there was a vacancy for an English Assistant in his school. He was the husband of my kindergarden class teacher and therefore we were known to each other for a fairly long time. Apart from this, neither my father nor my brother asked me anything about my escapade so that any doubt in my mind about what their reaction would be, was soon removed. After lunch, the two of us went home to Handaganawa. My mother and sisters were overjoyed to see me back. They too appeared to be careful, not to ask me any questions as to where I went and what I did, after I ran away from home.

### **Farewell, Alma Mater**

At the beginning of the third term, I went back to school, but nothing fruitful seemed to happen. Only two of us, *Sumana Akka* and myself, were in the H.S.C & U.E class. Mr. Manthilkake taught us the Sinhala subjects. I remember using *Baddegama* as our text book. It was a translation of Leonard Woolf's *Village in the Jungle*. The Principal, Mr M.B.S. Palipane came to the class off and on for a Geography lesson. Apart from this, there was no other classroom work, so that I used to spend the time with a group of our erstwhile classmates who were accommodated in a verandah outside the Principal's office, and waiting to complete the examination at the end of 1950. There was no sign of the Education Department approving the H.S.C & U.E class in our school.

Therefore, on September 12, 1950 I walked into the principal's office and told him that I wanted to leave school. Asked for the reason, I told him that I wanted to seek employment. So, without any further ado, the principal typed my leaving certificate and handed it over to me, together with a few other documents, about me that were in the school. I thanked him and left his office bidding farewell to him. I went round to meet other teachers to bid farewell. At last, it was the turn to take leave of my former classmates. This was a bit of a sad event, since I was leaving the school for good and taking my leave of my classmates who had been together for three or four years. The most sorrowful moment was when taking leave of *Sumana Akka*, as only the two of us were left out of those who passed the S.S.C. examination together in that year and by now I had developed a fraternal relationship with her.

I came to know very much later that a bursary holder was eligible to continue with financial support even in the university. Why the Principal did not advise me on this possibility was not clear. Perhaps it was because, I told him the reason for leaving the school was to seek employment but the actual reason was, that I had got the impression that my parents would not be able to support me for higher education. Unfortunately, I could not tell this to the principal. Not being aware of the possibility of continuing with the bursary, I could not ask for advice from any other teacher in the school.

When the boat turns upside down, that side is said to be better (than drowning, perhaps). Because of what happened to me, I got the opportunity to be exposed to an environment different from what I would have got, had I gone for higher education, direct from school. Being inherently an uppity individual, I would have been a different person. My experience as an assistant teacher and a government clerk, taught me to get on well with such groups of people, which was useful in my career. I must therefore thank the Principal Mr. M.B.S. Palipane for the opportunity that Willy Nilly came my way.

### **Going Home to Minipe**

Having spent my last night in the hostel, I left for home the following morning, bidding farewell to all my colleagues in the hostel. I came to Walala in February 1945 from Halyala. I was leaving Walala in September, 1950, five years and six months later to go to Handaganawa. Part of the route up to Madugoda would be the same as what I was used to travel at least once a month. But beyond Madugoda, the route up to Handaganawa was relatively new to me. Passing Madugoda, I came to Maussawa and then to Kovilmada. The stretch of road up to *Tawalantenna* was full of short sharp bends. No sooner the driver turns his steering wheel to the left, he had to turn it to the right at an angle of about ninety degrees; thus, it continues for a distance of about five miles. There was a short climb up the *Tawalantenne* hill after which the road descends for about half a mile and then takes a ninety degree turn descending towards Enasal *Kandura* and *Panawelulla*, then to Thispaha at which point, one gets a view of the vast *Bintenna* plains to the east. The road from this point, descends to *Gurulupotha* for a distance of about four miles, on the slope of the *Moraketiya* hill with the eighteen hair pin bends (*daha ata wanguwa*). The road from Madugoda was quite narrow and still narrower in the hair pin bend section, making it necessary to reverse the bus at least once to negotiate each bend. Some of the bends were so sharp that the bus needs reversing more than once. The sixteenth bend was the only one which has a wide circle and can be negotiated without reversing.

After Gurulupotha the descent continues up to *Hasalaka* through Maha Aswedduma but there were no sharp bends. About a mile from Gurulupotha, is the *Rathna Ella* Water Fall on the left. The road beyond Hassalaka is on flat country through *Pallewaththa* to *Weragantota*. There was a Dumbara Restaurant before the turn off to the *Rambukwella Road*. At a distance of about half a mile along the Rambukwella Road, the bus takes a left turn to go towards the Weragantota Rest House. Close to the Rest House there was a small bazaar beyond which is Oruthota, the crossing of the Mahaveli Ganaga to get over to Mahiyangana. The bus goes back to the Rambukwella Road to turn left and go towards *Morayaya*. There was a small bazaar at Morayaya. The Minipe Irrigation Office, Post Office, the Rural Hospital, and the school were located at Morayaya. The bus travels another two miles to reach *Thune Kanuwa* at which place was the former Italian Prison Camp. A little over a quarter of a mile from there was the huge banyan tree, *Hawarinuge*. In a little over half a mile the bus reaches *Handaganawa* at which place there was a cooperative store and two boutiques on either side of the road. After about another quarter of a mile the bus reached Wisihathare *Ela* (D. Channel 24), at which point I got off the bus to walk home along the main channel bund road. So, my schooling had come to an end after 5 years and 5

months of primary education and 5 years and 6 months of secondary education, a total of nearly eleven years.

### **Apey Aiyya (My Elder Brother)**

It is apposite to discuss in some detail my relationship with my elder brother, who was the eldest in our family. I have already mentioned something about him in Chapter II. My visits to Potawa, where he was the Chief Clerk of the Bintenna D.R. O's office, began in 1950 when I was awaiting the results of the S.S.C. examination and thereafter during school vacations. The first such visit was with him and his family.

Once they were returning from Mahiyangana to Potawa and I accompanied them. As we had to walk a distance of about six miles from Mahiyangana to Haddaththa Oya, *Aiyya* hired a bullock cart for his wife (*Nanda Akka*) and daughter to ride on. We walked along the *Pangaragammana Road* and reached *Haddaththa Oya* by dusk. The P.W.D. Overseer and his wife provided us with a sumptuous dinner and accommodated us for the night. The following morning, we travelled to Potawa by bus. It arrived at Haddaththa *Oya* in the evening and was parked there to return to *Badulla* the following morning. The house at *Potawa* was thatched with *illuk* and had a front verandah with a small room at one end. There was a common area and a bedroom behind which was a dining area and kitchen. The front room was occupied by *Poddalgoda Maama* (an uncle from Teldeniya), who was a clerk at the DRO's Office.

**Potawa** was a small village, six miles from *Bibile* and thirteen miles from Mahiyangana. It had a cooperative store and two more boutiques one of which belonged to the village headman and the other boutique to Kandiah from *Bibile*. A road by the side of Kandiah's boutique, led to the Village Committee Office, operating in a house with a large garden. This house was also occupied by the V.C. clerk Mr. Gunasekara, the cooperative inspector Mr. Appuhamy, and two clerks in the DRO's Office, Mr. Herath and Mr. Kodikara. They had a cook from Navayalatenna, who became friendly with me, when I visited that place during the day with my brother's two children. The manor of *Korale Mahaththaya* was in a garden, a distance away from the main road. The village headman's residence was by the roadside, just opposite the Cooperative Store. The DRO's office and the quarters of the DRO were in a large house with a large garden, behind the village headman's house. That property was owned by the village headman. The school, dispensary and the post office closest to Potawa were at *Uraniya*, about two miles away from Mahiyangana.

Subsequent to this visit, I went to Potawa on several occasions during the school holidays. One such trip was a walk of thirteen miles from Mahiyangana. Having started from home at *Minipe* in the morning, I went to what was called "*Seyyadu*" boutique in Mahiyangana to check whether there was anyone going towards Potawa, or even a part of that journey. As there weren't any, I started on my own to walk along the *Pangaragammana Road* towards Haddaththa Oya. This track was through thick jungle where wild elephants roamed. But because this was the dry season that was minimal. I reached the *Oya* which was a perennial

stream, quenched my thirst with what appeared to be clean fresh water and walked another one and a half miles, when I came to a small boutique at *Andaulpotha*. There were some rusks (*hulan viskothu*) and dried up *roast paan* (toast bread) in this boutique for me to eat, soaked in a glass of plain tea. When I walked about another four miles, I reached *Uraniya* and another two miles to Potawa. I did not meet any human being all the way from Andaulpotha to Potawa except at the Uraniya bazaar, which was also through thick jungle. After reaching Potawa, I had a late lunch prepared by *Nanda Akka*. This is *Pallewela Nanda Akka* and should not be confused with *Bambaradeniye Nanda Akka*.

On another occasion, I rode a bicycle to Potawa. I went to the Mahiyangana post office, where I met the postal peon carrying mail to Uraniya. This trip, was in the afternoon. On the return trip, I came early morning to the Uraniya post office, and came to Mahiyangana with the tappal runner. A road was being constructed from Haddaththa Oya to Mahiyangana through Mapakada, so that we could come along this road to Mahiyangana. I made this trip once again on my own on a bicycle.

Once, when I went to Potawa during a school vacation *Aiyya* had gone to Mahiyangana for the *Poson Festival*. It was the responsibility of the DRO to be on duty on behalf of the government at such religious festivals. *Nanda Akka* was in a helpless situation, when her infant daughter was afflicted with sore eyes. The child was crying incessantly because of the pain, which was severe in the dry season. So, when she found a lorry going to Mahiyangana, she decided to go there with me accompanying her. There was a hospital with a graduate medical officer at Mahiyangana. There would also be native physicians who specialized in eye treatment.

The infant son of *Aiyya* who was about ten months old was suffering from an attack of pneumonia when I was on a later visit to Potawa. The government medical practitioner at the Uraniya Hospital treated the child. This required a plaster called antiplogestine which was available at a boutique at *Hepola Oya* about two miles towards Bibile. I went there on a bicycle and brought this medication to apply as a plaster to keep the chest warm. The baby was cured within about ten to twelve days.

I went on *Aiyya's* bicycle to Yalkumbura on the Bibile-Passara road in search of a job at the cooperative society where, I was told, some vacancies existed. But the relevant authorities could not be contacted. When I returned to Potawa, it was pretty late in the evening, dark and raining. *Aiyya and Nanda akka* appeared to be relieved to see me back.

When the results of the S.S.C. examination were released, I sent a telegram to my brother informing him of the result and requesting him to send me fifteen rupees (to celebrate the event). He obliged promptly. I am sure he was very happy to hear the good news. My brother was very dear to me and was my guide when I needed such guidance to avoid pitfalls. Although he was far away, we used to write to each other and keep in touch. It was this affinity that prompted me to go to him, when I ran away from home. This close relationship continued till I got married and parted company for a few years in the late fifties. We resumed contact in the sixties, which continued till his death in 1985.



**Ape Aiyya, my Elder Brother**

The next chapter of my life is about employment and a few youthful adventures.

## Chapter IV

### My Life as a Youth

#### Background

I went to Walala Central School in February, 1945 from Halyala, my birth place. After leaving school in September, 1950, I went to Minipe, my second home in Allotment 21/33 of the Minipe Colonization Scheme. This scheme was launched in the mid-thirties of the twentieth century. Ceylon was still a British Colony and was ruled under the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931. Hon. D.S. Senanayake, the Minister of Agriculture and Lands under that constitution, launched several irrigation projects such as Minneriya, Kalawewa and Minipe. They were ancient irrigation schemes which had gone into desuetude under the rule of three colonial powers, Portuguese, Dutch and British from 1605 A.D.

The Minipe Colonization Scheme was based on the anicut constructed across Mahaveliganga, to divert water to the Yoda Ela on the left bank of the river, to irrigate over four thousand acres of paddy land under Stage I from Minipe to Morayaya, a distance of about fifteen miles of canal. This land was thick forest (*mookalan kele*), home to wild elephants. There had been an ancient irrigation scheme at Minipe. The modern main channel overlaps the ancient channel in most places. One wonders whether the ancient anicut across Mahaveliganga was at the same location as the modern anicut. It may be possible that the ancient anicut was at Rantembe where the river entered a very narrow gorge, which could be crossed over a wooden bridge (*edanda*), constructed by felling a large tree across the gorge. Under Stage I of the scheme, there were 35 distributory channels (D. Channels). The main areas of settlement were Minipe, Ambagahapelessa, Pahekanuwa, Handaganawa, Hawarinuge, Thunekanuwa, Theseke Ela, Morayaya and Thispahe Ela.

The motorable road known as Rambukwella Road overlapping Stage I of the scheme, covers about 10 miles from Weragantota to the Minipe Anicut. The main locations on the motorable road are Weragantota, the Rest House Junction, Thispahe Ela, Morayaya, Theseke Ela, Thunekanuwa, Hawarinunge, Handaganawa, Wisihathare Ela, Dumkala Watta, Pahekanuwa/Wisieke Ela, Ambagahapelessa, Minipe and Headworks. Only a little over one mile of this road was under the Public Works Department and therefore, at the initial stage buses could ply only up to Morayaya from Kandy. A stretch of nearly nine miles was under the Irrigation Department and no public transport was allowed as this was an agricultural road. The colonists underwent considerable difficulties, particularly in the case of illness. There was a maternity home at Ambagahapelessa and a cottage hospital at Pahekanuwa but

the hospital with a medical graduate was at Mahiyangana, which was across the Mahaveliganga at Weragantota. After innumerable representations, bus transport up to Minipe was extended in the late forties.

The Minipe Scheme fell within the Uda Dumbara Division of Kandy District. It was administered by a *Ratemahattaya*, *Rambukwella Dissawe*, who played a pioneering role in opening the Minipe irrigation scheme by clearing the jungle. My father, accompanied by a few others from our village, went to Minipe with *Rambukwella Dissawe* to clear the jungle in the area, that fell within D.21 channel. This was a malarial area and it was a miracle that *Appachchi* did not fall victim to malarial fever.

Those who were pioneers in jungle clearing, were given allotments of land under the colonization scheme. Each allottee received five acres of paddy land and three acres of highland. The colonist's cottage was built in this plot of high land. This is how my father became the allottee of lot No.33 of D.21. These pioneers had to walk over twenty miles from *Halyala to Wisi Eke Ela* to reach their allotments. Although there was a bus plying between Kandy and Weragantota, these people did not depend on it. Even if they did, they could go only up to Weragantota and walk five miles as there was no motorable road at the beginning. Even after the Irrigation Department constructed a road from Weragantota to Minipe, buses were not allowed on it for a very long time because it was meant for departmental use only.

Initially, there was only one bus from Kandy to Weragantota, leaving Kandy at about 6.30 a.m and arriving at Weragantota at about 12 noon. The return journey started at about 1 p.m. reaching Kandy by about 7 p.m. Some time later, a bus starting from Kandy at about 1 p.m. reached Weragantota by evening. Those who wanted to travel by this bus on its return journey, had to start very early in the morning walking a distance of up to ten miles to arrive at Weragantota before the bus left at 6.30 a.m. After the irrigation road was constructed, lorries of the Land Development Department and the Land Commissioner's Department began to ply on this road, but getting a lift in one of them depended on the whims and fancies of the driver concerned. Some time later, private vehicles began to transport passengers between Minipe and Weragantota. It was only in the late forties, that a regular bus service up to Minipe operated on this road.

Thus, the pioneers of the Minipe Colonization Scheme faced problems of transport in addition to the malarial problem in the absence of any hospitals and dispensaries. The closest hospital was at Mahiyangana, across the Mahaveli and was over five miles away from D.21. There were three boutiques in Handaganawa and *Wisi Eke Ela* which catered to the needs of the colonists. They were run by traders called *Podimahaththaya*, *Haramanis Mudalalie*, and *Pihille Gedara*. The Minipe Post Office was housed in the *Pihille Gedara* boutique. By the time I went to Minipe in September, 1950 most of these problems had been resolved.

## My New Home

The cottage constructed by the Land Development Department for lot 21/33 was situated on the three-acre highland allotment, just above the main channel, over one mile away from the paddy land. This cottage had a front verandah from which there was an entrance to the living area. There was one bed room, a passage and a kitchen. Access to the bed room from the living area was to the right and to the passage, straight ahead. Behind the passage, was the kitchen to which access was from the passage. Water for domestic use was drawn from a common well, constructed by the Land Development Department and was one block away. During the rainy season, we had a well dug in our own allotment near the cottage. The main channel at the edge of the allotment was used for bathing and washing.

We walked to our paddy land along a foot-path up to a trough on the main channel and crossed it to get on to the bund. Walking along the bund for some distance, we arrived at the Irrigation Road, walked about a quarter mile to arrive at D.21 and along this D. channel for another quarter mile to arrive at Allotment 33, our paddy land.

When my father first arrived at this allotment, he constructed a one-roomed hut at a vantage point on the five-acre (ten pela) paddy land. Access to the room-cum-kitchen was through a passage which he used as his bedroom as well. He had constructed an earthen structure (*kottapila*), about one and a half feet high, which he used as his bed. Above the kitchen, there was a wooden structure below the roof which he used as a store area, access to which was by a ladder. Water for domestic use was obtained from a makeshift well near a water fall on the D/channel. Bathing was in the channel when there was water or else in the Mahaveli about three quarter of a mile away. When he shifted to the cottage on the highland, this hut was replaced by another one at the top of the block. This was used only when there was work in the field.

Two other families from Halyala had received two allotments adjacent to that of my father. One was that of our *Baala Heen Appachchi*. His highland lot was also adjacent to ours while that of the other person was a little further away.

The scarcity of food which I experienced at the hostel came to an end at Minipe. However, there was nothing for me to do for a while. The regular routine a person is subjected to when at school, came to an end. I did not follow the time table of others but had to organize my own time table if my days were to be spent fruitfully. Until that was done, it was a daily routine of going out after breakfast to the bazaar at Handaganawa which was about half a mile away, reading a newspaper, listening to the yarns of those gathered there, coming home, lunch and then a long afternoon snooze. I would then go to the main channel nearby for a bath. I visited the neighbouring house of *Heen Mama/Heen Appachchi* to listen to radio music. This radio was operated with a 'Berec' dry battery' which was about eight inches long, six inches wide and three inches high, weighing about four pounds and connected to the radio with four wires. Dinner was a little after dusk. Early to bed and early to rise was the norm.



## **Paddy Cultivation**

With the beginning of the cultivation season in December, I could not remain idle when my father went out to the field. I decided that I should also participate in field work. This was not something strange because even at fourteen years of age, I went to the field with a tiny mammy while work was going on. On the day that I started work in earnest, there was heavy rain. By evening my limbs which had been idle all this while ached. When I went home after a bath at the channel, I was very tired. My mother had set up a fire for me to dry myself, and after a hearty meal I went to sleep. The following morning, I felt refreshed and so this continued until the middle of January, 1951. The other adults who worked with us in the field seemed to hold the mistaken view, that a person need not pass examinations to engage in paddy cultivation. Some of their remarks would have forced me away from the field, if not for the fact that I was a youth who could withstand such pressures.

## **Teaching at Urugala**

I had sent several applications to the Education Department seeking an appointment as an English Assistant (Teacher). Once I received a letter informing me that I had been selected for appointment to a school at Wellawa in the Kurunegala district, but this was subsequently cancelled. However, an application I had handed over to the Education Officer at his office in the Suisse Hotel in Kandy bore fruit. I received a letter in January appointing me to act as an English Assistant in the Urugala Junior School with effect from January 15, 1951.

I went to Urugala on January 14 accompanied by my father who carried a pillow case with some vegetables picked up from his highland cultivation. At Urugala, we went in search of the Head Master Mr. Samarasena who was living in a house along a by-road but not far from the main road. He directed us to a house occupied by some teachers. We went back to the bazaar from where there was an access road to the school down a paddy field. The house was close to the school, just across a footpath leading down towards Motamure. The occupants of the house were, Mr. Fernando of the Primary School, Mr. Mithrasena, Carpentry Instructor of the Junior School, and Mr. Ponniah of the Tamil section of the Primary School. Mr. Fernando who appeared to be the leader of the group, assigned a camp cot for my use and so I settled down at Urugala. My father went back to Minipe.

My father had accompanied me to school twice before, once to the primary school and then to the central school. Why he accompanied me to Urugala, when I could have managed things on my own, indicated how happy he was about my gradual progress. Apart from this, he was not a person to pamper his children even when they were very young.

We had to go to another house, that was about a quarter of a mile up the hill through the bazaar for lunch and dinner. There was a cook who catered for the four of us, as well as another three. They were Messrs Attanayake and Wickremasinghe of the Primary School

and Mr. Uduwawala of the M.O.H. office. We had breakfast at our own house, a few hoppers and a glass of milk. We also had a cup of tea at the ten o'clock interval.

**January 15, 1951 was my first day** at my new job; in fact, it was the first day **of my employment** anywhere. I was a school boy up to that time but became a school teacher on that day. The school started at eight in the morning and concluded at one o'clock in the afternoon with a short interval at about 10 am. There were three classes in the Urugala Junior School. The wife of the Head Master, Mrs. Samarasena was in charge of Standard Six and Mr. Samarasena was the class master of Standard Eight. I was assigned Standard Seven which had about twenty pupils. Some of them were Herath, a daughter of the Primary School Headmaster, the brother and sister of Mr. Abeysinghe who was a primary school teacher, Abeywardhane, the son of the Headmaster of the Wegala School, a girl who was a cousin of Abeywardhane, Ekanayake, the brother of a restaurant owner, and a boy from a tea estate. A few years later, I met Abeywardhane who was employed as a clerk at the Tamankaduwa Irrigation Office.

I had to teach all the subjects in Standard Seven. This was a formidable task for a person who had no experience or training as a teacher. These subjects had to be taught in the English medium. My work was facilitated by the availability of text books. I had to think of how my teachers taught us and what methods they used. To me the most difficult subject to teach was Art in which I was not good at all as a student.

The school complex had five buildings. They were the Junior School building, the Primary Head Master's quarters, the carpentry shed, the Tamil Section building, and the Primary School building. The Primary School Headmaster's quarters and the Primary School building were the first to be built here, which I remember were there even when we came for the annual Health Week variety shows before 1945.

As would be clear by now, the Junior School had a staff of four members which included the Samarasena couple, Mr. Mithrasena and Mr. Ariyapala. Mr. Veerakathy came on to the Junior School as a teacher of practical subjects. A female teacher joined the staff just before I left in November, 1951. She was a resident of Anchikade in Teldeniya. The Tamil section had two teachers; Mr. Ponniah and Miss Ehambaram. The Primary Section had the Headmaster Mr. Herath, his wife, Mr. Attanayake, English Teacher, Mr. Wickremasinghe, Mr. Fernando, and Mr. Abeysinghe as its teachers. One Miss Mendis joined as an addition in 1951.

My salary as an English Assistant was sixty rupees per month. In addition to this basic salary, a cost-of-living allowance and a special living allowance were added. The total emoluments for a month therefore came to about Rupees 120. Normally teachers' salaries were paid around the twenty fifth of each month, but I was paid by about the tenth of the following month because I was an acting teacher. The Head Master had to send a statement of my attendance to the Education Office after which my salary was sent to the Urugala Post Office. If I absented myself on a Friday and Monday in the ensuing week, I would lose four days' pay. I did not receive any salary during the vacations in April and August.

While at Urugala I participated in some activities outside the school in the company of other teachers. On the fourth of February we hired a car and went to Hunnasgiriya to take part in

Independence Day celebrations organized by the Uda Dumbara DRO. Some of us sang a few songs to entertain the gathering. On another occasion we hired a car to go to Kandy to see a movie at the New Empire cinema. While waiting in the queue for tickets I fainted and was assisted by my colleagues. But this did not prevent us seeing the movie. The other important event was attending the wedding house (Magul gedera) of Mr. Ekanayake, the restaurant owner. His house was at Metideniya accessible along a footpath down a paddy field, crossing a perennial stream and walking up a paddy field to reach the house. At the wedding we were seated in a separate room. This was the second time in my life that I broke the fifth of the Five Precepts. Walking back up the paddy field footpath was very difficult for most of us but no mishap occurred.

It was at this time that my brother came to our native place at Halyala and occupied the house there for a while. They had pirith chanting one night as was the practice when settling down in a house anew even though it may not be a new house. When I heard of the pirith ceremony I also participated in it. My brother had two children by this time, a daughter and a son. The sister-in-law was expecting another child. Perhaps this was why they decided to settle down in a more salubrious environment than in Mahiyangana. Once in a way I would visit them at the weekend and enjoy a good home cooked meal. Once I bought a fairly large steel trunk from a boutique at Madugoda and brought it with me to Urugala. Sometime after the child birth this family shifted back to Mahiyangana and remained there till about the middle of 1953.

While working as a school teacher at Urugala, I searched for better avenues of employment that would provide me with a regular income. I came across a notification in the Ceylon Government Gazette, which was available at the Urugala Post Office, that the General Clerical Service examination was due to be held and applications were being entertained. I sent in my application and was sent an admission form to sit the examination to be held on June 15, 1951 at a centre in a school in Kandy. Before long the results of the examination were published in the Ceylon Government Gazette. I had passed the examination and therefore was guaranteed a permanent and pensionable appointment in a government department.

## **General Clerical Service**

The Deputy Secretary to the Treasury (D.S.T) had sent me a letter on November 5, 1951 informing me of my appointment to the General Clerical Service in the Irrigation Department. The appointment would be effective from November 15, 1951. Therefore, I bade farewell to my teaching job on November 13, 1951. With my steel trunk I had brought from Madugoda I left for Kandy Railway Station by the evening bus from Urugala. The train to Colombo left Kandy at about 2.30 a.m. Although I had to break rest the whole night that was of no consequence because of eager future expectations.

***Journey to Colombo:*** The night mail train from Badulla to Colombo Fort arrived at Peradeniya Junction at about three in the morning. The section of about three compartments coming from Kandy was then attached to the Colombo train. I had obtained a railway warrant from the Irrigation Department, which enabled me to travel free from Kandy to Colombo Fort in a second-class compartment. This is how I went to Colombo on November 14, 1951. The train reached Colombo Fort by about 6.45 in the morning.

I had never gone to Colombo on my own, and therefore sent a letter to my cousin Sirinama requesting him to meet me at the Fort Railway Station. He was working in the Widows' and Orphans' Pension (W. & O.P.) Office. Sirinama Aiyya was the elder brother of my sister-in-law, Nanda Akka. Although I waited at the railway station till about nine in the morning there was no sign of Sirinama Aiyya. Not knowing what to do, it suddenly struck me that Dharmasena Aiyya, the second son of *Bala Heen Appachchi*, was now living at *Sumangalaramaya, Punchi Borella*, having entered the Buddhist order of monks, as a pupil of the chief incumbent of this temple, who was from *Thalagune*, a village adjacent to my native place, Halyala. While waiting for Sirinama Aiyya, many a person at the railway station asked me where I wanted to go. So, I asked a hiring car driver to drop me at Sumangalaramaya, agreeing to pay five rupees as hire. Although I got into the car, I did not know where it was going but after some time we arrived at the temple. *Dhammarathana Podi Hamuduruwo* was there and I was greatly relieved that there was some temporary shelter for me even if Sirinama Aiyya did not come to meet me.

I explained my situation to *Podi Hamuduruwo*. By now it was approaching lunch time. So, he told me that we can attend to the problem after the *dawaldane*. I also was given lunch at the temple. *Podi Hamuduruwo* did not know how to go to Sirinama Aiyya's office. Therefore, the two of us took a tram car to the Borella junction and from there a bus to *Sri Jayawardhanaramaya, Cotta Road*. There we met *Halyale Indajothi Hamuduruwo*. The three of us took a COC bus from Cotta Road to Lake House and from there walked down to the Secretariat building where the W & OP office was located. When contacted, Sirinama Aiyya told us that he was under the impression that I was coming the following morning and agreed to come to Sumangalaramaya after office. Therefore, the three of us walked up to a tram car halt on York Street and took a tram to Sumangalaramaya. This was the mode of passenger transport on Colombo Fort to Borella, Colombo Fort to Kotahena and Kotahena to Borella routes in the city of Colombo at that time. This was my first tram car journey.

### **The Boarding House**

Sirinama Aiyya came to the temple at about five o'clock and in a hired car, the two of us went along Kanatte Road to Narahenpita Junction and turned on to Thimbirigasyaya Road and then left to Abhayaramaya Lane. We arrived at No.20, the home of the *Kithulagoda* family. Sirinama Aiyya was a boarder in this house. Two front rooms were occupied by six boarders, three in each room. I was shown a bed in the room occupied by Sirinama Aiyya and Mr. Wanigarane, a clerk in the Money Order Department of the Postal Department. The entrance to this room was through the front room which was also occupied by three boarders, Mr. Chandradasa, accountant at the D.C. Fernando Co., Mr. Samarasekara of the Money Order Department and his younger brother Gunadasa, a school boy. The entrance to

this room was from the front verandah. There was a bathroom and a lavatory on the other side of the house access to which was round the front compound. Just in front across the road were two burgher families, the Whatmores and Deutremes.

The affairs of the boarding house were managed by Mrs. Kithulagoda. Mr. Kithulagoda was a clerk in the Money Order Department and went to office early for overtime work. He travelled on a bicycle. They had three children, a son Ranjith and two daughters. The younger daughter was Geetha. The son was a student at Royal College. He was taken there on a rickshaw that was a common form of transport at the time. The two girls were students of Visakha Vidyalaya and travelled by bus. The mother of Mrs. Kithulagoda also lived there. There was a boy who attended to odd jobs in the house and some women to work in the kitchen. Each boarder was charged sixty rupees a month for board and lodging. Lunch was sent to the office through a lunch-carrier who was paid three rupees a month.

### **Irrigation Department**

On the morning of November 15, 1951, I assumed duties at the Head Office of the Irrigation Department as a clerk in the General Clerical Service. I was accompanied by my cousin Sirinama to the Head Office of the Irrigation Department which was located on the third floor of the Secretariat building. We took a Castle Bus Co. bus from the Abhayaramaya Lane halt on Thimbirigasyaya Road to Bambalapitiya. The bus fare was ten cents. From Bambalapitiya to Fort we took a South Western Bus Co. bus. The fare was fifteen cents. We got off at the Secretariat halt. Having shown me the office of the Irrigation Department, Sirinama Aiyya went down to his office promising to meet me after office, to travel back to the boarding house.

The Director of Irrigation was Mr. W.A. Guthrie and the Deputy Director was Mr. W.T.I. Alagaratnam and the Assistant Director was Mr. A.E.C.de S. Gunasekara. They were all engineers. A Civil Servant Mr. Gulasekaram was the Assistant Director (Administration). The Chief Accountant was Mr. A. Weerasinghe. Messrs E.F.E. Fonseka, Pararajasingham and C. Wignarajah were Assistant Accountants. The Office Assistant was Mr. K. Kanagaratnam while Mr. G.M. Direckze was the Chief Clerk. Mr. E.M. Gunasena Banda of the Establishment Branch was the clerk in charge of our subject area. He directed me to the Estimates Branch in another room.

This room accommodated three branches, Estimates, Accounts and Pay, and had about twenty clerks. The Estimates Branch had its row of tables close to the set of windows opening out to the Galle Face Green and the sea. The Head of the Estimates Branch was Mr. A.V. Ratnarajah, an elderly gentleman. The others in this branch were Duraisingham, Phillipiah, Thambiah and Peiris. All of them appeared to be either in their late thirties or forties. M.A. Podimahaththaya was the typist and Karunadasa, the office peon. There was a vacant table and a chair in the middle of the row. Mr. Ratnarajah asked me to occupy it and await instructions. There was a canteen on a side wing of the third floor, where, I was told, my lunch (packed in two enamel plates and tied with a cloth and carrying my name tag) would be left by the lunch-carrier.

On my first day there was hardly any one interested in talking to me, except a person in the Accounts Branch who sat parallel to me. I cannot remember his name now, but he was a Muslim as his name and accent indicated. In time others began to speak to me. The person who became very friendly with me was the elderly typist, Mr. Podimahaththaya, who I learnt was from Ratnapura and was living near Delkanda Junction at Gangodawila. Three others had come on their first appointment on the same day. They were Sivagurunathan and Rajakaruna of the Accounts Branch and Sivasubramaniam of the Pay Branch. Most of the clerks in these three branches appeared to have some experience and were making progress except one who did not get through his typing test even at the age of thirty-five years. A clerk has to pass his typing test within the first year of service to be eligible for the first increment. On reaching the age of thirty-five years, he will get his increment even if he had not passed the typing test.

Sirinama Aiyya came to accompany me to the boarding house at the end of first day's work. From then on, I came to office on my own. On the seventh of December, my Muslim colleague seated next to me asked me whether I was drawing the salary advance. I did not know what it was. I was told that approximately 25% of the monthly salary could be drawn on the seventh of each month in advance, which would be deducted from the month's salary. Since I did not want it, he asked me to loan it to him and promised to repay it on pay day. Although I did not know whether I would get into a trap, I gave him the money. Fortunately for me he repaid it on salary day, but I was now required to draw the advance every month for one full year.

Sirinama Aiyya got a transfer to the Peradeniya Agriculture Department at the end of December. He served in that department until his death some time in 1974. By then he was either the Office Assistant (OA) or an administrative officer of the department. By the end of December, I was able to get about in the vicinity of my boarding house and the office. There was about one week's vacation for Christmas at that time. January first was also a holiday. Therefore, I went home to Minipe for the first time after I came to Colombo.

An engineering student of the University of Ceylon by the name of Jayasena came as a boarder to fill Sirinama Aiyya's place. He was from Kirindiwela. Some time later I met him at Uda Dumbara. He told me that he had married a daughter of Mediwake Korale Mahaththaya. I was at the Kithulagoda boarding house for about one year. Mr. Samarasekara, who was one of occupants of the front room got married and left to live in Nugegoda. His brother Gunadasa also left with him. The vacancies were filled by Mahaliyana of the Municipal Council and Siriwardhane of the Post Office Savings Bank.

An advance of Rs 150 was granted to government servants at that time to purchase a push cycle. Repayment was in monthly instalments of about seven rupees with a small interest. I drew the advance and purchased a Raleigh cycle from Hunter and Company at Front Street, Colombo. This enabled me to explore Colombo and travel to office. I also obtained a second-class season ticket to travel by train from Narahenpita to Fort. It cost me Rs. 6 for three months. On rainy days, I would go to office by train. This was on the narrow gauge Kelani Valley railway line that operated trains between Colombo Fort and Opanayake. All trains

except one had old steam engines. There was one diesel engine. There are a number of stations between Fort and Narahenpita, viz, Maradana, Baseline Road, Cotta Road, and Manning Town Halt. It took about half an hour to cover this distance.

My bicycle route to office started from Abhayarama Lane to Thimbirigasyaya Road and to Torrington Avenue, up to Radio Ceylon, beyond which was the vast Race Course of the Ceylon Turf Club. After Torrington Road, I went on to Alexandra Place. On its right was St. Bridget's Convent and a little beyond on the left was Victoria Park. When I passed that, I came to the Colombo Town Hall on the left and the Victoria Eye Hospital on the right. Just at that point, is also Lipton Circus with double roundabouts. Taking a right-angle turn to the left, I got on to Union Place, to take me to the Slave Island roundabout. I took a right-angle turn to the right to cover about half a mile to the Regal Theatre on the left and Lake House on the right. A little ahead at the crossroads, I turned left and rode down to the Secretariat building and the cycle shed. The adjacent building was the Parliament building a short distance away towards the sea.

The working week was from Monday to Saturday. Office times on week days were from 9.00 am to 4.30 pm and on Saturday till 1.00 pm. The boarders spent their spare time playing cards for five cent stakes and pooled the money. When I was transferred out at the end of 1952, my boarding mates decided to spend this money for a group photograph at Maradana Donald's Studio and a modest tea party. Sometimes after dinner, we would take a walk up to the Parakrama Theatre on Kirula Road and watch a 9.30 movie. A second-class ticket was priced at one rupee and twenty cents.

There was a cable radio service called Rediffusion at the time. Some houses in the garden behind the Kithulagoda's had Rediffusion connections. The musical programmes on this radio which begin at six in the morning, went on till ten in the night. Although this was at times a nuisance to those of us in the rear room of the boarding house, it also enabled us to listen to some songs and music. The radio set in the Kithulagoda house was operated for the news broadcast of Radio Ceylon and the evening children's programme.

***Desire for Higher Education Kindled:*** Not long after I went to Colombo, I met Dr. Tennakoon Vimalananda at the Irrigation Department. He had come to meet one of the directors. Dr. Vimalananda was the first Headmaster of the Walala Central School to which I was admitted during his tenure. He got an appointment as a Lecturer of the University of Ceylon, from where he went to England for his PhD. When I met him, he was living at Schofield Place, Kollupitiya, and asked me to come there whenever I was free. When I went there at a weekend, I found that the house was adjacent to the railway line. Professor Ravi also lived in that house.

Each time I met Dr Tennakoon Wimalananda, he encouraged me to do my higher education emphasizing how important it was. He promised to help me, provided me with some books and introduced me to a few who could guide me in various subjects. He asked me to apply to the University when there were vacancies for clerks. I did so once, but was not selected. The university was then located in Colombo. Once he asked me to accompany him when he visited *Sri Sivali Hamuduruwo of Vidyalandara Privena* and introduced me as the nephew of

*Halyale Sumanatissa Hamuduruwo*. The two of them talked about the debate between Dr. Senarath Paranavithane and Dr. Tennakoon Vimalananda, that was being published weekly in the *Silumina*. When the university was shifted to Peradeniya in 1952, Dr. Vimalananda asked me to accompany him to his new quarters on Galaha Road, to help him to arrange his books in his library. I spent a week-end assisting him and returned to Colombo by train. The desire for higher education kindled by him, remained dormant until I got an opportunity to launch into it, which is also the main theme of this exercise.

### **Death of Rt Hon.D.S. Senanayake**

Consequent to the General Election held in September/October, 1947 and the victory of the United National Party, its leader Mr. D.S. Senanayake became the first Prime Minister of Ceylon. Under the previous constitution, he was the Minister of Agriculture and Lands who played a key role in the establishment of colonization schemes such as Minipe, Minneriya and Kalawewa. Hon. D.S. Senanayake had the practice of exercising in the mornings, riding a horse on Galle Face Green, which was close to his official residence 'Temple Trees'. One morning in March, 1952 he fell off his horse and died.

His body was lying- in- state in the Parliament building. Thousands of mourners went past the body for several days. I cannot now remember where the body was cremated. In all probability it was at the Independence Square. When I went home for the New Year holidays in April, my father asked me if I had gone to pay my last respects to the Prime Minister. I had in fact done so several times as the Parliament building was next to the Secretariat. My father was very happy to hear this because he had enormous respect for Hon. D. S. Senanayake, who pioneered the Minipe colonization scheme.

### **New Prime Minister**

The post of Prime Minister felt vacant with the death of Rt. Hon. D.S. Senanayake. His son Hon Dudley Shelton Senanayake, who was the Minister of Agriculture and Lands in his father's cabinet, was appointed by the Governor-General Lord Soulbury as the new Prime Minister. It was rumoured that Sir John Kotelawala, Minister of Transport and Works, who was a senior member of the United National Party (UNP), caused a pamphlet titled "Premier Stakes" to be published criticizing this appointment. Hon. Dudley Senanayake, the new Prime Minister held an Agricultural Exhibition at the Victoria Park (present *Vihara Maha Devi* Park) to publicise the achievements of the UNP government. Soon after that he dissolved Parliament and called a general election.

### **1952 General Election**

I got the opportunity to go on election duty for the first time in my life. I went to Matara, together with a large number of government servants, who travelled by special train from Maradana to Matara late in the night and arrived at Matara early in the morning. We walked a certain distance, crossed the Nilwala Ganga on an old steel bridge, and after some more walking, arrived at the Matara Kachcheri.



At the Kachcheri, we were assigned to various polling stations by some official there. Most of those who went from Colombo had to go to polling stations by bus. Three of us were assigned the polling station at the Nupe Roman Catholic School, which we reached walking back towards the railway station along Broadway Road and turning left along a minor road. We were accommodated for the night in an upstairs building on Broadway Road. The village headman of the area provided us meals and accommodation. Having participated in the rehearsal session in the afternoon, we returned to our accommodation and relaxed until the following morning. One in our group was Mr. Ranasinghe of the Irrigation Department, an experienced clerk and a jovial, talkative fellow, so that we had never a dull moment that evening.

Early the following morning, we went to the polling station. Voting began at 7 o'clock and closed at 4 in the afternoon. The Senior Presiding Officer (SPO) was an Assistant Commissioner of Immigration. We had our lunch at the polling station. After the poll was closed at 4 o'clock, the ballot box was sealed. The SPO accompanied by a police constable took the ballot box to the kachcheri. Our trio returned to our accommodation, and after a wash and a change, went to the railway station to take the special train to Maradana. We may have had our dinner at a restaurant on the way to the railway station. I changed over to a Kelani Valley train to go to Narahenpita, but having fallen asleep, I woke up past the bridge at Polhengoda. So, I got down at the Kirillapone station and walked back along the railway line to my boarding house. *This was my first trip to Matara.*

### **Food Control Enumeration**

An enumeration under the Food Control Ordinance was held in 1952. I was assigned the task of counting officer of a section of the Thimbirigasyaya Road. The necessary forms had to be distributed in advance to the households in the area. On the night of enumeration day, we visited each house, counted the number of residents and checked whether they had ration books or not. These books also had to be checked.

I encountered some embarrassment at two houses. In one, the two occupants were a mother and a daughter. The mother was there but she said that the daughter was sick and sleeping. I told the mother that unless I saw all the people listed in the form, it was irregular for me to certify the veracity of the entries. With great reluctance, she brought the daughter out. I thanked them and left the place. By the time I went to the last house, I was a bit tired and sat down at a table and placed my file on the table. As I was waiting thus one of the residents asked me to go ahead with my work. When I told him that I was waiting for the ration books, his response was that they were under my file. Feeling a bit ashamed, I completed my work there and went to my boarding house. After that I went on my cycle to the supervising officer Mr.G.D. Loos, who lived at Havelock Road and handed over the completed forms. It was a big relief to be rid of that responsibility.

One day, I went to meet Podimahaththaya at Delkanda Junction before the *Vesak Festival* in 1952. He told me that his neighbours were making a large vesak lantern (*yoda vesak kuduwa*) for the festival and that I could see it, if I came there. I had never seen such a lantern before and therefore went on my bicycle along Nawala Road to Nugegoda and then to Delkanda Junction. There was a large cadjan shed by the side of the road. Inside it was

the *Pahan Kuduwa* with a number of smaller ones around it. There were no lights yet as it was a few days before Vesak. Podimahaththaya was living in a house on Pangiriwatte Road. He treated me to a sumptuous dinner. When I returned to the boarding house it was pretty late.

### **First Suit**

My first full suit with double-breast coat and trousers, was tailored at a Tailoring Mart at Bambalapitiya. The suit was turned out of Indian tussore within about one week and cost me around Rupees 50. I also got a pair of English tussore trousers tailored. There were no ready-made garments in those days, and whatever one wanted had to be tailored, which was good because it was made to measure and fitted the particular customer. Ready-made shirts came into the market in the early sixties from Singapore. White shirts were priced at Rs. 7.50. Shoes were imported from England. The best brand of shoes was 'John White' and a pair cost Rs 26. Local shoes were available at around Rs 10. I wore my suit for the group photograph taken prior to my transfer to Minipe. Perhaps a framed copy of that photograph is still available with my sister.

### **Ailments**

I suffered from some illnesses accompanied by high temperature. In February, I took treatment for fever from Dr. A. Ratnapala of Kirula Road who recommended five days' leave. In March, I was hospitalized at Mahiyangana. The District Medical Officer (DMO) had recommended sixteen days' medical leave. In July I was warded at the General Hospital, Colombo (Ward No.21) and was granted eleven days' medical leave. My hospitalization helped me to get an understanding of the conditions that prevailed at that time. At Mahiyangana there were no nurses, so that the attendants looked after patients and dispensed the treatment prescribed by medical personnel (DMO and RMPs). There was no electricity which meant that kerosene lamps had to be used at night. Sterilization of syringes etc. was done in boiling water in equipment meant for the purpose. My brother who was working in Mahiyangana at the time and sister-in-law (*Nanda Akka*) visited me at the hospital.

At the General Hospital in Colombo, there were specialist medical consultants, house officers, female nurses and nursing sisters of some Christian denomination (Irish Catholic?). There were also the usual attendants. The House Officer (HO), who was a medical graduate, would examine the patients twice a day. The Consultant examined a patient only if recommended by the HO, or if the patient was known to the consultant. The nurses dispensed medicine prescribed by the medical officers and administered injections, etc. The denominational nursing sisters also took turns with the nurses, but they appeared to attend only to those of their faith. A Christian priest also visited the patients daily. In those days no dignitaries of other religions visited patients. The attendants looked after the menial tasks in the ward, but were helpful if the patients rewarded them. I had no such contacts except that one day a nurse who was a fiancée of one of our boarding-mates visited me with one of her colleagues. Mrs Kithulagoda had sent me soup through the servant boy one day at lunch time. Both these were some consolations to one who had no visitors in hospital.

I was unhappy living in Colombo because of these illnesses. Therefore, as soon as I passed the typing test which had to be completed within the first year of service, I requested a transfer to Minipe. Some of my colleagues in the Head Office thought that I was out of my senses to ask for a transfer to a place like Minipe. They did not know that I was from Minipe. When I got the transfer order, the OA Mr. Kanagaratnam called me to advise me that working in the home area was a difficult task, that those who are known can fall out, and therefore one needs to be very careful. I thanked him for the advice and took my leave.

My fellow boarders invited me for a group photograph and tea at Punchi Borella. The Kithulagoda family had accommodated me for about thirteen months. I thanked them and left. I called a 'Quickshaw' to go to the Fort railway station in the evening to catch the night train to Kandy. This was perhaps on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, because I had to assume duties at Minipe on December 22, 1952. I had handed over my push bicycle to the Fort Railway Station to be sent to Kandy. Having arrived at Kandy late in the evening, I checked into the Muslim Hotel for the night. Early the following morning I took a bus to Minipe.

## **Transfer to Minipe**

In the morning of December 22, 1952, I reported for duty at the Minipe Irrigation Office, located at Morayaya about three and a half miles from my home at Handaganawa. I had decided to travel for work on my bicycle, which was the most convenient form of travel in colonization schemes rather than waiting for buses. There were two buses in the morning, one at 7.30 and the other at 8.30. The first was too early because office opened at 9.00. One was not sure whether the second bus would be in time for office. I did not want to be late.

The Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) in charge of the Minipe Sub Division was Mr. Appucutty Chellappah, a Grade I Technical Assistant (TA). The head clerk (HC) was Mr. E. Rajapakse, an officer of the General Clerical Service. The office peon was Mr. Siriwardhane. There were two store keepers (SKs), Mr. Jinadasa and Mr. Barsenbach. Bandulahamy and Podiappuhamy were two labourers while Robo Singho was the night watcher. There was a lorry driver called Richard and several Technical Assistants, Overseers and a large number of labourers attached to various work sites under the sub division on either side of the Mahaveliganga.

There were two clerks, one was the head clerk (HC). I was very much junior to him and therefore was called the second clerk. The duties assigned to me included establishment matters, typing, and irrigation difficulties. This work involved the typing of estimates, tenders and contract documents. Establishment work involved clerical work relating to the leave of labourers and accidents. Mr Piyasena and Leelasoma joined later.

There were two main categories of labourers. The maintenance labourers, who looked after the irrigation works that have been completed and which required day-to-day maintenance. There were a few patrol labourers to go up and down the channel system and report any damage caused to the bunds, etc. and of cattle and buffaloes trespassing, because they can damage the earthen bunds. The other maintenance labourers attended to the weeding of

bunds and irrigation roads and to any minor repairs. There were two Maintenance Overseers (M.Os.) in charge of maintenance. Mr. Sivasamy was stationed at Ambagahapelessa and was responsible for the Headworks (Anicut), the upper section of the channel system and the relevant section of the road. Mr. Jayakody was stationed at Hawarinuge (Handaganawa) and was in charge of the lower section of the channel system and part of the Irrigation Road.

The maintenance labourers who had long years of service were eligible for fourteen days' casual leave and fourteen days' medical leave but until I looked into this, they had never been given leave even for such events as New Year or for illness. Casual leave can be taken up to seven days at one stretch. Medical leave can be allowed on medical certificates issued by a government medical officer (DMO or RMP). When I conveyed this to the Maintenance Overseers, they were surprised. Or they may have been partners to the conspiracy because when leave is granted, they have to make alternative arrangements which was a bit of an inconvenience.

The other category of workers were those engaged in the construction sites and were under the direct supervision of Construction Overseers (C.Os.). These labourers were also eligible for the leave referred to above, if they had 180 days service in the previous year. These workers fell into such categories as Skilled Grades I & II, Semi-skilled and Unskilled. All the workers whether maintenance or construction were daily paid and their daily pay was Rs.1.20, 1.40, 1.80.and 2.10 depending on their grade. Some of the construction workers would eventually become maintenance labourers. The construction workers more than maintenance labourers were prone to accidents. These were among my duties.

Eventually the work relating to Monthly Progress Reports (MPR) and Weekly Progress Reports (WPR) were included in my duties. The MPR (later called MP & CR) were a set of books, in which the progress of construction work was entered in terms of monthly expenditure under each sub-item in the estimates. There was an office copy and a fair copy. The latter was sent to the office of the Divisional Irrigation Engineer (DIE) after the monthly expenditure was posted. It would be returned with some comments/queries, if any, to be brought up to date and sent back with the following month's postings. The WPR was a document in which the TAA entered the work done during a week and sent for the perusal of the SDO. This document also indicated how many miles were travelled each day and the daily weather condition. The monthly travelling claim submitted by the TA is checked against this document.

Although one Mr. Piyasena from Bandarawela who was expected to do some typing work, he was not of much help to me as he needed to learn typing. He was useful as a colleague to while away the time after office. But, some time later he was transferred out to a worksite at Soraborawewa as a Kangany, a minor supervisor. With the appointment of Mr. T. Leelasoma of Muruthalawa as an Assistant Clerk, some of my work could be handed over to him and therefore, I was considerably relieved.

The Drawing Office also began to be staffed gradually. The first to arrive was Mr. M.K. Piyadasa of Alawala, Attanagalla, who was designated 'tracer'. A draughtsman by the name of Piyadasa also came on transfer. Because he was senior both in service and age, we called

him '*Loku Piyadasa*'. Mr. Namasivayam, an apprentice draughtsman, also joined some time later. All the members of the staff working in office and around Morayaya were provided with quarters within the Irrigation Camp.

Besides the office building, there were three permanent buildings within the Camp. One was the Irrigation Engineer's Bungalow which was occupied by the SDO at the time. The other two permanent buildings were labourers' cottages. Each of these had two rooms and two halls on either side with half walls. There were two small rooms on a side behind which was a detached kitchen and a lavatory. One of these cottages was occupied by Mr. Nagarajah, TA, whose mother and sister lived with him. The other cottage was occupied by the HC Mr. Rajapakse, Mr. Ruthirapathy, TA, and Mr. Namasivayam. There were two semi-permanent quarters one of which was occupied by Mr. Manickavasagar, TA. One room in this was occupied by Mr. M.K. Piyadasa. The other semi-permanent building was occupied by Messrs Jinadasa and Barsenbach. When Messrs Leelasoma and Loku Piyadasa came on transfer they were also accommodated in this building. Mr. Jinadasa was transferred out and was replaced by Mr. Asirvatham.

The Minipe Sub Division was managing the construction works at Bintenna area of Badulla district which included, Mapakadawewa, Sorabora wewa and Hembarawa on the right bank of Mahaveliganga. Mr. V. Vairamuttu, T.A., and Mr. K.K.V. Silva, T.A. were placed in charge of the Mapakadawewa works. Mr. L.A.D.A. Jayatissa and Mr. E.M.D.W. Wijenayake, two Irrigation Learners were attached to Mapakadawewa. The Soraborawewa works were under Mr. J.D.L. Fernando, T.A. who was assisted by Mr. K.K.D. Kodituwakku and G. Samarasinghe, Irrigation Learners. Mr. Ruthirapathy, T.A. was in charge of the Hembarawa Scheme. Mr. A. Nagarajah, T.A. was in charge of miscellaneous irrigation activities on the left bank of Mahaveliganga. Mr. V. Manickavasagar, T.A., replaced Mr. Leo (JDL) Fernando after he was transferred out of the Sub Division. Mr. Ronnie Perera, a senior T.A. was placed in charge of investigations relating to the proposed Mahaveli Projects, starting with hydraulic measurements across Mahaveliganga at Weragantota.

### **My Activities**

Although I travelled from home at the initial stage of my service at Minipe, I spent some nights at the camp with other colleagues. When Mr. Ruthirapathy was out at Hembarawa, I would use his bed for the night. Eventually, however, I got my own bed fixed in the room of my friend M. K. Piyadasa, who agreed to accommodate me. Since I had my bicycle, the two of us would go to Weragantota Dumbara Restaurant after office for evening tea so that my stay was of mutual benefit. On our way back after tea, we would drop in at Abeyratne Mudalali's boutique and engage in some conversation with people who gathered there in the evenings. This helped us to develop some public relations which even facilitated our official duties.

My brother, who was working in the office of the Divisional Revenue Officer (DRO) at Potawa came to Mahiyangana when the DRO's office was shifted to a permanent office built at Mahiyangana. Around 1953, he got a transfer to the Uda Dumbara DRO office. This enabled him to settle down in our house at our native village, Halyala. By now he had four

children but not yet school going. I was again able to visit my native place during week-ends and spend the time with my nephews and niece.

When my brother was working at Mahiyangana, I continued to maintain my acquaintance with Messrs Herath, and Kodikara whom I had come to know from the time they were at Potawa. Mr. Mendis who came as the Chief Clerk of Mahiyangana became an acquaintance. Whenever we went to Mahiyangana, we met them at the residence of the Balagalla Village Headman, where some of them were boarded or taking meals. My friend Piyasena of Bandarawela who was at the Irrigation Office accompanied me on these visits. We were able to worship at the Mahiyangana Shrine on some of these visits.

The Restoration of the Mahiyangana Dagaba had commenced by this time (1953). A brief description of this Chaithya is given in Chapter I, above. In August, during the annual Esala procession (perahera) season, a special festival was held to solicit support from the pilgrims for the reconstruction of this dagaba. A restoration society under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister Hon. Dudley Senanayake was established. Its' Treasurer was Sir Bennet Soysa of Kandy. During the festival, the Public Works Department set up a pontoon bridge across the Mahaveliganga for the use of the pilgrims, as there was no permanent bridge and therefore would have to use the *oruwas*, if the pontoon bridge was not constructed. A massive wire rope was drawn across the river and tied to two big trees on either bank. Barrels were then tied together and hung on to this wire rope at several points, so that they floated on the river. Planks were placed over the barrels for the pilgrims to walk on, as if they were going along a wooden bridge. A large number of pilgrims came to Mahiyangana during Poson Poya but no such bridge was available. They had to use the *oruwas* (wooden boats) or wade across the river when the water level was very low. Many of us in the Irrigation Office made daily visits to Mahiyangana during these festivals, as it was a matter of about one and a half miles from office to Mahiyangana across the river and we did not have anything to do in the evenings. We loved to wade across the river as it was fun and sometimes, we got wet up to our waist. Although men would lift up their clothes as they went deeper into the water gradually, the female pilgrims would allow their clothes to get wet. We allowed our shorts to get wet if there was too much water, but they would soon dry up because it was the dry season.

### **Trip to Hembarawa**

One Mr. Ruthirapathy, T.A. who was in charge of Hembarawa fell ill and went home to Velvettithurai on leave and Nagarajah was asked to look after Hembarawa. I accompanied Mr. Nagarajah to Hembarawa, because of my curiosity to see the place. From the Irrigation Office, we had to walk about one and half miles and cross the river to get to Mahiyangana. Hembarawa was eighteen miles from Mahiyangana past Sorabora, Aluththarama and Ginnoruwa. We started off early in the morning and it was around two in the afternoon that we reached Hembarawa. The foot path was muddy in some places and we would sometimes go down up to our knees in mud. We were accommodated in the house where Mr. Ruthirapathy lived. The occupants of this house were the two parents, a good-looking daughter and her younger brother. While lunch was being prepared, we walked down to the river and had a good bath. After lunch, I took a long nap until dinner time because I was so tired after walking all that distance.

The following morning, we went to see the progress of the work in the tank. Hembarawa was a small village of about ten families of blood relatives with a village headman to represent the government. The village falls within the Bintenna DRO's Division which meant that the VH was 18 miles away from the supervisory institution. The village economy depended largely on slash and burn (chena) cultivation. There was a tract of paddy fields under the Hembarawa Tank but because the tank was in ruins, paddy cultivation also had to depend on rain water. The restoration of the Hembarawa Tank involved the construction of a concrete sluice and the filling up of the washed-out earthen tank bund. Storage of water in the restored tank would help the villagers to undertake paddy cultivation, in both Maha and Yala seasons or some subsidiary crops in Yala, if there was not enough water for paddy cultivation. Chena cultivation was limited to the rainy season. Six months of the year from about May was dry and windy, when nothing could be grown because of the lack of water. Therefore, the restoration of the tank was crucial and would contribute greatly to an improvement of the standard of living of the villagers. They had no problem with water for domestic use as the Mahaveliganga flowed by the village but that water could not be lifted up to paddy field level for cultivation.

Our return journey was in the night of the second day, because Nagarajah was very keen to hunt some animal such as deer or elk (sambur). Being a vegetarian, I was not happy about this but I had no alternative but to accompany him. He organized two villagers to join us. As we were approaching an open grassy patch (*villuwa*), there was a wild elephant just in front, so that we did a detour to get back on our path. When we had gone about a mile or two a deer was seen on the path, at which Nagarajah aimed his gun and pulled the trigger. The two villagers and Nagarajah assumed that the deer was wounded and was hiding in the jungle but they could not trace the animal so, we continued our journey. After about another three miles, we arrived at Ginnoruwa where there was highland cultivation and a watcher was living in a hut located at a vantage point. The two villagers from Hembarawa were reluctant to go beyond this place and returned to their village. The two of us were accommodated on two bunk beds by the watcher who had made a log fire to keep away wild animals and mosquitoes.

We woke up early in the morning and walked along the jeep track that was being opened up towards Aluththarama. This was on high ground and therefore we could avoid the muddy patch of the footpath. At Aluththarama a perennial stream flowed close to which were a few huts and what appeared to be a boutique. There was nothing we could have as breakfast. We walked about another three or four miles and arrived at the quarters of Leo Fernando, TA, who was in charge of Soraborawewa Scheme. He had gone out for work but his cook was kind enough to serve us tea and Huntley and Palmers biscuits. What we had at that time were imported biscuits. Having rested for a while we walked back to Mahiyangana, crossed the river, and arrived at Morayaya camp in about one and half hours. This was an extremely tiring trip for me but I enjoyed the novel experience.

## Trip to Kindigoda

On another occasion, I accompanied Nagarajah when he went to investigate the proposed anicut site at the Kindigoda village. The villagers there were Muslims. Their livelihood depended on breeding animals such as cattle and goats and slash and burn (*hena*) cultivation. The construction of an anicut would provide them with an opportunity to undertake some paddy cultivation. We were accompanied by an Apothecary of the Mahiyangana Hospital who was going to Udaththawa on a tour of duty. On our way, we came across a Surveyor's Camp in the middle of the jungle. The two of us also went to Udaththawa with the Apothecary. His cook prepared lunch for us after which we – Nagarajah and myself- began the trek back to Pallewaththa through Kindigoda.

Heavy rain began to pour down as we passed Kindigoda village and by the time we came near the crossing of the Hassalaka Oya, the stream was overflowing. We knew that there was a suspension bridge up stream. Therefore, we walked up through the shrub jungle and reached a stretch of paddy fields. There was a hut occupied by those cultivating and looking after this land. When we told the householder about our intention, he advised us against it, because it was now getting dark and it would be difficult to locate the suspension bridge in the dark, as there was no clear and visible path to the bridge. Nagarajah was keen to get back home because of his mother and sister and in spite of the villager's advice, we walked up to a road that would lead us to the bridge. Now it was very dark and raining and searching for the bridge appeared futile. Since we could not retrace our path, we walked up to the bank of the stream and began to walk down along it. At some points we had to get into the stream of flood water hanging on to roots and branches on the bank. At last, we reached a causeway which we could not cross because of flood water. There was no alternative but to return to the villagers' hut in the paddy field. He gave us two sarongs to change our wet clothes, set up a fire for us to warm/dry ourselves, while his wife cooked us dinner. I think that that was the most delicious meal I had had in my life, although it was nothing more than boiled rice and potato curry. After the meal we were given mats and pillows to sleep in one of the two rooms they had. This was how the simple people in our villagers treat others in trouble, even if they are complete strangers.

Waking up early the following morning, we thanked the villager and walked back across the causeway to the manor of *Korale Mahaththaya* at Pallewatta where I had left my bicycle. We cycled to the Morayaya Camp in about half an hour. This was a very dangerous trip but there were no regrets.

**Vesak Trip to Bandarawela:** During the Vesak holidays in 1953, my friend Piyasena suggested that we go to Bandarawela and spend a few days there. I readily agreed as I had never gone to Bandarawela. What we planned to do was to cross over to Kandeketiya and then take bus to Badulla and Bandarawela. One evening we cycled to Ambagahapelessa and crossed the Mahaveliganga in an *oruwa* (wooden boat) to Bathmedilla. It was getting dark and we found it difficult to trace the footpath up to the motorable road. The path was covered with over grown guinea grass. I had to push my cycle - an annoying task - but after about one or two hours we managed to get on to the motorable road. We spent the night at the Kandeketiya Colonization Officer's quarters.



The following morning, we boarded a bus to Badulla, which was about twenty-five miles from Kandeketiya. I was travelling on this road for the first time. Half way through, the bus stopped at the Meegahakiula bazaar, where the passengers and the bus crew had tea. The two of us had our breakfast. After about half an hour, the bus resumed its journey and about four miles on, arrived at Taldena village. After passing the school, we crossed the Badulu Oya over an ancient steel bridge. About a mile from there, on the right was the Taldena Borstal Institute. There were a large number of young offenders engaged in various activities in their garden on a hill side. After about another mile was an irrigation canal on the left slope which carried water from Badulu Oya to the Taldena paddy fields. When we came near the headworks of this irrigation system, we crossed a branch of Badulu Oya. Past the bridge, the road continued up a steep incline with a number of sharp bends. At one of these bends was the foot path leading down to the *Dunhinda* Water Fall. Climbing up another one or two miles, we passed Medithale and reached the Rideepana Peak beyond which was the Badulla Urban Council area. In another ten minutes or so we arrived at the Badulla bus stand, where we changed over to a bus to Bandarawela. We had to travel about eighteen miles to arrive at the roadside house of my friend Piyasena. Bandarawela town was another mile away.

Piyasena's mother appeared to be a lady in her late forties or early fifties. She treated me as her own son and I was well looked after during the two days, I spent at Bandarawela. In fact, it was a good holiday for me. I was told that Bandarawela was a holiday resort for those with means. They would own a house/bungalow at Bandarawela and occupy it during their holidays. I was shown a roadside house that was owned by Professor Malalasekara of the University of Ceylon. The climatic conditions with cool dry refreshing air were said to be ideal for those with heart/lung ailments, particularly tuberculosis patients.

Bandarawela was surrounded by tea estates. It was also close to Diyathalawa which was a garrison town with training centres for the army and the air force as well as the school cadet battalions. Bandarawela town had a one-street bazaar on the Badulla Road. There was a reasonably large hotel on the Welimada Road. There was also a Cargills grocery store patronized by the planters in the area. The railway station was conveniently located at a short walking distance from the bazaar. Most people would travel to Colombo by train as the service at the time was regular, reliable and convenient particularly for long distance travellers.

Our return trip was by train from Bandarawela to Peradeniya Junction and then to Kandy by the night mail train from Badulla to Colombo. It was also a new experience having our dinner in the Restaurant Car, which was patronized by first class passengers for whom one section of the restaurant car was reserved, while third class passengers were served in the other section. We arrived in Kandy early in the morning in time for the 5.30 am bus to Morayaya. This bus was used by those who want to get to their destinations fast as it did not take more than three hours for the whole trip while other buses would take nearly five hours. I would invariably meet some of my erstwhile schoolmates who were employed as school teachers. One such person was Sumana Akka who travelled from Nawayalatenne to Menikhinna. We arrived at Morayaya around nine in the morning and took a long nap in the morning, as we had broken rest the whole of the previous night. The trip would have been

even better, had the train journey been during the day. For that, I had to wait some time longer. However, it was a pleasant and novel experience on the whole.

### **Pirith Pinkama (Ceremony) at Morayaya Irrigation Camp**

A group of us at the Minipe Irrigation Office decided on a unique event; it had never been attempted at this office nor in the whole of the Irrigation Department up to that time. I suggested that we should arrange for chanting pirith and offering alms to Buddhist monks at the Irrigation Camp at Morayaya. My colleagues in the office, the Head Clerk Mr. Rajapakse, the Draughtsman Mr. Piyadasa and the peon Mr. Siriwardhane agreed wholeheartedly with my suggestion. This was in the early part of February, 1954 when the rainy season was coming to an end.

Although the staff consisted of several Hindus, Catholics, Christians and Muslims beside the majority of Buddhists, we decided to get the widest possible participation. Therefore, contribution lists were circulated at Morayaya, Minipe, Mapakadawewa and Soraborawewa. The tappal labourer Mr. Arthur was very helpful in getting contributions from Mapakadawewa and Soraborawewa, while the two Maintenance Overseers helped with contributions from their labourers. The amounts were one rupee or fifty cents from labourers, five rupees from overseers and ten rupees from technical assistants. The staff in the office contributed amounts from five to ten rupees.

When an amount considered adequate for the purpose was collected, we decided on a date for the pirith ceremony and the alms-giving. I went round to invite the monks and obtain the services of tom tom beaters (*hevisi karayas*). The setting up of the pirith mandapaya was undertaken by some of those who were competent to do that. Vegetables and other necessary items were bought at Morayaya and Weragantota. Some items had to be bought in Kandy. A few labourers led by Bandulahamy and Podiappuhamy assisted us in these activities. They cooked the food items for the alms-giving and the meals of lay participants. My father also participated in the alms-giving. A photograph of those who assisted in these activities, together with my father is still with me. It was the view of every one that this was a very successful event.

A few of us had white national suits prepared specially for this ceremony, which was also a new experience. This ceremony helped to change the wrong image of the staff of the Irrigation Department held by many colonists and others in the area. We got recognition and acceptance from the people in the bazaar and the village.



**My Father is at the extreme right. Podiappuhamy, David and Bandulahamy are also in the picture**

**Morayaya School:** It was presumably after this event that the Head Master of the Morayaya School considered us deserving to be invited to listen to Buddhist sermons on the radio on Sundays. M.K. Piyadasa and I got into the habit of visiting the Morayaya School and developed an acquaintance with the Head Master, Mr. Subasinghe (*Iskole Mahaththaya*) and his wife, Mrs. D.D.M. Mohotty (*Iskole Hamine*). She was also a teacher at the school. They were an elderly couple who treated us like their children. The school had a radio receiver provided by the Education Department. The *Iskole Mahaththaya* invited us to come to the school on Sunday mornings, to listen to the Buddhist sermon broadcast by Radio Ceylon, between 8am and 9am. There were no other radios in the area to which we could conveniently listen.

The school had an adult education class and the two of us were invited to teach the adults. The classes were conducted in the evenings on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. As we did not have any useful work to do in the evenings, we readily agreed. I was paid a monthly allowance of twenty rupees. Apart from this, the opportunity to meet some people in the colony also was attractive to the two of us. These interactions with the head master and his

wife further strengthened our affinity with them. The lady helped us to get our meals problem settled through one of her acquaintances, a portly lady (*Hamine*), who had a carpenter relation (*Puncchi Seeya*) at Morayaya junction. The *baas unnehe* agreed to provide us meals (lunch and dinner) at his carpentry shed. He had a boy who was a good cook. So, one of our perennial problems were settled to our satisfaction. We took advantage of this, until we were transferred out of Minipe.

## **Pilgrimage to Adam's Peak (Sri Pada)**

The pilgrimage season to Adam's Peak starts in December (Unduwap Full Moon Day) and ends in May (Vesak Full Moon Day). When we had finished the pirith ceremony and the alms-giving we were in the middle of the *Sri Pada* pilgrimage season. A few of us decided to go on this pilgrimage. Abeyratne Mudalali had bought a new Hillman passenger van and agreed to go on the trip. Two or three outsiders known to us and Abeyratne Mudalali also joined us. Those from the Irrigation Department were M.K. Piyadasa, Piyasena and myself.

One morning in March we started from Morayaya and reached Kandy for lunch. Thereafter we travelled through Peradeniya, Geli Oya, Gampola, Ulapane, Ginigathena, Laxapana, and Maskeliya and reached Nallathanniya by evening. The rest of the way was about four miles up the steep hill. We started the walk through the tea plantation and reached the *Makara Thorana*. This part was not much a climb but after the Makara Thorana the climb becomes steeper but tolerable up to *Seetha Gangula*.

The pilgrims take a wash or a bath at Seetha Gangula. The water is extremely cold but fresh as it flows from the mountain springs above. Most pilgrims would wear fresh white clothes suitable for the holy place. As our group was already in white clothes which were not dirty as would happen if we travelled by bus and train, a change was not necessary although we took a good wash (not a bath). All of us carried towels to wrap round our heads to ward off the cold breeze up the mountain and they were also useful after the wash. I also carried a large white bed sheet to cover the upper part of my body on the way up. I may have had a wollen waistcoat and a scarf as well.

The climb beyond Seetha Gangula is very steep but the path was well constructed with stone steps. When we reached the *Ambalama* (resting place) our colleague Piyadasa fainted for some reason or other, some pilgrims gave him some black pepper, ginger and garlic to bite which helped him to recover completely and continue on the pilgrimage. As we climbed further up, we came to *Idi Katu Pana*, the place where the pilgrims roll down a ball of thread attached to a needle. This place was full of white thread and needles. Next, we came to *Maha Giri Dambe* which is the steepest part of it all. On the way up we had refreshments at some of the restaurants available at vantage points. All of us in the group were first time pilgrims (*kodukara*) and therefore did not know much about the customs of the pilgrims. After reaching the peak, we worshipped the Footprint of Lord Buddha. Most pilgrims would stay back to see the rising sun, but we went down no sooner we had completed the worship. The holy place was not crowded and therefore we did not have much difficulty in performing our rites.

Having come down to Nallathanniya by dawn, we set out on our return trip. As we passed Maskeliya, our colleague Piyasena was seen taking the steering wheel from Abeyratne Mudalali who was the owner/driver of the vehicle. When driving on a declivity, the vehicle nearly ran off the road at a sharp bend. The mudalali who was seated next to the driver, managed to steer the vehicle on to the hill side and averted a fatal accident, had we gone down the precipice on the other side. Abeyratne Mudalali took over the driving and all of us were relieved to have been saved perhaps by some divine intervention. So, we came back to Pallewaththa negotiating the eighteen-hairpin bends, Gurulupotha and Hassalaka, when again Piyasena took over the steering wheel, drove up to Weragantotoa and stopped at Abeyratne Mudalali's boutique. He saw that the rear wheels were fuming and found that Piyasena had driven the vehicle without releasing the hand brakes and so, the brake linings were heated and burnt out. In spite of these mishaps the trip was extremely enjoyable and elevating. This was my first trip to Sri Pada.

**1954 Solar Eclipse:** The eclipse of the sun that occurred in the year 1954, was the first of its kind that I had seen up to that time. In fact, scientists from other countries visited Ceylon, as it was thought to be clearly visible in places like Hingurakgoda. However, a team of scientists from the Soviet Union was not allowed to come, because Sir John Kotalawala who was the Prime Minister at the time was against the Communists.

A newspaper gave publicity to the story of an astrologer/native physician who said that if one were to partake of a portion of *vada kaha* (a root similar to ginger in taste) at the time the eclipse occurred, a large number of benefits would accrue: wisdom, physical beauty, ability to learn and study. A number of us at the Morayaya Irrigation Office also prepared the portion and drank it in varying quantities. The result was that within minutes, everyone who drank it started vomiting. Those who drank more vomited more requiring treatment from the government hospital. I was not badly affected and therefore did not have to seek treatment. However, all those who drank the mixture became wiser not to repeat such foolish things. A song also was created which went "*Biwa neda vada kaha sudiya*".

**Trip to Anuradhapura:** Permanent and pensionable government servants were entitled to three sets of holiday warrants, for free travel by Ceylon Government Railway (CGR) to any destination. Those from Jaffna Peninsula who worked in places like Badulla, Matara or Colombo were said to benefit most from this concession. They would travel home and be with their families during their vacation. Those who lived with their families would travel home, as all the members of the family were entitled to this concession. This is not to say that others who lived away from home did not benefit from the concession. In fact, they also made use of holiday warrants for long distance travel using sleeping berths as well. Staff officers were entitled to first class travel while middle grades such as clerks were eligible for second class travel. Minor employees were eligible for third class travel. This last category was not entitled to sleeping berths as they were not available in the third-class compartments. Government servants who had holiday warrants, could travel by Air Ceylon plane between Colombo and destinations such as Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai by surrendering an appropriate number of sets of their holiday warrants, depending on the class of travel they were eligible for. Those who were entitled to second class travel, had to surrender two sets of holiday warrants.

This long description of train travel serves as a preamble to a trip I made to Anuradhapura, during the period I was at Minipe. Armed with a set of second-class holiday warrants, one evening, I took a bus to Kandy and stayed part of the night at Muslim Hotel which was close to the Kandy railway station. I had to wake up around 1.00 am to board the Colombo bound train from Kandy which leaves at about 2.30 am. A passenger to Anuradhapura has to break journey at Polgahawela and wait for the train on the northern line (Colombo-Kankesanthurai) or the north-western line (Colombo-Thalaimannar). I arrived at Anuradhapura before noon and went in search of Sirinama Aiya who was working in the Agriculture Department office.

All these offices were still located in the sacred city, because the new town had not yet been completed. When I met my cousin, he took me to his quarters which accommodated several government servants. They were running what was called a 'chummary' with a servant to cook their meals. I was given a bed and meals for the two or three days I spent there. Because the sacred places were within walking distance, I was able to visit many of them on my own and refresh my memory of these places I had from the school excursion. I also went to Medawachchiya with Sirinama Aiya when he went on some official visit.

In a few days Sirinama Aiya was going to Matale and suggested that I accompany him which was a good thing for me as I had not visited our relations at Matale. He took me to the house of one of his cousins to stay the night. We went across a stream and along a foot path by some paddy fields to visit his *Loku amma*, his mother's elder sister. The following morning, I came back to Minipe travelling by bus through Wattedagama and Madawala. The trip to Anuradhapura was fruitful because of the train travel, the opportunity to consolidate my knowledge of the sacred places, and meeting some relations I had never met before.

**Cousin Sirinama's Marriage:** My cousin was still a bachelor. A proposal had been made of the sister of a schoolmaster of Kaduwela in Matale. I was invited to the wedding and therefore had to get a suit ready. This was done at the Daswanis in Kandy. It was made of light brown gaberdine and cost about one hundred and fifty rupees. This was my second full suit.

On the wedding day the groom's party started from Pallewela (Kanahampitiya Junction) in two or three cars hired for the purpose and travelled through Teldeniya, Madawala, and Wattedagama reaching the bride's house at Kaduwela by about 10.00 am. After the ceremonial rites, a sumptuous lunch was served. On the return trip, the wedding party went to Kandy for a photograph and returned on the Kundasale-Teldeniya road, reaching Kanahampitiya by about 4.00 pm. The wedding party had to walk down about half a mile along a Village Committee Road on a sloping hill which the couple would have found rather precarious in their ceremonial dresses. There was a tea party at the groom's house, after which the bride's relations returned home to Kaduwela. My sisters' marriages were not such elaborate affairs but simple events. Therefore, this was the first wedding of its type that I attended.

## **Theatrical Endeavours**

Every month after pay day, it was my habit to go to Kandy. There was a special hair dressing saloon at which I got my hair cut. One had to go to Kandy even to watch a movie. My aesthetic inclinations were also aroused which prompted me to contact Jayathilake Aiya of Walala junction, a dramatist who had trained us for short plays while we were at school in Walala. When I told him about my interest, he offered me a part in a play he was planning to stage. The play was called 'Hithuwakkaraya' and the part I was to play was that of the main actor, the hero. From then on, I travelled to Walala every Saturday for a few months to train for the play. We rehearsed during the whole of Saturday night.

The villain in the play was Sugathapala of Polgolla who was a hostel mate. Three girls from Kandy, Katukelle and Deiyannawela trained as the hero's mother, wife and sister respectively. Jayathilake Aiya thought that we should watch some movies to get an idea of acting and took us once to watch the Tamil movie '*Thirimbippar*' at the Wembley Theatre. The girl who was training as the 'mother' was seated next to me. What she wanted seemed to be to get closer to me rather than to watch the movie. I did not want to encourage her because she was not attractive to me. Later when we were rehearsing one night, she passed me a letter, but I overcame the bother by saying that I did not expect such a thing from a 'mother'.

The play was staged at Menikhinna School Hall and at the Polgolla Co-operative Training School. Besides the dialogues, there were a few songs that I had to sing. They were based on the tunes of the popular Hindi songs at the time. One song was based on 'Suhani rath dal suki, in 'Dulari' sung by playback singer Thalath Mehmood for actor Dev Anand. Large crowds came to see the play but I was told that the income was insufficient even to cover the expenses involved. I had contributed at least fifty rupees every Saturday during the training period. This was a lot of money at that time.

During the training period, I worked in the office for half a day on Saturday as was required at that time, and after lunch travelled to Walala by bus. The rehearsals were held at several places from time to time and finally it was at a temporary school hall of the Central College. Having broken rest during the night, I travelled back to Morayaya on Sunday morning on the 5.30 am. bus from Kandy. I would doze off from time to time on the way. Several petty traders going to the Sunday Fair at Urugala and Hunnasgiriya also travelled on this bus.

The bus stops at the Dumbara Hotel in Hunnasgiriya for the crew and the passengers to have some refreshments. I used to have my breakfast here and one Sunday when I came to pay the bill, I found that my purse was missing. When I looked around, I saw the *Kanahampitiya Lekam Mahaththaya*, Mr. Egodawela who was good enough to lend me five rupees and save me from embarrassment. After this incident, I did not use a purse, but kept my money safely, so that no one could pick my pocket.

## **Miscellaneous Activities**

I had no savings out of my monthly salary because of these trips and other activities. I also gave nothing to my parents for their expenses. A voucher for about fifty rupees would be given to the SDO on salary advance day and I would draw that amount regularly. On pay day, I would draw my full salary and leave the SDO's room mentioning that I had taken an

advance but not refunding it. He had given me one or two hundred rupees at the end of the financial year (The financial year then was from October 1 to September 30 of the following year). Once I bought an Aladdin lamp for fifty-five rupees with the money so received. After some time, the chimneys and mantles of these lamps were not available in the local market and therefore could not be used. But the lamp (minus these parts) is still with me and has now become an antique.

At that time there were rumours that bribery and corruption was widespread in some government departments. It was an open secret that some officers in development departments such as the Public Works Department and the Irrigation Department resorted to bribes. A commission was appointed in 1955 to investigate into these matters in the Irrigation Department. With this, the then Director Mr. W.T.I. Alagaratnam retired from service and Mr. Silva Gunasekara was appointed Director of Irrigation. It was known that some Engineers, Technical Assistants and Overseers of the Irrigation Department resorted to irregular means of making money in various degrees, depending on their grades. Some of us who worked in the office had no such interest, but enjoyed minor benefits such as salary advances that were not repaid. Whenever I was in need of money, I would draw an advance in excess of the normal amount due, which as mentioned before would not be refunded. Once I drew an advance of one hundred and fifty rupees to pay for the suit tailored at Dasvanis in Kandy.

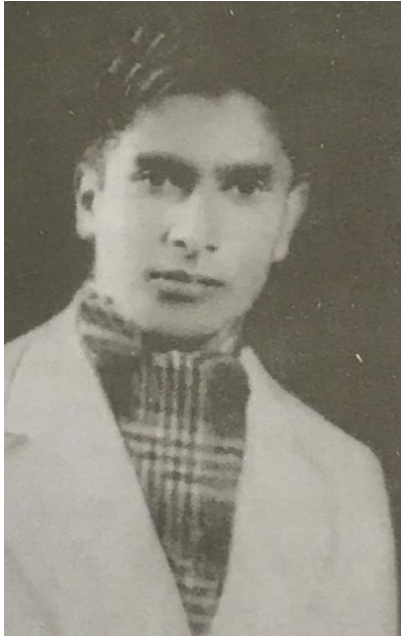
A schoolmate from Walala who was unemployed when I was working at Morayaya was assisted by me financially as well as by introducing him to persons who could help. There was earthwork in the field channels in Mapakadawewa Scheme, which were given out on job contracts limited to a maximum amount of five thousand rupees each. The contractor had to construct a hut for his labourers, procure the implements such as mammoties, pick axes, crowbars, and baskets, and provide provisions for the meals of labourers. This friend was E.M. Wijesinghe from Henagehuwela (now Henarathwala), Teldeniya. After about a month or two, he abandoned the job perhaps because of the harsh conditions of work in such schemes at the initial stages.

Before and after this event, I used to visit him at Henagehuwela, and spend two or three days with him. On one such visit we went to watch an elaborate ceremony under a huge tamarind tree. This was said to be an annual event in that village to appease some powerful deity. The festival went on for two or three nights. Wijesinghe Aiya was living with his parents, a younger sister and an uncle who was Chairman of a Village Committee in the area. Wijesinghe Aiya's elder brother was employed and was said to be working somewhere in Negombo. During these visits the two of us also met another schoolmate, Mudiyanse Aiya who was living close to Wewegama. He was also a hostelmate of mine at Walala.

During the annual Kandy Esala Perahera season, many of our erstwhile school and hostelmates would meet in Kandy. There was invariably a carnival at this time and the site for it was the Bogambara Grounds. Walking round the carnival grounds we recounted each others' experiences during the preceding year while at the same time enjoying what there was to see at the carnival. During one such carnival, we saw the then popular film star Prem Jayanth, the hero of the film 'Sujatha' in which the heroine was Florida Jayalath. The most popular song in the film was *Jeevana me gamana sansare, no leba aloke...* based on the



Hindi song *do nayana thumhare pyari ppyari, gagana ke sare...* There were many other songs in 'Sujatha' such as *Piyalee kedeela vetuna nebul saman male ...* based on the Hindi song *Bhagawan do garee thara insana banika de...* The movie itself was very popular, because it marked a change from the stereotype earlier Sinhala movies such as *Kadavunu Poronduwa, Kapati Arakshakaya and Hadisi Vinischaya* of the Minerva Company who were pioneers in Sinhala films which by itself was commendable.



**Photograph taken in 1954 at the Bogambara Carnival Grounds**

**Ceremonial Opening of Mapakadawewa:** This was an irrigation scheme, based on a reservoir built by constructing an earthen dam connecting two minor hills and collecting water diverted from the perennial stream of *Hathdaththa Oya*, across which an anicut was constructed. There were two concrete sluices on either end of the tank bund, to supply water to the left bank (LB) and right bank (RB) channels, leading towards *purana* (old) villages of *Pangaragammana* and *Elawela* respectively.

This scheme was ceremonially inaugurated by Prime Minister Sir John Kotelawala, with the participation of the Minister of Lands and Land Development Hon P. B. Bulankulame and the Director of Irrigation Mr. Silva Gunasekera. Mr. B. Sellaheva was the Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Central Division, Bandarawela. The SDO Mr. Chellappah wanted this to be a grand occasion, where the distinguished guests would be welcomed with a song. I was entrusted with this task, as most of those in office knew about my theatrical abilities. I had to compose a song to welcome the Prime Minister, the Minister and the Director. Although I had not done anything like this before, I rose to the occasion, composed a song to the tune of a welcome song I had heard at school. The two daughters of Mr. Chellappah trained with me to sing the song to the accompaniment of music on *Loku Piyadasa's* violin. Everybody appeared to think that we did a fairly good job.

This event coincided with a campaign to elect a member of parliament for the Aluthnuwara seat which had fallen vacant. The nominees for the by-election were Mr. Dimbulana from

the United National Party (UNP) and one Mr. Gunaratne, a schoolteacher from Badulla, from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The UNP candidate won the seat.

### **Land Allotment at Bakinigahawela**

While at Minipe, I was always on the look out for a plot of crown land which I could obtain for cultivation and if appropriate build a house on. Once I sent an application to the Government Agent, Kandy district, for a demarcated extent of land from the area above our highland allotments. This was jungle land (*mookalana*) with large trees which could be sawn for timber for house construction as well as for furniture. Although the request for land failed, a permit was later obtained to cut down a *hulanhik* tree or two, the timber of which was used to make some furniture for me and to build a house for my younger sister (*Nangi*).

In the meantime, there was a gazette notification by the Government Agent, Badulla indicating that some land at Bakinigahawela (on the Bibile-Moneragala Road) was available for alienation under a middle-class scheme. Some of us at the Minipe Irrigation Office applied for these allotments. We were called for an interview by the Assistant Land Commissioner (ALC) in Badulla. As all of us could not go to Badulla for the interview, I was delegated the task of going and representing the other applicants from our office. I went to Badulla by bus on the Mahiyangana-Bibile-Badulla road which was about sixty miles. Mr. Manickavasagar gave me a letter of introduction to one Mr. Costa, a Draughtsman of the Badulla Irrigation Office to provide accommodation for me at Badulla and also to introduce me to the ALC. The mission was successful and all of us received allotments of ten acres each. But unfortunately, none of us could put this land to any use and after about two or three years, the allocation was forfeited.

### **Falling Ill with Typhoid**

Around March 1955, I fell seriously ill with a continuing high temperature and a splitting headache. Therefore, I went to the Teldeniya Hospital, got treatment from the DMO, Dr. Jayakody who was the only medical graduate in the area, and went to my brother's house at Halayala. As there was no relief from the fever and the headache, my brother hired a car from Hunnasgiriya and took me to Teldeniya and admitted me to the hospital there. A sample of my blood was sent to the Kandy Hospital and when the report came back in about three days, it was revealed that I was suffering from typhoid.

This is an illness caused by impure water. It is said that the intestines are affected by blisters which result in purging even blood when the illness is acute (According to the Oxford Dictionary it is caused by *bacillus typhosis* and characterized by catarrhal inflammation of the intestines). Recovery can take several weeks depending on the seriousness of the attack. It took about two weeks for me to recover. There was constant purging and at some stage blood also was passed. I could take no food, only a liquid diet. Lime juice was given to control the purging. A hospital attendant from Wendararuwa who came on night duty would bring a basin of warm water and mop my whole body early in the morning giving a

soothing effect. There was no electricity and therefore water had to be boiled on the kitchen fire. Kerosene lamps were used at night.

When the illness eased off gradually, I could hear the music played over a radio perhaps from some boutique nearby. Almost all the songs and music played over the Sinhala service of Radio Ceylon at that time was Hindustani which was very popular in Ceylon. This music also helped Radio Ceylon to be very popular in India. The songs of the Hindi movie, *baiju bawra* were very popular and songs such as *Tu ganga ki moju me jamuna ki dhahara* and *Bhagawan, bhagawan. o duniya ke rakhawale* were being played constantly. The Sinhala songs based on these tunes sung by Mohideen Baig and Rukmani Devi were also very popular.

After I was discharged from hospital, Nawaratne Malli took me in a hiring car to Karalliydde, where some relations lived. The uncle and aunt and two cousins (male and female) treated me kindly. The following day Nawaratne Malli and I went to Teldeniya and took a bus to Madugoda to my brother's house, where I spent a few days till I was well enough to go to work. I was advised by the doctor to supplement my meals with eggs, but I had never eaten them and therefore it was with utmost difficulty that I gulped down a boiled egg. However, after the initial difficulty, consumption of eggs became a daily feature which helped me to recuperate soon. An invigorating drink called Sanatogen also helped. After about another two weeks' rest, I went back to work. When I resumed duties, I stayed in the Morayaya Irrigation Camp in the room of my friend Piyadasa. This also made it possible for the two of us to resume our normal activities, including our visits to the school and teaching in the adult education class.

## **Cupid's Arrow**

A healthy youth would consider it an important matter in life to find a suitable partner. Some adolescents pay attention to these feelings as they advance in years. It may be because of this that, even as school children, they have love affairs. There were some problems that I faced in these stages of my life. Because I had grown up among females in my childhood, there was a tendency to consider other young girls I met as sisters. I studied in a mixed school. Some girls I met at the school appeared to be attractive. But because of the tendency mentioned earlier, I did not make any attempt to proceed beyond mere friendship. The ethical standards prevalent at the time, 'prohibited' any love affair among school children. It was considered a serious violation of ethics to enter into such relationships while they were still dependent on parents.

When I had my own means of livelihood in early youth, there were certain accepted norms that could not be violated. I was a Kandyan Sinhala Buddhist of the Goigama caste. Therefore, I had to find a woman who fell within this framework. The easiest thing was to select someone who was a relation. There were two girls who were attractive but unfortunately for me one of them was a few years older and the other was not within the

correct relationship. Although these are not important now, sixty years ago even such standards were rarely violated. Some of the girls who were former schoolmates attracted my attention but they did not satisfy some of my conditions. Therefore, I was reluctant to follow them up. Some young men embark on 'love affairs' for fun, but I was not prepared for that. I firmly believed that if I were to fall in love, I must be prepared to end up in marriage and not do any such thing for short term 'fun'. Therefore, I had to be very careful in my choice. Because I was not old enough for parental intervention, they appeared to think that there was no urgent need to look for suitable proposals. My idea was to select someone on my own.

During the time I was engaged in my theatrical endeavours, a girl who was training with me tried to encroach on me but I did not encourage her for various reasons. When I was travelling at week ends for training for the play, I met the English teacher at Ambagahapelessa school who was on her way home to Teldeniya. We were seated in the bus each other's side and had about three hours of conversation. She was a sister of the teacher that I had met in the Urugala Junior School. I did not meet her again. Therefore, the first encounter became part of past memory. If I was interested, I could have gone to Ambagahapelessa on my cycle and pursued the matter. I now feel that I was perhaps waiting for a better-looking girl.

It was in this background that after my illness, I resumed teaching at the Morayaya School Adult Education Class. On one such evening, I saw a pleasant maid in the headmaster's quarters. She was a relation of the headmaster and had come there when the headmaster went to Colombo to bring his two children, Indra and Chandra, for the school vacation. They were boarded at the Manning Town quarters of an uncle, Mr. Rasaputhra, who had married an aunt (*Loku Kudamma*) of this maid. Although I was attracted by this girl, I was not bold enough to talk to her in the presence of elders and others. I now feel that I was still a timid young man when it came to these matters. However, I felt that she also was interested in me. Finally, it was she who broke down the 'invisible facade' that kept us apart.

There was a young school boy brought up by the headmaster who also came to learn English in my adult education class. The class was over by about seven thirty in the evening. This boy passed me a note one such evening and told me who the author of that note was. When I heard this, I was a bit excited but brought the note to our room. It had been written by a person called Prema and she had mentioned that she was interested in me. The writer had given details of her family. Her name was **Pragnawathie Wijesiriwardhane** although she liked to be called *Prema*. She was born at Alahenpita in Talpawila, Matara. Her father was Don Cornelis Wijesiriwardhane and the mother Dona Essentia Samarakoon. She had written about her brothers and sisters. The Headmaster of Morayaya school was a grandfather and they called him *Mawarale Muththa*.



### **Falling in Love**

This information indicated that the writer conformed to my criteria except that she was not a Kandyan. Even this could be a problem for my parents. However, I began to exchange information through the schoolboy, Gunadasa. I did not want to keep this a secret from her elders. Therefore, I requested my friend Piyadasa to become my emissary to the headmaster and his wife. They did not object to this relationship, but when the school vacation came to an end Prema went back to Manning Town with Indra and Chandra. After that the exchange of information was by post. Our postal service was very efficient in those days. Any letter posted anywhere in the country would be delivered to the recipient the following day. The postage for an ordinary letter was six cents.

I informed my parents also about this affair. Although I told my mother about this in detail, I did not tell my father. As usual that was left to my mother. My mother did not object to my idea but I had no information from the father. He did not object to it either, perhaps because he thought that, that would be futile. Therefore, I decided to proceed on my own with the unexpressed blessings of my mother.

Every opportunity that was available to go to Colombo was made use of to visit Prema. One such occasion was the trip to Colombo with Mr. Jayatissa who fell ill at Hembarawa and had to be escorted home. My earlier illness also made me volunteer to accompany him, when those responsible in the office were looking for some one to go with Jayatissa. A van that

was available at Morayaya was hired for us to travel to Colombo. When we went to Miriswatte junction, some relations of Jayatissa met us and we continued the journey to Colombo, where the patient was shown to Dr. Wijegunawardhane who asked us to admit Jayatissa to Durdans Hospital at Alfred House Gardens. Having done that, I sent the van back to Morayaya and went to Manning Town to meet Prema. I came back to Morayaya after a day or two.

Prema's maternal aunt (*Loku Kudamma*) was married to one Mr. Rasaputhra, who was an officer employed in the Railway Department, which entitled him to government quarters at Manning Town, Colombo 8. The Rasaputhras had three children, Kirthi, Laxaman and Ramya, who were all schoolgoing. The Samarakoon family to which *Loku Kudamma* and Prema's mother belonged were from Matara and had five brothers and four sisters. The other two aunts were *Hingi Kudamma* and *Punchi Kudamma*. Prema's maternal uncles were *Loku Maama*, *Paagoda Maama*, *Bankuwe Maama*, *Dingi Maama* and *Hinni Maama*. *Loku Maama* lived in Matara with his eldest son but visited Colombo often and stayed at Manning Town. I met him there and found that he had developed an instant liking to me, which was mutual. *Bankuwe Maama* and *Dingi Maama* lived at Panadura, while *Hinni Maama* lived at Udahamulla. *Punchi Kudamma* was married to Mr. Martin Kulatunga, who was employed in the Central Bank and lived at Rattanapitiya. Thus, only Prema's mother and *Hingi Kudamma* lived in Matara.

With the strengthening of the bond between me and Prema, my view that it should end in marriage also grew. Therefore, certain steps were taken towards that end. Some *hulanhik* planks that were at home, were delivered to the carpentry workshop of *Punchi Seeya* at Morayaya, to make some furniture such as beds, a dining table, a bookrack and a dressing table. A matrimonial alliance with some one living in Matara or Colombo would be difficult. Therefore, I had to get a transfer to Colombo. An application for transfer was sent to the Director of Irrigation on July 27, 1955 through the Irrigation Engineer, Minipe, and the Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Central Division, Bandarawela. The reasons advanced for the request were, my desire for higher education and the impending examination for promotion to Grade II of the Executive Class of the General Clerical Service. There were no facilities for preparing for these examinations in a place like Morayaya



Prema (on the left) and Kapugewatte Kalu Akka (1950)

**Social Activities:** The various worksites of the Irrigation Department were located in remote areas. Therefore, the social relationships that exist among officers and employees serving within these different locations, as well as between different locations, was very important for the smooth functioning of the Department. If there were conflicts between persons, they can adversely affect official duties. Those serving in the department belonged to various communities and religions. The different worksites even within a sub division were isolated and located away from each other. Therefore, every opportunity to bring them together was used. If anyone got a transfer, it was an occasion for a farewell party, usually a dinner at a week-end. Alcoholic drinks kindled the spirits of many of the participants, leading invariably to song and dance.

The popular Sinhala, Tamil and Hindi songs of movies were sung by those who had such ability. Some songs of the Sinhala movie 'Sujatha', Hindi movie 'Baiju Bawra' and Tamil movies such as 'Life' and "Thirimbippar' were popular numbers, although songs from earlier periods also were sung by some. The time for 'classical songs' was after dinner when the singers were highly inebriated. They would sing these songs seated cross-legged on the floor, in the style of Hindustani ustads. A song that was sung very often was *Maya maya, ko sepatha me sansare*, sung by Mohideen Baig, based on Baiju Bawra's '*Bhagwan, bhagwan, O duniya ke rakhawale...*' sung by Mohamed Rafi. The problem for us was when we had to sing at the high pitch of these two songs. Yet some of us managed to finish them well. The Sinhala song *Jeewana me gamana sansare...* based on the Hindi song *Do nayana thumhare pyari pyari...* was also very popular. Another song that we tried to sing was *Tu ganga ki moju me jamuna ki dhara...*

Our Head Clerk at this time was Mr. T.Y. Munaweera, who was a good clarinet player. He was said to have trained to play this instrument under A.J. Kareem, who was the clarinet player for Radio Ceylon. Loku Piyadasa played the violin. This was also the time when I was in the theatrical mode. A song that came into prominence was *Giye eida maawa thanikara harde dukak mawaa...* sung by Rukmani Devi and S.S. Veda. I tried to imitate it to the accompaniment of the clarinet played by Munaweera.

Apart from these 'big' parties, a few of us at the Irrigation Camp at Morayaya would enjoy a pre-dinner drink, if we had the opportunity to 'kill' someone for ten rupees. It would invariably be a Technical Assistant. We would send Bandulahamy on to the road, when it was time for the afternoon bus from Kandy. It was the habit of the bus crew to sell a bottle of arrack for ten rupees at Morayaya. They bought it in Kandy for eight rupees. At that time, one could carry only two bottles, so that the bus driver would give each reliable passenger, a parcel of two bottles wrapped in brown paper. The passengers would leave them on the seats by their side. Once when checking at Teldeniya Police Station, two bottles were found on the seat occupied by a Buddhist monk. The driver who was a non-Buddhist when questioned by the police had said that the two bottles belonged to the monk whereupon the police had taken the two bottles into their 'custody'. The proliferation of such alcoholic drinks in colonization schemes was done by bus crews whose main source of income was this trade. After the nationalization of bus companies, this was largely reduced, because the bus crews were better paid and overtime pay included.



Some one put up a temporary cinema hall (a tent) on an open plot of land, by the side of the road to Weragantota Rest House. Before this anyone who wanted to see a movie had to go to Kandy, a distance of over fifty miles. The temporary cinema was about one and a half miles from the Irrigation Office. Even those at the very end of the colonization scheme could travel on bicycles and arrive at the cinema within about one hour. We went to see an English movie called 'Secrets of Life' which included some surgical operations. When the operation started, I swooned and came to only after the operation was over. Whatever film was screened, there was a fairly large crowd coming even from the far corners of the colony. It was said that a middle-aged couple patronised the cinema daily.

## Chapter V

### Married Life

#### Transfer to Colombo

My request for a transfer was granted. I received the official letter on December 1, 1955 stating that I was transferred to the Head Office with effect from January 3, 1956. My replacement at Minipe was Mr. Weerasekara who was at Nikaweratiya sub division. He was the son of the Head Master of the Kiripattiya School, a village adjacent to my birth place, Halyala. I had to find a boarding house around Colombo, send the few items of furniture I had and finalized the handing over of my duties to my successor.

#### Boarding House at Kelaniya

An erstwhile schoolmate Mr. G.B.Y. Rambukwella (Asoka) working at the office of Local Government Service Commission in Colombo, had indicated to me that some one in his office was running a boarding house at Kelaniya. I wrote to Asoka and he replied that a room was available in the boarding house of Mr. Perera and that it would be reserved for me. This boarding house was within five minutes' walking distance from the Kelaniya Railway Station and close to the railway line. I sent the few items of my furniture to Kelaniya by train from Kandy, a few days before my departure from Morayaya. A request was sent to the Irrigation Department Head Office to obtain a season ticket for me to travel by train from Kelaniya to the Fort Railway Station.

I prepared a note indicating the work to be done for the benefit of my successor at the Minipe Irrigation Office and handed over two copies of it to the Head Clerk Mr. T.Y. Munaweera on December 31, 1955. I bade farewell to my colleagues and left for Kandy by bus from Morayaya. A farewell party with a dinner had been held a day or two before my departure, I would have travelled to Colombo by the night train from Kandy, arriving at the Fort Railway Station around seven in the morning. Asoka would have met me there and gone with me to the Kelaniya boarding house. Some of these details are largely forgotten; what is stated here is based on my memory rather than on diary entries.

I had a room to myself, while two other rooms were shared by four or five others. They included Mr. Tennakoon, Mr. Wijeratne, Mr. Premasiri and two of his friends. Tennakoon and Wijeratne shared one room. Wijeratne was a proofreader at Lake House, and brought us news early in the morning, when he came after night duty. Premasiri was employed in the Telecommunication Department and was one of his friends. There was a young man, Gunasekara, who was training to be a diver at the Colombo Port Commission.

Mr. Perera managed the boarding house while being employed at the LGSC office. There was a female cook and a handyman, who carried our lunch to our offices. There was no

problem of meals at the boarding house, except that one had to be in time for meals to avoid any shortcomings, as all the boarders were hungry men. My furniture arrived at the Kelaniya Railway Station within about a week. I hired three or four labourers to carry these items from the railway station to the boarding house. They were all kept in my room.

### **Work Place: Head Office Accounts Branch**

On January 3, 1956 I reported for duty at the Accounts Branch of the Irrigation Department Head Office. The department was still located on the third floor of the old Secretariat. The head of the Accounts Branch was a senior clerk, Mr. P.C.M. Dias from Panadura. He appeared to be a good Buddhist as were most people from Panadura. The next senior clerk in the branch was Mr. Thendauthapany. There were three or four other clerks in the branch. When I was first appointed to the Irrigation Department in 1951, I was attached to the Estimates Branch. The former head of that branch was now the Chief Clerk of the department. The next senior clerk at the time, Mr. Duraisingham was now the head of the Estimates Branch. The typist Mr. Podimahaththaya was still in that branch. Two clerks, Mr. Y.A. de Silva and Mr. W. Matugama who were not known to me earlier were now working in the Pay Branch. Mr. E.F E. Fonseka was the Chief Accountant, replacing Mr. Weerasinghe who had assumed duties as the Auditor-General. Mr. Pararajasingham, Mr. Vignarajah and Mr. Nagamany were assistant accountants. Mr. Pararajasingham was in charge of Accounts and therefore was the staff officer who was my immediate superior.

Mr.E.M. Gunasena Banda continued to be in charge of establishment matters relating to clerks. The Director of Irrigation (DI) was Mr. A.E.C. de Silva Gunasekara, the Deputy Director (DD) was Mr. S. Arumugam while Mr. W.A.de Silva was the Assistant Director of Irrigation (ADI). The Assistant Director (Administration) (ADA) was Mr. A.St.V. Wijemanne, an officer of the Ceylon Civil Service (CCS). Mr. D.S. Jayawardana was the Office Assistant (OA). Mr. A.V. Ratnarajah was the Chief Clerk (CC). The OA and CC were senior officers of the Clerical Service.

The Irrigation Department was under the Ministry of Lands and Land Development at the time. The eldest brother of Prema, Cyril Wijesiriwardhane, was a clerk attached to that ministry and within a short time, we came to know each other, as the two offices were adjacent to each other on the same floor. He was living in his own house on Gonamadiththa Road at Kesbewa, and travelled to work by bus. The Colombo-Kesbewa buses were operated by the Gamini Bus Company.

My fiancée Prema shifted from Manning Town to Kesbewa, to her brother's house, after my transfer to Colombo. Therefore, I spent my week-ends with them at Kesbewa, travelling there on Saturday afternoon after work and returning on Monday morning. This was how most of my weekends were spent until our marriage. Prema's sister-in-law was Merlin Akka, whose parents lived close by. We usually had our Sunday lunch at their house. Merlin Akka's mother was a kind lady who treated me as her own son. The Wijesiriwardhanes, Cyril and Merlin, had two children, Gamini and Indrani (Of all these good people only Indrani is now living).

**Trip to Alahenpita, Matara.** I had not so far met other members of Prema's family. Her mother and her brothers and sisters lived at Talpawila-Alahenpita and therefore, I thought it was necessary to meet them as soon as possible. One brother (*Baby Mahaththaya*) had married from Kahatagasdigiliya in Anuradhapura and was settled down there engaged in some business activities. There were four other brothers, Edmund, Jayasena, Harischandra and Ramachandra living in Matara. I had seen Jayasena at Morayaya School but had not spoken to him because it was before I met Prema. Of the three sisters only two were in Matara. Prema's elder sister, Leela, was at Udahamulla, Nugegoda. The two younger sisters were Chandra and Nela. They were still school going.

One morning I took the train from Maradana to Matara and reached Matara Railway Station at about 11.30 am. From there I took a buggy (*bakki karaththe*) to the bus stand which was on the other bank of *Nilwala Ganga* on the sea side. This part of the trip was not new to me as I had gone to Matara in 1952 on General Election duty. I had to go to Talpawila on a bus bound to Kekanadura, Yatiyana or Aparekka, a distance of about three miles. When I got off the bus at the designated place, Prema's brother *Harris* met me to guide me home to *Pahala Gedara*, about a quarter of a mile from the main road. Prema's mother, *Alice Hamine*, appeared to be very happy to see her first prospective son-in-law. Prema had gone home to Matara from Kesbewa on time to welcome me.

Pahala Gedara was situated on high ground in the middle of a coconut plantation. It was a fairly large house for that time. Prema's father had died in 1950, so that Alice Hamine had to bring up the children, perhaps with the help of her brothers and sisters. The property at Pahala Gedara belonged to them too but they had allowed Alice Hamine to make use of its income. I was accommodated in a room accessible from the front verandah. I spent two or three days at Pahala Gedara, enjoying the various facilities such as the cool well water for a pre-lunch bath, the country-rice meals with a number of curries and *kiri peni* (curd and treacle), an essential part of the Matara hospitality.

The return trip was by the *Ruhunu Kumari* which leaves Matara around 6.30 in the morning. I used my holiday warrants to travel second class. The train would have taken about forty-five minutes to reach Galle, having picked up passengers at Weligama and Ahangama. Hon. W. Dahanayake, the Member of Parliament, came on to the second-class compartment at Galle to travel to Colombo. He was entitled to travel first class but appeared to prefer travelling with government servants, particularly those from Ambalangoda who travelled daily on this train for work in Colombo.

The General Election 1956 was due at this time. Those who entrained at Ambalangoda were vociferously critical of Hon.W. Dahanayake for having entered into an 'opportunistic' alliance with those of the *Bhasha Peramuna* (Language Front). The critics appeared to be 'Leftists', perhaps those sympathetic to the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP). Hon. Dahanayake was also an LSSPer earlier and this may have been the reason for such criticism. But Mr. Dahanayake explained to his critics the reasons for his decision. He was able to address some of the critics by their name, indicating that he was a regular traveller with them. Because of these heated arguments, the journey was very interesting and seemed to come to an end in no time.

Hon. Dahanayake won the Galle seat at the General Election of 1956 and became the Minister of Education in the government of Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. He was instrumental in restoring the midday meal of school children and establishing Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara universities, two new universities in addition to the existing University of Ceylon. He was awarded doctorates by these universities in recognition of his contribution as Minister of Education.

Consequent to the assassination of Prime Minister Bandaranaike on September 26, 1959 Mr. Dahanayake became the Prime Minister; but because of considerable dissension within the government, he replaced the whole cabinet overnight towards the end of November and dissolved Parliament calling for a General Election in March, 1960. He formed a new political party called *Lanka Prajathantravadi Peramuna* (LPP) and fielded 97 candidates for the election. Only one or two candidates won seats. He also lost his seat, which he had always won, and was able to come to Parliament only after the General Election of July, 1960. It is said that after his defeat he walked on to Galle Road in front of 'Temple Trees', the official residence of the Prime Minister, and took a bus to Galle.

After returning from Matara I got into the normal routine of travelling from Kelaniya to office by train for which I had a second-class quarterly season ticket for six rupees. During the Sinhala New Year days, I fell severely ill when I went to Kesbewa and was nursed by Prema. Because of this I could not go home to Minipe for the New Year, which I did after recovery. It was clear that there was no favourable response to my marriage proposal and therefore I returned to Colombo without any discussion regarding the matter.

### **Deciding on a date for the Marriage**

When I met Prema's family members and her close relations, they seemed to have no objection to our alliance. Therefore, it was necessary to decide on a date for the wedding. June 4, 1956 was decided to be the auspicious day. But I had to resolve some basic problems one of which was formidable. This was the need for money to meet all the expenses involved, such as renting out a house, tailoring a wedding suit, buying a wedding ring, hiring a few cars for my wedding party and some additional reserves for household expenditure. Although I had been in employment from November, 1951 (leaving aside the period I worked as a teacher), I had no savings to meet a situation like this. During the period from 1952 to 1955 I had received a net monthly income between Rs 130 and Rs 169. The amount received in May, 1956 was Rs 177. This monthly income was spent on my living expenses. There were no unnecessary expenses apart from what I spent on my theatrical escapade. If I had saved at least ten rupees a month, following my boyhood experience, I would have built up a fund of about seven or eight hundred rupees. However, when a person gets a regular monthly income, the need for savings appears to go into abeyance.

### **Mobilizing financial resources**

I told a few of my office colleagues about my predicament and to my great relief Mr Y.A. de Silva (Yasaratne) of the Pay Branch said that he has a friend who lends money and suggested that we go to meet him at his work place. The two of us went to the Stores Section of the Education Department at Thurstan Road. Mr Yasaratne's friend who was also a Silva agreed

to lend me the money at a monthly interest of ten percent (annual interest of 120%). The most important condition as far as he was concerned was that I should regularly pay him the monthly interest. The principal could be repaid whenever I was able to. I was not concerned about the conditions as long as I got the money I wanted. Usually, the money lenders deduct the first month's interest when the loan is given, so that the money one gets is the capital less the first month's interest. But in my case, this was not done because of the guarantee of my colleague Y.A.de Silva. I consider these two friends my saviours, who relieved me of the embarrassment that I would have had to face, if I could not go ahead with the wedding for lack of financial resources.

When I got the loan, I went to a tailoring mart at Bambalapitiya adjacent to the Tolaram's Textile shop, and placed an order for the wedding suit. It was of cream flannel. I also bought a pair of buck and tan shoes to go with the wedding suit. Arrangements were made for Prema to buy a wedding ring that would suit her. They bought my wedding ring which was the weight of one gold sovereign.

### **Renting out a house**

The other matter that had to be attended to was to find a house for us to live after marriage. I did not like the area in which I was boarded at the time. Nor was it possible to get a suitable house within the city of Colombo. Going too far out of Colombo would have presented problems of travel although the house rent would have been within our reach. My friend Mr. Matugama helped in deciding which of the suburbs were suitable for this purpose. The two of us went round Nugegoda, Mirihana, Udahamulla and Nawinna looking for a house. This area was ideal for me, because travelling to Colombo was convenient on the Kelani Valley Railway Line. Even bus travel was within my means. Finally, a house at Nawinna close to Devananda Road was rented out, at forty rupees a month with a three-month advance. The owners lived in the adjoining house. This house had two bed rooms, a large hall (drawing-cum-dining room), a kitchen and another small room with a rear verandah.

The few items of furniture I had at the Kelaniya boarding house were transported to Nawinna in a bullock cart and I went into occupation of the house on June 1, 1956. My friend Piyadasa who was then working in the Colombo Sub Division Irrigation Office at Veluwana Road and was boarded in a house at Ketawalamulla came to keep company with me in the new house. On the night before the wedding day, a drawing room suite of furniture was brought from the Udahamulla house of Prema's Hinni *Maama*. Prema's cousin, Karuna Samarakoon and brother Baby Mahaththaya helped to bring them in a hand cart.



**June 4 ,1956**

## **Wedding Day**

I had arranged for two hiring cars from Nugegoda for the wedding party to travel to Piliyandala and return to Nawinna after lunch at ten rupees each. I did not have any of my relations coming for the wedding. Therefore, I invited some office colleagues to help me out. Accordingly, Mr. Gunasena Banda Ekanayake and his wife, Mr. Matugama and his wife, and Mr. Podimahaththaya together with my bestman Piyadasa formed my wedding party.

On June 4, 1956 we met at Nugegoda and travelled to Cyril Wijesiriwardane's house on Gonamadiththa Road, Piliyandala. A large number of Prema's relations such as uncles, aunts, cousins (male and female), her mother as well as brothers and sisters had gathered in that house. The Registrar of Marriages in the area was invited home to officiate at the wedding. The attesting witnesses were Mr. Thiloris John Samarakoon, Prema's *Loku Maama*, and my friend Mr. M.K. Piyadasa. After a sumptuous lunch, we went to the Samarakoon Studio at Nugegoda Junction for the wedding photograph, after which we went to my house at Nawinna. Prema's two younger sisters, Chandra and Nela were there to recite *Jayamangala Gatha* to welcome us. The visitors dispersed after a simple reception. A few office colleagues who had come were also treated accordingly. Baby Mahattaya had prepared a fruit drink for this purpose on the previous night. My mother-in-law stayed with us for a few days.

Some historical events that took place during this period need to be recorded. The *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna* (MEP) led by the *Sri Lanka Freedom Party* (SLFP) formed a government after the General Election. Hon. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike became the Prime Minister. In terms of their election pledge a Bill to make Sinhala the Official Language of Ceylon was presented to Parliament. The Tamil politicians and some Catholics strongly protested against this. Their desire appeared to be to keep English as the official language, rather than getting a place for the Tamil language because the original Bill provided for the reasonable use of Tamil. On the other hand, some Sinhala leaders protested against the inclusion of any provision regarding the Tamil Language in the Bill. For instance, Professor F. R. Jayasuriya staged a fast under the steps of the Parliament building. Therefore Mr. Bandaranaike had to delete the provisions regarding the Tamil language from the Bill. This is how Sinhala became the official language of the country.

### **Married Life**

I was on leave from office for about one week. I used this period to visit some relations who had come for the wedding. Prema appeared to think highly of *Emara Aunty*, who was married to Bankuwe Maama. They were living at Panadura and we decided to make our first visit to them. Having travelled to Panadura by bus, we walked towards Nalluruwa and along Samudrasanna Mawatha and reached a large house, as were all the residential houses in Panadura. One part of the house was occupied by the family of *Dingi Maama*. Aunt Emara welcomed us warmly and entertained us to a sumptuous lunch. After resting for about two hours, we came back home by evening. My mother-in-law had dinner ready for us.

A few days later my friend Matugma, brought me some money collected from our colleagues in the office. This came at a time when I was badly in need of some money, as I had exhausted the loan taken before the wedding. Because of the increase of some allowances, the net salary I received in July, 1956 was 208 rupees. An advance of one hundred rupees was granted for *Buddha Jayanthi* celebrations. It was necessary to be very careful with our expenses. On Sundays I went to the fair at Delkanda to buy vegetables, fish, coconuts and some country rice. The provisions for the ration books could be bought from a boutique closer home. Any illness would involve additional expenditure.

A season ticket was obtained to travel by train from Nawinna to Colombo Fort. The fare for three months was six rupees. Lunch was prepared by Prema in the morning so that I could



take a packet when I went to work in the morning, so there was no need to spend on lunch at the office canteen. There was some expenditure on tea and cigarettes. Although it was a waste of money to spend on smoking, it had become a habit and could not be avoided. I smoked about ten cigarettes a day. The brand I smoked was Three Roses and ten-cigarette pack cost twenty-five cents from the agents. Because of this I travelled to Nugegoda after office by a train running express from Maradana to Nugegoda, bought a packet of cigarettes and any groceries from Gunawardhane Stores and took the slow train to travel to Udahamulla or Nawinna. I daily heard from the radios of nearby boutiques; a song sung by a group of children “ayubovan, vasanavan” etc. The Lamapitiya programme started at this time. Quite often, I heard the sweet voice of announcer, Mr Karunaratna Abeysekera addressing the children as “nangi” and “malli”. Those strains not only announced the beginning of Lamapitiya but also that the time was five fifteen in the evening. A ten-minute walk from Udahamulla or Navinna station, took me home by about six in the evening, having left home at 7.30 in the morning.

After the mother-in-law left for Matara, Prema spent the time alone with nothing much to do except to cook the dinner in the evening. Prema’s grandmother who was living in Manning Town with Loku Kudamma came for a few days to keep Prema company. One day when I came home, I found a new plate rack which the grandmother had bought for us from a street vendor. We used this for a very long time. What was necessary was to paint it from time to time. At that time, we did not have even a radio receiver. But of course, the neighbour had a radio receiver which was switched on early in the morning and continued uninterrupted till late in the evening so that our not having a radio did not matter much. The Sinhala movie ‘Dingiri Menika’ was released around this time. Its’ songs were constantly played over the radio.

The young land lady next door was the owner of the radio we listened to. However, none of them had anything to do with us, newcomers to the place. We found that this was normal behaviour of urban people. We ourselves did not mind this because as days went by, we found that it was good not to know them too well.

We did not have lights or pipe-borne water. Water for domestic purposes was drawn from a well in the garden but we had to go to Hinni Maamma’s for bathing and washing our clothes. They had a well which was full of water which could be easily drawn. This house was close to Udahamulla Railway Station. Prema would come there during the day to bathe and wash clothes and spend most of her time with some of her relations. Off and on, she would go to Manning Town when I went for work. There was a train halt at Manning Town that Prema could get off the train and go across the parapet wall into Loku Kudamma’s garden. In the evening I would go there and go home with her by the next train.

An examination for promotion to Grade II of the Executive Class of the General Clerical Service was held around this time. I also sat for this examination but was not successful as I could not adequately prepare for it.

The landlady indicated that they would need the house back so that I had to look for another house to rent out. Hinni Maama informed me that Arvis Singo Mudalali who was known to him had a house to rent out. I went to see the place with Hinni Maama and found it to be just enough for the two of us. It was like a railway compartment with a closed front

verandah, two sections which could be considered rooms and a kitchen with a detached latrine. The rent was thirty rupees a month with an advance payment of three months' rent. This was within my reach and therefore by about October, 1956 we shifted there. It was close to the Sunday Fair at Delkanda, which saved us much time and trouble. The rice rations, etc. could be bought at a boutique just a block away. There was a very good bathing well and also another well to draw water for domestic purposes. I could still take the train from the Udahamulla Railway Station.

Two of Prema's unemployed brothers came to live with us during this time which meant that we had at least to feed them. *Punchi Aiyya* (Edmund) who was plying a passenger van between Matara and Colombo, would come to our place with his assistant to take rest until his turn for the return trip. He would bring some provisions such as country rice and coconuts from Matara, which went a long way in easing our burden.

### **Prema's Motherhood**

In the meantime, Prema had become pregnant, which meant that she needed some additional nutrition and care. With the additional expenditure on the advance of house rent and expenses on shifting, it became extremely difficult to manage with the monthly salary. One way of relief was to borrow some money. Since I did not have any one from whom I could borrow, I decided to resort to the next best thing. This was to go to a pawn broker at Sea Street in Pettah. Thus, one day I pawned my ring and borrowed forty rupees. When I went home, Prema was wondering as to what happened to my ring. Having explained the position to her, I redeemed the ring immediately after pay day. But off and on I had to resort to this method without having to borrow from others.

As Prema's pregnancy advanced, we were advised by our elders that it would be necessary to consult a gynaecologist. Therefore, we went once or twice to one Dr. Caldera, who was running a consultancy service at his house in Borella. In the meantime, I was looking for a transfer to a place where there were suitable medical facilities. One or two Technical Assistants who were known to me, told me that Badulla would suit my purpose and therefore I requested a transfer to Badulla Irrigation Office, which was granted effective from March 1, 1957.

### **Transfer to Badulla**

On receipt of this transfer order, I made a request to the Assistant Irrigation Engineer (AIE) in charge of Badulla Sub Division for official quarters. His reply was in the negative. However, some of my friends in Badulla informed me, that I could get government quarters once I went to Badulla. The Head Clerk and the Second Clerk at Badulla had fallen out with the AIE and were not regular in their attendance but took leave very often. The Second Clerk

who occupied the second clerk's quarters came to office off and on, but was expecting a transfer.

A railway goods wagon was reserved at the Tripoli Goods Shed at Pettah to which my household furniture and other items were loaded to be sent to Badulla Railway Station. On February 27, 1957 Prema and I bade farewell to our relations at Udahamulla and Manning Town and entrained at the Fort Railway Station to travel by the 8.15 pm night mail train to Badulla. We had reserved second class sleeping berths for this purpose. Some time after the train started, I found that Prema was in tears, perhaps because she was sorry to leave her relations to go to a distant place. I tried to pacify her by saying that we were going away both for the good of our expected baby and that of ours. We had just started our long journey of travelling from place to place and never after this did, I see Prema in tears.

The train reached Badulla at about 8.30 am on February 28, 1957. My friend Mr.E.M.D.W. Wijenayake (W.B. Ekanayake), who was a Technical Assistant attached to the Badulla Sub Division of the Irrigation Department, was at the station to meet us and took us in a hiring car to Salgado Hotel in the centre of the town. A room had been reserved for us in the upper floor of the hotel. The manager of the hotel was very well known to my friend. After a wash and breakfast, my friend and I went to the Irrigation Office, leaving Prema to rest in the hotel room.

### **Badulla Irrigation Office**

We went along the Bandarawela Road passing the Town Hall and the Hospital and turned to the right on a by-lane to reach the Irrigation Office. The office was about half a mile from the hotel. Mr P.M. Sithamparapillai, AIE in charge of the Badulla Sub Division, who was in the office welcomed me warmly and informed me that in a day or two I might be able to get the quarters. He said that my immediate task would be to attend to several months of accounts queries raised by the Head Office and the office of the Divisional Irrigation Engineer (DIE), Central Division, Bandarawela. He told me that I need not attend to any other duties, until I completed answering the accounts queries. I knew that this would not be a problem for me, as I had been working in the Accounts Branch in the Head Office and was familiar with the type of queries that I was now required to answer.

After this I went round the office meeting others attached to the office. The Head Clerk, Mr. W R. Munasinghe and the Second Clerk Mr. J.A.C. Fernando were not in office. There were three Store Keepers (S.Ks.), Messrs. Siriwardana, Jayatilake and Gamage. The last named was now attending to the duties of the Accounts Clerk. Messrs A.B.de Silva and Dias were Draughtsmen. The office Peon was Mr. Tissera and the office labourer was Mr. Albert. Messrs Sithamparanathan and Ponnambalam were assistants helping in various office jobs and typing. I met the watcher Mr. Punchi Banda later and came to know others in the sub division such as the Technical Assistants (T.As.) Messrs. Lorton de Lima, Fred Ratnasingham, B.B. Jayasekara (Berty), the Maintenance Overseers (M.O) Messrs. Zainulabdeen and Ratnappuli, and Construction Overseers (C.O.s) Messrs Seneviratne and Punchi Banda (later Rajasinghe) as well as Mr. Nanayakkara some time later as and when they came to the office. As there was no other work in the office, I came to the hotel for lunch and spent the rest of the day relaxing in the hotel room.

## **Official Quarters**

On March 1, 1957 I assumed duties as the second clerk and started clearing the arrears of accounts queries. By the next day the official quarters were also made available to me. These quarters were located on a hill slope on Keppetipola Road. This was a circular road, starting from the Badulla-Bandarawela Road near the Town Hall and the Market, going across a paddy field towards St. Bede's College, taking a right angle turn on passing the college and after about one mile falling on to the Bandarawela Road again. There were four Irrigation Quarters on the right side of Keppetipola Road, about halfway through Circular Road. Two of the buildings were below the road but adjacent to each other. One was occupied by the S.K. Mr. Siriwardhane. The other was a twin cottage, one part of which was occupied by the Office Peon Mr. Tissera and his family and the other part by a Maintenance Labourer Mr. Yothan.

The quarters occupied by the Maintenance Overseer Mr. Zainulabdeen was above the road and had to be reached by climbing about forty-five steps up the hill. The second clerk's quarters could be reached by turning left at the fortieth step and proceeding about fifteen feet on a cemented path. Below the second clerk's quarters was a private house of a person named Mr. L.M. Perera. Mr. Fred Ratnasingham, T.A, occupied official quarters which were about five hundred yards from the other quarters towards St Bede's College.

There was a short-cut from our quarters to the office along Keppetipola Road, deviating to a foot path along an irrigation canal and then falling on to a motorable road, that ran down to the main road by the side of the Irrigation Office. We could reach home from the office up this road in about ten minutes.

The railway wagon containing my furniture arrived in Badulla at this time which enabled us to go into occupation of the official quarters. As the house was located on a hill slope, the kitchen, the store room and another room were constructed on a higher elevation than the main house. The main house had two bed rooms with attached bathroom and lavatory, a rear verandah, the dining hall and the living area with a front verandah, the length of both the living area and the dining hall. There was departmental (pipe borne) water service. Electricity supplied by the Urban Council was pretty dim between six and nine in the evening. Mr. Fernando who was occupying this house, shifted to a rear room which was accessible from around the house and therefore the main house and the kitchen were available for our use. Within about a month he went on transfer out of Badulla.

The Head Clerk Mr. W.R. Munasinghe went on transfer and in April, 1957 Mr. Haljothi Tentulus de Silva Wimalasiri came on transfer to Badulla and assumed duties as the new Head Clerk. I had known him when we were working together in the Head Office in 1952. He was now married and had a baby son. When they came to Badulla a sister-in-law accompanied them and they went into occupation of the Head Clerk's quarters, adjacent to the AIE's quarters. Until the arrival of Wimalasiri, I had to attend to the duties of the Head Clerk as well. The arrears of work that had been left behind by the predecessors were cleared by me in March and from April, I started work as the Second Clerk and was assigned the subject of Accounts.

Soon after we went to Badulla, I made arrangements to buy our provisions from a boutique in the bazaar. It was owned by one Geedrick Appuhamy from Ahangama. It was the practice of people from Galle and Matara districts to migrate to what they called the 'Sinhale', to engage in trade which was a profitable business for them, as there was not only the indigeneous population but also the plantation workers of Indian origin as customers. Geedrick Appuhamy had no hesitation in providing me with credit facilities, when he learnt that I was married to a person from Matara. Even otherwise these traders were willing to offer such facilities as long as a person settles his account regularly, particularly after pay day.

The net salary I had received for March,1957 was Rs.197/=. On Sundays I went to a fair close to the Railway Station, where I could buy some local vegetables, which were not available at the market but were also much cheaper. Although I had to walk about two miles to get to the fair, it was still worth the trouble. The ancient *Muthiyangana* Temple was also at the head of Station Road and *Passara* Road in Badulla town, so that I could go there with Prema to offer flowers and worship Lord Buddha. When I was at Minipe, the *Mahiyangana* temple was within walking distance as was the case in Badulla with Muthiyangana temple. These were considered special advantages for a Buddhist like me.

We were able to obtain the services of an elderly lady, who helped us in our cooking and kept company with Prema when she was alone at home. Firewood was a problem in Badulla and therefore we had to buy firewood from bullock carts, going round on Keppetipola Road. These carts came from Taldena area bringing loads of firewood for sale in Badulla. Our cook would buy a few bundles enough for a week. Each bundle was sold for ten cents and had three or four sticks about five or six feet long.

### **Badulla Hospital and Child Birth**

The main hospital in the Uva Province was the Badulla Hospital, located on the Bandarawela Road. The Irrigation Office was just behind the hospital on a by-road. There were several consultants serving in the hospital. They engaged in private practice outside normal working hours. The consultant gynaecologist at this hospital was Dr. Andrew Perera, who lived in his house situated on the by-road beyond the Irrigation Office. My wife was regularly examined by him at his home from March 1957. His view was that Prema's child birth would be about the beginning of June, 1957.

Towards the end of May, Prema's mother came to Badulla in *Punchi Aiyya's* van. The mother-in-law appeared to be keen to be with her daughter at her first child birth. The normal custom is to go to the parental home for the first delivery but since it was far away the easiest alternative was for the mother to come to the daughter, which made things easier for me. Prema also was relieved to be with her mother at this crucial time. The departmental jeep was stationed at the quarters of Fred Ratnasingham at night in readiness to go to the hospital. At about eleven on the night of June 6, Prema complained of pains and was admitted to hospital immediately. However, the birth took place the following day, **Friday, June 7, 1957 at 12.34 pm.**

I was waiting anxiously outside the maternity ward and was informed when the baby was delivered that it was a girl and that both mother and the baby were doing well. However, I had to wait another two or three hours before I could have a look at them. Having impatiently waited for a long time, I was about to go out for some refreshments, when Dr. Andrew Perera called out to say that I could go up to the first-floor ward and see the new born and the mother. They had been taken to the ward from the delivery room on the ground floor. No sooner had I heard the doctor's words than I was by the side of Prema's bed. I cannot even now imagine how I got there.

I found a tiny baby wrapped in Prema's pull-over and lying beside Prema pressed against the mother. I stayed by their bed until I was asked by the hospital staff to leave the ward. Eventually I went home to inform the mother-in-law about the baby and Prema and came back to the hospital with the necessary items for the baby and Prema. They spent two or three days in the hospital during which I visited them two or three times each day.

The time of birth was given to an astrologer called Sirinayake, who cast a horoscope and suggested auspicious letters to decide on a name for the baby. I was told that it would be convenient for the birth to be registered before leaving hospital. A name was necessary for this purpose. When I suggested the name Chandini, my friend Wijenayake asked me to add Tikiri Kumarihamy too. That is how my daughter's name appears as **Chandini Tikiri Kumarihamy** in her birth certificate. In about three days the mother and the baby went home. A jeweller was given an order to turn out a small *panchayuda* out of a quarter of a gold sovereign for the baby.

When Prema was in a condition to walk around, we took the baby to the Muthiyangana Temple, which was about one and a half miles from the quarters. The baby was placed on the floor of the shrine room, with its head towards the statue of Lord Buddha and was allowed to be there on its own for some time throwing about its limbs freely.

After about a month the mother-in-law went to Matara when Punchi Aiyya came in his van. He brought a wooden cot made of jak wood which we used for all my children and finally gave it to a maternal aunt of my son-in-law Priyantha. The elderly lady from Badulla continued to be with us to assist Prema in the domestic work and impart her wisdom of long years of experience of bringing up children. I came home immediately after office and the two of us spent our time with the baby. Prema appeared to notice very carefully every movement of the baby. This was a novel but very pleasant experience for the two of us.

Prema's dress was the Indian saree at the time of marriage up to the birth of the first child. But she changed over to the Kandyan saree after the baby was born at Badulla. She would have thought that I would be happy because I am a Kandyan. But whichever saree she wore made no difference to me. What was important was for her to wear a decent dress to cover herself adequately and be attractive to her husband. Prema's mother and the maternal aunts also wore the Kandyan saree. The change may have been because of this but I found that it took a longer time to wear the Kandyan saree than the Indian saree.

**Visits of Relations:** A group of Prema's relations from Colombo visited us during one school, vacation. They included *Loku Kudamma* and her children Kirthi, Laxaman and Ramya; *Hinni Maama and Seela Auntie* and their two children, Suwineetha and Lalani. They travelled by train, as they had railway warrants to which they were entitled as government servants. The children appeared to enjoy the outing thoroughly and spent two or three days with us. After a long time, Prema also had the pleasure of the company of her beloved relations. On another occasion, an uncle of Prema's came from Matara and spent a few days with us. He was a native physician.

An unemployed brother *Harischandra* (Haris) who was idling at Matara was asked to come to Badulla, and the AIE, on my request, graciously provided Haris a job, as a minor supervisor at the Badulu Oya Scheme at Kendaketiya. Haris was able to win the confidence and goodwill of his supervisory officers and continue in this job for a long time. He later went to Hakwatuna Oya in Kurunegala district. When the new Irrigation Department Headquarters building was opened, he joined as one of its Telephone Operators and shifted to the Mechanical Division at Ratmalana, perhaps as a supervisor where he served till retirement. He was married and had two children, a son and a daughter who were doing well. After retirement, Haris died when he met with an accident at the Pettah Bus Stand. His wife, Rupa, who was a teacher also died a few years later.

### **Minipe Trip**

I did not go to Minipe after my marriage but my parents were aware that I was in Badulla. That may be how I received an invitation to participate in the 'at home' on the occasion of the auspicious first meal of *Heen Akka's* eldest daughter (Yasawathie). This was an opportunity for me to meet my parents and my relations after a long time. I could go to Kendaketiya by bus and at Bathmedilla cross Mahaveliganga on to Ambagahapelessa and take bus to Handaganawa, from where it was walking distance of about half a mile to reach my sister's house. All this would take about four or five hours, but I would have had to stay a night out. Therefore, I requested Haris who was at Kendaketiya, to come to Badulla and stay at home so that Prema and the baby would not be alone, in case of any emergency. I started from Badulla early in the morning and following the route noted above, it was about midday by the time I arrived at my sister's house.

My parents and my two sisters (*Heen Akka and Nangi*), brothers-in-law, cousins and many other adult and young relations were all there at the house. I was meeting them for the first time after my marriage and every one appeared to be happy to see me. The feeling was mutual. *Appachchi* (my father) inquired about my trip and all indications were that he was very happy to see his younger (prodigal?) son after a long time. Everything turned out to be auspicious and nothing seemed to spoil the mood of the occasion. I was very happy that I got the opportunity to face my father and mother who were very precious to me. Filled with this sense of satisfaction, I returned to Badulla the following day on the same route.

It was the practice among our villagers, who could afford it to throw a big party going on for two or three days, when a child was fed the first meal at an auspicious time (*indul kata gaema*). Food items were available for the guests depending on the time of their arrival. If they were present at main meal time, a sumptuous meal of rice and curry would be served.

Those who were up to it would also be served with drinks such as arrack and beer with appropriate bites. The guests would in turn present the host with suitable amounts of money varying between five and ten rupees. A few would give even more depending on their relationship with the host and how happy they are. These amounts were a lot of money in those days. For some throwing an 'at home' was purely for the pleasure of it and there were others who would do this to make some money; but the expenses were always more than what one could earn, so that they would fall into debt trying to keep up with the 'Joneses'. In this case, the brother-in-law had the means to meet the expenses and therefore it was mainly a means of demonstrating his love for the first-born child.

I had to go to Minipe once again to attend the funeral of the baby son of my younger sister. Appachchi had sent me a telegram conveying the message. Again, I went on the Kendaketiya route and returned the following day. The dead son was *Nangi's* second child. When I saw him on my earlier trip to Minipe, I told *Nangi* to look after the child carefully as I found him to be unusually healthy and grown up. I now feel that it would have been better, if I had not said that. However, these two trips helped me to renew my contact with my near and dear ones. It was also my last opportunity to meet my father.

### **Change of Name**

The General Treasury issued Circular No. 394 of August 18, 1957 allowing government servants to change their names, if necessary. Taking advantage of this circular I submitted a declaration to the authorities on October 4, 1957 to change my name effective from that date. I was hitherto known as Ekanayake Rajapakse Mudiyanseelage Ariyapala. My wife came to be known as Mrs. Ariyapala and moreover my daughter would be called Miss Ariyapala. I was not very happy about this situation and wished to be known by my surname rather than by my first name only. With the change, I became ***Ariyapala Ekanayake***, my wife Mrs. Ekanayake and my daughter Miss Ekanayake, thus removing the dissatisfaction I felt earlier.

### **1957 December Floods and Earthslip**

The north-east monsoon rains in 1957 were unusually heavy, resulting in floods in most low-lying areas of the country such as Ampara, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa and causing earthslips in hilly areas. Badulla also experienced heavy rains, sometimes continuously for days. On the night of December 19th, we heard a cracking noise in the front bedroom used by the three of us (Pema, our baby and me) and on closer examination saw a crack of about a quarter of an inch, running down the wall starting from the front window sill. The night was pitch dark with heavy rain. I called Mr. Punciappuhamy, M.O., who was living in the adjoining quarters. When the two of us examined the front compound with the help of our flashlights, we found that a section of the compound in front of the bedroom had slid towards Mr. L.M. Perera's house. The precipice was about fifty feet deep and was still sliding gradually. It was not certain at what moment the house would collapse.

Prema and the baby were shifted to the living area at the other end of the house. I got some clothes packed in a suitcase. We shifted down to the roadside quarters of our colleague Mr. Siriwardhane and the three of us spent the night with them. The following morning, we saw



the extent of the earthslip which had caved in to the very foundation of our bedroom. I went to the office and informed the Irrigation Engineer (IE) of the earthslip. He came and inspected the damage, which may have been communicated to the Divisional Irrigation Engineer and the Director of Irrigation.

The three of us spent the twentieth night also with the Siriwardhanes and left Badulla early the following morning by the *Udarata Menike* for Colombo, where we changed over to the Matara bound *Ruhunu Kumari* (Three new trains with specially painted compartments, which were called *Ruhunu Kumari*, *Udarata Menike* and *Yal Devi* were launched by the 1956 Bandaranaike Government, when Hon Maithripala Senanayake was Minister of Transport).

I left Prema and the child with the in-laws at Pahala Gedara and after a day or two returned to Badulla by bus via Matara, Hambantota, Wellawaya and Bandarawela. The railway line at Demodara had also slid preventing train travel to Badulla. The Colombo-Badulla train did not proceed beyond Bandarawela until the line was repaired which took a very long time. Had we not left Badulla on the twenty first, we would have had to face the problem of travelling to Bandarawela to take the train to Colombo. This was the second major flood that I experienced in my life, the first being that of August, 1947 when I was a schoolboy.

### **My Bedroom in the Office Building**

After I returned to Badulla, a day or two were spent in my quarters but because it was risky, the IE asked me to make use of a vacant hall in the office building as my living quarters. I brought down a few items of my furniture such as a bed and a few other essential items. Water, lights and toilet facilities were available in the office building but I had to get my meals from some boutique near the office.

### **Controversial marriage of Mr. Ratnayake**

A new clerk by the name of Ratnayake who was appointed to the Irrigation Office assumed duties during the time I was living in the office premises. Mr. Ratnayake was born and bred in some place in the Badulla district. He sought accommodation in a house near the office. This house owner had a very pretty daughter with whom my colleague fell in love (I was not surprised that he fell in love with this girl). Ratnayake married the girl and settled down in their house. However, Ratnayake's parents, particularly the mother, were vehemently against this and wanted him to give up this affair.

Pressed by these demands, but not having any other person to seek support and advice from, Ratnayake dropped in to see me after office hours to discuss his problem with me. I asked him why his mother was against the marriage and was told that it was a caste problem. Ratnayake belonged to the upper *goigama* caste while his bride belonged to the lower potter caste. When asked for my opinion, I told him that as he had already married the girl, he should not leave her in the lurch. A male would always be acceptable particularly if he had a government job, even if he was a divorcee. But a girl who is separated or divorced and unemployed would not have that type of acceptability in the social setting of our country. Ratnayake was advised not to give up the marriage, now that he had taken the

plunge. I do not know what happened after I left Badulla but I know that the marriage did not break up while I was still in Badulla.

**Once a month I went to Matara** by train to see the child and Prema. My daughter was about six months old and every time I went to see them, she appeared to forget who I was for a day or two and treated me as a complete stranger which was a little heart-rending for me. I was led to look for some means of making it possible for the three of us to be together, one of which was to ask for a transfer. When I made a formal application for a transfer on February 15, 1958, the IE was not very happy. He found another solution to my problem, by making part of the damaged quarters suitable for my occupation. The living area was partitioned as a bedroom. There was a door to the dining area from the front verandah. Only the front bedroom could not be used. The other bedroom could be used as the kitchen. All other facilities in the quarters could be used.

Once the partitioning was completed, I was able to bring back Prema and the child in March. Prema's younger sister *Nela Nangi* also came with us to Badulla, so that Prema had the benefit of someone who was near and dear to the baby as well. My daughter had become very friendly with her Punchi *Amma* during the three months spent at Matara.

### **Request for Flood Damage Relief**

In view of the inconvenience that we had to undergo as a result of having to vacate the quarters and travel to Matara for which I had to obtain leave and holiday warrants, I decided to appeal to the Director of Irrigation to provide me some relief by way of the following:

- a. To treat the railway warrants used for travel to Matara as *duty warrants*,
- b. To treat the leave obtained for the trip as *duty leave*,
- c. Pay me one month's subsistence allowance from December 20 to January 19.

No such request had been made by anyone in government service before this and therefore the decision to allow the request or not had to be made by the Treasury. The Irrigation Engineer, Badulla Sub Division, certified as correct the information given in my appeal. The Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Central Division, recommended the request. The Assistant Director (Administration) Mr. Nissanka Wijewardhane who came to Badulla to hold a disciplinary inquiry, personally inspected my quarters (accompanied by me) and sent a recommendation to the Treasury. I was informed by letter dated May 9, 1958 from the Director of Irrigation that my request had been approved by the Controller of Establishments in the General Treasury.

Subsequent requests, citing my case as a precedent, by those who were affected by the 1958 communal disturbances had been disallowed, as reported in the newspapers. Consequently, there was a lot of criticism regarding the approval granted to my request. One newspaper questioned why, what was sauce for the goose was **not** sauce for the gander.

## **Pilgrimage to Sri Pada**

During the 1958 pilgrimage season to Adam's Peak, Wimalasiri and I decided to go on this pilgrimage, and obtained the services of a car owned by a businessman in Badulla. There were altogether eight members in the two families. They included the two babies, two sisters-in-law, two wives and two husbands. With the driver, there were seven adults and two babies to travel in this Ford Prefect car. On the morning of the day, we were due to leave for Sri Pada, we found that my baby daughter, who was about nine months old, was running a high temperature. Although it was risky, we decided to go on the trip hoping to consult a physician on the way, if it became necessary.

We started from Badulla reasonably early in the morning and travelled through Welimada, Keppetipola, Hakgala, Nuwara Eliya, Nanu Oya, Thalawakelle, Kotagala and Hatton. Even at Hatton the baby had the fever, so that we consulted a qualified western physician, who gave some medication and told me that there was no harm in continuing with the pilgrimage. The rest of the trip by car was through Dickoya and Maskeliya to Nallathanniya.

The trek from Nallathanniya to the Peak was about four miles but the major part of it was steep hill. On the way up. we broke journey at a place where sleeping accommodation was available. After about four hours of sleep, we continued the climb to reach the peak well before dawn. Once we completed the worship of the foot print, we got on to an area from which the rising sun was visible. This was a wonderful phenomenon but waiting for it in the extremely cold breeze was a challenge, unless the pilgrims had suitable warm clothing. The baby daughter had recovered from the fever, both because of the medical treatment as well as the cold weather at the peak. She refused to be carried by anyone, other than the mother all the way up to the peak but was now willing to go to her *Punchi Amma* to Prema's great relief.

After the *Irasevaya* was over, there was a great rush to come down from the peak. By now the baby was with *Nela Nangi* and I had to make a great effort to save them from getting crushed by the rush of the crowd. After about ten minutes the crowd had descended and those of our group who had dispersed here and there came together and began our descent, which would have taken about two or three hours to Nallathanniya where the car was parked. It was not clear how long we took to reach Badulla, but all of us were very tired but happy that we had completed this pilgrimage. This was my second trip to Sri Pada.

I went with my children in 1983 during the pilgrim season, and I stayed at Nallathanni, until they returned after worshipping at the Sri Pada, because by that time, I was unable to climb mountains. My elder daughter, who went to Sri Pada at the age of eight months for the first time, now a twenty-six-year-old doctor, joined the pilgrimage. This time we came to Maskeliya and after breakfast, we travelled across Nuwaraeliya, Gampola and Kadugannawa and by the time we reached Colombo, it was evening.

## **Mahiyangana Sub Division**

The Assistant Irrigation Engineer Mr. P.M. Sithamparapillai, who was in charge of Badulla Sub Division, was assigned the task of establishing a new sub division for Mahiyangana. As a

first step in this direction, Mr. C.A.de Silva was sent to Badulla to serve as the Head Clerk of Mahiyangana Sub Division. Another person was sent as the second clerk. I think he was one Mr. Hashim. Mr. Gamage who was under the Badulla Sub Division was to be transferred to Mahiyangana Sub Division as its store keeper. For several months, the Mahiyangana S.D. office was run in a section of the Badulla office. This was in the hall I had occupied as my quarters after the earthslip.



**Badulla Irrigation Office Staff**

**Front Row:** C.A.de Silva, Fred Ratnasingham, A. Ekanayake, Mrs. Ekanayake, Mrs. Wimalasiri, P.M. Sithamparapillai, Mrs.Sithamparapillai, Wimalasiri's sister-in-law, Mrs.Jayathilake, Jayathilake and H.T.de S. Wimalasiri.

**SecondRow:** Hasheem, Nanayakkara, J. Ratnappuli, Wickremasinghe, Kiri Banda, Ponniah, Berty Jayasekera, W.M.J.de Silva, S. Sithamparanathan, S. Thillainathan, Albert, A.B.de Silva and W.B. Ekanayake

**Third Row:** Heen Banda, Seneviratne, D.A. Mahanama, Seneviratne, P.B. Rajasinghe, Ariyaratne, Gamage, Irton de Lima, B.A. Tissera, Jayasinghe, H. Wijesiriwardane, Kalu Banda, Dias, Punchiappuhamy and A.V. Mahindapala

At the beginning of January, 1958 Mr. A.J.P. Ponrajah assumed duties as Irrigation Engineer of Badulla. Thereafter all those who were assigned to the Mahiyangana Sub Division, including the Assistant Irrigation Engineer Mr. Sithamparapillai went to Mapakada, where the Mahiyangana Irrigation Office was established. A few days before their departure, the staff of these two sub divisions got together for a dinner and a photograph. A copy of this photograph, although a bit worn out, is still available with me.

A few of us went to Mapakada before the Mahiyangana staff shifted there. Prema and the baby daughter also went with me and spent the night in a building constructed for a circuit bungalow. We spent the night on the floor in one room as there was no furniture or linen in the new circuit bungalow. We went to Mapakada past Passara, Bibile, Potawa, Uraniya, Andaulpotha and Haddaththa Oya, a distance of about sixty miles from Badulla. Mapakada can now be reached by road through Taldena, Meegahakiula, Karametiya, Kuruweetenna, Andaulpotha and Haddaththa Oya which is only about twenty miles from Badulla.

### **1958 Communal Disturbances**

There were several instances of communal disturbance in the country, although their intensity varied one to another. The attack on the protestors in 1956, when the Official Language Act was presented to Parliament, was the first of its kind in Ceylon after Independence in 1948. But the more serious disturbance occurred in 1958, when I was working in Badulla. Immediately before these disturbances, there was also a general strike of government servants in April. We, at the Irrigation Office did not participate in the general strike although the Badulla Kachcheri staff did.

There was a large Tamil population among the business community in Badulla town. There were also Tamil workers in the plantations in the vicinity of Badulla. The communal tension in Badulla town reached high pitch, when the body of one Mr. Seneviratne of Nuwara Eliya, who was killed in one of his plantations around Eravur or some such place in the Batticaloa district, was taken through Badulla to Nuwara Eliya. Various rumours were spread by mischievous elements, bent on looting or sadistic elements desirous of spilling some blood. When the tensions reached an acute stage, a group of labourers of the Land Development Department at Kendaketiya, got into one of their lorries and came to Badulla claiming to protect the Muthiyangana Temple from any attack. By then, a State of Emergency had been declared, which was also a novel experience in this country, and the army deployed to assist the police in bringing the situation under control. The Kendaketiya labourers were encircled by the police and army, confined to the temple grounds and kept under custody there.

In spite of these steps taken by the government, sporadic disturbances continued for a few days. We who were occupying quarters on high ground on a hill slope in Badulla, could see what was happening in the town area. One night, we observed fire breaking out in several places in the town, which meant that some mischief makers were setting fire to houses or some other buildings. We could also see vehicles rushing towards these spots and extinguishing these fires. These vehicles may have been those of the army or the police.

Fortunately, we did not hear of any lives been lost in Badulla. A small tea factory on the railway station road had been completely gutted by such a fire.

With the sensing of this uneasy situation Mr. Ratnasingham, who was also buying his provisions from the boutique of Geedrick Appuhamy, requested me to buy some provisions for him, as he was reluctant to go to any boutique himself at this juncture. When the Mudalali found that I was purchasing some extra quantities of provisions, he asked me for whom I was buying them. I told him that I was buying something extra as a precautionary measure, under the special circumstances prevailing at the time and the provisions were for my own use. However, I felt happy to help my colleague Ratnasingham, when he was in a difficult situation and unloaded the extra provisions at his house.

Within a few days, the situation was brought under control. However, some politicians in the Welimada area incited the Sinhala people, while Tamil politicians created suspicion among the Tamil people. These are the embers, that are still lying dormant and flaring up from time to time. It is now clear that these suspicions cannot be removed easily and would require enormous amounts of goodwill on the part of both communities, with the political leaders showing unwavering commitment to peace and harmony.

### **Acquisition of some useful items**

Prema, as is the case with most housewives in this country, was keen to purchase a Singer sewing machine, which was the only brand available in the country at the time. Therefore, one day we went to the Singer sales outlet in Badulla, where we were shown a few models of the machine available at the time. One machine which cost Rs. 1800/= had a box into which the machine head could be turned in and a lid placed above it to convert the pedestal machine into some sort of table. When the machine is in use the lid could be fixed on to the side of the table to provide an extended platform.

I was able to make an initial payment and settle the balance in monthly instalments. To my mind, the Singer sewing machine company was the first in Ceylon to provide hire purchase facilities and operated through a country-wide network of agencies. Because of this facility, I decided to buy the machine costing Rs. 1800/= which would be a present that Prema would value and appreciate. The final instalment was paid several months later, when we were at Hingurakgoda. This machine is now an antique item and not in use.

The other item was a G.E.C. Radio receiver operated electrically. It was complete with several wave bands such as long, medium and short wave and the short-wave band with band-spread facilities, making any particular meter free from any disturbances by adjusting the band-spread. This radio could not be used when we occupied houses without electricity. Therefore, I had it converted to a transistorized radio which could be operated on six standard torch batteries. This was later discarded when more modern radio receivers came on the market.

## **Last days at Badulla**

The repairs to the damage caused in December, 1957 to my quarters commenced by about the middle of 1958. A retaining wall of about forty feet, had to be constructed to prevent the house slipping down to L.M. Perera's premises. A huge boulder that had slipped down and was resting in the backyard of Perera's house had to be broken and removed. Some repairs had also to be done to the quarters, to reinforce the cracked walls and bind the beams with steel bars. The contract for this job had been awarded to contractor L.M. Perera. It was in his own interest to complete the repairs before the next rainy season. In the meantime, I was transferred to Hingurakgoda with effect from November 15, 1958. The house repairs were nearing completion towards the end of my tenure in Badulla.

## **Transfer to Hingurakgoda**

When Mr. Nissanka Wijewardhane, Assistant Director (Administration), went with me to my quarters to inspect the flood damage, he asked me about my experience in the Irrigation Department. I told him that I had experience in all the main subject areas in an irrigation office such as Establishment Work, Accounts, and Construction and Maintenance Works and Contracts. Therefore, the ADA seemed to have decided to transfer me as Head Clerk of the Tamankaduwa Sub Division, where work had fallen into arrears and was in a mess. This was the second time I had to go to such a messy office, the first being to Badulla.

When I expressed my desire to visit some places like Maha Eliya and Kande Ela after I got my transfer order, Mr. Ponrajah took me and my family in his new car to these places. We had lunch at the Kande Ela Circuit Bungalow. I was able to see the Kande Ela Reservoir and the sluice, the Maha Eliya Canal and many places of interest on the way to Nuwara Eliya. I thanked Mr. Ponrajah for the opportunity afforded to us to visit these places we had not gone to before. It was the practice to organize a dinner to bid farewell to those who are transferred, which my colleagues at Badulla did not forget to honour. When Mr. Sithamparapillai, my former boss, heard about my new assignment and the transfer he wrote me a letter expressing his pleasure and stated that '*God helps those who help themselves.*' An erstwhile colleague at Minipe Irrigation Office, Mr. T. Leelasoma, who was at the Tamankaduwa Irrigation Office, wrote to me to say that we should travel to Hingurakgoda Station to go to the Tamankaduwa Irrigation Office. All this information was useful to me.

## **Departure to Hingurakgoda**

A railway goods wagon was booked for me to send my household goods from Badulla to Hingurakgoda. These items were loaded on to this wagon one or two days before my departure, so that they would arrive at Hingurakgoda in time. I had reserved second class sleeping berths to travel by the 13<sup>th</sup> night mail train, leaving Badulla at 6.30 pm. Sumanawathie, a domestic aide we had found from Maha Eliya, was also travelling with us in our sleeping berth. We arrived at the Polgahawela station at about 5.30 am on the 14<sup>th</sup>

and had to spend three or four hours to board the Colombo-Batticaloa day train to travel to Hingurakgoda. We had some light refreshments at the Polagahawela station, assuming that we could have our breakfast in the Restaurant Car on the Batticaloa train.

Unfortunately, however, there were no restaurant facilities in the day train, so that we had to make do with odd items we could pick up at various stations, when the train stopped for a few minutes. By the time we arrived at Hingurakgoda at about 2.30 pm, we were very hungry and tired. Fortunately, we had a large flask which we could fill with hot water at Polgahawela and that enabled us to feed the baby with some milk, as and when necessary.

Mr. Leelasoma met us at the Hingurakgoda station. He had come in a departmental jeep so that transport was available, but before we went to the office, we had some lunch at a restaurant in the town. Having quenched our thirst and hunger, we went to the Irrigation Office close to the Hingurakghoda Air Strip. Our temporary accommodation was in a large long room, in a building adjacent to the office. Mr. Leelasoma and a former student of mine at Urugala, Mr. Premawardhane, occupied a room at the other end of the large building. A Technical Assistant Mr. Navaratnarajah, occupied another section of the building. They had a cook who catered to all of them so that we were also provided meals at this place.

### **Assuming duties as Head Clerk**

Having taken a long rest from the fourteenth afternoon, I reported for duty on November 15, 1958 and met the Irrigation Engineer, Mr. G.S.M. Schokman who appeared to be very happy to welcome me. He had faced a situation where his Head Clerk had been malingering and all work had gone into arrears, leaving large bundles of unanswered Accounts Queries and Audit Queries. I assumed duties as the Head Clerk of the Tamankaduwa Sub Division and therefore had to clear the arrears of work while also performing all the routine duties of the Head Clerk (HC). At Badulla I had only to clear arrears in the first month, while I had no responsibilities as HC. This work load had to be cleared by working before and after office hours, although no overtime payment was made.

The office staff consisted of various categories of officers and employees. Mr. T. Leelasoma with whom I had worked at Minipe and who was then an Assistant Clerk, was now a clerk in the General Clerical Service (GCS) with some years of experience. My erstwhile student Mr. Pemawardhane was also a GCS clerk, who had just entered the government service. Mr. Alexander was a temporary clerk but appeared to have some experience. There were three Store Keepers, Messrs. Amarasekera, Dabare and Ariyasena. Messrs Rajawickrema, Perera and Samaraweera were Draughtsmen. There were several members of the support staff such as H.A.D.S.V. Perera, Dharmaratne, Jayasinghe, Herath and Meedin.

Messrs. Casperz, Kulatunga, Ivan Wijesuriya, R.S. Balasuriya, Nawaratnarajah, Jayatissa, Pinto, Siripala and Wilson were Technical Assistants (T.A.) supervising various worksites at Elahera, Giritale, Minneriya, Gal Amuna and Kaudulla. Under them, there were a number of Mainenance Overseers (M.O.O) and Construction Overseers (C.O.O). The M.O.O. were Sivalingam, S.A., Gunawardhane, Francis and Fernando. There were several C.O.O, and lorry and jeep drivers whose names I cannot now remember.



The number of labourers (masons, carpenters, and ordinary labourers who were skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled) would have been over five hundred, dispersed over the several worksites. The leave applications of labourers that had to be approved by the H.C. in a day, would have been over twenty-five. These could lead to various irregularities. I found that, there were at least five leave registers, to accommodate all the workers in the Sub Division with the same name being assigned numbers for ease of identity. For example, there would be five Punchi Bandas with numbers 1 to 5 assigned to them. Punchi Banda No.1 would be from Elahera, while No.2 would be from Giritale, and so on. They can be genuine or bogus. There were several contractors engaged in various jobs and they too can be the source of corruption. Therefore, working in such an environment can be similar to *'eating curd and treacle with a sharp razor blade.'*

### **Head Clerk's Quarters**

My predecessor in office was transferred out of Tamankaduwa S.D., at the same time that my transfer was to take effect; but he did not vacate the quarters for some time. Because he was transferred, he could not come to office. Unlike at Badulla, there was alternative accommodation at Hingurakgoda. Therefore, I was allocated a part of a building which had three sets of quarters. One was occupied by Mr. Kulatunga, T.A, and the other by some of our office staff. This was located at a site, which could be reached in about five minutes from the office. After about one month, the Head Clerk's quarters fell vacant and therefore I was able to shift there, which was just across the road from the office. This enabled me to be in office both before and after office time and clear the heavy load of work that had accumulated. I could also drop in for a cup of tea and see how the baby and Prema were getting on.

This was a twin house one part of which was allocated to the Head Clerk while the other part was occupied by the senior storekeeper Mr. Amarasekara. The Head Clerk's quarters had two bedrooms, a storeroom, a living area and an enclosed front verandah which was also spacious. The kitchen was detached and could be reached along a roofed corridor. As Sumanawathie from Maha Eliya was still with us, Prema had some sort of domestic help. The problem was that the place was mosquito-infested, so that we had to use nets to get any sleep day or night.

One evening, when I was playing with my daughter operating a toy train, a serpent was seen creeping along the verandah very close to us. I picked up the child and called Prema, who was in the kitchen, handed over the child to Prema and drove away the serpent. This was a risk that we had to face both at Hinguakgoda and at Girithale. We had to be extra cautious, as we did not have electricity after ten in the night at Girithale. One night after lights were out at Girithale, I heard a noise in the lavatory outside the house and flashing the torchlight from the bed room window, I saw a large serpent creeping through the lavatory door. I called out to Simion, the night watcher who was around, who said it was a *polonga*, one of the most poisonous serpents in the area. Simion saw to it that that serpent did not live to harm any one.



**Official Quarters**



***Office***

## ***Appachchie's Demise (January, 1959)***

Soon after my transfer to Tamankaduwa S.D., a telephone call was received in our office from the Minipe Post Office giving a message regarding the passing away of my father. Gunathilake Malli told me later that he gave the telephone call. He was then a teacher at either Handaganawa or Morayaya school. On receipt of this message, my office colleagues assisted me to get a hiring car from Hingurakgoda town and so the four of us, Prema, the baby, Sumanawathie and I went to Minipe arriving at home at dusk that day. Many of our relations were already there. This was the first time Prema went home after our marriage, although I did go alone twice, when we were at Badulla and had the good fortune to see my father while he was alive.

When I made inquiries as to how my father had died, I was told that one evening he had fallen seriously ill. Therefore, my brother-in-law *Lekam Mahaththaya (Heen Akka's husband)* had taken Appachchi to the Kandy Hospital accompanied by '*Williong Aiyya* (one of our elder cousins). My father had expired in Lekam Mahaththaya's car, when they had just passed Urugala town. Appachchi had been resting on Williong Aiyya's lap when he passed away. The vehicle returned to Handaganawa, after which the funeral arrangements ensued.

The funeral took place a day or two later with the casket being carried in procession to a hillock (*godella*) in our paddy field, which was nearly two miles away from home. The funeral pyre was built on that hillock, and as is the custom, was set alight after sunset by two nephews (*baenas*) of my father. Several of my office colleagues had come in a jeep from Hingurakgoda and returned the same evening. *Ape Aiyya* cried like a wounded child. I was able to control myself until evening and let out my anguish after arriving at home, when I realized that my father would no longer be there. We returned to Hingurakgoda perhaps after the seven days' almsgiving was over.

**Minneriya Sub Division:** The Tamankaduwa SD was reconstituted into two sub divisions with effect from January 1, 1959 - Minneriya and Kaudulla Sub Divisions. While the Kaudulla Sub Divisional Office was to remain at the former Tamankaduwa office premises, around February, 1959, the Minneriya Sub Divisional Office was shifted to temporary buildings on the Girithale tank bund. I understood that the former Girithale SD office was located in these premises. The Minneriya SD was to be the successor to the Tamankaduwa SD and as a result all the arrears of work were its burden.

It was under these circumstances, that my family was deprived of the permanent quarters with better water and electricity facilities and we had to shift to the Girithale Tank bund, where there were temporary quarters with aluminium roofs and plank walls. My house had two bedrooms, a living area, dining room and a store room. The kitchen was detached from the main house. The lavatory and the bathroom were two-in-one located adjacent to the kitchen. The tank bund was full of gravel that heated up during the day with no shady trees around. It was 'a hell-on-earth' under the hot aluminium roof. After sunset, this hell turned into a 'heaven' with the cool breeze from the tank and the completely cooled aluminium roof. There were hardly any mosquitoes on this tank bund perhaps because of the windy atmosphere in the nights, so that we could take a good rest at night. There were other

temporary quarters of the same type as mine, a few yards away close to the office building. Mr. R.N.G. Ratnayake (Gamini) and a draughtsman by the name of Gunawardhane shared that house.

Most of the other staff members such as draughtsmen, storekeepers and support staff had their quarters which were also temporary buildings, downstream of the tank bund close to the Girithale-Polonnaruwa Road. Messrs Jayatissa, Wilson, Nikatenna and Siripala, Technical Assistants, occupied a permanent building at a sharp bend on the Polonnaruwa Road, at the head of the tank bund. Another Technical Assistant, Mr. Pinto, lived in a temporary house downstream of the left end of the tank bund. A support staff member, Mr. H.A.D.S.V. Perera lived with his family in a temporary cottage downstream of the tank bund from which a footpath led down towards the LB channel.

The office of the Minneriya SD was housed in a temporary building complex on the Giritale Tank Bund, above the Diyabeduma Road. This was to the left of my quarters about three to four hundred yards away. The only permanent building on this section of the tank bund was the Irrigation Engineer's bungalow to the right of my house and close to it. Water was provided from an overhead tank constructed on a concrete tower. This tank had to be filled daily with water brought in a bowser. Electricity was provided by a generator for four hours from 6 to 10 pm.

The members of the staff of the Minneriya SD were as follows:

1. Mr. G.S.M. Schokman, Irrigation Engineer (IE).
2. Mr. C.J.A. Gunasekera, Assistant Irrigation Engineer (AIE)
3. Mr. A. Ekanayake, Head Clerk (HC)
4. Mr. R.N.G. (Gamini) Ratnayake, Second Clerk.
5. Mr. S. Alexander, Temporary Clerk.
6. Messrs Gunathilake, Rajawickrema and Gunawardhane, Draughtsmen
7. Messrs Ariyasena and Dabare, Store Keepers (SK)
8. Messrs Herath, Jayasinghe, Dharmaratne, Meedin and H.A.D.S.V. Perera, Support Staff.
9. Messrs Casperz, Kulatunga, Jayatissa, Wilson, Nikatenna, Siripala, Pinto, Technical Assistants.
10. Messrs Francis, Fernando, Sivalingam, S.A. Gunawardhane, Maintenance Overseers.
11. Mr. Ethiligoda, Construction Overseer, attached to the office attending to office duties.

A number of Construction Overseers were attached to the various worksites. I cannot now remember their names.

The Head Clerk was responsible for the general administration of the office. In my case, I also handled the main subject of Accounts. The subject of 'Works' was handled by Mr. Alexander. Mr. Gamini Ratnayake, who was a novice in the government service handled the subject of 'Establishments' under my constant guidance. It was my duty to guide Gamini. I knew how important proper guidance was for the training of a newcomer to the public service because I did not get such guidance during my period of probation.

Recently I came to know that I had guided him well when I met Gamini on Christmas Day, 2010. Although this narrative would take us several years to the future, it is appropriate that it be stated right now. A mutual friend, Mr. Ananda Jayatissa who lives in England gave me Gamini's telephone number. Having contacted him, we decided to see him on my way to see my niece Yasawathie, who was also a resident of Kurunegala. Gamini was living on the Circular Road. He had married a young lady from Kurunegala and settled down there. I had attended his wedding but lost contact after that.

Six of us visited Gamini on December 25, 2010. They included my *Lokuduwa*, her son and daughter, my *Podiduwa* and myself. Lokuduwa was about two years old, when Gamini was living in the temporary quarters adjacent to ours at Girithale. Gamini now has two sons. One is a medical doctor married to a doctor. The other is a graduate who also had married a graduate and were employed in the Environmental Authority.

In the course of our conversation, Gamini mentioned how important my guidance was to him in his career. Asked what I had done, his reply was that one thing I had told him was to take copies of important circulars that came from higher offices, such as the Head Office and the Treasury and regularly maintain a file for his guidance. He followed my advice and eventually became highly knowledgeable about various circulars, rules and regulations. Yasawathie's husband who had worked with Gamini in the Provincial Council told me that they would always consult Gamini, when they needed any information about circulars, rules and regulations. I felt how grateful Gamini was to remind me, in the presence of my children, about some simple guidance I had provided in the course of my normal duties. Gamini had retired as an Administrative Officer of the North Western Provincial Council, Kurunegala.

To my pleasant surprise, I also met T.M.D.K. Tennakoon (Kulasiri) at Gamini's house on that day. Kulasiri and I had worked together in the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC) at Matara and Kandy. When I went to Gamini's wedding Kulasiri was attached to the Kurunegala CFC branch. In fact, I changed in to my suit at the CFC premises before going to Gamini's wedding. From there it was walking distance to the wedding house. Kulasiri had eventually married a sister of Gamini's wife. Let us now go back to Girithale and resume that narration.

### **Local Support Staff**

The work load in a large sub division was so heavy that the two or three clerks assigned to it by the Head Office could not handle it. Therefore, several persons with designations such as Kangany were employed in the office to assist the clerical staff. Minneriya SD had five such employees. Mr. Herath assisted the Accounts Clerk in such work as writing the Voucher Book which was a major task. The issue of monthly check rolls and checking them before payment, preparation of pay sheets and related tasks were performed by Mr. Jayasinghe. The leave registers of over five hundred labourers were maintained by Mr. Dharmaratne. Mr. H.A.D.S.V. Perera was an expert in maintaining the history sheets of labourers. These had to be updated monthly, the main source of data being the check rolls after payments are made on them and they become office records. Mr. Meedin was the English Typist.

### **Driver's Restaurant**

No facilities were available close to the office, for refreshments or tea for either those working in the office or for members of the public, who had to come to the office on any business. Such facilities were provided in urban areas under welfare programmes but those of us in remote areas were not even aware that they could be provided. One of the lorry drivers, Mr. Gunaratne, sought to remedy this situation, by opening a tea kiosk and an eatery, in a cadjan hut put up on the Diyabeduma Road, just below the office. Gunaratne's wife and children managed the restaurant. I was requested to open the restaurant at the auspicious time. This helped us to buy things like hoppers and string hoppers in case of such need. The restaurant appeared to prosper as indicated by the improvements made to it from time to time.

### **Purchase of Provisions**

Because of the lack of any marketing or shopping facilities at Girithale, we used departmental transport facilities to go to Hingurakgoda where there was a sizeable bazaar. We could buy our dry provisions as well as fruits and vegetables at this bazaar. During the short period we were attached to the Tamankaduwa SD, I bought most of my requirements from the shop of Messrs Wilmot & William. Mr. Wilmot was a businessman from Ahangama who had settled down in Gampaha and had several businesses such as paddy mills, a cinema hall, and paddy fields at Hingurakgoda. He was also a registered contractor of the Irrigation Department. I patronized his shop because of the reasonable prices he charged.

The authorized dealer for provisions on my ration books was Dharmaratne, who was said to be a nephew of Wilmot. Besides the provisions on the ration books, I did not buy any other items from Dharmaratne Stores except when they were not available at Wilmot Stores. When we shifted to Minneriya some time later, my ration books were transferred to the Minneriya Cooperative Stores. The rice issued on the ration was usually local par-boiled rice which I did not buy except when there was 'cora' or 'milchard' rice. The quota of Mysore dhal was bought regularly, as it was a source of nutrition for my daughter. There were some vegetables such as *thalum batu* freely available, which could be plucked from the shrub jungle behind the quarters.

The net salary that I received in January, 1959 was Rs.213/=; in January, 1960 it was Rs.218/= and in January 1961 it was Rs.233/=. As local vegetables were relatively cheap and also because of the rationed items which were sold at regulated prices, we could manage with these salaries without falling into debt.

### **A Second Child**

Around February, 1959 Prema indicated that she was pregnant for the second time. Her first pregnancy was when we were living in the suburbs of Colombo where the climatic condition and other facilities were all favourable. She had a number of relations living close by. There

were also facilities to consult gynaecologists in Colombo and Badulla. But now she was living in a temporary cottage, under a hot tin roof where the temperature rose to high levels inside the house particularly at noon. She had the domestic help of Sumanawathie until before the New Year in April when her father came to take her back to Maha Eliya.

My daughter, who was about two years old suffered, from an attack of whooping cough for about two months and was extremely irritable perhaps because of this ailment. She would often get angry with the mother and come to me to the office walking along the gravel path from home to office. There was no domestic help after Sumanawathie left. The first three months of pregnancy was the period when Prema suffered the most.

### **Trip to Minipe for the New Year**

With the approach of the Sinhala New year which was the first after *Appachchi's* death, I thought that it would please *Ape amma* if we visited her during the New Year holidays. It would also ease Prema's loneliness with a sick child. Because of Prema's condition, I thought it would be better if we travelled by car. Therefore, I was able to obtain the use of a Peugeot 404 car owned by Mr. Sivalingam, MO at Diyabeduma. This was a comfortable car at the time. On the day of the journey, the vehicle arrived at my quarters early in the morning. Mr. Herath, one of our office colleagues also came early to travel with us to Wattegama. As we approached Minneriya, the car crashed on to the side of a bus coming from the opposite direction on a narrow culvert. The driver's side of the car was entangled with the bus between the front and rear wheels, so that the driver and the passenger behind could not open their doors and get off the car. The left side of the car was damaged and the passengers could not get off without a ladder, which someone provided for us. We had to wait an hour or two until an officer from the Hingurakgoda Police Station arrived.

After their formalities were over, we went to a garage at Minneriya to attend to the defective braking system of the car which was the cause of the accident and resumed our journey after two or three hours. We travelled through Habarana, Dambulla, Matale, Wattegama, Madawala, Digana, Teldeniya, Madugoda, *Daha Ata Wanguwa* (18 hair pin bends), Gurulupotha, Pallewatta, Weragantota and Morayaya and arrived at *Wisi Hathare Ela* by about 5.00pm. Mr. Herath went back in the same car to go home to Doragamuwa in Wattegama. We walked the rest of the distance of about one mile and reached home by dusk.

The last New Year visit home was four years ago in 1955. My mother and other relations appeared to be very happy that I had come for this new year. Prema also got an opportunity to get to know my relations better, particularly her mother-in-law (*Ape amma*) than when she met them during my father's funeral. Having spent a few days with my relations, we came to Teldeniya by bus from Handaganawa and boarded another bus bound to Matale via Madawala and Wattegama. After lunch at Matale, a strenuous effort was made to give our daughter, a hair cut. She kept crying throughout the whole process of the haircut. Then we took a Polonnaruwa bus to travel to Girithale through Dambulla, Habarana and Minneriya and reached home by early evening. For several years after this, we made it a habit to go to Minipe for the Sinhala New Year because it made my mother very happy and gave us an opportunity to meet other relations, at least once a year.

## **Back at Girithale**

There was no domestic help when we returned to Girithale from Minipe. Therefore, Prema got the sanitary labourer Arumugam to get down any thing she needed from Gunaratne's boutique. Once she got down some hoppers for the daughter. When the hoppers were given to her, she had thrown them back at Arumugam's face because of some anger with the mother. Sometimes she would come walking along the gravel path to the office and be seated by my side. When an office colleague saw her walking up, he would carry her to the office. Therefore, most of my colleagues were also her pals.

## **Mihinthale Trip**

I requested the IE to provide us transport to Mihinthale on Vesak Poya Day in 1959. He was good enough to allow the use of his jeep for this purpose. My colleagues Ratnayake, Dabare and one or two others were to join us. When we were waiting for the vehicle in the morning, mechanic Podisingho with his wife and some members of his family also came in the jeep driven by Gusthan, the IE's jeep driver. Podisingho and his family wanted to go to the Dambulla shrine. Seeing that we would have to travel in a crowded jeep, I took the driving seat with Prema and the child in the front seat by my side. Podisingho's wife was also accommodated in the front seat on the left of Prema. All others including the driver Perera (Gusthan) were crowded behind in the rear section of the jeep. Although I began to drive the vehicle, I had no licence for the purpose at the time.

Podisingho's family was dropped at Dambulla and the others went their way to Mihinthale. In a little while my daughter began to cry incessantly. Gamini offered to take her and when this was done the child was pacified and fell into a deep slumber. I could not do anything, as I was at the wheel but would have given it over to the driver if the child had not stopped crying. After paying obeisance at Mihinthale, we came to Dambulla, picked up Podisingho's family and by the time we arrived at Girithale, it was quite late in the afternoon. This type of concession was provided in the sub divisions, depending on the goodwill of the local superior but they were not officially recognized as part of a regular welfare programme.

## **Epidemic of Fever**

During the dry season in the middle of the year 1959 all of us in the family, Prema, the child and I suffered from an attack of fever which was of epidemic proportions (This appeared to be similar to the fever that we suffered during the second world war narrated in Chapter II under the caption of illnesses). Therefore, we hired a Morris Minor car, whose driver was known to Wilmot Mudalali and left for Matara one afternoon. On the way there was heavy rain around Kurunegala and by the time we reached *Alahenpita* in Matara it was around midnight. The driver dropped us at home at *Pahala Gedara* and started the return journey immediately. I came back to Girithale in a few days, leaving behind Prema and the child at Pahala Gedara. I found myself very weak after the illness with a loss of appetite. It took about three weeks to one month for me to completely recover. I cannot remember how I managed my meals during this period; perhaps I cooked them myself or sought the assistance of driver Gunaratne's restaurant. After about two weeks, I went to Matara to bring back my wife and child to Girithale. Punchi Aiyya found a youth called Edwin who



came with us as our domestic help. The child was enamoured of the various stories related by Edwin and therefore it was a great relief to Prema, who was now in an advanced stage of pregnancy.

### **An Appreciation**

Let us again turn from the more personal to the official aspect of my life. I stated earlier that a great deal of accumulated arrears of work was cleared by me within a short period of assuming duties as the Head Clerk of the Thamankaduwa Sub Division and then of the Minneriya Sub Division, working both before and after office hours. On August 27, 1959 the Irrigation Engineer Mr. G.S.M. Schokman sent me a letter of appreciation which contained the following among other things:

*“Appreciation of my work is entirely due to your efforts. Your intelligent and enthusiastic approach to this difficult subject, which would have baffled many officers is commended. D.’s appreciation is just proof that they are aware of the magnitude of the job which has been tackled by you successfully.”*

### **Back to Matara for Child Birth**

When the date for child birth was approaching, we went back to Matara in the third week of August, 1959. This time we travelled by train, taking the Batticaloa-Colombo night mail train. Using my holiday warrants, I reserved second class sleeping berths for the three of us. Edwin, being a grown-up youth, travelled third class. We changed over to the 7.30 am Matara train at the Colombo Fort station and arrived at Matara around 11.30 am. A Kings Cabs hiring car was used to get home to Alahenpita, which was about four miles from the Matara Railway Station. The cab service was attached to the King’s Hotel, which was owned by a relation Mr Francisco, and was managed at the time by Punchi Aiyya.

Although I went to Girithale leaving Prema and the child at home in Pahala Gedara, I received a message by the end of August to the effect that Prema had been admitted to the Karunaratne Ward at Walpola, Matara. I went to Matara immediately, reaching Karunaratne Ward very late in the evening. Prema’s mother and a sister, Chandra, were already with her. I was also given a room to rest in. The delivery took place sometime early in the morning. This time it was a boy, born on **August 31, 1959**. He was named **Hemakantha** (Golden Shine), when his birth was registered.

This baby went with us to Girithale in two or three weeks and had to suffer the inconvenience of the tin-roofed temporary quarters until we shifted to permanent quarters on the Minneriya tank bund. This time Prema’s sister *Chandra Nangi* went with us to Girithale and later to the quarters on the Minneriya Tank Bund. The baby suffered from constant chest colds. Dr. Fernando, a general practitioner at Hingurakgoda, was of the view that the baby would get over the ailment after about four years. Although continuous treatment was given over the years, it was the treatment of the renowned Paediatrician Dr. Stella de Silva that finally cured the baby, my son, Hemakantha Ekanayake.



**Prema with the baby son Hemakantha born on 31.08.1959. and the daughter,  
Girithale**

### **Bandaranaike Assassination**

The most important event that we heard and saw in 1959 was the assassination of Hon. S. W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the Prime Minister of Ceylon. A 'monk' by the name of Somarama shot him at close range at his bungalow, *Tintegel*, at Rosemead Place in Colombo on September 25, 1959. In spite of intensive treatment and surgical operations by renowned surgeons such as Dr.P.R. Anthonis, the prime minister died in the morning of September 26, 1959. His body was laid at the Horagolla Walauwa by the end of the month and was available for the public to file past the casket. Large crowds from many parts of the country streamed in endlessly to Horagolla to view the body.

On September 30, after I had completed the work connected with the closing of accounts for the financial year (which at that time was between October 1 and September 30, Gamini Ratnayake and I went to Horagolla in Ananda Jayatissa's new Volkswagen 3 Sri 100. He dropped us at a certain point on the Veyangoda Road, from where a short-cut was available to walk into the Horagolla Estate. Gamini and I walked along this path and came close to the entrance to the Horagolla Walauwa. Under the semi-darkness of the night, the two of us stealthily joined the main queue that was coming in from the Colombo-Nittambuwa Road and viewed the Prime Minister's body which was lying in the main hall. If we had joined the main queue, it would have taken several hours before we could see the body. I saw Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike seated despondently on the steps of the staircase leading up to the upper floor.

We soon came out on to the main road and walked towards Colombo until we came to Thihariya, from where we took a bus to Colombo. I went to Girithale in an Ampara van that takes off in front of the Fort Railway Station. Gamini went home to Mawanella and returned to Girithale later. My van trip from Colombo to Girithale would have taken four or five hours.

### ***Consequential Events***

Hon. W. Dahanayake who was the Minister of Education in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Bandaranaike was appointed Prime Minister, after the assassination of Mr. Bandaranaike. However, the other members of the Cabinet were not happy about it. After some time, Prime Minister Dahanayake replaced all his ministers with others who had little experience as ministers. The Governor-General at the time was Sir Oliver Goonetilleke. Parliament was dissolved and a General Election was called in March, 1960.

Hon. Dahanayake formed a new political party by the name of *Lanka Prajathanthravadi Peramuna* (LPP) and presented over a hundred candidates for the General Election. Only one or two seats were won by his party. Even he lost the Galle seat which he had always won so far. After the March general election Hon. Dudley Senanayake, Leader of the United National Party (UNP) formed a government but lost the Vote of Thanks for the Throne Speech. Therefore, Parliament was dissolved again and a General Election called in July, 1960.

By then Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike had assumed leadership of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). After the General Election she was appointed Prime Minister and formed a government. In order to continue as Prime Minister, she was appointed to a seat in the Senate. Thus, Honourable Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias-Bandaranaike became the first female Prime Minister in the world. Some prominent members of her Cabinet were Hon. C.P. de Silva, Hon. Maithripala Senanayake, Hon. T.B. Illangaratne, and Hon. Felix Dias-Bandaranaike.

## **Minneriya Office and Housing Complex**

The initial phase of the construction of a permanent building complex on the Minneriya Tank Bund had begun before 1959 and therefore construction activities could start at the beginning of that year. The complex included an office building, two senior staff quarters adjacent to the office building, Irrigation Engineer' bungalow, three junior staff quarters, and two sets of twin cottages for other employees. The construction of these buildings was awarded to several contractors so that they would proceed with construction activities simultaneously and complete them within a short time. This strategy contributed to the completion of these buildings by the end of 1959 and ready for occupation in January 1960.

Therefore, the Minneriya Sub Division was shifted from the temporary accommodation on Girithale Tank Bund to permanent buildings on Minneriya Tank Bund in January, 1960. The senior staff quarters closest to the office were allocated to me as the Head Clerk. It had three bedrooms on either side of the living and dining areas. Two bedrooms were located on the left of the house with an attached toilet and a bathroom common to these two bedrooms. The other bedroom on the right of the house had an attached toilet-cum-bathroom. Behind this bedroom was a store room. The kitchen, the servants' bedroom and their toilet and bathroom were at the back of the house accessible through a passage from the dining area. The AIE Mr. Gunasekara came into occupation of the other senior staff quarters. The three sets of junior staff quarters were meant for clerks, draughtsmen and store keepers. The members of the support staff occupied the twin cottages meant for the minor staff. There was a club house in an open area by the road, leading to the tank bund where the sluice and the *devale* were located.

## **Pirith Chanting and Almsgiving**

In January, 1960 we went into occupation of a completely new office and new quarters which were not in existence before and were not occupied by anyone before. Therefore, I thought it was appropriate to seek some religious blessings. However, this was not as simple as it looked. The staff in any Irrigation Sub Division were heretogeneous not only by race but also by religion. There were Sinhalese and Tamils, with a few Dutch Burghers and Moors. By religion they would be Buddhists, Hindus, Catholics and Christians, and Muslims. Although the Sinhalese Buddhists were in a majority, these were sensitive areas in which the feelings of others should not be hurt.

In view of this the widest possible consultation was sought and when I found that there would be support even from non-Buddhists, a few of us got together and decided on a pirith ceremony followed by almsgiving. In order to get the necessary financial support as well as to get the widest possible participation, subscription lists were circulated among the various worksites such as Elahera, Girithale, Gal Amuna, Hinguakgoda, Minneriya and Kaudulla. The labourers and officers contributed varying amounts of money and within a reasonably short period of time it was possible to finally arrange for the huge task we had undertaken.

Some carpenters and others with some experience undertook the setting up of the *Pirith Mandapaya* in a part of the main office. It was decorated with electrical bulbs and

streamers. The electrical work was done by a catholic employee, who was an electrician employed in the Sub Division. I went to a Buddhist temple near the Hingurakgoda aerodrome and invited the monks for the pirith and alms giving. We invited the Irrigation Engineer in charge of the North Eastern Division (IE ic.NED) Mr. Mervyn Ainsley Block, who was a practicing Buddhist, to attend these ceremonies. We also invited the staff of the Kaudulla Sub Division to participate in these ceremonies. All or most of them participated, some of them very actively. In the end, the organizers felt that their effort was successful. This was a much more elaborate ceremony than even the one we had at Morayaya in the Minipe Sub Division in the early fifties. Subsequently, we participated in some religious activities at the *Nagalakanda Vihare*, which was nearby and averted the blame for not inviting those monks for the pirith chanting and alms giving.

### **Monthly Pay for the Workers**

The Bandaranaike Government that came to power in 1956, had decided make the daily paid employees in various government institutions monthly paid, if they had completed 180 days of work in the preceeding period. Workers in the Minneriya SD had not been converted to monthly paid employees even by 1959. As a first step, it was necessary to prepare History sheets for each of the workers. A history sheet contained personal information of each employee and a monthly record was kept of the number of days worked, the daily rate of pay, the check roll number and the monthly accounting document and scheduled number assigned to the check roll after payment is made. As will be seen, the Check Roll (CR) was the authentic document providing most of this information.

As hundreds of employees were involved, mistakes could occur, bona fide or mala fide. When this work had to be expedited, the mistakes could be compounded. Those attending to this work can manipulate, for a consideration, the secondary documents to favour a particular employee. For these reasons, close supervision of this work was necessary, even if those doing this work were honest. The maintenance labourers [ML] of the old irrigation schemes such as Elahera, Girithale and Minneriya, who had long years of experience, were first converted to monthly paid. Once this was over, those in the construction sites who had over 180 days of service were converted to monthly paid. All this work was completed during 1959.

### **Check Roll Frauds**

These workers were then eligible for arrears of pay for periods up to three years. Action was taken to prepare separate schedules for the payment of these arrears. One day the support staff member, who was responsible for the preparation of these schedules of pay, came to me with a few schedules and said that the amounts indicated in those schedules could be drawn by us. Asked to explain what he meant by that, he said that there were a large number of bogus names (headless people who were nicknamed 'Sirisangabo') in most check rolls through which the overseers would make money, which was the normal practice in the department. The amount of money involved in the schedules given to me was about Rs three thousand. I told him to leave the schedules with me.

In the evening after office, I took these schedules to my quarters. On reflection, it was clear that this money could not be legitimately drawn. Several persons needed to be involved to make the payment. A shroff makes the payment. Someone has to identify the payees, which meant that one or more Overseers had to be involved. The person who prepared the schedules also had an interest in the payment. That would come to about four or five persons. A fraudulent payment would need to be shared equally among the fraudsters with none getting a lion's share. The net result would be, that I would receive about Rs six hundred. Even this was an attractive amount, considering that my monthly salary at the time was less than Rs three hundred. But so far, I had a reputation as an honest person. Do I want to forfeit this for a mere Rs. six hundred or even for the whole amount of Rs. three thousand? The answer was clear. I took the schedules to the washroom, set fire to them, and when they burnt to ashes, flushed the ash down the commode. My unsettled mind became very calm. The following morning, I told my assistant about my decision. Even now I feel very happy about what I did.

### **Implementing the Official Language**

The government had decided that the Official Language Act should be implemented with effect from January 1, 1960. In terms of this decision, action was taken to carry out most of the work in the Minneriya Irrigation Office in Sinhala. The monthly accounts were prepared in Sinhala for the first time. The documents relating to monthly accounts had to be personally signed by the IE. Although he was not knowledgeable about the written language, he signed without hesitation all the accounting documents that I had prepared, which demonstrated his confidence in me.

### **Sinhala Proficiency Examinations**

From the time that the Official Language Act was passed, government servants were encouraged to acquire proficiency in the Sinhala language so that they would eventually be able to perform their official duties in Sinhala. For this purpose, an examination was held at two levels, ordinary and higher level. Those who passed the higher-level examination, were eligible to claim a payment of five hundred rupees as a bonus. I sat the higher-level examination held on January 2, 1960 and the results were communicated to us on August 1, 1960. Having passed the examination, I was able to draw the bonus payment which went a long way in easing my financial difficulties.

### **Ceremonial Opening of the Kaudulla Scheme**

The Member of Parliament (MP) for Minneriya was Hon. C.P.de Silva, who had held Cabinet appointments under the Bandaranaike governments since 1956. He was a former member of the Ceylon Civil Service (CCS) and held the post of Assistant Government Agent (AGA) of the Polonnaruwa district. He was very popular with the people of the area which led him to contest the parliamentary seat after his retirement. In the Bandaranaike Government, he was invariably the Minister of Irrigation, which helped him to consolidate his popularity among the people of the area. Because of this, there was a bit of political pressure on those working in the Irrigation Department, although the Minister himself never interfered in official matters so long as they were legal and regular.

Because there were two General Elections in 1960 there was considerable pressure on the field staff to expedite the construction projects in the area, one of which was the Kaudulla Tank Scheme. An opening ceremony was held on the Kaudulla Tank Bund with the participation of the Minister Hon. C.P.de Silva, the Director of Irrigation Mr. A.E.C.de S Gunasekara and the Divisional Irrigation Engineer Mr. M.A. Block. A social gathering and a dinner was held in our Club House the same evening with the participation of all these dignitaries except the Hon. Minister. The Director of Irrigation Mr. Silva Gunasekara went around, meeting those at the gathering. He gave me the impression, as a person who was very much concerned about the welfare of his departmental staff. As a matter of fact, it was only after he became the Director of Irrigation in 1955, that permanent staff quarters began to be constructed in various sub divisional offices, so that there was some incentive for officers to work in these remote areas.

### **1960 General Elections**

I participated in the official duties connected with the General Elections of March and July, 1960. The polling station in the July General Election was at Rotawewa. Its Senior Presiding Officer was Mr. Upali Weerakoon, AIE attached to the DIE's office at Polonnaruwa. As the polling station was not far away, we went there early in the morning in Mr. Weerakoon's car. I came back home with him after the close of the poll. The SPO Mr. Upali Weerakoon went to the Polonnaruwa Kachcheri with the ballot box accompanied by a police escort. The 1960 July General Elections resulted in the formation of a government by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Hon. C.P.de Silva who won the Minneriya seat, became the Minister of Irrigation under this government.

### **An Opportunity for Higher Education**

An advertisement appeared in the newspapers at the beginning of October, 1960 about two undergraduate programmes to be conducted by the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon established in 1959. They were in Public Administration and Business Administration. The eligibility for admission to these programmes was, that an applicant should have passed the Senior School Certificate Examination and have three years' experience in a government or private organization. An admission test was also to be held.

My dream of higher education surfaced and I decided that I must get admission to this programme under whatever conditions and therefore sent an application promptly. The necessary documents for the admission test were received. The test was to be held in a hall at Thurstan College, Colombo. I was informed later, that I had passed the test, that I had been admitted to the undergraduate programme in Public Administration and that the inaugural session would be held on December 20, 1960 at a place in Race Course Avenue, Colombo, which I was invited to attend.

## **Transfer to Colombo**

One thing I had to do immediately was to get a transfer to Colombo. Having made an application for this purpose, permission was sought to interview the Assistant Director (Administration) Mr.V.J.H. Gunasekara, CCS, to explain to him in person the reasons for my request for a transfer. The ADA was a Major in the Volunteer Force. I received a letter to say that a transfer was ordered to be effective from January 16, 1961. The request to predate it to January 2, was also approved.

In spite of the hectic days which I was going through, my colleagues in the Minneriya Sub Division organized a farewell for me. The minor employees took a group photograph with me at the centre. In the meantime, my household furniture was loaded in a goods wagon at the Hingurakgoda Railway Station, to be sent to Colombo. Prema, the two children, *Chandra Nangi* and I would have travelled in sleeping berths from Hingurakgoda in the Batticaloa-Colombo night mail train, but I cannot now remember when this was done. I had also arranged with Arvis Singho Mudalali of Udahamulla, to rent out a new house he had built in his garden for a monthly rent of eighty rupees with one year's advance payment, which was to be set off against the monthly rent in forty-rupee instalments. With this transfer, I experienced another important turning point in my life.



## Chapter VI

### Adulthood

My formal education started when I was six years and six months old on September 1, 1939, the date on which I was admitted to Mediwake School for my Primary Education. After Secondary Education at Walala Central College, I passed the Senior School Examination held in December, 1949. I was seventeen years old, when the results of this examination were released in March, 1950. If there was no interruption to my education, I would have entered the university for higher education in 1952. Even if I had pursued a special degree programme, I would have been a graduate in 1956, at the age of 23.

But this did not happen. After leaving school, I went in to employment but the thirst for higher education was not quenched. On the contrary, this was kept burning with the advice of Dr. Tennakoon Vimalananda whenever I met him in Colombo, after I was employed in 1952. However, this desire could not be fulfilled for lack of opportunities. This opportunity was opened to us after a delay of over eight years, with the commencement of the Public/Business Administration undergraduate programme in 1960, by the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon. Therefore, it was indeed a delayed opportunity for university education '*Pama Wu Sarasavi Warama*' {*Belated access to academia*}.

I gained admission to the undergraduate programme in Public Administration, at the end of 1960, after an admission test. But with this, my responsibilities extended in several directions. They included the satisfactory completion of my degree programme, efficient performance of my duties in my job, maintenance of a family with two children, arranging for the education of these children, and the maintenance of cordial relations with my friends and relations. The following chapters describe my efforts to balance these complex relationships as best as I could.

#### Higher Education

The Vidyodaya University of Ceylon established in 1959 functioned in the premises of the Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda, Colombo 10. A large house at Racecourse Avenue, Colombo 7 had been rented out to accommodate the Department of Economics, Public and Business Administration. These pioneering activities were carried out by Dr. Linus Silva. The two undergraduate programmes were ceremonially inaugurated by the then Minister of Trade, Mr. T.B. Illangaratne on December 20, 1960 and the lectures commenced on December 27.

About four hundred students had been admitted to these programmes. They had to be assigned to several groups for lectures in the rooms that were available in the rented-out building. Sometime later, the halls of Thurstan College were made available to conduct these lectures. The participants of these undergraduate programmes were all employed and therefore lectures were conducted between 5 and 9 p.m.

Dr. Linus Silva was the Head of the Department. The others in the academic staff were Professor K.P. Mukerjee, Mr. Dingi Karunathilake, Mr. Robert Silva and Mr K.D.P. Perera. The visiting lecturers included Dr. W.M. Tillekaratne, Dr. M.R.P. Salgado, and Mr. A.S. Jayawardane of the Central Bank, Hon.Stanley Thilakaratne, M.P. and Mr. C. Arulpragasam, C.C.S.

In the middle of 1961, the university was shifted to the Gangodawila premises. The university office was housed in the old buildings of the Air Force Camp constructed during the Second World War. The lectures were conducted in the newly constructed Gnanissara Building. The Sumangala Building was still under construction.

The main positions in the university were held by the undermentioned dignitaries:

Vice Chancellor: Rev. Weliwitiye Soratha Nayake Thero.

Registrar: Mr. D.A. Kumarage, later Mr. Hemachandra Gunasekara,

Librarian: Rev. Galapatha Khemananda Thero, later Mr. W.B. Dorakumbura.

Superintendent of Examinations: Mr. A.W. Kaluarachchi.

Administrative Assistant: Mr. A.W.P. Guruge, C.C.S. Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Education.

The first examination (intermediate) was held at the end of 1961. I failed this examination and completed it in March, 1962 when a special examination was held. The papers for this examination were in Public Administration, Government, Banking, Principles of Economics, Economic History and Statistics. There were two compulsory papers in English and Sinhala Buddhist Culture, which a candidate could pass any time before the final examination.

Thereafter, classes for the General Degree commenced in 1962. I read three subjects, viz., Political Science, Economics and Public Administration. Each of these subjects had three examination papers. Professor K.P. Mukerjee taught Political Science, and Dr. V. Kaneshalingam taught Public Administration. Dr. A.M.A. Aseez was the lecturer in another subject., Messrs T.A.D. Sirisena, N.A. Gampola and Dharmasena de Silva were members of the permanent staff.

The final examination was held in December, 1963 after two years' of course work. The results were released in the middle of 1964. Out of about one hundred and twenty-five candidates who sat the examination, about eighty-five had passed it. Two had obtained second class (lower) passes. I was the only candidate in Public Administration who had passed with a class.

The convocation was held at the Bandaranaike Hall that was newly constructed in the university premises at Gangodawila. The Governor-General Mr. William Gopallawa who was the Chancellor of the university presided at the convocation. Ven. Halyale Sri Sumanatissa Thero of the Asgiriya Chapter, a maternal uncle of mine, also attended the convocation and appeared to be pleased that I had earned a university degree.

My wife, Prema, and the two children were in the audience. After the convocation was over, we went to a studio at the Eighth Mile Post (*Ate Kanuwa*) and took several photographs. The family of my friend P.W. George, who also graduated on that day, accompanied us to the studio, after which all of us had dinner at a Chinese Restaurant at the Colombo Town Hall. All of us who graduated on that day entertained our teachers to a dinner at this restaurant on a subsequent day.

## **Transfer to Colombo**

Consequent to my transfer from Minneriya to Colombo to pursue the undergraduate programme, finding a suitable house to rent out was an urgent need. As the university was being shifted from Maligakanda to Gangodawila, a house in and around Gangodawila would suit us. Therefore, I met Arvis Singho Mudalali, who had rented out a small house to me soon after I got married. He was building a new house in his garden, located in close proximity to the Sunday Fair at Delkanda. The house rent was Rs. 80.00 per month. I rented it out paying an advance of one year's rent.

This house had two bedrooms, sitting and dining hall, another hall which could be used as a large bed room, kitchen and attached toilet. There were two wells in the garden, one for drinking water and the other for bathing and washing clothes. There was no electricity but we managed with the lamps we had with us. Eventually we also bought a Petromax (a pressure lamp). We went into occupation of this house after the goods sent by train from Hingurakgoda arrived at Maradana Goods Shed and were cleared in a day or two. The Sunday Fair was a few yards away and the boutique to purchase the rationed goods was almost next door.

The garden was spacious enough for the children to play about. The Railway Station at Udahamulla could be reached in about five minutes. There was a bus route outside the garden limits, and the High-Level Road on which there were buses to Colombo was also within reach.

When I went to Colombo on transfer my net salary was Rs. 233.00 per month, out of which Rs. 40 was paid as house rent. The balance Rs. 40 was set off against the advance paid earlier. A railway season ticket for three months from Udahamulla to Narahenpita was Rs. 6. Even if I travelled by bus to office, the fare would not be more than one rupee a day. The bicycle which I had bought at Minneriya was also available for travelling to office, which saved both time and money.

## Place of Work

I was attached to the Machinery Branch of the Irrigation Department located at the premises of the Gal Oya Development Board (GODB) building, Bullers Road, Colombo 7. Three branches of the Irrigation Department, viz. the Contracts Branch, the Machinery Branch and the Stores Branch were located on the upper floor of the GODB building and were placed under the supervision of a Deputy Director, Mr. Baron Sellahewa, who was the Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Central Division at Bandarawela when I was at the Irrigation Office, Minipe. With the Sinhala being used in government offices, clerks with a proficiency in that language were found necessary. The person who was in the branch before me was a Tamil clerk, who went on transfer to Minneriya to replace me.

The head of the Machinery Branch was Mr. Subramaniam, who was a senior clerk. Before long, I found him to be a likeable person. Letters drafted by him in English had to be translated to Sinhala. There was another clerk, Mr. Punyawardhane, for this purpose. He translated letters relating to my subject from English to Sinhala and vice versa. This was not be a problem, as there were glossaries of Sinhala/English words compiled by the Department of Official Languages.

Mr. Berty Galahitiyawa, who was attached to the Polonnaruwa Irrigation Office when I was at Minneriya, was now serving in the Contracts Branch. He was also an undergraduate of the Vidyodaya University. As the Deputy Director Mr. Sellahewa had known me from the time, I worked at Minipe, there was a pleasant work environment. The head of the Contracts Branch was Mr. Edmund Vithanage, known to me from 1952. The typist Mr. Satharasinge was also known to me for some time.

Another clerk who was attached to the Machinery Branch was one Mr. Fernando of the Quasi-Clerical Service. Two young Tamil clerks, Messrs Thanabalasingham and Palani, were also working in the branch. An indication of the caste system that was prevalent among the Tamils, was found even in government offices. The head office of the Irrigation Department was still located in the old Secretariat building in Colombo Fort. The Director (DI) was Mr. Silva Gunasekera. The Assistant Director (Administration) (ADA) was a civil servant Major V. J. H. Gunasekara, who was one of the accused in the 1962 coup-d-etat and was taken into custody.

At this time, a headquarters building for the Irrigation Department was being constructed at the Bullers Road-Jawatte Road junction. The department was shifted to this building in 1961. The Machinery Branch was first located on the ground floor and then shifted to the second floor. By this time the clerical staff of the branch consisted of Messrs Subramaniam, Fernando, Punyawardane, Thanabalasingam, Palani and Ekanayake. The *Karyala Karya Sahayaka* (KKS) was one Mr. Appuhamy.

After the head office was shifted to the new building, those who were travelling to office on the Kelani Valley train got off at the Narahenpita station, walked along Thimbrigasyaya Road, turned off to Torrington Avenue, entered the premises of the mosque and crossed over to Jawatte Road. I also very often followed this route, as I was living at Udahamulla. I used my bicycle as well to travel to office on some days. I could also travel by bus from

Delkanda Junction to Thimbirigasyaya and then to Bullers Road-Jawatte Road junction. Sometimes I would get off the bus at the Police Park Road and walk to Jawatte Road along Keppetipola Mawatha. I used this route when going to Visakha Vidyalaya to pick up my daughter and drop her there in the morning.

### **Son`s Illness:**

My son (hereafter, Loku Putha) fell ill often in Minneriya. In the opinion of a private medical practitioner at Hingurakgoda, this condition was bound to continue till he started school. As the illness continued even after coming to Colombo, we consulted several medical practitioners, including Ayurvedic Doctor Rev. Malewana Gnanissara who said the child was suffering from asthma. After that, treatment was taken from Dr. J.R. Wilson who was living at the Thimbirigasyaya-Vajira Road junction. I had to take the child every other day, for a series of injections that went over ten days. We started from home at about six in the morning and returned home after the injection, left the child at home and then I went to office. Even this treatment was not effective.

On the advice of a school mate of mine the child was taken to paediatrician Dr. Stella de Silva, who prescribed a medicine (a mixture) and asked me to come back with the child when the mixture was over, stating that if this did not cure the illness, physiotherapy may be necessary. The prescribed mixture was bought from a pharmacy for Rs. 1.50. When the mixture was over, the child was taken to the doctor again who advised me to continue with the mixture whenever the child fell ill. Within about three months, the child was completely cured and did not need any further treatment.



**Loku Putha (Hemakantha Ekanayake) preschool age (Date of Birth 31.08.1959)**

## Daughter`s Schooling

My daughter (hereafter Loku Duwa) was by this time of pre-school (nursery) age. In 1961, she was admitted to a nursery with links to Visakha Vidyalaya at Vajira Road. It was managed by a young teacher by the name of Miss Jayathilake. Loku Duwa was in Miss Jayathilake`s class. A middle-aged woman accompanied her from Udahamulla to Vajira Road.

One day, when I went home in the evening, I found Loku Duwa`s head bandaged. I was told that when she was rocking her chair, she had fallen back causing injury to the head. Treatment was given at school, before sending her home with the caretaker. The following morning when I met Miss Jayathilake at school, she confirmed the story about her rocking the chair. But the information I received later was that another `naughty` child had pushed the chair causing the fall and injury. Consequently, the child could not go to school for about two weeks but continued at this nursery, with the expectation of admitting her to Visakha Vidyalaya the following year.

The Principal of Visakha Vidyalaya at the time was Mrs. Susan Pulimood, under whose guidance the school had made vast strides and gained recognition as the best Buddhist girls` school, not only in Colombo but also in the whole country. Loku Duwa was admitted to this school the following year 1962 and was initially enrolled in Mrs. Soma Kiriella`s class. As there were too many students in her class, Loku Duwa was sent to another class with fewer students, but she returned to Mrs. Kiriella`s class and caught hold of her hand. She remained in Mrs. Kiriella`s class for the rest of the year.

After the rocking chair incident, I took Loku Duwa to and from school. I would go with her by bus, drop her at the nursery, and walked to the office along Keppetipola Mawatha, turning off at Police Park. At about eleven o`clock, I would go to the nursery, pick her up, take her home by bus, and after lunch returned to office by about 2 o`clock in the afternoon. But the head of my branch, never questioned me about my absence from office. I feel that this was because I never delayed or neglected my work.

After Loku Duwa was admitted to Visakha Vidyalaya, the routine changed. She went to school with me in the morning but was picked up at noon by my wife, Prema. After Loku Putha was admitted to the nursery at Vajira Road both children went to school with me in the morning and back home with Prema. When the nursery was over in the forenoon, Prema would go with the son to Vajiraramaya and remain there till Loku Duwa`s school was over. The preaching hall of Vajiraramaya was the waiting place for mothers, who went to pick up their children from Visakha Vidyalaya.

A neighbour at Udahamulla who was a teacher at Nalanda Vidyalaya, Mr. Perera, sent his daughter to Visakha Vidyalaya with an elderly escort. They walked to Delkanda Junction and travelled by school bus to Visakha Vidyalaya. Occasionally my daughter was also sent under the charge of this elderly lady. After I was transferred to Ratmalana, Harris, my brother-in-law, who was by this time attached to the Irrigation Department Head Office, dropped Loku Duwa at home. Several people have helped us whenever necessary. Therefore, I am grateful to them.

### **Transfer to Ratmalana**

The mechanical branch of the Irrigation Department was located at Ratmalana, close to the Deaf and Blind School (*golumadama*). A reorganization of the mechanical branch was done, consequent to a series of newspaper articles criticizing the working of this branch. An Englishman by the name of Johnson who was the chief mechanical engineer, was designated adviser and Mr. F.L. Tirimanne was appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer. The deputy director Mr. Sellahewa was placed in overall charge of the mechanical branch and transferred to Ratmalana. Consequently, the machinery branch which was at the head office was also shifted to Ratmalana, resulting in my transfer to Ratmalana with effect from June 5, 1962.

The top positions in the Irrigation Department at this stage were held by Mr. E.C.de S. Gunasekara, Director; Mr. S. Arumugam, Deputy Director; Messrs T.B.E. Seneviratne, S.M. Arumugam and V.N. Rajaratnam, Assistant Directors; and Mr. Vernon Abeysekera of the Ceylon Civil Service, Assistant Director (Administration). Our branch was under Deputy Director Mr. Sellahewa. The Chief Accountant was one Mr. Weerasooriya while the Office Assistant was Mr. Leelaratne. There were several assistant accountants.

I travelled from Udahamulla to Gansabhawa Junction, and then along Pepiliyana-Ratmalana Road to Maliban Junction on Galle Road and then to *Golumadama* Junction. Bus No. 117 from Nugegoda to Ratmalana operated on this route. Whenever possible, I cycled to office, which again saved time and money but consequent to this change, I had to travel by bus to drop Loku Duwa at school and take another from Bambalapitiya to Ratmalana on Galle Road. Haris dropped her at home after school. She also was sent to school by `school-van` for some time.

### **Promotion to the Executive Clerical Class**

I passed the examination for promotion to Grade II of the Executive Clerical Class of the General Clerical Service held on October 14, 1961. The Deputy Secretary to the Treasury sent me a letter dated June 21, 1962 informing me of my promotion to this grade with effect from October 1, 1961. I had by this time earned nine increments in the General Clerical Class so that there was only a slight increase in my salary. Accordingly, my annual salary from April 29, 1963 was Rs.1860/- with a monthly salary of Rs.155/-. The salary with all allowances was Rs.260/- per month.

### **Polio Scare, Chicken Pox and Measles**

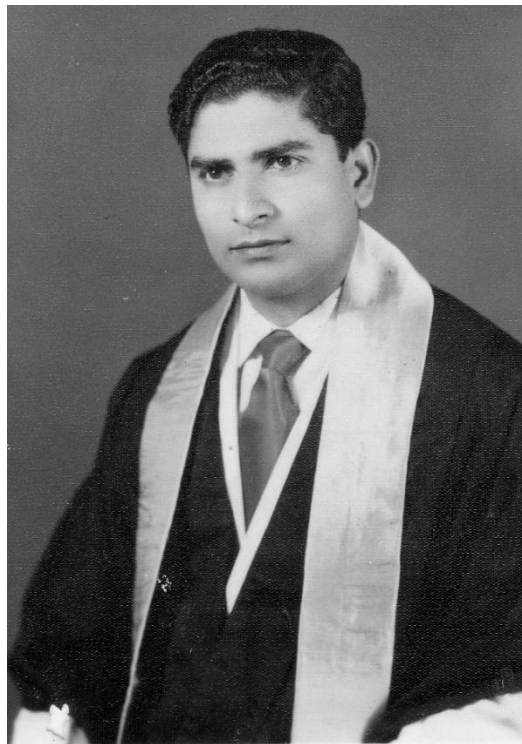
A polio epidemic broke out in the early part of 1962, in and around Colombo district. The fear of the dreaded epidemic spread like wildfire, much more than the disease itself. This was because a child affected by polio would be paralyzed for life. My daughter was five years and some three months at the time. We discussed the problem and decided that Prema should go to Matara with the two children. I also went with them and returned to attend to my official duties.

When I went to Matara for the New Year holidays, I found Prema suffering from a severe attack of chicken pox. The two children had suffered from it earlier and had recovered by

the time I went. In the meantime, Loku Duwa gained admission to Visakha Vidyalaya but she could be sent to school only in May. Having explained the matter, I had obtained permission for this from the Principal Mrs. Pulimood.

In 1963 all the members of my family went to Bambaradeniya, to attend the wedding of the second daughter of Bambaradeniya *Nendamma*. Having travelled to Peradeniya by train, we hired a car to Bambaradeniya via Daulagala. Many of my relatives had also come for the wedding, among whom were my mother and my elder sister who had travelled from Minipe in my brother-in-law's car. I was glad of the opportunity provided by this wedding to meet these relatives. We also went to the Kadugannawa house of Padma Nangi, who was married to my cousin, Gunathilaka Malli. The bridegroom was a Grama Niladhari from Marassana. We went to his house along with the wedding party and returned to Colombo the following day.

After two or three days both my children ran a high temperature. Therefore, early the following morning we went to Manning Town by train with the intention of consulting Dr. Wijegunawardhane, who had a dispensary at Maradana. However, Prema's Loku Kudamma (maternal aunt) who had a look at the faces of the children, said that they were suffering from an attack of measles and that no special treatment was necessary. Therefore, we came back home and took the necessary precautions. After the event, Prema told me that the grand children of *Nendamma* had had measles and my children had contacted it at the wedding house there.



**Degree Photograph (B.A. Vidyodaya, 1964)**

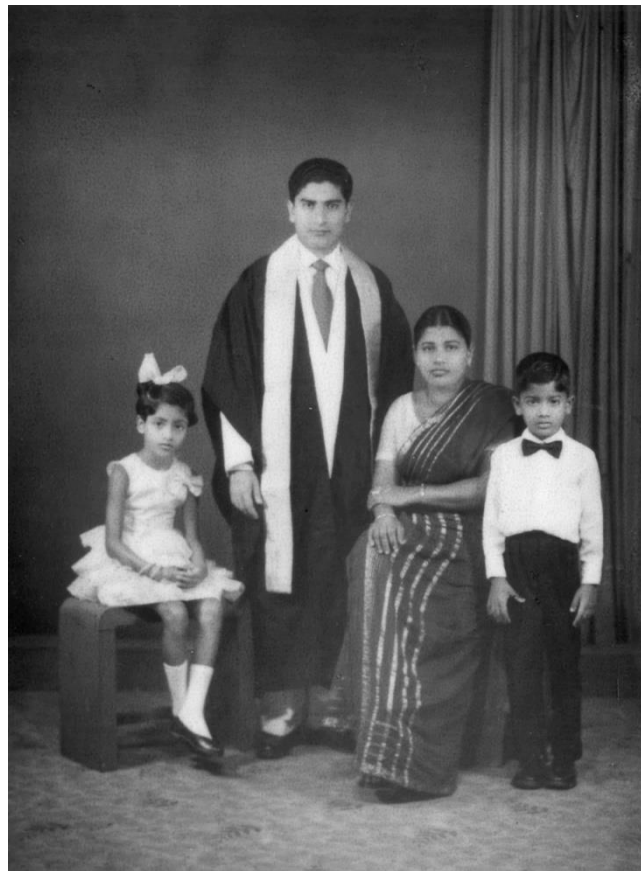


### **Special Concessions for Education**

The lectures of the undergraduate programme started at 5 p.m. daily. It was very difficult to attend lectures leaving office at 4.30 p.m. Therefore, permission was obtained to leave office at 3.45 p.m. in terms of Treasury Circular No. 383 of June 13, 1957. I had to come to office at 8.15 a.m. to compensate for leaving office early. This was easy because I had my bicycle.

It was around 9 p.m. when I came home after lectures. After a wash or bath and dinner, I engaged in studies till about 12 midnight. The following morning, I woke up at about 5 a.m. But none of these were considered to be inconveniences because my sole aim was to earn a university degree. However, all this did not result in my neglecting of any of my obligations to my children or household responsibilities. Prema was a great source of strength to me in all these activities. As she was not employed, the children were well looked after. Our pecuniary difficulties were borne with equanimity.

When the degree examination was due, I got approval for study leave in lieu of my unused vacation leave. Thirty days of such leave was availed as twenty half days in November, 1963 and twenty days in December. These concessions helped me a great deal to engage in my studies.



**With the Family, December 1964**

## Visiting Lectureship

My lecturer in Public Administration, Dr. V. Kaneshalingam was very pleased that I had secured a pass with a class at the degree examination. I know that he recommended me to the Head of the Department, Professor K.P. Mukerjee for appointment as a visiting lecturer to assist him in his tutorial work. Accordingly, in October, 1964 I received an appointment as a visiting lecturer. The letter for this had been signed by Venerable Palannoruwe Wimaladhamma Thero, who was then the Vice Chancellor. The first Vice Chancellor (*Viswavidyalayadhipathi*) Venerable Welivitiye Soratha Thero had passed away in 1962. His *aadhahanauthsawaya* (funeral ceremony) was conducted at the Gangodawila university premises. Most of us took part in the funeral procession from Maligakanda to Gangodawila.

Venerable Palannoruwe Wimaladhamma Thero was succeeded by Venerable Parawahera Vajiragnana Thero followed by Professor D.E. Hettiarachchi, Venerable Walpola Sri Rahula and Professor Hema Ellawala. All of them used the term *Viswavidyalayadhipathi*. The term *Upakulapathi* came into use after 1978. According to Professor T.B. Kangahaarachchi, *Upakulapathi* means deputy head of the family (second husband?), which is why the earlier holders used the designation *Viswavidyalayadhipathi*.

In 1972, this university was converted to the Vidyodaya Campus of the integrated University of Sri Lanka, consequent to a reorganization done in that year. However, in 1978, it was called the University of Sri Jayewardenepura under a new law. I was appointed a visiting lecturer from time to time up to September 1970, after which I joined the permanent staff of the university.

## Transfer to the Irrigation Department Head Office

After my degree examination at the Vidyodaya University, I was transferred to the Head Office of the Irrigation Department with effect from January, 1964, and was posted to the Establishment Branch, whose head was Mr. Ferdinando. This branch was under the supervision of the Office Assistant (OA) Mr. Edmund Vithanage and the Assistant Director (Administration) (ADA) Mr. Vernon Abeysekera. Mr. K.W. Perera, one of the clerks in the branch, was in charge of the subject of engineering staff and therefore he had daily contact with the Director of Irrigation (DI).

After some time, Mr. Perera was transferred to the Treasury and the duties performed by him were assigned to me. Therefore, I had to meet the DI Mr. Silva Gunasekera almost daily. He was an uppity person and therefore one had to be very careful in dealing with him. But once he understood and took a liking to a person, a fruitful official relationship was possible. When I gained his confidence, my official work became very easy. He had been very helpful to me in obtaining Treasury approval, to take up an appointment with the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC).

## Search for an appropriate job

The results of the degree examination were released and a convocation held in 1964. But it was not possible to secure a full-time job in keeping with the qualifications. There were several reasons for this. We had graduated from a newly established university. This programme of studies was not something that was known in the country earlier. The `American Model` was considered to be inferior, by those who were used to the English tradition. To some people in this country, the qualification from a `Pirivena` university was an acolyte (*abiththa*) degree.

This was what a relation of Prema told me, when I met him at the time, I was following the degree programme. It was doubtful, whether he had passed even the senior school certificate (SSC) examination. Yet my response to him was in the form of a local saying, that as long as the cat caught mice, I was not concerned whether it was made of wax or clay (*itiyen ho maetiyen*).

A few years later, the situation changed for the better and many of my batch mates held high positions in the government sector before retirement. I joined the service of the university which also took some time. I applied for a staff grade post in the Central Bank and was called for an interview at 1.30 p.m. on a particular day but was not called before the panel until 4.30.p.m. Having waited in an air-conditioned room, I had developed a severe headache and could not face the interview panel successfully. The chairman of the panel was Dr. Gamini Corea. There was a discussion among them, whether I was qualified for this job. Dr. Corea suggested that I should apply for some position in the Planning Department.

Permission was sought from the Public Service Commission (PSC), to sit the limited competitive examination for promotion to the Ceylon Administrative Service (CAS) but this was refused. Applications were submitted for various positions in Boards and Corporations but without success. Some of those posts required experience rather than university qualifications. Much more than all these was the `push` from some influential person. I did not have this requirement.

The Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC) was established in 1964, by Minister Felix Dias-Bandaranaike in the government of Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Dias-Bandaranaike. The members of the first board of directors of CFC were:

Chairman: Mr. Sam Silva, C.A.S.

Vice Chairman: Mr. Godwin Vithana, Civil Engineer.

Director: Mr. E.de S. Wickremaratne, Accountant

Director: Commodore Rajan Kadirgamar, Chief of the Navy.

Director Economics -J.V.S. De Silva

There was an advertisement in the newspapers, calling for applications for various grades in the corporation`s service. On 10.11.1964 I submitted an application for a post in Grade V. The consolidated monthly salary of this post was Rs.600/=. My salary in the government service at that time was Rs.260/= . per month. On 23.2.1965, I was informed that I had been

selected for a post in Grade VII. Its monthly salary was Rs.500/=. I was selected for that post not on the basis of my degree qualifications, but because I had thirteen and half years` experience in government service. I had to be released from government service to take up this new appointment, so that I would retain my pension rights. It took about four months to get the approval of the Deputy Secretary to the Treasury, in terms of section 26 of the Industrial Corporations` Act No. 49 of 1957.

### **Political Upheavals**

By the end of 1964 there were several political upheavals in the country. The government of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, had introduced some very important changes beginning in 1962. Consequent to the take-over of private schools by the government, the Catholic Church carried out a campaign of protests, which was stopped by a Cardinal who came from India. The suspects of the 1962 coup-d-etat were either Catholics or Christians. The nationalization of the insurance business, petroleum business, and the Bank of Ceylon as well as the establishment of the People`s Bank were undertaken in and around 1962. The free supply of wheat flour by the U.S.A. under P.L.480 was terminated, after the takeover of the petroleum business.

The government was severely criticized by the newspapers owned by private companies or individuals. A proposal was contained in a Throne Speech to nationalize the Lake House newspapers. The owners of the Lake House went all-out to defeat the vote of thanks to the Throne Speech, by persuading a number of Ministers and Members of Parliament to vote against it. Mr. C.P. de Silva, who was a minister of the government, also voted to defeat the vote.

Although the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Ceylon Communist Party (C.P) supported the government of Mrs. Bandaranaike, Parliament was dissolved because of the defeat of the government in the Parliament. A massive rally was held on Galle Face Green in support of the government. A new newspaper called `Aththa` was launched under the patronage of the C.P. A General Election was held in March, 1965 following the dissolution of Parliament.

### **1965 General Election**

The last general election in which I performed official duties was the General Election of March, 1965. I had taken part in official duties in all general elections from 1952. In 1965, we went to the polling station at Addalaichenai in the Batticaloa District on election duty. We travelled to Batticaloa by the night train and spent a day at a school near the Railway Station.

My colleagues in the Irrigation Department Head Office, Messrs Malalaratne and Ellepola also went to Batticaloa. As we did not have to go to the polling station till the following day, the three of us travelled by bus to Kalmunai to meet a person known to Malalaratne. We went looking for his house and having met him returned to Batticaloa after lunch. Kalmunai was known at that time for the manufacture of local textiles such as sarees and sarongs. After returning to Batticaloa, we went sight-seeing as we had not gone to Batticaloa before.

The following day, we travelled to the Addalaichanai polling station by special bus and were accommodated for the night at the premises of the Teachers` Training College. In the evening we walked up to Akkaraipaththu town about two miles away but returned before dusk because of the `election fever` in the environment.

The Senior Presiding Officer (SPO) of our polling station was a Tamil officer from the Postal Department in Colombo. He was very fluent in Sinhala and was very active in chasing away, with the assistance of the Police, any mobs that assembled around the polling station. Our polling station was reserved for females. All the voters were Muslim ladies. One of them, who appeared to be fluent in Sinhala, told us that she was from Alawala in Attanagalla but was married to a person from Addalaichenai.

After closing the poll, we returned by bus to Batticaloa railway station to travel to Colombo on a train, that left at about 8 p.m. According to the results that were picked up on the way, it was clear that the United National Party (UNP) was getting a majority of seats. Consequently, a government was formed under the leadership of Mr. Dudley Senanayake. Messrs C.P.de Silva, Philip Gunawardana, W. Dahanayake, and I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla were among those appointed ministers. Mr. P.B. Wanninayake was Minister of Finance, Mr. J.R. Jayewardene, Minister of State, and the Horowpothana M.P. Mr. E.L.B. Hurulle was Minister of Transport.

### **Some Other Important Events of 1965**

Certain years in my life have made a greater impact on my life than others, because of the events of those years. 1965 was such a year. The most important event was Prema's pregnancy in about February which increased my daily tasks. Although on previous occasions of pregnancy she had no problem preparing our meals, this time she could not even go near the kitchen. If she did, she would throw out several times. She did not however lose her appetite. By now both the elder children were attending school. Loku Duwa was in Grade Three at Visakha Vidyalaya while Loku Putha was admitted to St. John's College, Nugegoda that year. Mr. Ekanayake working in the Irrigation Department and living at Nawinna, helped me to get my son admitted to the school.

I woke up at about 4 a.m. to prepare breakfast and lunch for all four of us. The children were dressed up to go to school. Loku Duwa went on the Visakha school bus from Delkanda Junction. I dropped Loku Putha at school. At noon Prema would pick up Loku Putha. Loku Duwa would return home by school bus. She would get off at Delkanda Junction and walk home, with an elderly lady who was accompanying the child of a neighbor. On a day that the old lady did not come, Loku Duwa had passed the normal halt and got off the bus at the next halt at the Eight Mile Post. Prema told me in the evening, that the child had been shaken with fear and crying after reaching home. I would prepare the evening meals after coming home from work.

The environment was reverberating with the tension of the 1965 general election. I had to go to Batticaloa for election duty. My brother-in-law Harris who was working in Colombo at this time, came to be at home in my absence. All of us went to Matara for the Sinhala New

Year. After the New Year I came back for duty, leaving behind Prema and the children at Matara as it was the school holidays. After the holidays they were brought back home.

It was during this period that I was selected for a post in the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation. I accepted a Grade VII post and assumed duties on June 15, 1965 reporting to the Head Office of the Corporation. It was located in the premises of the Fisheries Department in Galle Face.

## **Service in the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation**

I had thirteen and a half years` of service as a clerk in the General Clerical Service, in the Irrigation Department. Entering the service of a public corporation was a turning point in my career. It involved a change from a pensionable post to that with a provident fund. The `culture` in a corporation was quite different from that in the government service. Yet the Fisheries Corporation was initially under the management of a group of officers, who had entered the service of the corporation from government service. Therefore, any difference was not discernible. The attitude and the work style of those who were used to the system of rules and regulations of the government service, changed only very slowly. Although some members of the Board of Directors were progressive, there was not much of flexibility due to the influence of the majority.

The head of the office administration was Mr. E.B. Tennakoon of the Ceylon Civil Service, who was Secretary to the Board of Directors. He had served in the Treasury. Two of his assistants, Captain Eustace Jayasekera and Mr. D.D.G. Karunaratne as well as a clerk Mr. Rajapakse had also served in the Treasury. Although all of them were personally friendly people, they were guided by the framework of government rules and regulations to which they were accustomed. A professional accountant was in charge of the finance division, but its activities also could not break away from the governmental framework. After the resignation of Mr. Wickremaratne, a member of the Board of Directors, the vacancy was filled by an accountant well versed in governmental rules and regulations.

After a few of us joined the corporation, the future programmes of the corporation were explained to us over a period of two weeks by members of the Board of Directors. We listened to lectures on different aspects of the corporation by Messrs Sam Silva, Chairman, Economist Mr. G.V.S. de Silva, Mr. Godwin Vithana, Vice Chairman, and Commodore Rajan Kadirgamar, Navy Commander. The Corporation was established to promote the fisheries industry and serve both the producer and the consumer. The Assistant Managers, Chief Clerks and other staff recruited to man the regional network of the corporation, were given a training and sent out to the field by the end of June, to carry out a field survey of about two weeks.

### **Transfer to Galle**

Under this programme, I was transferred to Galle with effect from June 28, 1965. The place of duty was the office of the Fisheries Department located at Magalle. Mr. Sandanayake was

transferred as the Assistant Manager. A burgher gentleman from Galle itself was also assigned to this district. Mr. Sandanayake and I undertook the survey of fisheries activities in the coastal area between Ahangama and Beruwala. We started walking along the beach from point to point, meeting those who were engaged in the fisheries industry and explaining to them the role of the Fisheries Corporation. We had to face some opposition, because of the false propaganda carried on by the wholesale traders of St. John's Market in Colombo. However, the response turned out to be favourable, after we had spent long hours to convince them of the benefits accruing to them from the Corporation. Our long walk along the beach ended when we reached the beach at Beruwala.

### **Transfer to Matara**

After the completion of this exercise, I was transferred to Matara with effect from July 26, 1965. There were two ice factories at Matara and it was intended to take control of them to persuade fish traders to consign their fish to the Corporation. Accordingly, the ice factory at Rahula road, owned by Harischandra Mills and another factory at Meddawatta, were taken under our control. A few officers of the Corporation had to be stationed at these factories. My responsibility was to supervise the work of Messrs Fernando, Amarasekera, Tennakoon and the burgher gentleman and also to participate in that work, the owners of the ice factories provided the necessary facilities. We went to work on a roster basis and if anyone was unable to come for his tour of duty, the one already in service had to continue on overtime work.

Although some traders were suspicious of the Corporation's intervention in the supply of ice to the fish traders, it was our responsibility to win them over. We considered ourselves to be the 'ambassadors' of the Corporation. The ice factory owners accepted this arrangement wholeheartedly, because it eliminated any irregular sales that would have taken place earlier.

I was transferred back to Galle on August 16, 1965 but it was for a few days. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of that month I was again transferred to Matara. A young officer Mr. Mohan Edirisuriya was transferred to Matara as Assistant Manager. He rented out a room adjacent to a hotel in Matara Fort for use as our office. From then on, arrangements were made to get the fish traders gathering at the Meddewaththa boxing site, to consign fish to the Corporation in Colombo. The Assistant Manager was given the authority to fix the prices payable to the traders, for fish consignments to the Corporation in Colombo on receipt of the invoice from Colombo. Therefore, whatever the prices at the St. John's Market in Colombo, action was taken to pay a higher price for those traders consigning fish to the Corporation. Consequently, the fish traders began to increase their consignments to the Corporation. However, they could not understand how the Corporation could pay higher prices. Our argument was that because the Corporation had freezing and storage capacity it could sell the fish whenever the market prices were higher.

After a few months, Mr. Edirisuriya was transferred to Hambantota and a young officer by the name of Tissa de Zoysa was appointed as the Matara Assistant Manager. During his tenure, the office was shifted to a building owned by Dr. Mohotti on Broadway opposite the King's Hotel. There was enough space on this upper floor to accommodate a fishing gear

store as well. Mr. Peter Silva, who was earlier an employee of the Fisheries Department, took over as the store keeper in charge of fishing gear. He was resident of Polhena in Matara. Fish consignments to the Corporation in Colombo (Mutwal) continued.

### **Change of Residence and Related Matters:**

When I was appointed to the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation, we were living at Udahamulla. I had to go on outstation duty from June 1965, first to Galle and then to Matara. When in Galle I came for work from the Talpawila Mahagedara, Matara. After the transfer to Matara on August 21, I decided to bring down Prema also to Mahagedara, as she could no longer manage alone, as she was nearly five months pregnant. She needed my support as well as those of her elders.

These changes also affected the schooling of the two children. We did not want to remove Loku Duwa from Visakha Vidyalaya. Therefore, she was boarded at Loku Kudamma's place in Manning Town. Loku Kudamma's daughter was also attending the same school, so Loku Duwa could go to school with her. Loku Kudamma was also someone who was ready to be helpful to Prema. Therefore, we were confident that the child would not encounter any difficulties.

Loku Putha was removed from Nugegoda St. John's College and admitted to Rahula Vidyalaya, Matara, for which a son of Prema's Hingi Kudamma was greatly helpful. Loku Putha travelled from Talpawila to school in a van. Prema had her mother and sisters to help her. Chandra Nangi was then working as a nurse in Dr. Mohotti's ward. Punchi Aiyya (Edmund Wijesiriwardana) went to work from home and therefore was around in case of need. As the CFC office also was in Matara, I went to work from home as well.

### **Birth of Podi Duwa**

Prema was admitted to Dr. Mohotti's nursing home, when it was time for the delivery of the baby. The birth took place in the morning of **November 25, 1965**. Dr. Mohotti and Chandra Nangi had helped in the delivery. The baby girl was named **Dayani Bhadra Nilmini**. As both the baby and the mother were doing well, they came home in two or three days.

In the meantime, two brothers of Prema entered wedded life. Punchi Aiyya married a girl from Nakiyadeniya, while Rama (Ramachandra Wijesiriwardana) married a young school teacher. Rama was employed on a tea estate and therefore did not come to live in the *mahagedara* (main house), but Punchi Aiyya continued to live in the main house.

The *mahagedara* could not conveniently accommodate several families. Therefore, I started looking for a house within the precincts of Matara town, also because it would help Loku Putha to travel to school and for me to travel to office. When Mr. Peter Silva told me that there was a house at Pamburana, the two of us went to Kamburugamuwa to meet the owner, who agreed to rent out the house to me.



We went into occupation of the house on Galle Road. It had several rooms with the kitchen built as a separate unit behind the house. The garden was large. There was pipe-borne water and electricity, which were not available at the *mahagedara*. The house was convenient for the three of us, Prema, Loku Putha and me, but this was an area prone to filariasis with hordes of mosquitoes. Therefore, we had to always keep the baby under a mosquito net. It was under these circumstances, that I got a transfer to Kandy which was a great relief to all of us.

## **Transfer to Kandy**

I was transferred to Kandy with effect from April 1, 1966. The Kandy District Office was established to promote fish marketing in the Central Province. Messrs Tissa de Zoysa and T. M.D.K. Tennakoon were also transferred to Kandy from Matara. Mr. M.H. Gunawardena was the Assistant Manager in Kandy. A marketing officer by the name of Fernando was also sent to Kandy. By this time two fish stalls at the Kandy market, which were earlier under the Ceylon Cooperative Fish Sales Union (CCFSU), had been taken over by the Corporation. The sales assistant of these stalls was Mr. A.M.S. Bandara.

The Kandy District Office was located in three rooms on the first floor, rented out from the Queen's Hotel. I was the Chief Clerk while Messrs Wickremasinghe and Nawaratne were two other clerks, who did the Accounts. Arrangements were made to open a wholesale store, in the premises of the Kandy Ice Company at Ampitiya. The store keeper was one Mr. Pathirana. Action was taken to recruit a few labourers to assist in these activities. One Mr. Silva was transferred from Colombo to serve as the Distribution Officer. After some time, Mr. M.H. Gunawardena was transferred out and was replaced by Mr. Mohan Edirisuriya. I had worked with him at Matara. He was replaced by Mr. W.P.S. Abeydeera as Assistant Manager, with whom I worked until my transfer to Colombo, which I had requested on being selected to follow a postgraduate programme at the Vidyodaya University. The transfer became effective from March 1, 1968.

## **Residing at Napana and Lewella in Kandy**

When I informed Gunathilake Malli about my transfer to Kandy, he asked me to spend a few days with him until we found a house to rent out. Therefore, we travelled by train to Kadugannawa and spent a few days with Gunathilake Malli, who had married a young school teacher called Padma and was living in his father-in-law's house. The father-in-law was a retired schoolmaster who treated us with utmost kindness.

Soon after we went to Kadugannawa, I was informed that there was a house owned by Mr. Tennakoon at Napana. He was a retired schoolmaster and to reach his house, we travelled from Kandy to Madawala and then about half a mile along the Sirimalwaththa Road. His wife Mrs. B.M. Tennakoon was my class teacher in Grade VI at Walala Central School. When I reminded her as to who I was, she treated me like one of her own children.

There was a house being built bordering the main road. As the construction work was nearing completion, Mr Tennekoon agreed to make the house available for occupation within two or three days. My household furniture that was handed over at the Matara Railway Station, had arrived at the Kandy Railway Station and transported to the new house. Therefore, about a week before the Sinhala New Year, we went into occupation of this house.

Loku Duwa and Loku Putha had to be found schools in Kandy. Loku Putha was admitted to Dharmaraja Primary School with the help of a brother-in-law of Gunathilake Malli, who was a teacher of Dharmaraja College. Loku Duwa had been boarded for over six months at Loku Kudamma's house, at Manning Town to attend school. When I came to take her to Matara during a school vacation, I found the child in a subdued mood. It may have been due to her feeling, that she was living away from home and parents, although the relations looked after her very well. Therefore, steps were taken to admit her to Mahamaya College after my transfer to Kandy.

I went to the Education Office in Kandy and, on the basis of the provisions of a circular for the benefit of transferred public servants, made a request for a letter to be given to the Principal of Mahamaya College. When I met the Principal with the letter, she told me that there was only one class for the relevant grade, which already had fifty students and therefore there was no room to admit any more students. When she asked me why I was not seeking admission to a school such as Kandy High School, I told her that my daughter was now attending the premier Buddhist school in Colombo and therefore wished her to be admitted to a similar school in Kandy. The Principal went on to say that after the take-over of schools, there were no such things as Buddhist schools but I told her that I still thought that these schools continue to maintain a Buddhist environment.

In spite of the Principal's refusal to admit the child, I continued to be seated near her table. She then asked me who in the Education Office gave me the letter. I replied that I did not know any one there but someone in the office gave me the letter. Finally, she asked me to bring the child for admission. Thereupon I went to Colombo, met the Principal of Visakha Vidyalaya Mrs. Susan Pulimood, who asked me why I was removing the child. When I explained the position to her, she caused the relevant school leaving documents to be given to me, wishing the child well. The following day Loku Duwa was admitted to Mahamaya College in Kandy.

She had to take two buses from Napana to school. First, she took the Sirimalwatta-Kandy bus from home and changed over at the Lake Bund opposite Queen's Hotel to take the Ampitiya bus to school. She got used to this after travelling with me for a few days and acquainting herself with some girls travelling to Mahamaya College on the same route. Loku Duwa returned home on her own with the other children. Loku Putha went to school with me in the morning and came back with the father of one of his class mates. As Loku Duwa also travelled home on the same bus, they could both get off near our house. Prema was left at home with Podi Duwa until the two children returned home. By the time I came home, it was evening as I had to travel from Kandy.

The house at Napana had electricity and water was supplied from a tank located in Mr. Tennakoon's garden premises, to which water was pumped from a well near the paddy fields. This water supply was inadequate for bathing and washing. Therefore, at weekends, we went by bus to Nawayalatenna to bathe in the Mahaweli ganga (river). It was risky bathing there.

In the meantime, a schoolmate of mine, Mr. H.B. Rajapakse living at Lewella in Kandy, told me that there was a house for rent there. It had no electricity but there was a water tap on the road close by. Mahaweli ganga was within walking distance where we could go for a bath. Travel time to school and to my office was reduced. The children could go to school with some children from the neighbourhood, by bus from the Lewella bus terminus. The bus fare was very much less than that from Napana. Therefore, we rented out the house at Lewella and shifted there from Napana.

Several relations visited us from time to time at Lewella. My mother spent two or three weeks with us. Bambaradeniya aunt (*Naendamma*) visited us one day with one of her younger daughters. During the Esala Procession of the Temple of the Tooth (Dalada Maligawa) in Kandy, my mother-in-law (Prema's mother) and Chandra *Nangi* visited us to watch the Kandy Perahera, which was an annual Buddhist festival. I was in constant touch with Gunathilake Malli. He had by then constructed a two-roomed house on a block of land owned by Padma Nangi's family and was planning to build a larger house on the premises with a National Housing Department loan. The Assistant Commissioner of that department in Kandy was Mr. E.W. Jayawardane, a schoolmate of mine at Walala Central College. I introduced Gunathilake Malli to him to expedite the approval of the loan. Another schoolmate, Mr. H.B. Rajapakse, was living at Lewella and working in the Mercantile Bank. My brother (*Ape Aiyya*) who was working at the Kandy Kachcheri, was living close-by in the government quarters at Aruppola.

One day, when my one-and-a-half-year-old Podi Duwa was on Loku Duwa's lap (*odokkuwa*), she had fainted and collapsed. With the help of a neighbor, Prema took the baby to the Kandy General Hospital for treatment. On the way back they came to the Ampitiya premises of the Kandy Ice Company, where I was temporarily working. The child did not suffer a similar attack for a very long time.

## **Transfer to Colombo: Residence at Mirihana**

When Vidyodaya University launched a postgraduate degree programme in 1968, I applied for admission and was selected. Therefore, I requested the Fisheries Corporation authorities to grant me a transfer to Colombo.

A few problems were encountered consequent to this transfer. I had to look for a house to live in. The two children had to be found schools. I attended lectures for a few days from *Loku Kudamma's* house at Wimalawatta. *Loku Putha* was admitted to Ananda College, for which assistance was again provided by Gunathilake Malli's brother-in-law. The Principal at

the time was Colonel E.A. Perusinghe. The front room of the house of *Hinnimama* at Schockman Place, Mirihana, was given to me where I also kept Loku Putha. He could go to school in the van of the Old Boys` Association in which the son of a neighbour, Mr. Kahawatta, also travelled to school.

Prema had to continue to live at Lewella until a school was found for Loku Duwa. The Principal of Visakha Vidyalaya was by then Mrs. Hema Jayasinghe, former Principal of Kandy High School and with my experience in Kandy, I did not go to meet her on the assumption that she would refuse to admit the child. When I mentioned my problem to my batch mate Mr. A.M.S. Radaliyagoda of the Central Bank, he accompanied me to Mrs. Thamara Kumari Illangaratne. With her intervention, Loku Duwa was re-admitted to Visakha Vidyalaya.

An annexe belonging to Edirisinghe Mudalali was rented out with the assistance of *Hinni Mama*. Therefore, we were able to shift from Lewella with our household goods and settle down in this unit, which was located at the back of Edirisinghe Mudalali`s boutique. Although it was small, it had electricity and pipe-borne water. It had a verandah, two rooms and a kitchen. While it served our need temporarily, we looked for a bigger house. Podi Duwa fell ill once again in this house. Because of the high fever, she developed a fit and was taken for treatment to Dr. Silva at Maharagama. Although she did have a fit again, precautions were taken to avoid it whenever she fell ill.

Mr. Coggins, a resident of Wijesekara Mawatha, told me of a vacant house adjoining his property, whose owner was employed at Taprobane Hotel. I went with Mr. Coggins to meet the owner, Mr. Hector Jayanetti from Hikkaduwa and rented out the house at No. 30, Wijesekara Mawatha. This house was located in a large garden and had a spacious hall (sitting-cum-dining), three bed rooms and a storeroom. The kitchen was located at a lower level. There was no electricity. Water was available from a well within the garden. The neighbours on either side of the house were Messrs Coggins and Perera. Loku Duwa travelled to school by bus while Loku Putha continued to travel in the van.

### **Personnel Division**

I was assigned to the Personnel Division of the Corporation after my transfer to Colombo. Mr. Peiris who served in that division, was transferred to Kandy to replace me and went into occupation of the house at Lewella. The Personnel Division was located in the Fisheries Department building at Galle Face. The manager of this division was Mr. E.P.P. Jayasuriya, who at the commencement of the Corporation was the Marketing Manager. My immediate superior was Mr. D.D.G. Karunaratne, who was Assistant Manager of the division. I was the chief clerk of one unit. Messrs Kalinga Ekanayake, Ranasinghe, Aluvihare and Lennie were the other members of my branch. Mr. Rajapakse was the chief clerk of another branch. When a new building was constructed at the Mutwal premises of the Corporation, all the units at Galle Face were shifted there and my place of work from the middle of 1968, was Mutwal.

The composition of the Board of Directors had changed. Mr. D.C.L. Amarasinghe of the Ceylon Civil Service was Chairman. Mr. Stanley Fernando was Director, Marketing, while Mr. Abu Bakir was Director Security. The General Manager was Mr. D.K. Subramaniam, who was

also a member of the Board. The Commander of the Navy Commodore Rajan Kadirgamar continued as a member of the Board.

In 1968 a few of those who had served in the Corporation for a few years, were promoted to Grade V as Assistant Managers. I was promoted to that grade with effect from November 8, 1968 but it was an acting appointment for three months and was made permanent with effect from March 6, 1969.

### **Marketing Division**

After my promotion, I was transferred to the Marketing Division and assigned to the wholesale unit (wet market) at Mutwal. The Marketing Manager was Mr. Ivor de Mel. The division was under the direct supervision of Director Mr. Stanley Fernando. A Grade IV officer, Mr. S.P.C. de Silva, who travelled from Ambalangoda, was in overall charge of the wet market during the day. The recently promoted Assistant Managers were assigned to work on a roster basis and therefore work in the wet market was carried out throughout the day.

The Assistant Managers had to supervise the unloading of fish from the Corporation's trawlers, boxing and distribution of fish brought from fish producing areas, distribution of fish to the Corporation's agents every morning, freezing and storing them, packaging of frozen fish and their distribution. They were assisted by several junior officers and labourers. Some of those who assisted me were the Supervisor Mr. Dudley Anthony and Allocation Officer Mr. Titus Fernando. There were a few Assistant Supervisors and Distribution Officers. They always worked in my roster and therefore, we developed a good working relationship, resulting in efficient performance of duties.

### **Accident to the right hand**

The floor of the wholesale market was slippery, because of constant washing and chips of ice and flake falling on the floor when boxing fish. Those who walk around this area in gumboots, had to be cautious to avoid slipping and falling down. Within a few days after my going to work there, I fell down and fractured my right wrist. This happened in the night. Although it was the practice to take such a person immediately to hospital for treatment, I remained in the work place till the following morning, because I was the only responsible person on duty at the time. Although my wrist was very painful, I remained in the rest room, until the officer who was due for duty at 8 a.m. arrived to relieve me. It was after that, that I went to the Colombo General Hospital for treatment.

I was admitted to the hospital and sent to Surgeon Dr. P.R. Anthonis' ward, he had by then done his ward rounds and therefore I had to wait till the following day. That night, I was given a mat and a pillow and had to sleep under the bed of another patient. The following morning, I was taken to another section, where my hand was dressed up with plaster, and I was sent to a ward, in which I was given a bed. Since I had not gone home for two days, I requested a ward nurse to telephone my brother-in-law Haris, who was working in the Irrigation Department. That evening, he visited me at the hospital and later informed Prema about my accident. I was discharged from the hospital in two or three days but my wrist was in plaster for six weeks. After the plaster was removed, the wrist remained rigid and could

not be easily moved. Therefore, Ayurvedic treatment had to be sought from Yahampath Vedaralahamy living down Piliyandala Road, Maharagama. He applied medicinal oil and herbal bandages and, in a few weeks, I was able to turn my wrist with ease.

## **Postgraduate Examination**

The Part I examination of my postgraduate programme was held in December, 1968. I sat the examination with my hand plastered but because I was left-handed, writing was not a problem, although the right hand was painful. My accident leave also helped me to prepare for the examination.

After the examination and the expiry of accident leave, I went back to work and was again attached to the `wet market`. We continued our roster system. After night duty (16 hours from 4 p.m. to 8 a.m. the following morning) we rested for two days. The year 1968 was spent in this manner.

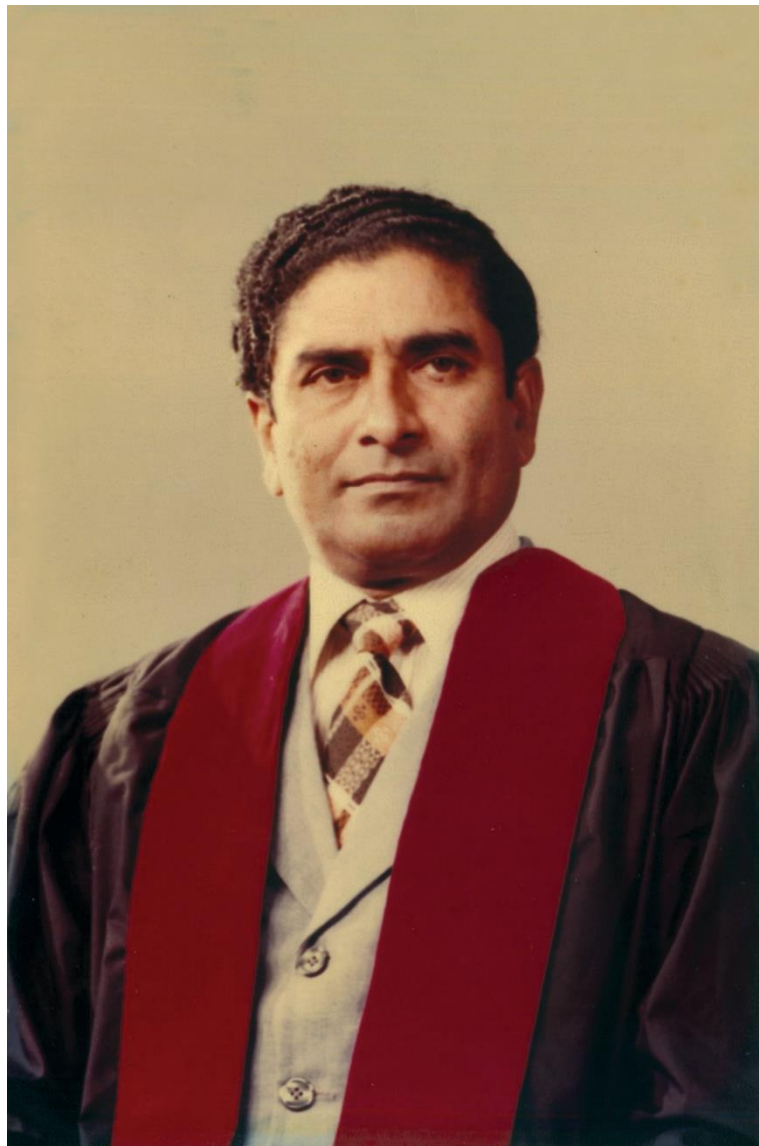
I had passed Part I of the examination and sat the Part II examination at the end of 1969. On the day that I was due to go back for work in 1970, the employees of the Corporation launched a strike. The staff officers who did not participate in this strike, attempted to do some work with the help of casual labourers, but this was not successful in the absence of experienced workers.

It was in this situation that one night the Director (Security) Mr. Abu Bakir went on to insult a Regional Manager of the Marketing Division. A few staff officers decided to pull me out of duty, as I was the only staff officer on duty at the time. Accordingly, I left the work place and accompanied the Regional Manager to his house and came back with him the following morning. The other staff officers had to participate in the strike, from the following morning in terms of their decision the previous evening but they appeared to have completely forgotten it.

Therefore, I met my friend Mr. Nandasiri Gunaratne who was the Secretary of a labour union, applied for membership and continued to participate in the strike. In a few days the staff officers also joined and were on strike till May, 1970. I did not receive my salary from the Corporation for four months. The household expenses were covered by the income I received as a Visiting Lecturer of Vidyodaya University and teaching in a class at Pushparamaya for external students preparing for the Intermediate Examination of the university. Before the strike I received a net salary of Rs. 430/- from the Corporation and another Rs.250/- as additional income from teaching. But now we had to manage with Rs. 250/- to cover the monthly household expenses. Therefore, financially it was the most difficult period that we ever experienced.

The staff officers called off their strike in May, 1970, i.e., one month before the General Election, I was transferred to Hambantota district with effect from January 8, 1970 but because I was on strike this did not take effect. By the time we returned to work in May, 1970 the results of Part II of the postgraduate examination had also been released. I was

awarded a merit pass and became the holder of a Master in Public Administration (MPA) degree. I was posted to the Personnel Division headed by Mr. Irvin Jayasuriya who appeared to have a regard for my qualifications.



**Master of Public Administration, 1969**

When the strike was over and normalcy restored in the Corporation, construction work in the Fisheries Harbour in Trincomalee was disrupted by trade union action by some workers there. It was said that they were led by a worker who belonged to the Chinese wing of the Communist Party. When the engineer in charge of construction requested the Corporation to investigate the matter, I was assigned to undertake the task. Accordingly, I travelled to

Trincomalee by the night mail train and commenced inquiries. This necessitated spending three or four days, during which I was accommodated for the night at the Naval Headquarters in Trincomalee Fort.

After the completion of the investigation, instead of travelling by train, I made arrangements to travel from Trincomalee to Ratmalana by Air Ceylon. There were daily flights on the Colombo-Trincomalee-Jaffna route. The plane in which I travelled was an `Avro`. This was my first trip by aeroplane, which is the reason for this narration. Since then, all my trips abroad were by aeroplane, which will be described later.

After the 1970 General Election, Hon. George Rajapakse was appointed Minister of Fisheries in the government of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. I was posted to the office of the Colombo Regional Manager, who was Mr. Jayamanne. Some high-ranking officers of the Corporation were under the wrong impression, that I was aiming at a high office. This became clear from what one such officer told me, when I went round bidding them farewell, after I was selected for appointment as a lecturer of the Vidyodaya University. He asked me, how I could become the General Manager of the Corporation if I leave it. My reply was, that I could become the Vice Chancellor of the university. In the course of my university career, I had the opportunity of acting as Vice Chancellor of two universities -Sri Jayewardenepura and Sabaragamuwa. I did not seek to be a full-time Vice Chancellor.

The last date of my service in the Fisheries Corporation was September 30, 1970. On the following day, I went to Vidyodaya University at Gangodawila to assume duties as a lecturer. My colleagues in the Corporation, entertained me to dinner at the Chinese Restaurant near the Town Hall. They presented me with a sterling pound, as a token of appreciation. I presume that this gold coin was given by Prema to one of our children or grandchildren.



## Chapter VII

### University Service (The First Eight Years)

#### Post of Lecturer

There were several reasons why I joined the university service. The main one was, that it was only in the university, that the most qualified applicant was selected to fill the vacancy without the patronage of any outsider. I had obtained my first degree with a class and my postgraduate degree with a merit pass. I also had over eighteen years' experience in government service and in a public corporation. Of the applicants for the post, I was the most qualified person which the selection panel could not ignore.

There was also social recognition for university academics. They were considered much more `respectable` than those in any position in the Fisheries Corporation, which I joined because the salary there was higher than that in the clerical service. But a businessman in Matara, told me the job did not suit me. I was also keen to change the job as soon as possible. Another reason was that the university salary was higher than that of the corporation. The net salary I received in my last month of service in the corporation was Rs.328.50 although the gross salary was Rs.640/- per month. The initial salary in the university was Rs.900/- and the net salary in my first month of service was Rs.767.50, an increase of Rs.439/- (767.50-328.50). In fact, that was the most important incentive for me to accept the university appointment. The others were of secondary importance.

On hearing of my new appointment, the Venerable Halyale Sri Sumanatissa Nayake Thero, Principal of Asgiri Maha Vihara Pirivena, wrote to me as follows:

*'The former job was not something about which one can be happy. This is good in all respects. The only difficulty is the many clashes and conflicts that arise from time to time. It is desirable to avoid those situations as far as possible.'*

This sound advice was very useful to me. During my twenty-eight years of university service, I encountered innumerable problems, but I am happy that it was possible to overcome them with ease.

I entered the service of the university on October 1, 1970 and retired on April 20, 1998. The following pages cover my activities over a period of twenty-seven years and seven months. They include some general information relating to the university, but more particularly those relating to me and my family. Some important events that took place in the country,

but which affected me and my family directly or indirectly are also described in the next few chapters.

### **University Structure**

The government of Hon. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike who came to power in 1956, established two new universities in 1959, under the names of two well-known educational institutions in the country-Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara. The Vidyodaya University of Ceylon commenced its operations at the premises of the Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda. The Royal Air Force Camp at Gangodawila opened during the Second World War, was vested in the Vidyodaya University.

The university office was shifted in 1961 to the temporary buildings in the Air Force Camp. Two permanent buildings named Sumangala and Gnanissara were under construction at Gangodawila. A few buildings for residential purposes of the high officials were also being built. Two large halls were constructed and named after Bandaranaike and Lenin. A hall of residence for students was also built and was named Rahula-Dhammapala Hall.

The chief executive officer of the university was the *Visvavidyalayadhipathi* [Schedule I lists the names of those who held this position from the beginning]. The first *Visvavidyalayadhipathi* was Venerable Weliwitiye Soratha Thero and the last was Professor Hema Ellawala, who assumed the position in 1971.

Consequent to the April insurrection in 1971, the government of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Professor Osmund Jayaratne. Vidyodaya, Vidyalandara, Peradeniya, Katubedde and Colombo universities were converted into campuses of the single University of Sri Lanka. The former Vice Chancellor of the Katubedde University was appointed the new Vice Chancellor of the single university. A new university office called Senate House was located at Ward Place, where the Ministry of Higher Education is now housed. Later an office for the University Grants Commission was opened in these premises.

Vidyodaya University became Vidyodaya Campus. The chief executive officer of the campus was the Campus President. Dr.V.K. Samaranayake was the first Campus President (The names of Campus Presidents appear in Schedule I).

Under the government of Hon. J.R. Jayewardena established in 1977, the University Grants Commission was established and the campuses were converted into independent universities. The Vidyodaya Campus became the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. From then onwards, the chief executive of the university was designated Vice Chancellor. [Schedule I gives the names of those who held this position until I retired in April,1998].

### **Faculties and Deans**

There were six or seven faculties at the commencement of the Vidyodaya University. The Department of Economics, Public and Business Administration was under the Faculty of Arts. The Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce was established in 1972 (The names of the Deans appear in Schedule II).

## **Departments and Heads**

The Public Administration programme was initially under the Department of Economics, Public and Business Administration. In 1968 it came under the Department of Management Studies. The Department of Public Administration was created on May 5, 1980 [The names of those who held the position of Head of Department till I retired in 1998 appear in Schedule III].

## **Positions Held**

The lowest academic grade was Assistant Lecturer. On October 1, 1970, I joined the next higher grade of Lecturer. After serving six years in that grade, one becomes eligible for promotion to the grade of Senior Lecturer. The grade of Assistant Lecturer was done away with, after some time and the positions of Senior Lecturer, Grades II and I, established. After ten years as Senior Lecturer Grade I, one becomes eligible for promotion to the grade of Associate Professor, provided some other conditions are satisfied. I was promoted Associate Professor with effect from October 1, 1986.

These academics were required to hold some administrative positions from time to time, to which appointments were made by the higher authorities or by election by the members of the faculty. For example, under the existing law, Heads of Department were appointed by the Vice Chancellor, while Deans were elected from among the Heads by the Faculty Board. The appointment of Directors of Affiliated University Colleges and acting Vice Chancellor was made by the Chairman of the University Grants Commission. The academics have also to serve on various university bodies, such as the University Council, Senate, Faculty Board, Research Committee, Supplies Committee and the Examination Irregularities Committee [The positions I held are listed in Schedule IV].

## **Financial Rewards**

The Vidyodaya University paid me a salary of Rs.900/= per month on being appointed to the grade of Lecturer. At the time of my retirement, I received a monthly salary of Rs.34,427/=, because of promotions and revisions of university salaries. University salaries which were low compared to those of some prestigious institutions, such as banks were revised during the period 1988-1994 with the intervention of the Minister of Higher Education Hon. A.C.S. Hameed and the Chairman of the University Grants Commission Professor Arjuna Aluvihare. In 1986, I received an increase of salary because of a promotion.

After 1994, university salaries were revised again with the intervention of Hon. Richard Pathirana Minister of Education and Higher Education, and the Chairman of the University Grants Commission Professor Sirisena Tilakaratna. In spite of these salary revisions, the struggle for increased salaries continued due to the rapid increase in the cost of living [Schedule V indicates these increases to the time of my retirement in April, 1998].

## **Subjects Taught**

I taught several subjects within the field of Public Administration to first, third and final year undergraduates from October, 1970 to April, 1998. In certain years, I also taught

postgraduate students. Some of these subjects were taught to undergraduates of the Brunei University, where I was on sabbatical leave.

Elements of Public Administration was a subject that I taught the first-year students for several years. It had a political science orientation at the beginning, which gradually was replaced with a management orientation. A paper in Public Administration, Theory and Practice was taught to the third-year students. Its Political Science orientation was also replaced with a Management component. Public Finance was taught to third year students [was eventually given to one of our own graduates]. Political Science, which I taught first year students for many years, was given over to another lecturer specially recruited for the subject. My special attention was devoted to the subject under the title of Management of Public Enterprises, which I taught to final year undergraduates and post graduates from 1972. I compiled a monograph for teaching it at the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Therefore, the students had easy access to information, which they would have to collect from many sources, without this monograph.

After my sabbatical leave, Development Administration was taught to the final year students of our university from 1991. I taught it at the Brunei University from 1989 to 1991. I also taught the Management component of the Human Resource Management subject there. In 1996, I taught Management to the Diploma students at Buttala Affiliated University College (A.U.C).

### **Structure of the Undergraduate Programme**

The Public Administration programme launched in 1960 was based on the `British` model. On completion of the first year, students started the degree programme. For the general degree they had to complete two years of study and for the special degree three years. At the end of two years, they had to pass in nine examination papers, in three subjects for the award of a General Degree.

This structure was changed in 1966. After the first examination, the degree programme consisted of three parts I, II and III. Each part was taught for one year, at the end of which there was an examination in about six papers. After some time, the first year was converted to Part I and each of the other three Parts II, III and IV of the undergraduate programme had annual examinations. This was a complete change to the `American Model`. The students had to pass in twenty-four examination papers during the four years to obtain the degree, which was named Bachelor of Public Administration (B.P.A).

The qualifications for admission to the programme also underwent changes. Initially a candidate who had passed the Senior School Certificate (S.S.C) examination and completed at least three years` service in the public or private sector was admitted to the programme, on passing an entrance examination conducted by the university. In the next stage, a candidate who had passed the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Advanced Level in any stream (Arts, Science, Commerce or Mathematics) could enter the first year of the programme, if the candidate had reached the level required for admission to the university. An alternative path for admission therefore was to pass the first examination as an external candidate and enter Part I of the degree programme. When admission to the programme was confined to those who had passed the G.C.E Advanced Level (A.L.) in the Commerce Stream, admission of external candidates was terminated.

## **Numbers admitted to the Programme**

At the beginning, over a hundred students were admitted to the Public Administration programme. But with the revision of the programme structure, the number seeking admission was largely reduced. After admission was limited to Commerce stream candidates, all of them sought admission to the Business Administration programme. Although some students were admitted to the Public Administration programme, many subjects in the Business Administration programme had to be taught to Public Administration students as well, for example, Economics and Accountancy. The advantage was that, Public Administration graduates could qualify as professional accountants and economists and compete successfully in seeking employment, without being restricted to the public sector.

The number of students who passed the G.C.E (A.L.) examination in the Commerce Stream increased. There was no Science Stream in schools in the remote rural areas and therefore Commerce was the alternative available for those students, which resulted in an increase in those seeking admission to universities. The only undergraduate programme to accommodate them was the Management programme of the Vidyodaya University. Therefore, steps were taken to increase the number of students admitted to the Public and Business Administration programmes. For example, the number admitted to the Public Administration programme in 1970 was sixty, but in the following year it increased to one hundred and twenty.

With the establishment of the Department of Commerce under the Management Faculty in 1972, the number of Commerce stream students admitted could be increased by about another one hundred. The University Grants Commission allocated new students to the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce in bulk, and then assigned to the different undergraduate programmes by the Faculty. These students were very reluctant to enter the Public Administration programme as they did not fully understand its nature. Because of these difficulties, the University Grants Commission itself now allocates about fifty students to this programme.

Yet, no Public Administration graduate was unemployed. The well-known Accountancy teachers at present are Public Administration graduates. These graduates are employed in the Administrative Service, Accountants' Service and Audit Service in both the public and the private sector. Some of them perform an immense service as Commerce stream school teachers. The present (2012) Minister of Higher Education Hon. S.B. Dissanayake was a Public Administration graduate, who entered the programme as a student in October, 1970.

Mr.W.A. Wijewardena, who recently retired as the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, was the first student to pass the degree programme with a first class in 1972. The second graduate to earn a first class was Mrs.Ramanie Samaratunga who is now a Professor at Monash University in Australia. In later years, the daughter of Mr. Wijewardena also passed out as a first-class graduate. In an inquiry I made recently, it was revealed that about forty students had so far secured first class passes. The total number who graduated from this programme would be a little over seven thousand. In the university system in Sri Lanka, there is a Department of Public Administration, only at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (2012). The programme had existed from 1960, under the same name but

the name of the degree changed from time to time. At the beginning, it was Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), which around 1966 was named Bachelor of Public Administration (B.P.A). In 1974, it was changed to Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) and is now called B.Sc. (Public Management) [2012].

### **Academic Staff**

The Department of Public Administration was started in 1980 with five academic staff. One of them died. Another person who went abroad did not return. One of the academics devoted his time to the development of the postgraduate division of the faculty and therefore his contribution to the undergraduate programme was minimal. Therefore, it was very important to build up the human resources of the department. But there was no cadre provision to recruit staff to meet student numbers, the ratio of which was 1:18. Only about one or two posts were approved annually.

My friend Mr. R.A.A. Perera, who became the Dean of the faculty, submitted a corporate plan to the University Grants Commission, according to which the cadre provision for all the departments in the faculty was increased around 1983. Consequently, the vacancies were filled annually in increasing numbers with our own graduates or those from outside.

By the time of my retirement in April, 1998, there were about thirty members of the academic staff. These new recruits were also provided with opportunities for postgraduate qualifications. But some of them have left the university service while others have migrated to other countries such as Australia and Canada [Schedule VI gives the academic staff as of April, 1998].

### **Some Other Matters**

The following contents of this book, relate to various matters that took place from the time of my entry to the university service, to the time of my retirement. Every effort has been made to present them in a chronological order, as far as possible but there may be some deviations from that order. Some of these may relate to general issues and some to me and my family. They are presented in summary form for reasons of space. If circumstances permit, after this exercise steps will be taken to elaborate on matters considered necessary.

The government that came to power in 1970, appointed a commission to inquire into the activities of the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation. I was employed in this corporation before my entry into the university service. The only member of this commission was its Chairman Mr. Jayaratne, who was a lawyer. The Secretary to the commission was Mr. Abeywickrema of the Ceylon Administrative Service. A lawyer by the name of Mr. D.S. Wijesinghe assisted the Commission in leading evidence of the witnesses and in other legal matters. My friend Nandasiri Gunaratne, Secretary of the Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Samithiya (Independent Labour Union), requested me to participate when the union went before the commission. During the strike in the Fisheries Corporation in 1970, it was this union that gave me protection. Therefore, I felt obliged to accede to this request. After giving evidence it was revealed that the Chairman of the Commission, its Secretary and Legal Officer had highly appreciated my contribution.

In 1971 and 1972, the Professor and some members of the faculty contributed to the activities of the Commission appointed to study the revision of salaries of employees of

Boards and Public Corporations. The Chairman of this commission was Hon. George Rajapakse, Minister of Fisheries. All these happened after the April, 1971 insurrection. The office of the commission was located in a building on Ananda Cumaraswamy Mawatha close to Flower Road.

A colloquium and a workshop under the auspices of the George Rajapakse Commission was conducted by the Department on the basis of a proposal by a Fulbright scholar, Professor M. Ali Raza, an American of Pakistani origin, who was attached to the Department at the time. The colloquium was held at the Central Bank Auditorium and attended by high officials such as Chairmen of Boards and Corporations. It was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Hon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. A workshop on job evaluation for other employees and trade union leaders of those Boards and Corporations was conducted at the auditorium of the Ceylon Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research (CISIR). The theme of the workshop was that wages should be determined on the basis of the contribution of various employees. The workshop was conducted by Professor Ali Raza. Messrs R.A. A. Perera, Sirisena Tilakaratne, K.A. Munasinghe, Gamini Gunawardena, and A. Ekanayake who were members of the academic staff of the Department took part.

Consequent to this exercise a request was received by the Department to conduct job evaluation at Taprobane Hotel owned by the Bank of Ceylon. This task was assigned to my friend R.A.A. Perera whom I assisted. The job evaluation was conducted over a few months and a report submitted to the Chairman of the Bank of Ceylon. This exercise could be regarded as a practical project undertaken by the staff of the Department, which enabled us to acquire useful new knowledge.

## **1971 April Insurrection**

The second term of the academic year came to an end on April 5, 1971. In the evening, I was waiting for a bus outside the main gate of the university. I travelled to the university and back home by bus. The bus fare from Mirihana to Udahamulla was ten cents and then to the university another ten cents. Mr. Karunathilake, a graduate in history who later was the General Manager of the National Housing Development Authority, a neighbour of mine also joined me. Some of our students were leaving the campus in a hurry with their bag and baggage. We noticed that the environment was tense. Therefore, the two of us decided to walk home as buses were not regular on this route.

The following morning my children left home for school but returned in a short while because a curfew had been imposed. On making inquiries from neighbours who had radios, it was revealed that the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (J.V.P), (the Peoples` Liberation Front) had launched an armed struggle by attacking some Police Stations the previous night. This struggle continued for a few days in various parts of the country. Some areas had fallen under their control.

The Police Stations were not armed at the time. There were a few shotguns for demonstration but it was doubtful whether they had live bullets. The baton was the weapon in the hands of policemen. The government faced a critical situation and sought arms from

various countries. The arming of the Police Stations in this country began after this insurrection. It was revealed, that a large number of young men and women had died in this insurrection.

After a few days the Prime Minister Hon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike addressed the nation over the radio. A large number of `misguided` young men and women were taken into custody. Some buildings of universities and schools were used to detain them. The premises of the Vidyodaya University at Gangodawila was one such place. Because of this, there was no way of starting university activities even though the country had returned to normalcy. The university authorities had to search for alternative accommodation. The official residence of the Principal of Thurstan College, housed the university office. A building of Lumbini Maha Vidyalaya was obtained to conduct lectures. Therefore, university lectures were conducted in the afternoons.

A government building on the Baudhaloka Mawatha-Longden Place junction was obtained for the office and lecture rooms of the Department of Management Studies. Later some buildings of Thurstan College were obtained to conduct lectures. The university had to be operated from outside the Gangodawila premises till about October, 1972. In the meantime, the Rehabilitation Camp was gradually shifted to other places. The demand of the university students to return the campus to the university increased. Therefore, by October, 1972 the Gangodawila premises were returned to the university.

### **The Trial of Main Suspects**

Over twenty main suspects of the 1971 insurrection were charged under the Court of Criminal Justice Law. It was a common sight, for closed vehicles carrying these suspects, on days of court sittings, at the premises of the Tennis Club to go up and down in front of our office at Longdon Place.

The evidence of witnesses revealed that the infamous `five lectures` of the J.V.P. were conducted under the shade of pine trees in the open ground of Vidyodaya University. Although small groups of students were seen assembled on this ground, no one suspected that this was for any political or insurrectionary purpose. The hostel of the student monks, opposite the main gate had been used for J.V.P. discussions. Many of us have seen a person in the robes of monk called `Morawaka Bhaddiya` behaving like a thug, but the aim of this thuggery was not clear to anyone. When the United National Party (U.N.P) came to power in 1977, the accused in the JVP insurrection were released. The JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera contested the presidential election in 1982 and polled more votes than Dr. Colvin R.de Silva, veteran left politician.

The leader of the Vidyodaya student organization, Mahinda Wijesekara, a suspect of the insurrection who was released, took to democratic politics and became a cabinet minister. Many others who took part in the insurrection are now holding important positions in society. The statements of many of these reveal that they never questioned their leaders before imprisonment. But while in prison they questioned not only the `five lectures` but also many other related matters and gave up their `wrong path` and became law-abiding citizens. But the JVP again resorted to violence in the latter part of the nineteen eighties and followed a destructive path; the party has now taken to democratic politics and entered Parliament after contesting the general elections. But their popularity is at a minimal.



## **Returning to University Premises at Gangodawila**

The student organizations campaigned to get back the university premises but without a favourable response from the government until the number of detainees was reduced. By October, 1972 the security forces released the campus premises. The various units of the university located in different places in Colombo, were shifted to Gangodawila. A *shramadana* campaign by the students and other organizations, helped to clean up the whole campus. By about the end of 1972, normalcy had returned to the university.

Every year, with an increasing student population, there was a problem of water during the first two or three months of the year. This was resolved by the supply of water in bowsers. Later a large water tank was constructed and the problem solved.

## **Land Reforms**

In 1972 two important measures launched by the government of Prime Minister Hon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, had a major impact economically and politically with land reform and the Republican Constitution. Consequent to the April insurrection, the government took steps to change some of its policies. One such step was the enactment of the Land Reform Law. As a first step land over fifty acres, owned by Sri Lankans was taken over. An organization called the Land Reform Commission (LRC) was established to administer the land so taken over. The next step was to take over the land owned by foreigners and foreign companies. It was rumoured at the time, that there was a controversy within the coalition government as to which minister should be entrusted with this task. Coalition partner, the Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) wanted the taking over of plantations to be entrusted to Dr. Colvin R.de Silva who was the Minister of Plantations. But what was being taken over was land, whether they were plantations or not and therefore the Prime Minister decided, that it should be handled by Hon. Hector Kobbekaduwa, Minister of Agriculture and Lands.

Some plantations vested in the LRC, were in later years given to be managed by political supporters who ruined them by exploitation and neglect. Two such estates were the Nawanagala and Gallekelle, formerly owned by the Johnston family. There were instances of prime estate land being exchanged for barren land belonging to politicians. There had been instances of not only these exchanges but also the sale of such land, done for very low prices under the government that came to power in 1977.

## **Republican Constitution**

The Republican Constitution that came into effect on May 22, 1972 was an important political and administrative development. Under the 1947 Soulbury Constitution, there were two chambers of the legislature, called the Senate (Upper House) and the House of Representatives (Lower House). The Governor-General was the representative of the British Crown (King or Queen). It was argued that Ceylon was not a fully independent country (sovereign state). The British Privy Council was the highest court in the judicial system. Even the accused in the 1962 coup d'état could appeal to the Privy Council and be exonerated.

In view of all these shortcomings, the Coalition headed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party sought a mandate at the 1970 General Election, to form a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution. Dr. Colvin R.de Silva, M.P., served as the Minister of Constitutional Affairs of the new government. The new House of Representatives abolished the Senate. The Parliament then resolved to form itself into a Constituent Assembly. The first meeting of this Assembly, held at the *Navarangahala* (New Arts Theatre) of the Royal Primary School, symbolizing freedom from Parliament, resolved to draft a new constitution. The subsequent meetings were, of course, held at the Parliamentary building. The last meeting of the Assembly was also held at the *Navarangahala* on May 22, 1972 to finally approve the new Constitution. Mr. William Gopallawa, as Governor-General under the old Constitution, took oaths as the first President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The name of the country was changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka. Hon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, took oaths as the Prime Minister. The ministers of the Cabinet also took oaths before the new President. Thus, the link with the British Crown that had existed from 1802 came to an end and the country became an independent and sovereign nation.

### **Admission of *Podi Duwa* to School**

The year 1971 is of some importance to me for several reasons. It was in this year that *Podi Duwa* (younger daughter) was admitted to Sujatha Vidyalaya Primary Section. Although *Loku Duwa* (elder daughter) was attending Visakha Vidyalaya, *Podi Duwa* could not be admitted to it because we lived beyond the prevailing `two mile` limit. Therefore, she was admitted to Sujatha Vidyalaya which was a private school. The Principal of this school was Mrs Clara Motwani, who was a well-known teacher. The Primary Section was housed in a bungalow at *Thummulla* junction. Miss Malkanthi Ratnayake was *Podi Duwa`*s first teacher.

My daily routine was to take *Podi Duwa* from home at Wijesekera Mawatha to Thunmulla junction by route 113 bus, drop her at school and take a bus to Gangodawila-Wijerama junction to get to the university. At noon when the school was closing, I followed the same route back to take the child home, leave her there and come to university in the afternoon for lectures. After the 1971 insurrection, I went to Longden Place instead of Gangodawila following the same daily routine. This process continued till October, 1972.

### **Birth of the Fourth Child**

By about the end of 1971 Prema was pregnant once again, but I did not have to take over the domestic work as in 1965. The new baby was born on August 31, 1972 in a Caesarean operation. Why this was necessary was follows: my friend Nandasiri Gunaratne was making arrangements to find a domestic aide as Prema`s confinement was approaching. Therefore, the two of us went to my friend`s house at Mount Lavinia. On the way back to Mirihana by bus from Attidiya, there was no one to offer Prema a seat. So, she had to travel standing the whole way. In the night Prema developed delivery pains, resulting in the flow of a `watery fluid`. Therefore, she was immediately admitted to the Castle Street maternity hospital. As the condition of Prema became acute, the obstetricians decided to perform an `operation` to deliver the baby. It was successful and my second son **Varuna Kosala Ekanayake**

**(PodiPutha)** was born on **August 31, 1972**. This coincided with the birthday of *Loku Putha* so that both sons could celebrate their birthday on the same day.

**Loku Duwa** sat the G.C.E. (O.L) examination in December, 1971, passed it well and in 1973 began to study for the G.C.E. (A.L) examination. The granddaughter of *Bambaradeniye Nendamma*, who was studying at Ananda Balika Vidyalaya for the GCE (AL) examination was boarded at our house. She was a quiet girl and liked to carry the baby around whenever she was free. This affection towards *Podi Putha* may have been because she did not have a brother of her own. Due to the food shortages at the end of 1973, we could not keep her in our house. After I informed the child's mother (my cousin, *Bambaradeniye Akka*) about this problem, I learnt that the girl was boarded in a house near her school. Because of this my aunt was not happy with me, as was clear from a subsequent incident. I realized that if you agree to help anyone, any difficulties must be tolerated until the end. After a few years, this aunt began to show me the same kindness and affection as before this incident. This is *Bambaradeniye Nendamma*.

### **1973 Food Scarcities**

The Organization of Petroleum Export Countries (OPEC) increased the prices of petroleum products in 1973. Simultaneously there was a scarcity of food the world over. Therefore, Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike launched a `Food Production Campaign. People were encouraged to grow any kind of food crop in whatever available land. Strict measures were taken to control the transport of food items. Restrictions were placed on the transport of rice and paddy. Barriers were installed on motorable roads. One could not carry more than two measures of rice. If anyone wanted to transport more than this, a permit had to be obtained from the Divisional Assistant Government Agent (D.R.O). Providing rice meals in restaurants was prohibited on two days of the week.

Although this was a severe measure, people began to grow subsidiary food crops such as sweet potato, manioc, maize and so on. Because of the increase in prices, the growers derived an increased income. People whose main item of food was maize in the Meegahakiula area in Badulla district, increased the extent of land under maize cultivation because the price of a bushel of maize which was about Rs.15/= went up to about Rs.55/=. But before long there were several sinister forces sabotaging this effort.

The United National Party (UNP) led by Mr. J.R. Jayewardena accused the government of starving the people and deriding the `road barriers` as *haalpolu and mirispolu*. The supply of wheat flour by the U.S.A. under P.L.480, which was terminated after the nationalization of petroleum companies was resumed, flooding the market with wheat flour. This resulted in lower prices for maize thus discouraging the growers.

Meanwhile a crisis was created within the government resulting in the cabinet ministers of the LSSP, Dr. N.M. Perera, Minister of Finance, Dr. Colvin R.de Silva, Minister of Plantations and Constitutional Affairs, and Mr. Leslie Gunawardana, Minister of Transport, leaving the government. In 1975 protests by the opposition increased and took an aggressive turn. The U.N.P. promised to give the people eight pounds of grain each and create a righteous society (*dharmista samajayak*). For these reasons the government of Mrs. Bandaranaike became very unpopular. But if the measures launched in 1973 had continued, it would have led to a self-sufficient economy.

## My Cultivation Effort

With the launch of the food production campaign by the government, people also took an interest in this effort. It is appropriate to narrate how I participated in this movement. The incumbent of Muthiyangana Raja Maha Viharaya in Badulla at the time was Venerable Halyale Sri Sumanatissa Anunayake of the Asgiriya Chapter. There was some land belonging to Muthiyangana under the Komarika Ela scheme. My brother informed me that if I was interested a block of land could be obtained. Accordingly, on a day the Anunayake Thero was going to Komarika, four of us, my brother, two of his sons and I travelled there. The surveyor who was blocking out that land was asked to allot me a lot.

This was around October, 1973, after which I went to Komarika from time to time to make the land ready for cultivation. Water for this land was obtained from an anicut constructed across Loggal Oya. It was an old irrigation scheme. The land of Muthiyangana fell under Stage II of the scheme. At the end of the old main channel, an extension had been constructed but concrete structures had to be constructed to enable water to flow down. Water for my block of land could be obtained from the Raja Ela which was an extension beyond the old paddy fields.

The land had to be made ready for cultivation before the 1973 Maha rainy season. The first step was to construct a hut in a suitable spot on my block of land. The necessary wood items for the construction of the hut were collected from the jungle around. The roof was thatched with cadjan. The walls were also thatched with cadjan. The services of two labourers from Galaha were obtained to commence cultivation activities. The initial crop cultivated consisted of such things as soya bean, Lanka dhal, ground nut, pumpkin and brinjal. Our meals consisted of rice, Mysore dhal and dried sprats or dried fish curry for lunch and dinner. Any vegetable curry was a rarity. In the morning a labourer was sent to the bakery at Keselwatta to buy bread to be eaten with dhal curry for breakfast. One morning a labourer went to the well to fetch water but returned with a pot-full of mushrooms he found on a hay stack near the well. That day we had a sumptuous meal with mushroom curry, which was a luxury.

In order to ensure the success of our cultivation activities it was necessary for me to go to Komarika constantly. This had to be done without neglecting my work at the university. Therefore, my lectures were given in one week to cover those of the next week, which I spent at Komarika. When good relations are developed with the students, a university lecturer can exercise such flexibility.

There were several routes to use from Colombo to Komarika. It was possible to travel by train from Colombo to Badulla and then take a bus to Meegahakiula from where one could walk two miles to reach the allotment. There were four foot-paths from the main road. One was through Akurukaduwa, another from Kehelwatta through a shrub jungle to a precipitous hill slope down to a paddy field, the newly constructed main channel and then to the block of land, the third from Kongahamula and the next along the old road to Komarika village. If one travelled from Badulla by the Ketawatta bus, one would get off at Kongahamula and walk down the steep hill slope to reach the land. Another route by bus was from Colombo to Kandy and then to Meegahakiula on a Badulla bus, past the eighteen hair pin bends (*dahaata wanguwa*), Mahiyangana, Andaulpotha and Karametiya.

As there was a food scarcity at this time, I met the Manager of the Ketawatta Cooperative Retail Store and sought to solve my problem. The consumers in this area did not draw all the rice and flour rations they were entitled to, so that there was a surplus in the store. It was extremely difficult to buy milk foods in urban areas, but such items as Nespray could easily be bought from this Cooperative Store. Although a pound of rationed sugar was seventy-two cents, extra sugar was seven rupees and fifty cents. Some consumers who bought rationed sugar, sold it for five rupees a pound. Thus, this extra sugar could also be bought from such consumers. A village near Komarika called Kalugahakandura produced kitul jaggery and treacle, so that there was no shortage of sugar substitutes.

This was an opportunity for me to obtain an adequate supply of milk foods and sugar for my children, although travelling to Komarika was strenuous and time-consuming. I was aware that it was a strain on Prema to look after the children, when I was away on these trips.

During the New Year holidays in April, 1974 the whole family went to Komarika. We got off the bus at Keselwatta and walked down through the precipitous path. Prema, carrying the baby and walking along the side of the paddy field, slipped and fell down with the baby, but no harm was done. We all slept on improvised `beds` constructed out of jungle sticks and participated in harvesting the green gram crop. We walked in the scorching sun to bathe in the cool waters of Loggal Oya, about a quarter a mile away. This was a new experience for the children although it was hard. Loku Putha ran a temperature for which treatment was taken from the Meegahakiula hospital. He had to walk about two miles for this purpose and two miles back. When working on the land I had walked on some poisonous soil and developed some severe wounds on my leg. After we returned to Colombo `Jensen violet` was applied on the wounds. After about two years, on the advice of the Anunayake Thero this block of land was handed over to Gunaratne *Malli*, the son of *Heen Mama*. That was the end of my `adventure` in food production.

### **Progress of Children**

Several events of importance to my children took place around this period. *Loku Duwa* passed the G.C.E. (A.L.) examination and entered the Medical Faculty of the University of Colombo in 1976 with twenty-nine other Visakhians.

*Loku Putha* had passed the G.C.E. (O.L.) examination in 1975 and the G.C.E. (A.L.) examination in 1979. As he was devoting more on cricket at school he could not qualify for admission to university. Although *Podi Duwa* passed the Fifth Standard Scholarship Examination she could not still be admitted to Visakha Vidyalaya. We did not want to admit *Podi Putha* to a nursery although he was four years old. I was promoted Senior Lecturer on October, 1, 1976.

### **Student Movement**

In 1976 there was a radical change in the University Student Council. This council had been under the control of the Lanka Jathika Sishya Sangamaya for a long time. But a group of students who were with them, in a surprise move, submitted nominations for election to the Council and won. It was rumoured that this group was sponsored by the J.V.P. The Lanka Jathika Sishya Sangamaya did not come back to power until my retirement in 1998. The alternative group contested the election in 1976 to eliminate violence. But after their

victory, they also resorted to the same tactics and there was widespread thuggery on the campus. Towards end of the nineteen eighties violence became very acute, about which more will be said later.

### **Demise of Close Relatives**

Some of my close relatives died around this period. They were *Nawaratne Malli* (cousin), *Pallewela Nendamma* (aunt), *Sirinama Aiyya* (cousin), my mother-in-law, my elder sister (*Heen Akka*) and my mother (*Ape Amma*). Nawaratne Malli was the younger son of Pallewela Nendamma, younger brother of Sirinama Aiyya and of *Nanda Akka*, who was married to my brother. He was about one year younger to me. The two of us were not only close relations but also close friends. He was the Post Master at Hunnasgiriya and lived in a house he built at Ekkassa in Halyala. He was a committed political character. He went to Colombo for the May Day Rally in 1972 and came back to fall ill and died in a few days. He was a popular social worker and a large crowd attended his funeral. I also attended the funeral and spent a few days there. He was less than forty years old when he died.

One day when I was at Komarika in my block of land, information was received that Pallewela Nendamma had died. One of my brothers' sons Raja was also there and therefore the two of us took a bus from Meegahakiula to Mahiyangana and travelled to Madugoda on a Kandy bus. By the time we reached Madugoda, it was around 7.30 in the evening. From there we walked home two and a half miles in heavy rain. A few days later, after the funeral Sirinama Aiyya and I walked to Madugoda. I came to know that Sirinama Aiyya was a heart patient. He took a Kandy bus to go to Peradeniya while I went to Meegahakiula.

When I went to Colombo after two or three days, I was informed of the death of Sirinama Aiyya. He was serving in the Department of Agriculture at Peradeniya. I went there to participate in the funeral.

My mother-in-law (Prema's mother) died in 1975. I sent my family ahead of me to Matara. I had to give some lectures for those who were sitting the Limited Competitive Examination to enter the Administrative Service. Therefore, after the lectures, accompanied by my neighbour Mr. Weeraratne, I went to Matara. When we got there, it was around midnight and had no means of transport. Therefore, the two of us walked home three and a half miles from Matara. The funeral took place the following day.

In May, 1977 Heen Akka, my elder sister died. By the time I went to her house in Handaganawa at Minipe many of our relations had already come there. At the time of her death Heen Akka had seven children, two of whom were sons. The last child was a girl of about three years of age. None of these children were married. My brother's elder children had also come for the funeral. They were talking about the political situation in the country at the time. All of them appeared to be inclined towards the United National Party. This appeared to be the result of propaganda carried on before the General Election, against a government which was in power for seven years, and had introduced various barriers, restricting the transport of essential items of food. These discussions indicated the existing trend in the country.

## Ape Amma (My Mother)



**Nangi, Amma (seated), Akka and brother-in-law Poddalgoda at the back, 1953**

Ape Amma (my mother) died in June,1977. I last saw her at the funeral of Heen Akka. I felt that her death caused Ape Amma much pain for she told me that `our children are departing before us old parents'. After about a month I was informed of the death of my mother. At that time, we were living in a house at Raththanapitiya near Vidyodaya University. My wife and I left in the night itself to go for the funeral, leaving our children at home. Anula (my sister`s daughter) who was living with us at the time also accompanied us. We travelled on a Kandy bus and the time would have been around 2.00 a.m. and there would have been no bus to Minipe at this hour. Therefore, we got down off at Polgahamulla and went to Gunatilake Malli`s house at Uda Iriyagama. Accompanied by Gunatilake Malli, we left by about 5.a.m. and went to Kandy to take a Minipe bus. By the time we reached the funeral house it was around 9.30a.m.

Arrangements had already been finalized for the burial the same afternoon. Ape Amma's younger brother, Venerable Halyale Sri Sumanatissa, the Principal of the Asgiri Mahavihara Pirivena and the Anunayake of the Asgiriya Chapter of the SiyamNikaya, also attended the funeral. The funeral itself was a simple ceremony. I went to Minipe on a later date for the alms giving. Although these final rites were over, I cannot sweep away my memories of my mother. The kindness and affection I received from my mother, not only in my young days but also after I was grownup often come to mind.

Ape Amma was eighty-three years old when she died. Although she had not received any school education, she had a vast knowledge of life through experience and her advice was beneficial to us. My earliest memory of her was the trip home from Eladamporuwa *hena*. Another incident was the injury caused to my right rib, in a fall when returning from a *hena* in the village boundary. Ape Amma carried me to the Madugoda hospital for treatment. One evening having played with the village children, when I came home after dusk, she was waiting for me with a fire brand (*ginipenella*) and threatened to burn my legs if I got late again. Thereafter I made it a point to come home on time.

I grew up in the company of Ape Amma till I was about twelve years of age. When I could read books, she got me to read for her *Yasodharawatha* and *Dhatuvistharaya* at bedtime. Ape Amma could sing these verses by heart. She was also adept at singing *nelumkavi* on paddy transplanting days.

Appachchi went to Minipe after he received land there but *Ape Amma* remained in the village for several reasons. She was running the 'milk feeding centre' in the village which gave the village children a free cup of milk in the morning. The main reason for her to run this centre was to feed her granddaughter, whose mother (*Kalawewe Akka*) had died when the baby was about twenty days old. Getting our paddy fields cultivated and looking after the village house and property may also have been some other reasons. During my school holidays I came home to my mother. When the colonist cottage at Minipe was ready and when *Ape Amma* could no longer remain alone with a girl, she also went to Minipe. Thereafter I also went to Minipe during my school holidays.

After the death of *Appachchi*, the paddy field and the highland at Minipe were partitioned and given to two other children keeping one block for her granddaughter under her care. She constructed a small house (hut) and lived in it with the granddaughter. Whenever I went to Minipe, I invited her to come and live with me but she was reluctant to do so until the granddaughter was given in marriage. Once when I was living at Udahamulla she came to get her eyes examined and spent two or three weeks with me. Again, when at Lewella she spent a few weeks with us. When we were at Wijesekera Mawatha, she spent three months with us. This time she came to live with us for life but because she had to be confined to her room or to the garden, she had no one besides us and was not even free to take a bath as she pleased. She told me that she wanted to go back. It was clear that she wanted to return to her familiar environment and live with her granddaughter. She lived in this environment until her death. She would have been dependent on others during the last one or two months of her life. Until then she wanted to be on her own.



## **Political Environment after 1977**

Several major political changes took place in 1977. The government of Hon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, which was in power till then was defeated at the General Elections. The U.N.P. under the leadership of Mr. J.R. Jayewardena won five-sixths of the seats in Parliament. The S.L.F.P. got only about eight seats. Even Dr. N.M. Perera of the L.S.S.P. and Mr. Pieter Keuneman of the C.P. who were in Parliament from 1947 were defeated.

The Jayewardena Government which came to power to establish a `righteous` society, allowed the post-election violence to continue, saying that the police were given a week`s `holiday`. The T.U.L.F. became the main Opposition party in Parliament. The declared policy of that Party was the establishment of an `Eelam State`. This is how the foundation was laid for subsequent terrorism. The open economic policy of the U.N.P. strengthened Tamil communal politics. This was made clear at the 1982 Presidential Election.

The J.R. Jayewardene government amended the 1972 Constitution and established an executive presidential system. The Prime Minister elected by the people`s vote in 1977 became the Executive President. After 1982, a Presidential Election was held. The two main contestants at this election were Mr. J.R. Jayewardena and Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa, who was the Minister of Agriculture and Lands of the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government. The main beneficiaries of the food production campaign launched during his time were the farmers of the North. They largely voted for Mr. Kobbekaduwa. The Tamil candidate Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam did not get much support from the Jaffna people.

President J.R. Jayewardene, who won the Presidential Election in 1982, held a referendum to extend the life of the Parliament elected in 1977. Therefore, the General Election that was due in July, 1983 was not held. This was an obstacle to the political aspirations of youth of the south as well as the north. Therefore, they resorted to various other means of struggle. The 1983 `Black July` may have been one aspect of this frustration, although it came out in a different form. How this event affected us will be dealt with separately. But it is necessary to go back to 1977.

## **First Sabbatical Leave (The Netherlands)**

University academics were eligible for one year`s sabbatical leave after serving continuously for seven years. Therefore, I was entitled to one year`s sabbatical leave with full pay from September 30, 1977. It is necessary to engage in studies or research in a foreign institution to spend the leave fruitfully. Now, sabbatical leave can be spent even within the country. When I was looking for a foreign institution to spend my leave, Mr. P.A.S. Dahanayake, who was a staff officer of the Central Bank and was at the time serving as a Deputy Director of the Foreign Aid Department, gave me a clue.

Mr. Dahanayake was a graduate of our university who had participated in the 1964 Convocation with us and joined the Central Bank. In 1969, he participated in our discussions on preparing for postgraduate examinations. Therefore, there was some acquaintanceship among us. When he was the Deputy Director of Foreign Aid, he informed me of a scheme of

scholarships offered by the Netherlands government. It was revealed that the Institute of Social Studies (I.S.S.) in The Hague had launched a 15-month master's degree programme. A formal application through normal channels was made for admission to this programme.

The government of Netherlands offered scholarships for qualified candidates selected by these institutes. I was informed that I was selected for the programme and that I would be awarded a scholarship. The Dean of our Faculty at the time was Senior Lecturer Mr. K.A. Munasinghe, who was at the I.S.S. in 1976 following a Diploma programme. I wrote to two people in the Netherlands, after I was selected for the Master's programme. One was Mr. Wasanth Moharir, a Lecturer at the I.S.S. He was of Indian origin and was always helpful to Sri Lankans. What I wanted to find out from him was the most appropriate programme of studies for me. I received a reply within a short time.

The other letter was to Mrs. Best, in whose house Mr. Munasinghe was lodging while at The Hague. The purpose was to ask her whether she could accommodate me, when I came to the Netherlands. She replied to say, that there were already two Sri Lankans in one of her rooms upstairs and that the attic was available to accommodate me.

Next, I had to get the necessary approval from various authorities to travel abroad. Sabbatical leave was approved by the university. The Prime Minister's approval was necessary which caused some delay as there was a change of government. Hon. J.R. Jayewardena was the new Prime Minister and his Secretary was Mr. Menikdiwela. I went to the Prime Minister's Office to find out the situation. While there, I learnt that a Lecturer of the Katubedda Campus was also awaiting the P. M's approval. In a few days this approval was received.

The next step was to obtain visas to enter the Netherlands and an airline ticket to travel to The Hague. An application for the visa was submitted to the Netherlands Consul General. The visa was stamped in my passport. The airline ticket was obtained from the Colombo office of K.L.M. This ticket provided for travel by Pakistan International Airline (P.I.A) to Karachchi and from there to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport in a K.L.M. flight.

Now, I had to collect clothes and other things necessary for the trip. A travel bag and a pair of flannel trousers were obtained from Mr. Munasinghe. Another pair of trousers and two shirts were tailored at Hewavitharane Tailoring Mart at Gam Sabha Junction. I already had a suit tailored in 1964 at the same tailoring mart. A woolen overcoat was bought for about Rs.150/= from Salusala at Jawatta Road. There was an import and sale of ['bail'] clothes prevalent at that time. These were second hand clothes and therefore did not cost much. As there was a shortage of trouser and coat material, Salusala also imported ['bail'] clothes.

Everything was now ready for me to travel abroad. My friend Mr. W.M. Jayaratne, a member of our academic staff who was living at Katunayake close to the airport, had invited me for dinner on the day I was travelling. Accordingly, accompanied by Prema and children as well as a few other friends such as Mr. Munasinghe and Mr. R.A.A. Perera, I had dinner on my way to the airport. My friend Mr. W.M. Abeyratne Bandara provided transport. After dinner all of us went to the airport. After bidding farewell to all of them, from then on, I had to do things on my own.

My bags were opened for inspection by Customs Officials. After that I went to the 'check-in' counter at which the bags were handed over for transmission to the airplane and a boarding

pass obtained. Then I proceeded to the Emigration counter, the passport was handed over to check whether the passenger had valid visas after which the 'Departed' stamp was impressed on the passport. Several 'forms' had to be filled in for all these items. Although this may be a simple matter for regular passengers, for a first-timer a novice, answering even a simple question can be problematic.

After all these formalities, one goes to the departure lounge. When it was time to board the plane, a ground hostess inspects the boarding pass, and gives the counterfoil to the passenger. There were no buses at that time for passengers to go up to the plane and therefore, they walked to the plane on the tarmac. Inside the plane, the seat assigned had to be located and then the hand luggage was stacked on to the overhead locker. The assistance of a cabin hostess can be sought, if necessary.

I travelled to Karachi Airport in Pakistan in a P.I.A. flight and the air hostesses were Pakistanis. What was common knowledge for regular passengers was a new experience to me. When the door of the plane was closed, I felt a complete loneliness departing from all my near and dear ones, causing a drop or two of tears to fall.

I left on this trip on the night of September 16, 1977. The flight took about four hours to arrive at the Karachi Airport. Nearly fourteen hours had to be spent in Karachi. Someone drove a few of us in a car to the Mehran Hotel. I was given a room in which I rested for a few hours and at about 9.a.m. set out to get a feel of the environment. It was a Muslim holiday and therefore most of the shops were closed. The Pakistanis who met on the way embraced each other with the greeting of 'Mubarak eid'. At lunch in the hotel restaurant, I tried to enter into a conversation with a young man who appeared to be a Sri Lankan. But he was very reluctant to enter into any conversation, telling me only that he was a Sri Lankan Tamil travelling to Lebanon. Perhaps it would have been for arms training.

On the night of September 17, I was driven from Mehran Hotel to the Karachi Airport. The KLM Agent inquired as to what had happened to my travel bag and I told him that I had not collected it the previous night. He went with me to the left luggage area and we picked up my bag after which he told me that there was all possibility of losing my bag. After that I went to the 'check in' counter, handed over my luggage, obtained the boarding pass and boarded the plane at the appointed time. The plane was a wide-bodied D.C.10, owned by the Netherlands Airline K.L.M. There were about eight seats across the cabin. When the plane landed at the Schiphol Airport the following morning, the time was around seven o'clock.

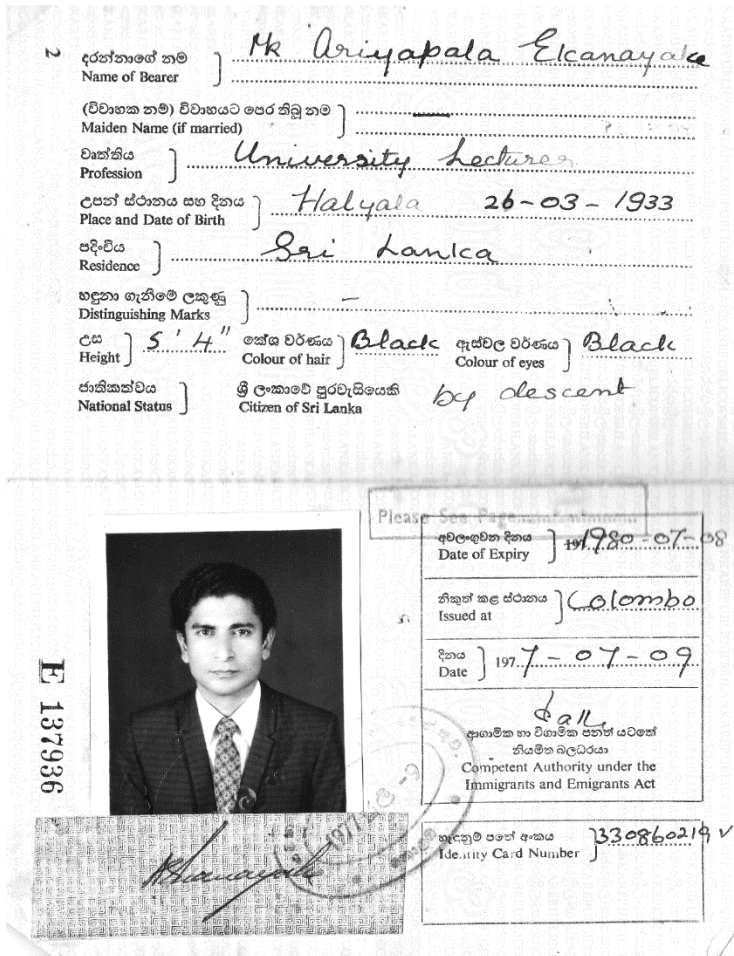
### **In the Netherlands**

After collecting my baggage, I went to the Immigration counter to finalize the formalities and as there was no customs check, went out to the open lobby outside. There I went to a bank, converted into Dutch currency, the thirty pounds sterling that I was permitted to take, and then took a bus to The Hague. There was a regular bus service from the Amsterdam Airport to several other cities. The Hague is the capital of Netherlands and I had to get to the Central Station there from where I took a taxi to No.109, Weisenbruckstraat, the home of Mrs. A.H. Best.

Mrs. Best greeted me warmly and conducted me to a small room upstairs. There was a bed, a small table and a chair, and an almirah. There was a gas heater which could be turned on

during the winter. Outside the room in the passage there was a wash basin. After depositing my baggage in the room and taking a wash, I went down to the lower floor.

I was told that two Sri Lankans were occupying a room on the first floor. They had gone out at the time. Our kitchen, bathing enclosure and toilet were also on that floor. After these were shown to me, I bought some bread and a jar of margarine from a grocery store opposite our boarding house.



**The First Passport (1977)**

After that I walked about one and a half miles to go to Wittebrugh, the building in which the I.S.S. was housed. The officer responsible for arranging for the accommodation of new arrivals was on duty, as there were many foreigners coming on that day. He was a person who had visited Sri Lanka. When I told him that I had boarding facilities, he told me that he knew about Mrs. Best's house.

I could travel to the I.S.S by bus or tram car. When I walked down Wisenbrukstraat and another street, I would reach the tram car halt to travel to Wittebrugh tram car station, from where it was a short walk over the bridge and across the street to the I.S.S. The bus

route was a short walk, to the bus halt at Wassennar`sweg from where you could go to the `Centrum` and then take another bus to the halt outside the I.S.S. The cheapest was to walk to the Institute, which was what I did very often.

When I returned home the first day, one Sri Lankan living in our boarding house had also come home. He was Mr. Keerthi Senaratne, a Development Officer of the Ministry of Industries, who had come to the R.V.B. at Delft for training. It was clear that he was a person from Matara. In a day or two the other Sri Lankan Mr. Ratnayake also came home. He was an officer of the Industrial Development Board, who had also come for training at the R.V.B. He was from Kandy.

The three of us went Dutch, sharing our dinner bill, but breakfast and lunch was on our own. We bought the necessary provisions from Connemara popular supermarket with low prices or from the week-end open market at Hobbemaplein. One example of cheap items we bought at Conmar was broken rice for one guilder or less whereas unbroken rice was about nine guilders per kilo. Red lentils which were a scarce item in Sri Lanka at that time, were about three guilders per kilo. A five-kilo bag of potatoes cost about one guilder and a kilo of big onions, also about one guilder. A large cauliflower was one guilder at the open market. The three of us went to the open market, walking about two miles each way. We also walked the distance up and down to Conmar.

The monthly expenditure for each of us for dinner was about seventy-five guilders. Breakfast and lunch were on our own and consisted mainly of bread and margarine. Each of us had a glass of milk in the morning. We had also taken some condiments from Sri Lanka and therefore there was no expenditure for spices. We also had a supply of own tea leaves. A small payment had to be made for the use of gas. My room rent was 190 guilders per month. Not more than four hundred guilders a month was spent on all these items. A guilder at that time was about Rs.4.90.

The following day when we went to the Institute, the new arrivals who had been awarded scholarships, were taken to the Foreign Aid Department for briefing and for the first month`s allowance which was 1200 guilders. A voucher was sent for subsequent monthly allowances, which could be encashed at the nearest Post Office. A savings account was opened at a branch of the Paribus Bank and about 800 guilders were deposited in the account monthly. The main aim was to save as much as possible. Because of this the various opportunities to travel about in Europe were not availed of. I went only on trips financed by the Institute or the NUFFIC.

### **Institute of Social Studies (I.S.S)**

There were several institutions which were financed by the Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation (**NUFFIC**). One of them was the Institute of Social Studies (I.S.S), to which I gained admission. The head of the institute was the Rector and there was a Dean of Studies. There was an office of student affairs. From about 1952, the I.S.S. had been conducting Diploma programmes of about six months` duration and also Master`s programmes of ten months` duration. Students from various countries the world over, were admitted to these programmes. They were mainly from developing countries.

In 1977, a fifteen-month Master's degree programme was launched. I was admitted to this programme. At the beginning it was largely experimental. The students had the freedom to

suggest a field of studies relevant to them. I wanted a programme based on Public Administration/Development Administration. Three young university lecturers from Liberia, Zambia and Uganda also wanted such a programme. Therefore, the four of us read several courses together. Several subjects were read with students of other groups. Maxwell Poe from Liberia became my closest friend.



**1978, in front of I.S.S - Sivananthan, Lalitha Dissanayaka, Wickramanayaka, Ekanayake, Mather and others, in the snow**

My teachers were Michael Faltas, Van Neuwenhuize, Raymond Apthorpe, Ken Post, Veracruizer, Kester and Kraak. Mr. Michel Faltas was my academic adviser, as well as supervisor of my dissertation, with whom I developed a close association. Mr. Faltas was an Austrian who had served in various countries and was like a father to me. Mr. Wasanth Moharir was a teacher who did not teach me any specific subject but took me out on various excursions that he organized for Diploma students in Development Administration. On one such trip, we spent two or three days in an abandoned coal mine area in South Limburgh. On another occasion, he took me to the Amsterdam University to witness an Ethiopian friend of his, defending his PhD thesis. For me this was a novel experience. Both Mr. Moharir and Mr. Faltas invited me and one or two others to dinner in their homes.

In order to resolve some of the shortcomings in the programmes of studies, about thirty participants accompanied by some academic staff members, were taken to a resort in the Arnheim area to discuss the problems of the programme. This helped the participants to establish a much-improved programme of studies relevant to them. Arnheim was a place where the Dutch Army and the Nazi Army were locked in a fierce battle during the Second World War.

The knowledge and experience I had gained from the lecturers, the subjects I studied and the field trips would undoubtedly have been enhanced by interaction with participants from various countries. There were participants from Asia, Africa and Latin America. I had the opportunity of meeting and making friends with a large number of people from Argentina, Brazil, Columbia, Guyana and Peru of Latin America; Liberia, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe), Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia of Africa; Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Philippines of Asia. Not even hundreds of books read during one life time, can give such wide knowledge and experience.

### **People of African Countries**

Most African people have been Christianized and ape the West. But at the same time these Western Christian forces had also helped to develop democratic trends in many of these countries. The independence struggles in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia were led by Westernized Christians. Southern Rhodesia after independence was called Zimbabwe. Its leader Robert Mugabe however much he was despised by Westerners appeared to be still popular among his people. Although there were allegations of election rigging, no leader can be in power without the support of the people. Countries such as Tanzania attempted to develop a local brand of socialism. Although there was not much Western influence, Tanzanian leaders appeared to be careful not to antagonize the Western forces.

There was Dutch dominance in South Africa. Britain also had occupied some parts of South Africa. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was an armed conflict between the people of Dutch origin and those of British origin called the `Boer War. Winston Churchill had fought in this war. The apartheid regime under which the indigenous people (blacks) were suppressed was run by the Boers of Dutch origin. Nelson Mandela waged his struggle against apartheid.

**This was the last Page translated by Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake, in the morning, of the day he passed away 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2014. The rest of the book was translated by Mr Edmond Jayasooriya.**

### **People of Latin America**

The Latin American countries were entirely under Spanish influence. Brazil was a colony under Portugal. Even in those countries, there were public uprisings in various forms. Acquaintance with these countries helped me understand Asian countries even better. One day while I was talking to a Sinhalese, I “jokingly” asked a Bengalese, who was nearby, whether he could understand what we spoke. He said he understood many Sinhala words.

In certain Latin American countries, the main food crops were maize and banana. In other countries, cane farming was done on a large scale. Rubber was grown in Brazil. The popular food in African countries was manioc (flour) and maize. On the Nile river basin, paddy and

maize were grown. Apparently, Europeans invaded African countries because of the mineral resources in those countries. Diamond and gold were available in plenty in Congo and South Africa. Western African countries were conquered for their farmlands by Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany.



**In the Netherlands**



**In the Netherlands, Trip to South Limberg in front of an ancient palace in Belgium  
With Emel of Turkey, Lalitha from Srilanka and Marikon from Philippines**





**With Maxwell Po from Liberia at the back, a Zambian and a Nigerian. who is in the middle?**

**Maastricht 1978**



**Inside a library at a church in Kerkrade, South Limburg**



**With Avan, a Parkistani friend in Arnhem 1978**

The Netherlands held under its sway the East Indies and Dutch Guyana of South America. With the end of the Second World War, the East Indies became independent under President Sukarno and came to be known as Indonesia. Dutch Guyana became free under the name of Surinam. Spices were grown in Indonesia and cane in Surinam. People brought from India to work in those plantations became Surinam citizens. Their language was Hindi. Groups of people from Indonesia and Surinam were resident in the Netherlands. They have brought with them their own food, etc. to the Netherlands. There were Indonesian restaurants in the Netherlands selling food known by Indonesian names. Yams, jackfruit, etc. were regularly brought from Surinam and sold at weekend fairs. Vegetables such as *kiri ala*, sweet potatoes, *polos*, manioc, brinjals, and tender pumpkin leaves were available in the Hobbemaplein open fair in The Hague. Cassettes of Hindi film songs were available in Surinam shops. I bought a few cassettes of Lata Mangeskar's songs.

I met a number of Sri Lankans in the Netherlands. At the ISS, I met Sivanandan, Lalita Dissanayaka, Sunil Adihetti and Saroja Adihetti. They too were following the Diploma programme there. I had known Wickramasinghe and Jayamaha of the Central Bank earlier as undergraduates of our university. I met Neville Karunatilaka, Batty Weerakoon, and

Susantha Gunatillaka, who had come for short-term seminars in The Hague. To build mutual rapport among us, we held dinners from time to time in our lodgings. Our practice was to serve at least one meal of rice and curry to those who had come even for a short time.

The Director of the Nuffic Institute, Mr Evert Jongens had a special bond with Sri Lankans as patron of the Netherlands-Sri Lankan Alumni Association. He visited Sri Lanka at least once a year. A relationship had been established between Velsen, a city in the Netherlands, with Galle. This was probably because of the Dutch fortress in Galle. Considerable aid was given by the city of Velsen to the Galle region.

Once I visited a Sri Lankan exhibition in the city of Velsen, sponsored by the Nuffic Institute, where I was shown a map of Sri Lanka by the Deputy Director of Nuffic, who asked me to show him the regions where the Tamils live. Then I asked him which Tamils he meant. As there was no response, I explained to him, that, that there were mainly three groups of Tamils -Jaffna Tamils, Batticaloa Tamils and Estate Tamils. I did not tell him about the Tamils who live in Sinhalese areas. What I understood from his query was, the extent to which propaganda had been carried out in European countries by Tamil politicians.

Western Europeans supported the struggles of those referred to as “minorities” in various countries. In support of the liberation struggle of the African National Congress, against the oppressive activities of the African rulers connected to the Netherlands, the government and the people of the Netherlands supported Nelson Mandela’s movement and gave refuge to the liberation fighters. Even the Tamil terrorists in our own country, were provided refuge by Western Europe considering them as liberation fighters. They thought that it was their obligation to help in the struggles launched by the minorities.

We also met Sri Lankans who had gone for training at the International Hydrology Engineering Institute (I.H.E.) and the Business Management Institute (R.V.B.) in the city of Delft. Some of them were Dayantha Wijesekera, Dayaratna, Fonseka, Roy Jayasinghe and Ranasinghe. Once, a Sri Lanka Night was held in the city of Delft and those present were treated to Sri Lankan food and music. I too contributed towards it.

After Ratnayaka and Senaratna returned to Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe and Dayaratna came to our boarding house. Later, Mr Roy Jayasinghe joined them. Finally, my friend Mr R.A.A. Perera arrived and lodged in a big room with Mr Roy Jayasinghe. When Roy Jayasinghe left, I gave Mr R.A.A. Perera my room and went to the big room below. This was in December 1978 because in that month, my wife Prema came to the Netherlands.

It would be a lapse on my part if I did not mention about a Sri Lankan couple and another person I met in the Netherlands. The Perera couple who lived near the city of Rotterdam was a very likeable and pleasant pair. I do not now remember their first names. Let us call the gentleman “Edward”, Mrs Perera worked in a private institution in The Hague. They travelled daily in their car from Rotterdam to The Hague. Mr Edward too worked in an institution in The Hague. Once they invited Lalita Dissanayaka, Sivanandan, the Mather couple and me to lunch and we went to Rotterdam. That day Mr Susantha Gunatillaka was present with us and we took him also with us. We were given a delicious lunch. I met this couple several times when I met Sri Lankans.



**Ekanayake, Roy Jayasinghe and ParNAVithana**

**34 years need to be added to the age of these children (1978)**

In the Hague, I met another character who was poles apart from this couple. He had gone to The Netherlands and was a “parasite” just idling his days away. I met him on one occasion when Sri Lankans gathered at the ISS Institute. He pretended that he was a high society man, asked for my address, and came to our boarding house one day. Saying that he had not had a good meal for a long time, he enjoyed a meal with us. He came back in about a week. From information received from various sources, we were aware by then that he was an “idle good-for-nothing.” I told him not to come again and sent him away. We never met him again.

From September 1977, the year I went to the ISS, until about the end of June 1978 I was engaged in studying various subjects. Short holidays were given during Christmas and Easter during which most participants went on tours to European countries, but we Sri Lankans did not spend money on them.

On one or two occasions, I fell ill. One Thursday evening I got a severe chest pain, but I did not take any treatment; I only rested for a couple of days in my room. Later, Mrs Best made an appointment for me with a doctor of Indonesian origin. He gave me some medicine and told me that there was no reason to worry. On another occasion, I got a severe headache

that persisted for two days. When I was washing my face there was severe bleeding from my nose. When that was over, the headache too stopped. I realised that some people in cold climates have this problem. I have seen my teacher Prof. Raymond Apthorpe in his room with a bundle of tissues tucked into his nose to stop bleeding. He asked me not to worry about it.

After the lectures ended, I had to write a dissertation. My supervisor was Mr Michael Faltas. I wanted to do a research study on the Public Administration programme in our University and make recommendations for its improvement. I read various books, collected data and built a theoretical background. Mr Faltas advised me, that however many books remain to be read, I must stop at some point, and begin to write the dissertation based on the data collected. I showed him drafts of the dissertation from time to time and got his advice. My target was to finish the dissertation before Prema came to the Netherlands. I got permission to type the manuscript myself instead of getting it done by somebody else. I bought a small typewriter for the purpose. As I got a fee for typing, it covered the money I spent on the typewriter, which was a saving for me.

After I finished the degree programme and the dissertation, I came to know that I had passed but I received official confirmation only in May 1979 five months after my return to Sri Lanka. The official certificate indicated that the degree of Master of Development Studies had been awarded to me.

### **The Hague**

As a little child, I had heard the story of a Dutch child who tried to prevent the collapse of a reinforcement of earth. I think this story is relevant to The Hague. The Hague is the capital of the Netherlands. Most areas there are located below sea level. When you go from the area where the ISS is located towards the beach, it is like climbing a hill slope. The SCHEVINGEN beach had been built by reclaiming the sea. About fifty or sixty feet of the beach had been reclaimed and the tide of the sea towards the city had been stopped. If the area so reclaimed is damaged in some place, there is the possibility of the city being inundated. Therefore, that story I had heard as a child was after all not a fairy tale.

The ancient roads of The Hague are still there, paved with stones like bricks. The system had been adopted even in the case of new roads. It seems to suit the sand floor well. Even the pavements are paved with these stones. Therefore, it is easy to repair them if they are damaged. It is not necessary to break up a large area like a cemented floor. A small area can be repaired quite well.

Close to Witterburg in The Hague, a marvellous city had been created named Madurodam consisting of quite small buildings. In this area of about five acres, hills have been created and a complex of micro buildings similar to ancient castles and churches has been built on its lanes. It is an ideal place to relax. If you have the time, you can walk around the place studying its buildings.

After I left for the Netherlands on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1977, my wife Prema looked after our children and managed the affairs of the home alone. She had never borne such difficulties before. At the end of 1973, she had to occasionally attend to the household chores alone for about a week, but I was there to help. When I went to the Netherlands, Podi Putha was five years of age and reached school-going age. Even that burden was borne by Prema. After

about three months of toil, Podi Putha was admitted to Nalanda Vidyalaya with the help of the Principal Mr Dharma Gunasinghe. My friend Mr K.A. Munasinghe too intervened. Podi Putha went to school in the morning with Loku Putha. Prema went to the school in the afternoon to pick him up. While doing so, she took lunch for Loku Duwa, who entered the Medical Faculty in 1976.

### **Prema's arrival in the Netherlands**

When the husband goes abroad on sabbatical, there were facilities for the wife to join him. However, my wife could not accompany me, because she had to look after our children. Therefore, I arranged for Prema to come to the Netherlands during the school holidays in December 1978. She came from Colombo to Amsterdam alone. I was present at the Amsterdam Airport. Even long after the plane landed, Prema did not come out of the passenger lobby and I therefore wondered whether she had not come on that flight. Then an official came to me and showing Prema's air ticket, asked me whether I was waiting for her. He took me along with him, to the Emigration and Immigration desk. Prema was seated in the room. As she was not quite conversant with a foreign language and was unable to answer some questions of the officials, she had been detained there. However, as she had said, that she had come to meet her husband, an official had come in search of me. Prema did not appear to be nervous. Afterwards we both went to The Hague and then to my boarding house. Mrs Best received Prema with open arms.

We spent the month of December in The Hague, until my studies were over. I went to some places of interest there with Prema often on foot. Before coming back to Sri Lanka, I thought of visiting London. So, I wrote to Ranjith Malli, who was working there and requested that accommodation for us be arranged (Ranjith Malli was a son of an uncle of Prema's). Before we left The Hague, several things happened.

When I left for the Netherlands, I took only a limited amount of clothes. On the first day of my arrival itself, I realised that the trousers and coat I wore were certainly out of date. So, I had to buy a couple of coats from there. I could not afford new clothes. Some of my Sri Lankan friends had told me, about a small shop belonging to a Christian organisation in Westeinde in The Hague that sells old clothes. I went there and bought some of the clothes I needed. Although they were used clothes, the women who ran the shop had cleaned them and displayed them in clothes hangers in an orderly manner. I could buy them at a nominal price. Even close to returning to Sri Lanka, I went there and bought two suits and a coat.

As at the time I went to the Netherlands, there was a dearth of clothes in Sri Lanka, I began to collect clothes for Prema and the children little by little. When clothes were on sale in shops such as Van D. Hemas, I bought suitable clothes for those in my family and me. You could buy clothes discarded by shops at the Hobbemaplane Fair. They were new but cheap. I bought not only clothes, but also a radio and a rice cooker. I went with Mrs Best and bought a Tokyo Beaver radio cassette newly introduced into the market at a sale. As all of it was too heavy to bring on the airplane with us, we sent some of it by parcel post. We could send parcels up to twenty kilos in weight. This was very cheap. I sent a couple of such parcels. The travelling bag I took with me to the Netherlands, was also sent by post. So, I bought two new suit cases at reasonable prices, but they were not very strong.

## The London trip

After everything was over, Prema and I set off to London from The Hague on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1978 on a NLM flight from Rotterdam. We went to Rotterdam from The Hague by train. As planned earlier, when we reached Heathrow Air Port, London, we met Ranjith Malli. We went by tube up to Hounslow and then to our lodging a short distance away, on foot. The house belonged to a person of Indian origin. Ranjith Malli's brother Lal Samarakoon and his wife lodged in one room of the house. Prema and I got the room next to it. There were no heating facilities. It being winter, we two stayed there with much difficulty. We had to pay fourteen pounds a week.

Mr Percy Abeysekera, an uncle of Sriyamali, a classmate of Loku Duwa's at Mahamaya College, was living close to our lodging. When we were returning from a dinner at their place one day, we saw snowflakes frozen into ice. Walking on it was slippery. Prema slipped and fell down twice. Fortunately, nothing serious happened. Afterwards she was quite reluctant to walk in the open air. On another day, Mr Piyasena Samarakoon, a son of Prema's Loku Mama (uncle) invited us to dinner at his home. Piyasena was a ground engineer at the British Airways. As we went in Piyasena's car, no mishap happened to Prema. Apart from that, Prema did not even join to go shopping. She preferred to remain in the room alone until I returned from shopping.

I went to South Hall Street in London, where there were Indian shops and bought a few sarees. From a shop where Lal's wife worked, I bought an electric portable sewing machine. It could be carried by hand like a suitcase but was rather heavy. I went to several shops in Oxford Street, more to look at goods than to buy them. Prema too joined me. When we were talking and looking at the clothes in one shop, two others were watching us quite interestedly, but they did not speak. That is the nature of the Sinhalese in London. It is said that they did not like to socialize and talk as a precaution against parasites!

When we went to Heathrow Air Port early in the morning on 04<sup>th</sup> January 1979, to return to Sri Lanka and handed over our baggage we were asked to pay 103 pounds, as they exceeded the prescribed weight. I did not have so much money with me. So, we removed our travelling bags, spoke to Mr Percy Abeysekera on the phone and told him about our problem. He too had been serving in British Airways. He replied that he would come to the airport as soon as possible and so we waited for him. In the meantime, when the officials in the check-in counter left, a KLM agent came to me and asked me whether I did not have any money on me. When I replied him in the negative, he put both travelling bags on the conveyor belt and despatched them. He put two air tickets in my hand and asked me to board the plane soon. By this time, Mr Percy Abeysekera had come. We told him that the problem had been resolved, thanked him, and went to the upper floor to board the plane. An official in the passenger lobby asked us to go to the plane soon as it was past departure time. As the tarmac was heavily covered with snow on that day, the flights were delayed. We walked a long distance along the corridor and reached the entrance to the plane, the air hostesses there checked our tickets and asked the flight attendant to keep the door open for us. No sooner than we boarded the plane, the door was closed. We were the last to board the plane. As there was a delay of one hour, we could go on the same plane to Amsterdam. It was then about 11 a.m. in Amsterdam. The KLM flight to Colombo was at 1.00 p.m. So, there was enough time.

A short distance from Heathrow, the sky turned quite clear. We were flying over several European countries, including Yugoslavia. The plane was delayed for a long time at the Athens Airport. The planes landing and taking off as evening fell was a lovely spectacle. On one side of the Athens Airport was the sea and on the other, a range of hills. Planes landed and took off from the other two sides. It was night when our plane took off. After flying for a number of hours, it landed again at Karachchi. Finally, when it landed at the Colombo Air Port it may have been about 7 a.m. on 05th January 1979.

### **Returning to Sri Lanka**

When we collected our bags, opened them for customs officers to check and came out into the open, Loku Putha, Podi Putha and others were eagerly awaiting our arrival. The news about the snowfall in the London Air Port had also reached their ears. So, until they saw us, they had wondered whether we would take that flight. My Podi Putha and I were delighted to see each other after fifteen months. When I left Sri Lanka, he was suffering from a throat inflammation and Prema told me that it disappeared on its own on my return.

We were taken to our home at Raththanapitiya in my friend Mr Abeyratna Bandara's car. We had got Merlin Akka to be in charge of our house during Prema's absence. It was evident that she had looked after the children well. Munasinghe, R.A. Perera, Ariyaratna and the new friend Hector Perera were present at home. It was a joyful day for all of us.

A letter written by our four children after Prema arrived in the Netherlands is still with me. It is probably the first letter that our children had written to us because we had never lived away from them before. Podi Duwa had sent a picture with birthday wishes to her mother. There was also a wish: 'May you be happy as all your hopes have been fulfilled as you wished'. Podi Putha had sent a picture with birthday wishes and a brief letter of a few sentences written in pencil. On the rear side of the page was a picture of the airplane in which his mother travelled. There was a sentence asking me to bring many toys. Loku Putha's letter was descriptive. It contained a brief account of what they did at the airport and how they went back home and about Malli. Loku Putha's letter had mentioned that Malli was behaving well but Loku Duwa in her letter mentioned: 'He is still naughty. All of a sudden, he dashes things on the ground. And he throws stones at us.' Both had said that Podi Putha got Merlin Aunty to tell him stories. Loku Duwa had written a lot about sari jacket material, etc. I think they were among the needs of a young woman of twenty-one years. On our return, we bought a model of a Concorde airplane and several matchbox cars bought in London for Podi Putha. We brought clothes and other things for the rest. However, I am not sure whether their aspirations were met.



## **Chapter VIII**

### **The University Service – The Second Twelve Years**

#### **Service at the Sri Jayewardenepura University**

I obtained my sabbatical leave from the Vidyodaya Campus of the Sri Lanka University. The Dean of the Faculty was Prof. Tuley de Silva. After my leave, I reported back for duty at the Sri Jayewardenepura University on 06<sup>th</sup> January 1979. Its Vice Chancellor was Prof. K.A. Jinadasa Perera, Head of the Management Faculty was Mr K.A. Munasinghe and Dean of Management Studies and Commerce was Mr Hema Wijewardena.

I made a request that a separate department of Public Administration be established, based on the studies I had done at the I.S.S. Institute in The Hague. Accordingly, on 05<sup>th</sup> May 1980, the Management Department was divided into two departments and the Public Administration Department created. I was appointed its Head. I give below various changes that occurred in my life afterwards.

From the money I saved in the Netherlands, I obtained a bank draft for 2000 pounds. With that money I got down two used cars from Japan through the Hideki Company -one a Toyota Corolla T-20 and the other a Datsun Nissan Sunny. From the Rs 65,000/- I got by selling the Toyota car I paid Rs. 5,000/- to the brokers. Another Rs. 10, 000/- was used for settling loans. I utilised the balance Rs 50,000 to build a house.

#### **Building a House**

When I was living on Wijesekera Mawatha, Mirihana somewhere in October 1971, I went for a land auction in Thalpathpitiya held by the Lanka Land Investment Company. There was a bus to Thalpathpitiya Kanatta Road but I left home on foot because the bus to Kanatta junction did not come. The land to be auctioned was near *Kanatta* junction. There were sixty-five blocks of land for sale. Brochures with the ground plan were distributed. The blocks of land bordering the main road began with No. 1 from near *Kanatta* junction. Behind that, the blocks started with No.17. When bids were called for block number 18, I bid for it. There was not much of competition. The block of 17.2 perches was decided in my favour for Rs. 4,400/-. I did not have the entire sum of money on me. So, I gave a cheque for Rs. 1000/- on the spot and arranged to pay the balance later. After the auction, I went home and told Prema that I had bought a block of land. She asked me why I had bought land from an area where there were “murderers”. I needed land and whatever the surroundings, nothing could be done now. I had to find the balance money and claim ownership of the

land. As I was a member of the University Credit Society, I was able to get some money from it. I arranged to pay the balance in instalments within one year. Accordingly, I got the deed for the land by the end of 1972. The cost of the land including notarial fees was Rs. 5500/-. I had a plan for a house drawn in about 1976 by my friend Gunatilaka, a draughtsman whom I knew in the Irrigation Department. It was a very simple plan, but it had the basics. Accordingly, its estimated cost was Rs. 35,000/-

The Rs. 50,000/- I realised by selling the car after returning from the Netherlands was insufficient to build a house. So, I applied for a loan of Rs. 50,000/- from the State Mortgage Bank. When it was likely that the loan would be granted, I started the initial work on building the house on the Thalapathpitiya land. I began drilling (sinking) a well in the land in about April 1980. As the *karyala sevaka* Mr Gunawardena who worked in the University was a mason, he took over the building of my house. In fact, he left the University service and engaged in full time masonry. So, it was easy to get certain things done. In the meantime, I was hospitalised with a pain in my spine, the day after sinking the well began. It was diagnosed as sciatica of the spine. Therefore, I had to receive treatment for a couple of weeks at the hospital and at home. I went with Gunawardena to Ruwanwella and bought the timber for the house. Punchi Aiya brought a stock of coconut rafters for the roof from our *maha gedera*. While the house in Thalapathpitiya was still under construction, we went into occupation on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1980. I got the electricity connection too within a few days. However, there was no supply of water until May 1997. Although the well was 45 feet deep, the level of water during the drought went down to about one foot. Therefore, I drove early in the morning to places like Embuldeniya, where pipe borne water was available and brought the water needed in two or three trips. Notwithstanding all the inconvenience, living in our own house was without doubt a big relief to Prema and me. We received the loan from the Mortgage Bank only after the building of the house was over. Even after spending all the money, it was not possible to supply all the needs of the house. It took about another nine years to fix the ceiling and grills for the windows and to build a wall around the house. Buying a car and getting a house in 1979 and 1980 made our life easy. However, our children still went to school by bus. Podi Putha went to Nalanda Vidyalyaya by car for some time. Later, he got used to going to school from the Jubilee Post by school bus.

### **Tourist business**

We faced hardships again as all the money I had, was spent on building the house and for our children's expenses. When I worried about it, my friend Mahinda Samarakoon, a relative of Prema's, gave me a clue to resolve the problem. He said that, as I had a car now, I could occasionally transport tourists and earn an additional income. Hence, I met Mr Deepal Jayasinghe, who was in charge of the Galle Face Hotel Travel Counter, with Mahinda. Deepal said that he could contact me occasionally for transporting tourists.

My first assignment was to drop a passenger from Galle Face Hotel to the Katunayaka Air Port. I got Rs. 75/- for it. Passengers going to the Air Port sometimes gave Rs. 100/- Gradually, as I gained experience, I got other assignments. Once I went on a tour with an elderly Australian couple to Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Hikkaduwa lasting a few days. He had come to Sri Lanka during the Second World War as a soldier. This time he had come to Sri Lanka to revive old memories and to show Sri Lanka to his wife. I also got occasional trips to Nilaveli in Trincomalee, Yala sanctuary in the south, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Galle and

Tangalle. I was paid according to the distance covered. From the money I got from it, I bought a gas burner and a cylinder in January 1982. But I could not engage in this business for long because I suffered a heart ailment on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1982. More of that later.



**Devon Falls**

### **The Presidential elections and the Referendum**

I have mentioned earlier about the Presidential Elections and the Referendum of October 1982 under “Political atmosphere after 1977.” I must mention here briefly about the activities of a few of us during the Presidential Election period. Mr Hector Kobbekaduwa contested President J.R. Jayewardene. He was the Minister of Agriculture in the government of Madame Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Madame Bandaranaike could not contest as she had been deprived of her civil rights. The artiste Mr Vijaya Kumaratunga directed the election campaign of Mr Kobbekaduwa. Once a gigantic meeting was held in Kandy. A few of us went there to participate in it. Librarian Mr W.B. Dorakumbura, Prof. Mendis Rohanadeera, Dr Jagath Wickremasinghe and I went there and after the meeting, we went to Anuradhapura to participate in a few meetings organised by former Minister Mr K.B. Ratnayaka. In Anuradhapura, we lodged in a tourist bungalow belonging to Mrs Basnayaka, who was then the Manager of the Anuradhapura branch of the National Savings Bank and a student of ours. She was a relative of Mr K.B. Ratnayaka.

We had breakfast the following day at Mr Ratnayaka’s place and later went to a few election meetings. The meetings in the evening were held near the Thambutthegama town and organised by one Sunil Jayaweera, who was a pupil of ours. In my speech I said that Mr Kobbekaduwa would collect about thirty to thirty-four lakhs of votes and Mr Jayewardene

about twenty-six lakhs. Actually, the result was the other way about. Mr Jayewardene won and became President for the second time. Afterwards, Mr Vijaya Kumaratunga was incriminated as a Naxalite and taken into custody. After the referendum, the Presidential Election was postponed.

### **Changes in the University**

An election was held to appoint a Vice Chancellor, after the official term of Prof. K.A. Perera ended. In terms of the University Act of 1978, only the University Court was eligible to vote. There were some forty members in the Court. The government put forward Mr Alahakoon for the post of Vice Chancellor. But, Mr Kangahaarachchi, a former supporter of the government too came forward as a candidate. Prof. Linus Silva, who was then an entrepreneur, supported him. Mr Kangahaarachchi won. But the government was not happy. When a Vice Chancellor is appointed, he must traditionally meet the Minister of Education and the President but Mr Kangahaarachchi ignored it, arguing that he need not meet anyone who did not support him. However, he could not hold the post for long. On the pretext that there was chaos in the University, a Competent Authority was appointed and the Vice Chancellor removed. The University Act too was amended, empowering the President to appoint the Vice Chancellor. Mr Karunasena Kodituwakku was appointed as Competent Authority and later as Vice Chancellor.

Mr Kodituwakku was a graduate of the Vidyalkara University and reportedly a stalwart of the socialist students' union and a member of the youth organisation of the United National Party. In my days at the University, Mr Kodituwakku served as an assistant lecturer in the Economics Department of the Vidyodaya campus. Later he went to Australia for postgraduate qualifications and was promoted to the grade of lecturer. Under the government that came to power in the 1977 General Elections, he worked in the National Youth Council. During this time, he was appointed Competent Authority of the Vidyodaya University. He held the post of Vice Chancellor until he left for South Korea as Ambassador for Sri Lanka.

### **1983 July Riots**

When the bodies of the soldiers killed by L.T.T.E. terrorists in a land mine in Jaffna were brought for cremation at General Cemetery in Colombo, a severe state of turmoil arose in the country. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 1983, my Podi Putha went to school. But by noon we, who were on an upper floor of Sumangala Hall, observed flames rising into the sky from various spots in Colombo. Mr Munasinghe who was then the Head of the Management Department and I went in my car towards Colombo to look out for our children. We first went to Nalanda Vidyalaya. We picked up Podi Putha there and went to the St. Bridget's Convent where Mr Munasinghe's daughter was studying. We picked her up too and then went to the St. Paul's Girls' School on Dickman's Road. We met a group of men in shorts brandishing knives walking along Dickman's Road and turning towards Galle Road. We hurried to the school, picked up Podi Duwa and drove along Havelock Road.

By now, there were signs that the mayhem had spread everywhere. *Podi Putha* told me what he saw on his way to school. Children who went by school bus from the Jubilee Post had been ordered to get off at Senanayaka junction and the bus had been halted. Then they had walked past the Borella junction, etc. to school. They had been advised not to leave the school. Therefore, he waited near the main gate until my arrival. However, Podi Duwa had not seen any commotion on her way to the school.

We saw a group of thugs talking big and going down the main road in front of our house, from the Kanatta junction, Thalpathpitiya. We saw them destroying the house of a Tamil police officer situated beyond the place called the 'Farm'. He was working at the Mirihana Police. He was out on duty. His mother, who was at home, having heard about the turmoil, had gone to the adjoining house of Sinhalese people and sought refuge there. But nothing could be done to stop the brutalities of the thugs.

We never knew whether the government took any action to stop the pandemonium that began on a Monday. On the Thursday of that week, the President addressed the nation. Only then did the police and the army intervene. What we saw with our own eyes may have been minimal, but the news was that there were murders and torching of houses on a large scale.

What the government did under the pretext of resolving the problem was to proscribe the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna, Communist Party, etc. and imprison a few of their leaders. Some political leaders were put behind bars under Naxalite charges. The sixth amendment to the Constitution was passed in Parliament, and as an oath had to be taken that the division of the country will be opposed, members of the Tamil United Liberation Front abstained from coming to Parliament. Thus, space for democratic discussions was also blocked. Large numbers of Tamil people emigrated. This strengthened the clamour for division. The diaspora as well as foreign organisations supported the armed groups. Finally, this transformed the L.T.T.E. into the deadliest terrorist group. Its' history is another story. What I have stated here is based on what I saw with my own eyes and reliable information.

## **Progress of the Family**

I have described our occupation of the Thalpathpitiya house in October 1980 and some activities that followed. The rest is described below.

By the end of 1982, Loku Duwa had completed her internship and started work in the Anaesthetic Unit of the National Hospital, Colombo. As there was a paucity of anaesthetists, she was able to work in that unit without having to go out of Colombo. This may be why she chose this field. But with the increased fighting in the North, she had to report for work in the Anuradhapura hospital. When she was working in the General Hospital in Colombo, she was boarded in a house in Barnes Place and she got transport facilities too. As she was growing in age, it was necessary to think of marriage. Finally, in December 1987, she got married to Wasantha Liyanagama. The marriage ceremony was held at the then Ramada Hotel attended by relatives and friends. After marriage, they went to live in Wasantha's

house on Senanayaka Avenue, Nawala, and went to work at the General Hospital from there. This was the situation when I went abroad on sabbatical leave in August 1989.



**At Haggala Gardens on the way back from Sri Pada Pilgrimage, Loku Duwa, Loku Putha, Prema, Podi Putha and Podi Duwa, 1983**



**Loku Duwa's Wedding 17.12.1987**

Loku Putha worked for some time as a storekeeper at Maurice Roche Company in the beginning of the eighties. Mr Keerthi Senaratna, an officer in the Ministry of Industries whom I had known in the Netherlands, helped him to get the job. Later, Loku Putha joined the Hatton National Bank and worked at the Darley Road branch for some time and then at the Nugegoda branch. I think he worked there until he went abroad in about 1991. I am not quite sure because I myself was abroad at that time.

Podi Duwa sat for the G.C.E. (O.L.) examination from Sujatha Vidyalaya and passed. She had to go to another school for the Advanced Level. The Principal Mrs Clara Motwani asked me not to remove her, but I said it was necessary to study in the science medium and admitted her to St. Paul's, Milagiriya. During the July riots she was studying in that school. Although she passed the Advanced Level, she did not qualify for university admission and, therefore, she too joined the Hatton National Bank and worked in the Hulftsdorp branch. At that time, we lived in Thalapathpitiya and so travelling was difficult. Somehow, she worked there until the end of September 1989.

In 1978, when I was in the Netherlands, Prema got Podi Putha admitted to Nalanda Vidyalaya with great difficulty. Ms Mendis, a teacher in the school, had helped Prema. Mr Kuveju, who was a student of ours at the University, was a teacher in the school. Mr Kuveju introduced Ms Mendis to us. Another teacher in the school named Mr Pieris was also a student of ours. With the help of all of them Podi Putha became a Nalandian. I have already mentioned that on the day July troubles began, he went to school with the greatest difficulty. At the end of the eighties, school education faced tremendous obstacles because of the intervention of "patriots". Normally, although the G.C.E. (O.L.) Examination should have been held at the end of 1987, it was held only in February 1988. Afterwards, the Advanced Level examinations could not be held, so that the whole of 1988 year was spent without school.

## Foreign travel (1) Belgium

I got the opportunity to go on foreign trips from time to time from October 1983 to August 1988. The lecturers in the Management Studies and Commerce Faculty were provided with facilities for postgraduate studies at the Catholic University in Lurven, Belgium. Under this programme, three assistant lecturers went to Lurven and senior lecturers went on short-term tours. Accordingly, at the end of October 1983, Mr Hector Perera and I went to Belgium. We had a room in that University and two rooms from the students' hostel (Home Vesalius) for our use. There were postgraduate students from various countries including African countries and India (Hyderabad and Bengal). Some of them were priests. The hostellers used a common kitchen and dining room. A small food container, refrigerator, and an electric stove were available for us. We cooked rice and vegetables as we pleased. The food of most of the Africans was manioc flour porridge. They ate it with a vegetable curry.

I got photocopies of 14 books from the university library, all of them on public enterprises in various countries. There were shops where the photocopies could be bound with hard covers. I sent my books by airmail to Sri Lanka. Mr Hector Perera shipped his books. One day we both went to a company in Antwerp dealing with cargo.

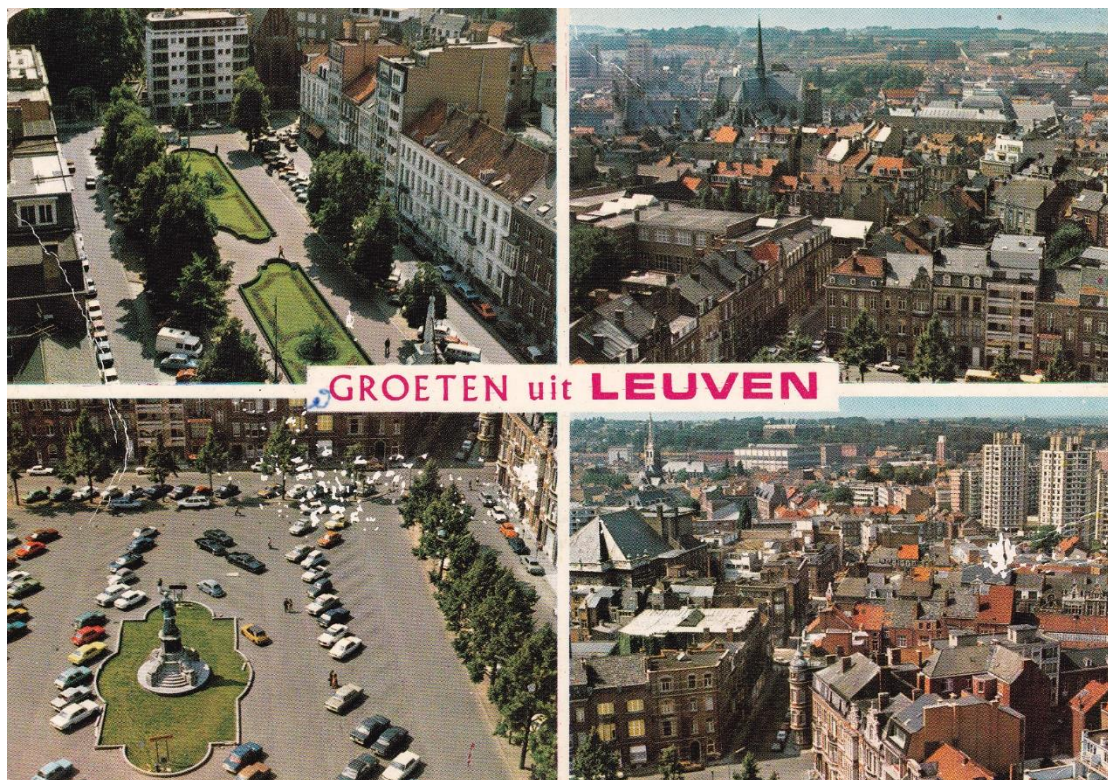
During this period, two professors of that University hosted the two of us to dinner in their homes. One was Professor Embrecht living in Antwerp city. He picked us up from Lurven and dropped us back after dinner. On our return from dinner, we were checked at a police checkpoint.

In the meantime, two of our assistant lecturers joined us and there were seven or eight Sri Lankans in the city of Lurven: five assistant lecturers -Yapa, Gunawardena, Dharmadasa, Thanthirigama and Karunaratna- and Charles Fernando who had gone to Belgium. We met from time to time at dinner.

When in Belgium, we visited such cities as Maastricht in the Netherlands, Amsterdam, Bonn, and Cologne in West Germany by tourist bus called Ideal Car. Visas were not needed to enter Amsterdam but were to enter West Germany. This bus entered Germany from a place called Aachen. This was a place on the border common of all three countries; Belgium, Netherlands and Germany. When the bus reached the border point, passengers had to get off, walk up to the other side past the Emigration and Immigration barrier, and then get back on the bus. As we had no visas, we walked across the border without reporting at the Emigration and Immigration counter and got on the bus. It was a great risk at the time, but we got off scot-free. The bus first went to Cologne and then to Bonn. It may have been about 12 noon. We went out telling the driver that we would come back to the bus at Cologne. After sightseeing in the city of Bonn, we sat on a bench in a park near the Rhine, enjoyed our lunch of bread and apple, and spent some time there. Then we came to Bonn railway station and went to Cologne by train. We reached Cologne in about half an hour and waited for the bus at a spot where there was an ancient church. As there was more time for the bus to arrive, we went window-shopping on a street there. We bought a few small gifts and went to the bus halt by about 6 p.m. The bus came in about an hour. In a few hours, we were back in our boarding house at Lurven.



On another occasion, I went to Luxemburg alone. My friend Mr Hector Perera had gone to England. I went by bus leaving at weekends for Luxemburg. The city and the country of Luxemburg was one. Looking down from where the bus stopped, you could see a steep hill slope. About a six hundred feet below was a watercourse. From the level of the bus halt to the hill on the other side were two bridges at two places. I walked along one bridge, strolled around the streets on the other side, bought some souvenirs, walked back along the other bridge to the bus halt, and when I reached the middle of the bridge and looked down and felt dizzy. The bus started its return journey at nightfall. At one place en route, the bus passed a very long bridge linking two hills. I came to the boarding house by about 9 p.m.



**Leuven city in Belgium**

I went to London too from Belgium. You buy a ticket from a place in Brussels and travel by train and ship. I reached Brussels early in the morning on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1983 and from there went to Ostende by train and by ship to Dover, and from Dover to Victoria by train.

As arranged earlier over the phone, Mr Kulatunga Perera, who was a pupil of mine at the University, met me at some place along the tube route. He was then the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Commerce Unit of the Sri Lankan High Commissioner's Office in Britain. We went to his home in Uxbridge. During a chat after dinner, something he told me moved me very much. He said that he is in that position today because of me. Surprised, I asked him why he said so. He told me that when he was in the third year of his course, he was so depressed that he wanted to leave the University but that he was encouraged by some advice I had given him on a dissertation he had written on a subject

that I had given him. According to him, I had remarked that his dissertation was satisfactory but if more interest was taken, he could achieve better results. When he reminded me of it, I could immediately recall his dissertation written in pearly handwriting. I could not remember what I had written there. If some little advice given by a teacher could make such a change in the life of a pupil, is it not a matter for humble satisfaction? (Mr Perera told me over the phone that he had retired recently). The following day I went with Mr Perera to the High Commissioner's Office and went sightseeing in London until nightfall that day. We had planned to visit Mr Percy Abeysekera, who was living in Hounslow, in the evening on the ninth. I have already said I had met him on an earlier occasion when I went to London. This time I wanted to meet him to see whether I could get his help to arrange accommodation for Loku Duwa in London when she goes there for postgraduate studies. That night at dinner he and his wife promised to help.

The following day Mr Perera and I came to the city again and visited Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and Parliament and dog-tired, went to the Victoria railway station and rested for a long time. I took train to Dover at about eleven at night. I boarded a ship from there and reached the Ostende railway station in Belgium early in the morning on the eleventh. From there I came to the boarding house in Lurven across Brussels in a couple of hours.

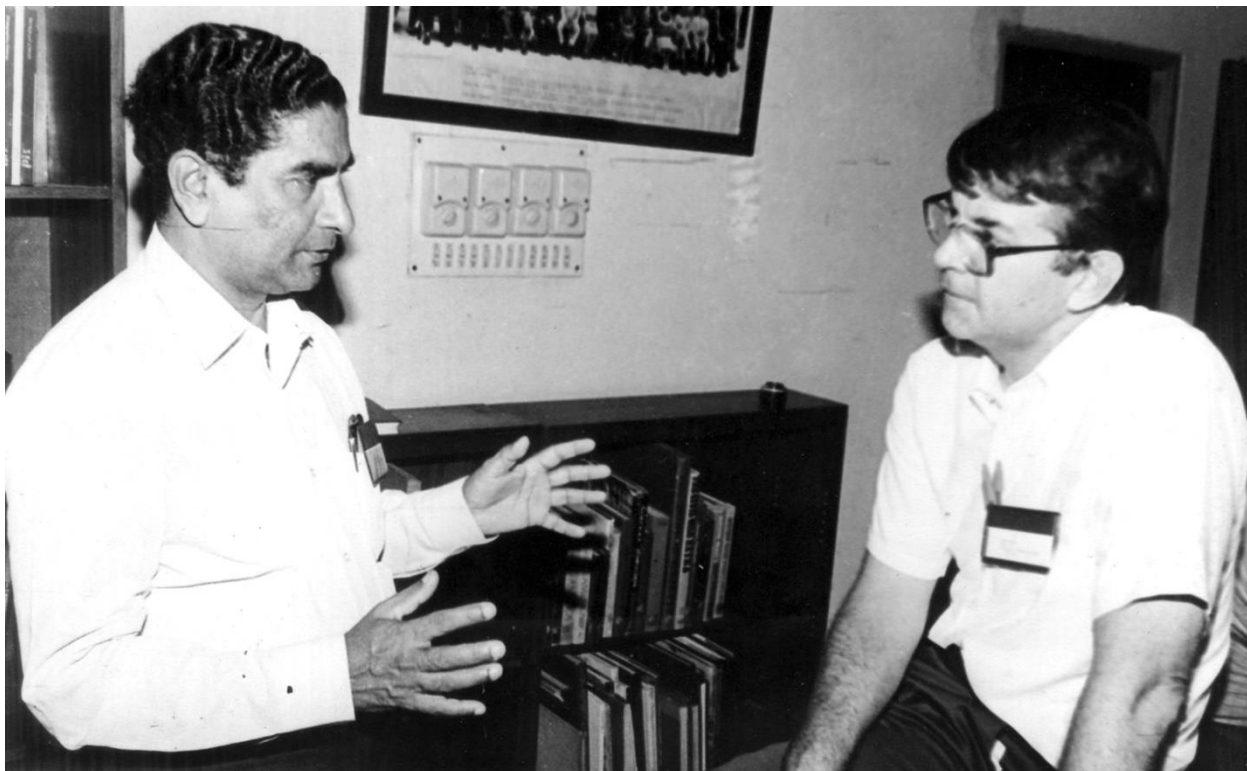
Both of us (Hector and I) had to return home at the end of the year, actually at the beginning of the following year. In the meantime, there were several dinners on various occasions in the homes of our Sri Lankan friends. Mr Charles Fernando was one whom I met for the first time when I was in Belgium. He became a member of our academic staff later. Early in the morning on 01<sup>st</sup> January 1984, we came to the Brussels International Air Port in Prof. Heroulen's car. We had to come to Colombo through Amsterdam. At the Brussels Airport, we handed over our baggage to be freighted to Colombo and obtained boarding passes for the entire journey, Brussels-Amsterdam-Colombo. By this time, most of the air travel services had been computerised. We travelled from Brussels to Amsterdam by NLM and from Amsterdam to Colombo by KLM. The KLM flight flies up to Jakarta.

We had to spend a few hours at the Amsterdam airport. The flight to Colombo left at about one in the afternoon. During the flight, we got permission to have a look at the cockpit and went into it. There were five officers on duty: Captain, Co-pilot, Engineer, Radio Operator and Navigator. Now, only two officers work in most airplanes because of the widespread use of computers by airlines. When we returned to our seats, we met Ven. Elle Gunawansa Thera. Mr Hector Perera had a long chat with him. He spoke with much apprehension about the situation that had arisen in European countries because of the 1983 July riots. Subsequently, I got ample information about him from several sources, which made me realise that he was an honourable bhikkhu with patriotic, humanitarian ideals.

We handed over a report on the work we both did during the last days we spent in Belgium to our coordinator and an officer of the Belgium Foreign Aid Office. After our return to Colombo, we submitted such a report to our Dean too.

## Foreign travel (2) Hyderabad

The academic staff of the University formed a union named "American Academic Union". Our librarian Mr W.B. Dorakumbura did the pioneering work in this connection. I was among the seven founding members who signed the constitution of the Union. It operated under the auspices of the Education Foundation of the United States. The annual assemblies of the union were held in various places in the country. Over fifty members participated.



**With Dr. Hurd, Director, American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad, September**

**1986**

A scholarship programme provided for about a two-week stay at the American Academic Research Centre located in the Osmania University premises in Hyderabad. Under this programme, four of us went there during 16<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> September 1986. This group included Dr. P. Wilson and me from our University, Dr. P.B. Meegaskumbura and Dr. Werake from the Peradeniya University. We travelled by Indian Airline flights from Colombo to Bombay and from there to Hyderabad. Accommodation for the first few days had been provided in a hotel next to an ancient royal palace. Later, we were given four rooms in the hostel near the Research Centre. It was a time of unbearable heat and the fans did not help us. Added to this, there was a mosquito nuisance and we slept under mosquito nets. This added to the heat.

During the day, I went to the nearby library and did some reading. A seminar was held that continued for about three days. People from various parts of India participated in it. They severely criticised the Tamil politicians in our country. It seemed that the refugees there were also a severe problem to them.

Food posed no problem because it was South Indian cuisine. The hostel served breakfast, dinner; lunch was by the restaurant at the Centre. Once, a few of us participated in a dinner in which a Vice Chancellor and a few university lecturers also participated. Dr. Hurd, Director of the Centre, hosted it in a club near a lake. Meeting Indian scholars on such occasions like these provided us the opportunity to widen our knowledge.

Various textiles and jewellery were available in shops in the centre of the city of Hyderabad. I bought only sarees and dress material, most of it for Loku Duwa. Excellent voile sarees were available in that country. I bought a few valuable Kashmir and Benares sarees too. Most of those who go to India bring textiles from that country. There was such a wide selection and the prices seemed to be reasonable.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September 1986, all four of us reached Colombo via Bombay. As we left Hyderabad Airport on a morning, we could see the parched landscape of India from the air throughout our journey, when the sky was clear. We saw that land in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala had been cleared for cultivation. When you enter the Sri Lankan coastline a gorgeous view greets you. You then realise how beautiful our motherland is.

### **Foreign travel (3) Bhutan**

In the mid 80s, I conducted lectures at the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies on a request made by its director Mr Forbes through Mr Dorakumbura. My lectures were on the political evolution of Sri Lanka since 1931. A few VIPs too attended my lectures as the programme was open to both outsiders and diploma students,

At this time, a dialogue on South Asian co-operation was going on and SAARC was launched a few years later. Prince Wickrem Shah, a brother-in-law of the King of Nepal, who was associated with the Tri Bhuvan University, had pioneered the dialogue. On an invitation he sent to Mr Forbes, I was nominated to participate in three seminars held in Thimpu, Kathmandu and Colombo. I will first describe my trip to Thimpu.

I got air tickets to travel from Colombo via Madras and Calcutta up to Paro in Bhutan. Visas had to be obtained to enter India twice. After attending to the fundamentals, I left Colombo on 05<sup>th</sup> June 1988 and went to Madras on an Indian Airlines flight. From there I went to Calcutta on the same airline. My journey from Colombo to Madras took about an hour but it took about four hours to go to Calcutta from Madras. I lodged in a hotel in Madras on the 5<sup>th</sup> and left for Bhutan on the 6<sup>th</sup>. I travelled from the Calcutta Air Port to Paro Airport in Bhutan on a Drukair flight. The plane could carry sixteen passengers. Apart from the two pilots in the cockpit, there was no other staff. As refreshments during the journey, there was a parcel in a basket in front. The plane did not fly too high in the sky. It flew low past hilltops and reached the Paro Airport within a couple of hours. The tarmac was by the side

of a river. There was no other level ground. Once I reached the terminal buildings, the Emigration Officers took a long time to issue visas. At the time, no tourists were entertained in Bhutan. Therefore, it seemed that even the issue of visas was done with utmost care.

On one side of the Air Port were the snow-capped Himalayas. The watercourse that flowed by the airport originates from those mountaintops. It was about twenty-five miles from Paro Airport to Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. We travelled on a modern bus. In our group were Prof. W.D. Lakshman and Dr. Samarasinghe of the Peradeniya University.

The bus route was on a hill slope. The area was full of hill slopes more than even in up-country in Sri Lanka. Something I noticed in the houses by the main road was that they were three-storied. The ground floor was for the cattle and goats that they reared. The kitchens were on the second floor and the bedrooms on the third floor. As most houses were by the hill slopes, they were accessible only along footpaths. The dress of the Bhutanese fell above the knee. They wore boots and something like long socks because of the cold climate. Even the bhikkhus in the country were dressed in a similar manner. In Thimpu, we were accommodated in the Motithan Hotel, which was the only hotel there. The government buildings as well as shops and boutiques were in the city area. The largest house in the city was probably the Indian High Commissioner's residence. The seminar was held on the 7th and 8th of June in the auditorium of a government department. The Indian High Commissioner hosted us to dinner on the 7th. In the evening of the 8th, there was a cultural show in the Motithan Hotel.

At the time, the sole ruler of Bhutan was its king. There was no such institution as a Parliament. However, even the king was subject to the directions of the Sangharaja. Conversations during the seminar revealed that there was discontent among the public officers. Those who were educated overseas showed that they were not satisfied with the administration in the country. But some were of the opinion that there was a good spy service in the country headed by an Indian officer. Realising the discontent among the people, the king himself had made certain improvements. Now there is a Parliament there. The king appointed his son, reportedly a graduate of Oxford University, as Prime Minister.

I bought a few simple souvenirs at the Thimpu market. I did not have the Bhutan *Nagultaran* but Indian money was largely in circulation and, therefore, I had no problem. I set off on my return journey on the 9th morning, came to Madras via Paro, Calcutta, and lodged that night in a hotel. On the following morning, I went to a few textile shops in Madras and bought some clothes. There were sales assistants who spoke Sinhala, some of whom had been in Sri Lanka. I left from the Madras Airport on the 10th afternoon and came to the Katunayaka Air Port in about an hour.

## **Foreign travel (4) Nepal**

Subsequent to the seminar on South Asian Co-operation held in Thimpu, a seminar was also held in Kathmandu on 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> August 1988. I left Colombo for this on 13<sup>th</sup> August. That night I lodged in a hotel in Madras. I met Prof. Lakshman that time too. Two other Sri

Lankans participated but I do not remember their names now. As I had to spend more time in Madras and Calcutta, I attended to other matters too.

In Madras, there was a large textile market, which could be reached on foot from the hotel where we lodged. Textiles of various designs manufactured in several provinces of India were exhibited in the market. Even when we returned, the market was open and I went there and bought a few sarees, bed sheets, etc. It was possible to recognise the diversity and antiquity of India from those items. I bought a copy of '*FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT*' from an Indian bookshop. I learnt from it the role played by the leaders in the Indian freedom struggle.

As no seat was allotted to me on the flight from Madras to Calcutta where the other Sri Lankans were accommodated, I had to tarry in the Air Port for about five hours. When I reached Calcutta on a night flight, it may have been about 01 a.m. the following morning. However, I lodged with the others in the same hotel and on the following day, I went with them on a Nepal flight from Calcutta to Kathmandu. Kathmandu was a very busy airport. And many flights arrived from Singapore, Bangkok, Dacca, Kuala Lumpur, etc.

Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, had streets and buildings of various types -royal palaces, hotels, temples and kovils- in various places. We were accommodated in a modern but rather small hotel. The seminar too was held in an auditorium there. During the recess, I walked around the royal palace area. I went to see a Hindu kovil also. There was a large stupa and a shrine. A large area of Kathmandu was visible from the spot. We were conducted to the premises of the University where Prince Wikrem Shah worked.

At the end of the seminar, we left Kathmandu on 18<sup>th</sup> August, reached Madras the same evening, and reached Colombo on the 19<sup>th</sup>. On the flight back, my baggage was overweight with the textiles bought in Madras. When a "consideration" was offered to an Indian airport official, it was sent right away to the plane regardless of its weight. I have never faced any problems with airport staff in Sri Lanka.

### **University activities, 1986-89**

From May 1980 to July 1986, I functioned as Head of the Public Administration department and worked towards strengthening the academic staff. In that exercise, there were occasions when I had to face obstacles placed by higher officials such as the Vice Chancellor and the Dean of the Faculty. However, my experience was that when matters were logically presented the Selection Board accepted my recommendations. Once, the Dean of the Faculty referred to the family background of a candidate who appeared for an interview. But I pointed out that the candidate I had in mind was a public servant with experience and that such a person is useful to our department and selected him. On another occasion, it appeared that the Vice Chancellor wanted a particular candidate appointed. However, my opinion was that there was a person with PhD qualifications among the candidates and that he was more suitable. He would not have to be sent by the university for postgraduate qualifications. But the Vice Chancellor raised the point that the candidate was a Russian graduate, raised objections and left the board meeting saying that he had another matter to attend to. Both external members of the board approved my recommendation. Therefore, the PhD graduate was selected. The Vice Chancellor made things unpleasant for him. Although a vacancy existed for a permanent post, he was appointed on a one-year

temporary basis. But later we appointed him on a permanent basis. Because of matters such as these, the Vice Chancellor was not well disposed towards me. Even during Senate meetings, there were various arguments from time to time.

## **Post of the Dean of the Faculty**

In the meantime, in the beginning of July 1986, the Dean of the Faculty resigned suddenly. It was not clear why. About a month later, he went abroad. The story was during his time he was subject to certain threats. I am not sure of the authenticity of the story. As the post of the Dean of Faculty felt vacant suddenly, a suitable appointment had to be made. According to the University Act of 1978, the appointment as Dean was on the vote of the members of the faculty. Only the heads of departments could apply. The Vice Chancellor appointed the heads of departments, but there should be acceptance by the academic staff of the department.

The Vice Chancellor had asked Mr Dorakumbura to ask me whether I was prepared to accept the post of Dean of the Faculty. I told Mr Dorakumbura that I did not mind if I was allowed to do the job without undue interference. After that message, a meeting of the members of the faculty was summoned and on 04<sup>th</sup> July 1986 I was appointed Dean of the Faculty. The Vice Chancellor issued the letter of appointment. As Dean of the Faculty, I was able to build good relations with the Vice Chancellor, and when he left, there was good rapport between us.

When I assumed office as Dean of the Faculty, I saw a heap of unopened letters on my table, and when I asked the Assistant Secretary Mr Sivalingam, why they remained unopened, he told me that it was on the instructions of the former Dean. I directed him that in future all letters received should be opened and necessary action taken. Only letters that required my personal attention should be referred to me. When I asked an office employee for some stationery, he asked me for a bunch of keys that was in my drawer to open the cupboard containing stationery. I told him to put the keys in the bunch, in the respective drawers and cupboards. There were no keys in the drawers of the Dean of the Faculty after that.

At the first faculty meeting after my appointment as Dean, there was a big argument between a friend of mine and the former Dean. The members were divided, one group supporting the former Dean and the other group my friend and real pandemonium broke out. From my seat, I knocked hard on the table and shouted to stop the fight. All of them lapsed into silence. My friend left the meeting. The meeting ended on a happy note. When I met my friend a couple of days later, I spoke to him as if nothing had happened. He told me that after leaving the meeting hall, he got into his car and drove up to Nugegoda, and returned after he recovered from his rage.

I had taken the head seat before everyone else because I was keen to hold the meeting of the faculty members sharp at 9 a.m. Most of them were not concerned about punctuality. Sometimes, it was necessary to hold special meetings with all members present. Once, some of them were absent and I asked them to explain. This too was something new. Most of the senior members gave plausible reasons. One lecturer protested and decided not to

give reasons but on the closing date for the reply he too sent a reply explaining his absence. The senior members had advised him not to be obstinate.

A Dean has to work in many ways for the progress of the faculty. He has to represent the faculty at meetings of the Board of Management. Even at Senate meetings, he has to represent the faculty regarding academic matters. Some of these include obtaining necessary staff and equipment and financial allocations. There were frequent obstacles to getting new equipment. Once, when magi boards and chalkboards were requested, it was with the greatest difficulty, that the consent of even the Deans of other faculties was obtained for the Supplies Committee. It seemed that saving was considered more important than essential equipment. Nevertheless, when the obstacles were removed everybody co-operated.

In filling vacancies in academic departments, the respective heads of departments must initiate action. Moreover, it is important that when provisions for the next year are requested the existing vacancies should have been filled. Once, the head of a department recommended calling fifteen candidates for an interview, and when the interview was over, he said only one was qualified. The Board of Interview comprised the Vice Chancellor and a few members of the Board of Management. We consulted them and selected six candidates as being qualified. The head of the department who strongly protested against the selection, resigned from the post the next day. I recommended another to be appointed in his place. Looking back, all the six candidates who were thus appointed had obtained PhD degrees. The person who protested against the appointments has not gained a PhD degree to date.

### **Student activities**

Several problems cropped up because of student activities. Within a month of my appointment as Dean, the Vice Chancellor went abroad and I was appointed to act in the post from August 16 to 26, 1986. There were conflicts between various student groups. On the night of August 20, a group of students held a farewell party while another group held a film show in another hall. A group gathered armed with clubs and claimed they were doing so in self-defence because they were apprehensive that some outsiders would attack them. However, about a dozen members of the staff of the Management Faculty, who were close to me, were with me for my support. We took action to avoid a clash and it was about 2 a.m. the following day that we dispersed. An open dialogue was held the following morning in front of the Sumangala Building on the events of the previous night. After arguments and disputes that lasted about a couple of hours, they dispersed.

After the Vice Chancellor reported for duty again, I submitted a five-page report to him on August 27, 1986, the last paragraph of which I quote below:

“23 –There is an extremely undesirable tendency that is now developing among a small clique of students to resort to thuggery and cause physical harm of a most vicious and painful kind to suppress the majority who do not toe the line. In the eyes of the majority of students, the administration may appear ineffective if these things continue unabated. There may come a day when there would be no active student life in the campus. What is left may be a humourless unthinking uncritical horde of followers of a band of thugs in the guise of student leaders.”



Subsequent events proved that this prophesy gradually became a reality. This situation arose because outside elements brought pressure on student activities.

### **A group of hostages**

On May 6, 1987, I went to the University to hold the faculty board meeting. Security officers of the University normally guard the main gate. But on this particular day, it seemed to be under the control of students. However, I was allowed to enter. We started the faculty board meeting at about 10.15 a.m. and finished it soon because we got a message from the Vice Chancellor through the Bursar to say that Mr Munasinghe and I should contact the Vice Chancellor.

Mr Munasinghe went to the librarian Mr Dorakumbura's room and spoke to the Vice Chancellor. Mr Dorakumbura followed suit. It was known that action was being taken to get the students who were in police custody released. The following were the reasons for this situation.

After the May Day rally under the sponsorship of the Maubima Surakeeme Sanvidanaya held at the Abhayarama Vihara, Narahenpita on May 1, 1987, Kitsiri Mevan Ranawaka, final year student in the Applied Science Faculty of the Sri Jayewardenepura University died in a police shooting. He had come to this meeting with his father attorney-at-law Mr Ranawaka of Panadura, who was a vice president of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna. Provoked by this incident, the students of the University had written various slogans and accusations on the walls of buildings.

The second academic year of the University was to begin on the 4th. On that day, students went in buses to participate in student Ranawaka's funeral. About twenty-five of the academic staff too went there on the University bus. No lectures were held on May 5.

When I went to the Sumangala Building after the above faculty board meeting, I saw a meeting of students. A student bhikkhu who was speaking, made a request from the academic staff to stand by the students and support them. He asked the students not to do anything either by word or deed that would offend the teachers. Student Nandasiri speaking explained the reasons for their detention. He said that the Police arrested a group of students, and the senior student counsellor promised to get them released by twelve noon, but did not happen. In the meantime, we came to know that the students were trying to get down newspaper reporters.

As it appeared that we might not be allowed to leave even for lunch, we got an employee to bring us a few packets of lunch and while we were having lunch at a table in Mr Dorakumbura's room, some newspaper reporters came in and took a few photographs. After lunch, we remained in the same room and a large group of students stood opposite the room and blocked it shouting slogans.

In the meantime, we were told that the Police had arrived at the main gate and we were asked to send them away before something serious happened. A few members of the academic staff persuaded the Police to leave the main gate. Consequently, the group of students who were blocking the door of Mr Dorakumbura's room went away. At about 5.30 p.m. we all went to the Council room, had tea and remained there. At about 7.30 p.m. the student-counsellor came to the University with the five students released by the Police.

They entered the Council room, told us that until the other detained student was released, they would not allow us to leave.

A message from the Vice Chancellor was received at about 8.30p.m. saying that he was prepared to discuss matters with five students. When this was conveyed to the student leaders, they discussed it and after a long time informed us that they were prepared for a discussion. The discussion took place at Mr Dorakumbura's residence at Nugegoda-Kohuwala Flower Road. The meeting was due to begin at 10.30 in the night but as various people came at different times it only started at about 11. 15 p.m.

The students insisted that the teachers remained at their wish. If so, when they were asked if we could leave now, their reply was that we could do so once the remaining female student was also released. By this time, it was confirmed that they had released the other female student too. Thereafter, the student representatives requested that the students involved in the disturbance should not be punished. I told them in front of all of them, that even if the University were open and the students came for lectures, I would not come for lectures, and that I would do so only when I felt that the situation was suitable.

Although it was suggested that I go home in the Vice Chancellor's car, I told them that I should get back to the University because my colleagues were there. I explained the happenings of the day to those in the Council Room, and as I was exhausted and sleepy, left for home at about one in the morning. Neither Prema nor the children knew anything about this. I had already informed them that evening over the phone that I would be late. So, Prema was waiting with my dinner ready.

The following day, all this was published in the newspapers with photographs. Thereafter, many people had expressed various opinions on the incident for several days. But there was no change in the students' activities. Even we as teachers could do nothing. Like parents who endure what their obstinate young children do, we also fell silent.

A one-man committee was appointed to inquire into these matters. I was summoned first to give evidence before the committee. While I was telling the committee what I knew, certain names were mentioned, and I was asked whether they were among those who detained us. I was asked about a bhikkhu too. I said that I did not know any of them. It was apparent to me the inquiry was held with the sole purpose of getting evidence against some whom they had picked and punish them. That way, I may not have been a useful witness. My evidence took an hour or so. When I came out, as I had heard that the Vice Chancellor was in his office, I went to see him. I told him that there was no reason for revenge although the incident caused us anxiety and distress. I asked him to drop this "witch hunt" as a compassionate being, and left for home. That day was a holiday. The committee ceased to function after that.

A few days later when I was in my office, an office employee came in and told me that a group of students had come to see me. I asked them to be seated in the faculty boardroom and went there later. I asked them why they had come but no one seemed to be able to give a direct reply. When I asked them whether they had come to discuss the "hostage" incident, they said yes. Although they had committed an offence, they were not prepared to admit it straightaway, nor were they prepared to apologise. That, of course, is the nature of university students. Therefore, I told them what I felt about it. I told them that teachers

were the best friends of pupils, that their teachers were put under pressure by this incident, but that I had no hatred but only sympathy towards them. It seemed that the “wall” between us had broken down. The students dispersed with smiles on their faces.

### **The Indian Intervention - 1987**

India directly intervened in the internal problems of Sri Lanka. India intervened in stopping the Vadamarachchi battle under the command of army officers Denzil Kobbekaduwa and Vijaya Wimalaratna in 1987 to defeat terrorism. The first intervention was the dropping of dhal by air in the guise of food supplies from India. As most people believe, Prabhakaran fled to India because of this intervention.

The Indo-Lanka Pact was signed, amid widespread protests, between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene, including a navy soldier attacking Mr Gandhi, as he was inspecting a guard of honour, watched by the entire country on TV. The Indian Peace Keeping Force landed and was sent to the war-torn areas. From our homes, we saw the largest number of planes ever landing at the Ratamalana Airport in one day.

In the meantime, the *Deshapremi* movement in the south expanded their activities. On the one hand, they protested against the Indian “monkey army” and on the other, launched a struggle against the Jayewardene regime. This gradually spread to universities and then to schools and by 1988 it reached its peak.

Even the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, launched a protest campaign against the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene (Indo-Lanka) Pact. The establishment of provincial councils on the Indian model under Indian pressure was considered, a step towards the division of the country. Meetings and protests were held in various parts of the country. I too participated in some of them.

One morning, Mr Dharmasiri Senanayaka came to my home at Thalpathpitiya and invited me to participate in the meetings held in Ratnapura and Balangoda. He came home early in the morning on the day of the meeting. Mr J.R.P. Suriyapperuma too was in the vehicle. We went to Dr Dinarathna Gamage’s place and with him, the four of us went to the late Mr Nanda Ellawela’s home. We had our breakfast there and went to Balangoda by van with Mr Gamage and two others. We met Mr Clifford Ratwatte there. There our meals had been arranged in the home of one Mr Silva, a businessman. We were accommodated in a hotel. On the following day, both of us were taken in Mr Ratwatte’s vehicle to two meetings.

After the meeting, at about 6 p.m., we returned by bus leaving the Balangoda bus stand to Colombo. I got off near Devananda Road, Nawinna, went to Mr Somasunderam’s house, and by the time I reached home in his car it may have been about 11.00 p.m. As Mr Gamage’s house was near the *Ate Kanuwa*, he may have got off the bus there. On another occasion, I went to Welimada for a similar meeting in my car. Mr Sunil Gunatunga of our staff and Podi Putha too joined me on this trip. Mr Gunatunga was from Nawelagama, Ella in Bandarawela. The first night we spent at his home, on the following morning we went to Welimada through Bandarawela and met the Organiser of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party Mr Ratnayaka. He had organised a meeting at Uma Ela. After that meeting, we came to the Welimada Rest House and after lunch, set off on our return journey. We reached home at about 9 p.m. after about a five-hour journey. Only Podi Putha was with me on our return journey.

Not only the Sri Lanka Freedom Party but also the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna opposed the Provincial Council system but the relevant constitutional amendment was passed because there was a five-sixth majority in Parliament. However, the story was that all the members had been detained in a hotel in Colombo and conducted to Parliament from there. Only a few such as Gamini Dissanayaka directly showed any opposition to the Rajiv-J.R. Pact. The Prime Minister Premadasa too expressed his opposition to the Pact, but he presented the Act in Parliament. Only Mr Gamini Jayasuriya of the United National Party resigned in opposition to the Pact.

## **Post of Associate Professor**

On completing ten years as Senior Lecturer (Grade I), one becomes eligible for promotion to the grade of Associate Professor. I was to have completed ten years in the grade on October 1, 1986. If you apply after that date, promotion is granted from that date irrespective of the date of eligibility. Therefore, I applied for the promotion before that date on September 8, 1986. According to the directives of the University Grants Commission, you must satisfy a marking scheme too which carries a maximum of 67 marks. The minimum mark was 40. I scored 50 marks on self-evaluation. The research papers had to be approved by two experts.

This takes considerable time. When the experts receive the papers, they do not immediately mark and return them; they have to be reminded several times. I knew the experts to whom my papers were given for evaluation but that made no difference. It was also improper to talk to them about it. Those reports were received somewhere in March 1988. Then a board of examiners had to be appointed for which two were nominated by the University Grants Commission. As I was Dean of the Faculty, another had to be nominated by the Commission. This took about five months. The Board of Examiners, which also had a member of the University Grants Commission, met on September 8, 1988 and recommended my promotion. The Board of Management met on the same day the Board of Examiners met and approved the recommendation of the Board of Examiners on the same day.

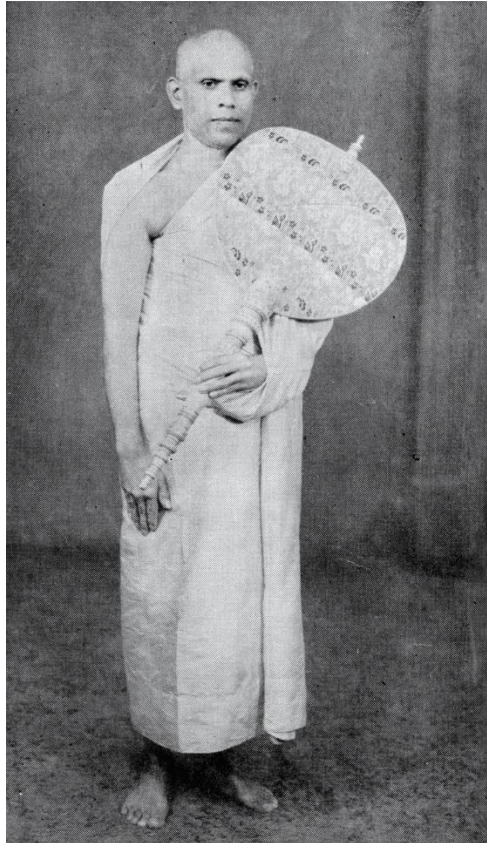
The University Grants Commission gives detailed instructions on this process of promotion and even a member of the Commission participates in the Board of Examiners. Although it was said that the Board of Management of the University has authority to take independent action, the Vice Chancellor sent a letter to the University Grants Commission somewhere in the middle of September, stating that the Commission's concurrence was required for the promotion. A meeting of the Commission was held only on November 26. As there was a delay in notifying the decision to the University, I went to the Commission office on December 13, got the papers, and gave them to the Deputy Registrar in charge of the subject.

Although the promotion was approved, there was a problem about the salary step to be paid to me. I sent a long letter to the Vice Chancellor on December 14 commenting on it among other matters. I quote below one paragraph of that letter:

"8 –The net result of all this seems to be that I have to wait indefinitely to benefit from the promotion which now seems to be my due. One wonders whether this is the reward one

gets for shouldering the burden of helping to administer a faculty with the largest student population who find it convenient to hold us hostage because of our regular presence in the campus.”

I received my letter of promotion on December 15, 1988. The salary anomaly had been removed. For this to happen it took two years three months and eight days, from the date I applied for the promotion. I describe this in such detail to show the efficiency of the University procedure and that nothing I gained was served to me on a silver platter.



**Venerable Halyale Sri Sumanatissa Anunayake Thera - Principal of Asgiriya Maha Vihara Pirivena**



### **Venerable Halyale Sri Sumanatissa Anunayaka Thera**

This Venerable Thera who made a great influence on my life was a younger brother of my mother, born on March 10, 1908 to Halyale Abeysinghe Mudiyansele Appuhamy and Pitawala Herath Mudiyansele Palingumenika. He was ordained a Buddhist monk, under the co-tutorship of venerable Weragodatenne Sri Dharmadarshi Saranapalabhidana Nayaka Thera, the chief incumbent of the Gangatilaka Vihara, Naranpanawa, and venerable Uduwawala Sri Revathabhidana Nayaka Thera, the chief incumbent of the Adhahana Malu Gedige of the Asgiri Maha Vihara and chief incumbent of the Mahiyangana Raja Maha Vihara.

He obtained the degree of Vidya Visharada Pandita, launched the Wattedegama Dharmadeepa Pirivena, and later became Head of the Asgiri Maha Vihara Pirivena. After a brief illness, he passed away on February 17, 1988. His cremation was held at the Asgiriya Police Grounds on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the same month. As his nephews, Gunathilaka Malli and I set fire to the pyre. Prema, Loku Duwa, my son-in-law Wasantha, Podi Putha, Podi Duwa and some other family members participated in the funeral.

### **Second Sabbatical Leave (Brunei University)**

After my first sabbatical, I reported for duty on January 6, 1979. Accordingly, I was entitled to a year's sabbatical at the end of 1985. However, I had to receive an invitation from an institution such as a foreign University for the purpose. This leave could be spent even in Sri Lanka but that was not such a productive exercise. So, I was thinking of various options, and having worked as Dean of the Faculty for two and a half years, contacted several foreign institutions. I mentioned my experience and qualifications in my letters. One of those letters I addressed to Dr C.J. Nuttman, the Head of Social Policy and Administration of Brunei University.

A reply to that letter was received from Dr Peter Eaton. At that time, Dr Nuttman was Dean of the Faculty of Management and Administration Studies and he had handed over my letter to Dr Eaton. The letter said that the subjects of Public Administration, Public Policies, or Development Administration were available during the academic year August 1989 to May 1990 and suggested that the matter be discussed over the telephone. This was by letter sent on February 4, 1989. I was requested to send two names of referees. By letter dated February 21, I sent the names of Vice Chancellor Prof. L.P.N. Perera and Prof. Tilakaratna of the Economics Department. On February 23, I went to Salaka and had a discussion over the telephone from 3.50 p.m.

Subsequently, Dr Peter Eaton informed me by letter dated May 3 that the Brunei University authorities had agreed to offer me a suitable appointment. As this university was recently launched, many areas were still being developed.

On May 11, 1989, I received a letter from Mr Janin Erih, the Bursar of the Brunei University saying that the Vice Chancellor had agreed to offer me a post of Senior Visiting Lecturer for two semesters with the following entitlements:

- (a) Salary would be \$ 4,600 per month, (A subsequent letter had amended this according to which a payment would be made to me based on the salary paid by our university)
- (b) Economy class air tickets,
- (c) An allowance of \$ 80 per day spent in Brunei,
- (d) Free accommodation in a fully furnished University house,
- (e) A self-driven vehicle, (There was no bus transport here)

I think I should briefly state some facts about the country that gave me such a generous appointment. This is important because even though it is known by name here, most people in our country do not know much about it.

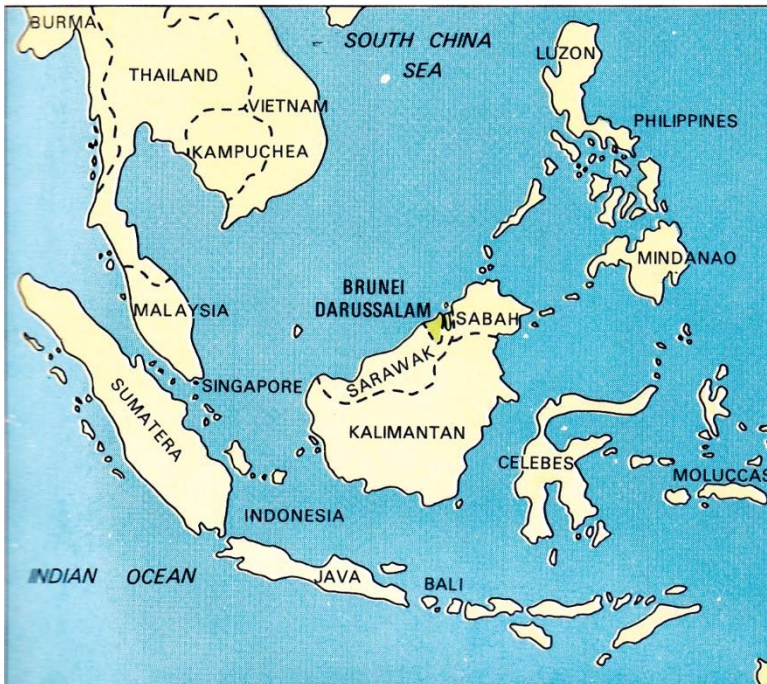
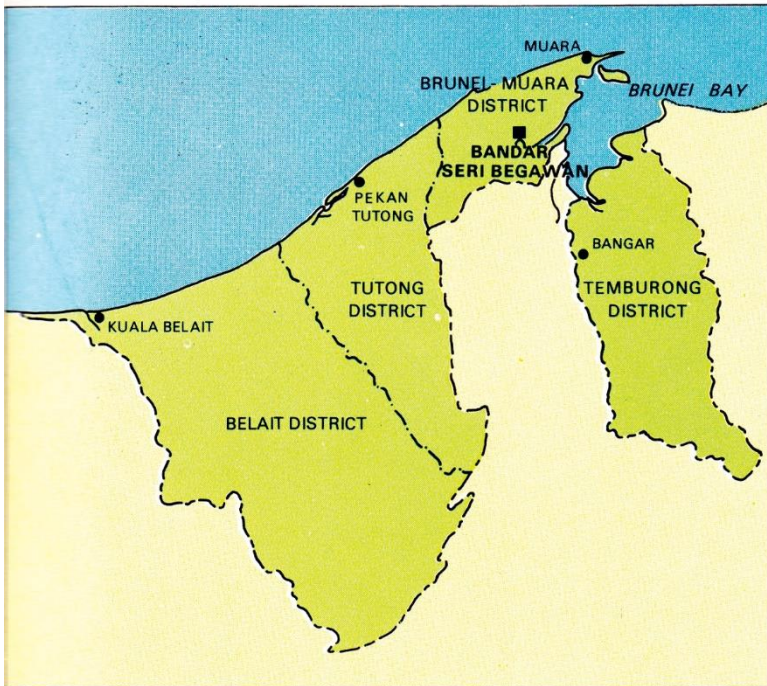
### **Brunei Darussalam**

The largest island in the region known in the past as East Indies is Borneo. This island had been divided into four parts in later times. The largest part in the south known as Kalimantan now belongs to Indonesia. The long northern tract is divided into three parts. The two regions called Sarawak and Sabah belong to Malaysia. The part called Brunei is situated in the northeast of Sarawak. The country contains four districts: Temburong, Brunei Muara, Totong and Belait. The land area is 5765 sq. miles. The capital is Bandar Sri Bhagavan situated in the Muara district of Brunei. The population (in the middle of 1982) was 198,930 and most of them were local Malays. There were a few Chinese and Indians. The state religion was Islam. There were groups of people following other religions, too. They spoke the Malay language but English too was commonly used. The males wore trousers and shirt as their daily attire and for festivals and official purposes a special dress. Whatever the occasion, the dress of women did not change. Most of them wore the headgear worn by Muslim women. The pictures of the Malaysian royal families would make this clear.

In Brunei, Chinese and Indians were engaged in business. Reportedly, there was good camaraderie between Chinese businessmen and the King. There was a Chinese Buddhist temple in the city of Bandar Sri Bhagavan. Chinese Buddhists worship there without any hindrance whatever (As there was no other place, I too worshipped at this temple during my stay there). There were Christian churches in various places. For a long period, the country was under the British crown until full independence was granted in 1983.

Brunei was a very poor country until 1973. The mainstay of the economy was rubber cultivation. But with the discovery of petroleum and its price escalation, the Sultan became one of the richest men in the world. Funds for the government budget were reportedly received from the coffers of the Sultan. Although there was a Cabinet of Ministers to manage government institutions, there was neither a Constitutional Assembly nor a Parliament. State authority resided entirely in the Sultan. The citizens as well as administrators spoke of and behaved with the highest respect and regard for the Sultan and the royal family. The Sultan was Hajji Hasanal Bolkiah. His official name was His Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hasanal Bolkiah Muizzaddin Waddaulah Sultan Dan Yang Di Pertuan, Negara Brunei Darussalam. On television and radio, the above official name was announced in full.

# NEGARA BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



Map of Brunei



The queen was known as Her Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha. The second queen was known as Her Royal Highness Pengiran Isteri Hajjah Mariam. The prince heir-apparent was known as His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Duli Pengiran Muda Al-Muthadee Billah. The Foreign Minister and the Finance Minister of Brunei were brothers of the Sultan. The Foreign Minister was known as His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Pedana Wazir Sahibul Himmah Wal Waqar Pengiran Mudah Haji Mohamed Bolkiah and the Finance Minister was His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Digadong Shaibul Mal Pengiran Muda Haji Jefri Bolkiah. The Sultan's sister was an undergraduate of the University and known as Yand Ternamat Mulia Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Puteri Hajjah Masna. This information will give the reader an idea about Brunei culture.



**Members of the two Royal households in Brunei and Malaysia pose for a group photograph at Istana Nural Iman, 1990**

### **Brunei University – Universiti Brunei Darussalam**

This University was launched in 1985. Its Chancellor was the Sultan of Brunei. The Minister of Education was also the Vice Chancellor. There was a Deputy Vice Chancellor to manage the daily affairs of the University. There were two administrative posts, one Registrar and the other Bursar, who was more active than the former. There were three faculties: Arts, Science, and Management. The faculty of Management and Administrative Studies had two departments, the department of Management Studies, and the department of Public Policy and Public Administration. At the time I was in Brunei, the Head of the Faculty was Dr. Chris Nuttman.

The Head of the department of Management Studies was Mr Jim Wilson. Dr Peter Eaton headed the Public Policy and Public Administration department.

### **Leaving for Brunei**

As I had found a place to spend my sabbatical, I applied for a year's leave on May 11, 1989. The Vice Chancellor approved it on July 19 as vacation leave from July 23 to October 1, 1989 and from October 2, 1989 to October 1, 1990 as sabbatical leave. I resigned from the post of Head of the Faculty effective from June 13, 1989. The faculty appointed Mr Jagath Bandaranayake to fill the vacancy.

Mr W.A. Wimalatissa, who had worked in our university for some time, wrote to me from Brunei. He had heard of my arrival and requested me to ask for any information that I may need. I sent a reply to Mr Wimalatissa on June 12. I made inquiries from the Brunei University authorities about getting visas. Photocopies of the relevant pages of the passport requested for the purpose and two copies of my photograph were sent on July 17 by DHL courier service. As there was some instability within the country during this period, correspondence was delayed. It was during this period that the "*Deshapremis*" created disturbances in schools, universities, and generally within the country.

On the night of August 6, 1989, I went to the Katunayaka Airport in the Vice Chancellor's official car. On the way, I heard that the government had declared a curfew. The driver and the security guard who accompanied me to the Air Port obtained a pass from the Air Port Police and returned to the university. I left at about one in the morning that day on a Singapore Airlines flight for Singapore. On the following day, that was on the seventh, I arrived at the Singapore Air Port at about five in the morning Singapore time.

A Singapore Airlines flight had left Singapore Airport for Brunei Darussalam Bandar Sri Bhagavan Airport at nine in the morning but I was unaware of it. So, I waited in the Air Port until 11 a.m. as stated in my air ticket and left Singapore on a Royal Brunei Flight. The journey took about two hours. As I came out of the Bandar Sri Bhagavan Air Port, Mr Wimalatissa met me and introduced me to Mr Chris Nuttman, the Dean of the Faculty, who had come there. Mr Nuttman took me to ANG'S Hotel in the centre of the city and arranged for my lodging there.

### **Reporting for duty at the Brunei University**

As I was informed that that I could get a vehicle from the office of the Avis Taxi Company that was located in the premises of the Sheraton Utma Hotel, I went there, which was not far from the hotel, and selected a Toyota Corolla. There was a better car but as it would cost more, I opted for the Toyota. The following morning a university officer had arrived and I followed him in my car to the University. The trip may have been about three miles.

I went to the Public Administration and Public Policy department of the University and met its head Dr Peter Eaton. I had spoken to him over the telephone, but after meeting him personally, we discussed the details. I wore a white shirt with a tunic collar as I was used to in our university, and when I asked about it, Dr. Eaton said that members of the academic staff of the University wore shirt and tie. So, he suggested that I did the same. Afterwards, he took me to meet several authorities of the University in the administration building. There, I was introduced to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Bursar, a lecturer in the science faculty, and Mr Wimalatissa of the Management Studies department. Dr. Eaton also showed me the library and the bookshop.

A couple of rooms by the side of the building where the management faculty was located were set apart for me as my office room. Behind it was a bathroom, a toilet and a small pantry. In addition to the table and chair for my use in the office room, there were about six students' chairs and a magi board. As Brunei was extremely hot, the room was air-conditioned. After work was over on the first day, a university vehicle arrived to take me to the hotel. While I was following the University vehicle, the Police stopped me. The University vehicle also stopped and when an officer in it came to us and asked the Police in

Malay language the reason for stopping the vehicle, he was told it was because I had not worn the seat belt. When the police officer was told that this was my first day here, I was advised to wear the seat belt in future. I also heard that the fine for not wearing the seat belt was Brunei \$ 1000/-. Since then, wearing the seat belt even in Sri Lanka is a habit with me. What a good lesson I learnt at the age of fifty-five years?

I lodged at Ang's Hotel from August 6 to October 2, 1989. Laundry was free of charge. Expenses were only for food and petrol for the vehicle. A few days later, I met at the restaurant, a Sri Lankan who had been lodging in the hotel, Tissa Wickremasinghe by name. While talking to him, I understood that he was married to Nimmi, the elder sister of cricketer Ranjan Madugalle. He had come to Brunei to take up the post of manager of the Muara Harbour. The harbour was the main seaport in Brunei. After a few days, Tissa bought a brand-new Toyota Corolla (He had obtained a loan for it). He took a house in Muara on rent and went to reside there. By this time Tissa's wife, Nimmi had joined him.

### **Subjects taught**

I went to the University on all weekdays and taught and prepared my lessons. Friday was a holiday, Saturday was a working day and again, Sunday was an off day. During the first semester, I was entrusted with teaching Development Administration. There were two texts for this: Dennis Randinelli's *Development Administration* and Robert Chambers' *Rural Development*. As I had not read these two books earlier, I bought them from the bookshop and summarised them. I photocopied the summaries and distributed them among the students and made use of them in my lectures. In the second semester, I was entrusted with teaching a part of Human Resources Management. Lecturer Abraham de Cruz taught the other part. There was a book on the Fundamentals of Management for use for this purpose. I summarised that too. I also undertook to teach Public Enterprises Management. For that, I used a draft of a book I had written in Sri Lanka. A noteworthy feature was that a sister and daughter of the Sultan of Brunei were among the students in the Development Administration and Human Resources Management classes. This is particularly worth mentioning because they never tried to stand out from the others.

During the first semester of the academic years 1990/91, I taught Public Enterprises Management and Human Resources Management. In the second semester, teaching Development Administration was entrusted to Dr. B.S. Wijeweera. He was for some time a member of the Ceylon Civil Service and was the Secretary to the University Grants Commission. Later, he taught at the Papua New Guinea University and came over to the Brunei University. Until I left Brunei, he was serving there.



**With some Lecturers of the Public Policy and Public Administration Department (1990)**

### **Arrival of family members in Brunei**

At the time I went to Brunei, there was a lot of turbulence in Sri Lanka. In Brunei, I felt how peaceful that country was. During the first couple of weeks, there were occasions when I awoke from sleep at night anxious about the condition in our country. Because of this, Prema lost no time in coming to Brunei. To get visas, I sent the necessary forms to Sri Lanka, got them back, and handed them over to the University.

As Prema and the two children were coming to Brunei, I applied for an official residence. In a few days, I got a house on the first floor of a housing complex in the Angarek region. The University provided furniture, kitchen utensils and bedding. There were also a television and a video player.

I was informed that Prema and the two children would be coming on a Singapore Airlines flight to the Bandar Sri Bhagavan Air Port on October 1. So, I went there and waited for a long time but no one came out. When I inquired from an officer there, I was told that three passengers with their names were at the emigration counter. They had been detained because their passports were not stamped. I went there with permission so I could leave the airport with them. Usually, passports are retained. A representative of the University would go to the Emigration and Immigration Department, get the visas approved, and bring the passports back. The passports were received only after the October 9, and Dependent Passes were issued until August 10, 1990.

I went to Ang's Hotel with Podi Putha, Podi Duwa and Prema in a car given to me. We got two adjacent rooms in the hotel. We did not wait long there though. On October 3, we went to reside at the official residence in the Angarek region. Henceforth, we could cook our meals as we pleased.

## **Problems faced by family members in Sri Lanka**

After Prema and the two children arrived in Brunei, I was briefed about some incidents they had faced after I came to Brunei. After about a week of my leaving home, an armed group had raided the house at night one day. At the time only Prema, Podi Putha and Podi Duwa were at home. Loku Putha had gone to work and not yet returned. The persons who entered the house had inquired after me. All books and papers in the house had been meticulously gone through. They had looked for me in almirahs and cupboards. They had asked whether there were weapons at home. Most of the questions had been put to Podi Putha. After about an hour or so, as nothing could be found, they had left saying that they were from the J.V.P. They warned that other groups may come claiming to be from the J.V.P. and asked the people at home to be careful.

Only after everything was over had Loku Putha come home. Terrified out of their wits, Prema and the two children had gone to the house on the Senanayaka Avenue, Nawala, where Loku Duwa was residing at the time. From that day until they left for Brunei, all three had been with Loku Duwa. Podi Duwa had gone to the bank for work and returned home in the evening. They hastened their departure to Brunei but told me nothing until they arrived here. Or else, I could expedite their arrival. I let things take their own course. My earlier visit to Netherlands was when my children were young. However, Prema had done everything necessary. Although the children were grown up now, Prema was unable to manage the affairs at home and remain there because of the chaotic situation in the country.

## **Family activities in Brunei**

There was no doubt that Prema and the two children who were in great distress in Sri Lanka felt reassured after their arrival in Brunei. Their presence was also a relief to me who was alone. As it was possible to cook our own meals, there was no need to get them from a hotel or a restaurant. This was essential because of my heart condition.

Those who go to Brunei to spend some time should necessarily do two things. If you drive your own vehicle, you must get a driving licence. Although you may have a driving licence issued in your country, you must get a licence from the Brunei Transport Department. It was also essential to get an identity card. For this purpose, you must go to the relevant office, sign on the form placing your fingerprints, and hand it over with two copies of your photograph. The identity card was issued in about a month. When you travel within the country, you must have this identity card with you. No sooner than I arrived in Brunei, I obtained these documents. When Prema and the two children arrived, identity cards were obtained for them, too.

I had informed my family members to bring a string hopper mould from Sri Lanka. When they came, we bought a steamer. Although there were a few items of crockery for the use of the family members, we bought some melamine plates, dishes and cups to use if the need arose and an electric iron. We bought a two-in-one radio as Podi Putha wished. We bought our daily provisions from several places. We had to go to the market once every three or four days for the purpose. We generally bought seer fish. They chop the seer fish from the head or the tail. The fish head was sold separately, which was a favourite dish in restaurants there. We bought the piece from the tail. A slice of a kilo and a half cost about six dollars. On the upper floor of the fish market was a shop selling coconuts. When a

coconut was put into a machine, it was shredded into small pieces (as if scraped with a coconut scraper) ready for squeezing. We could keep it in the refrigerator. You could buy coconut oil, sunflower and soya oil. There were vegetables too in the market. We went to the Sunday fair and bought country vegetables and greens. There was also a kind of red rice brought from remote villages. Other items of food could be bought from shopping complexes, such as Johan. Dried fish, sprats, etc. and spices were available in the shops of Indian Tamil traders.

Audio and video cassettes were available in a shop near the ancient Royal Palace. We bought a few cassettes and CDs of old Hindi songs. Video cassettes of Hindi films were available on loan for a nominal fee. You could even buy them, if you wished to keep them. As we had a television, video, and the cassette player at home, our entertainment needs were met to some extent.

The first invitations to a meal were to the Eaton couple, a Chinese lecturer, and Ms Pushpa Thambipillai, who was a resident on an upper floor of the building, where we ourselves were resident. Dr Peter Eaton had told me once, that when he was in Sri Lanka, he had eaten hoppers and string hoppers. Therefore, we invited these persons, who were colleagues of mine to a string hopper treat. Liquor was available in a shop in Bandar Sri Bhagavan market. A bottle of red label Johnny Walker cost 23 Brunei dollars; a black label bottle was 30 dollars.

After the above repast, we hosted Sri Lankan friends too to either lunch or dinner from time to time. This was a means of maintaining rapport among Sri Lankans in Brunei. Others too hosted us to meals. There were Sri Lankan engineers in departments such as highways, telecommunications and in construction projects, and school teachers and university teachers working there. Also, an engineer worked in the Prime Minister's Office (Sultan's Office). Some of them had gone to that country by ship or by the old airline. Now there is a modern airport and an airline. Brunei Airlines fly to Singapore, Bangkok, Dubai, Darwin and other surrounding countries. Flights from those countries land at Sri Bhagavan.

Another way that Sri Lankans maintained a bond among themselves was to go to the airport, when they leave or return. Such occasions were also opportunities to meet other Sri Lankans. From the capital to the airport or even from a place such as Kuala Belait was a journey of a couple of hours. Once a group living in the capital went to the city of Kuala Belait and participated in a cricket match and a meal. Petroleum company employees live in the cities of Kuala Belait and Seria. There were many Sri Lankans working there. Because of activities like these, it was possible to spend the evenings without feeling bored.

However, when I went to the University on weekdays, Prema and the two children were confined to the four walls of the flat. There was nothing to do except cook meals for the day and night. They could, of course, watch television and listen to music over the cassette recorder. I sent the two children to a computer class during this period. These classes were held in the Chun Hwa Chinese School in the city, after four in the afternoon. So, after returning from the University, I went there with the children. This did not happen every day but it was somehow a means for them to spend the time usefully.

## **Podi Duwa**

Podi Duwa asked for an extension of leave from the bank but it was refused. Then she concentrated on further studies. Children of most of the Sri Lankans working in Brunei studied in foreign countries like England and Australia, some in universities. Podi Duwa wished to go to Australia and pursue her higher studies but unless I could teach at least four to five years in the Brunei University, I could not afford to help her. By this time, the Institute of Technical Studies (I.T.S) had been established in Sri Lanka. It offered a course of study for a particular period, after which you could go to a University in the United States and get a degree in one year. So, I took steps for Podi Duwa to follow that course. As Loku Duwa and Loku Putha were in Sri Lanka, it was possible to make preliminary arrangements. There were hostel facilities too at I.T.S.

Podi Duwa returned to Sri Lanka at the end of December. On her return journey, she spent one night in a Singapore hotel, bought a few things, and arrived in Sri Lanka the following day. We had been informed earlier that a couple returning to Sri Lanka from Brunei would also lodge in the hotel that night. From Singapore, Podi Duwa called us at home, but as the receiver had not been correctly replaced, the call could not be taken. Therefore, she had spoken to the teachers' house in Brunei and conveyed the message.

Podi Duwa returned to Sri Lanka, entered the Institute of Technological Studies (I.T.S), and began her higher studies. She got lodging facilities in the hostel. Loku Putha and Loku Duwa had taken turns to help her.

## **Podi Putha**

Because of the disturbances in schools in Sri Lanka, we had to extend Podi Putha's stay in Brunei. He had passed his Ordinary Level examination, but there was no suitable environment in Sri Lanka to pursue further studies. Therefore, after Podi Duwa returned to Sri Lanka, Podi Putha had to be alone in the Brunei flat. Prema prepared meals for us. A pastime of *Podi Putha* was to sit in the balcony and keep on watching the ceaseless flow of traffic on the road in front. So, within a short time, he got a sound knowledge of the vehicles (cars) in use in Brunei at the time. Even now, Podi Putha has a good knowledge of cars. In fact, his friends seek his advice about cars.

Our flat was close to the Bandar Sri Bhagvan Airport. So, from the balcony, you could often see planes flying overhead. These planes belonged to the Royal Brunei Airlines (R.B.A.), Singapore Airlines, and Thai Airlines. As time passed by like this, and it was improper to be unoccupied, I asked Podi Putha what he proposed to do in the future. His reply was that he would like to be an airline pilot. I could not believe my ears when this child, who was scared of even climbing a few steps of a storied building when he was young, now saying that he would like to be an airline pilot.

However, we began to explore the possibilities in that regard. We went to the library of the American Embassy in Brunei and inquired about Pilot Training Centres. There were a few such centres in the coastal area of Daytona in Florida, U.S.A. We had no information about such centres in Australia. In the meantime, a Sri Lankan working at R.B.A. Airlines told me about the Asian Aviation Centre in the Ratmalana Airport in Sri Lanka. His brother named Wickremasinghe was working as an engineer there. Mr Sunil Abeywardena, the son of Mr Hector Abeywardena, owned the centre. I came to know that he had studied with my son at

Ananda College, so I wrote to the centre and got down the necessary information. We were informed that a fee of about Sri Lankan Rupees 500,000 would be charged for training up to obtaining the commercial pilot's licence and after one year's training, a trainee could sit the examination conducted by the Civil Aviation Department. When you pass the examination, you are awarded a Commercial Pilot's Licence which entitles you to apply for a job in an Airline.

After returning to Sri Lanka, it would be necessary to spend at least two years to study for the G.C.E. (A.L.) examination. If you pass it well, it will take at least another year to gain admission to the University. Thereafter, if the conditions in the university are peaceful, it will take another four years to pass the degree. So even if you get a degree after about seven or eight years, you are not assured of a job. Even if you spend about two years to get the pilot's licence, you may get a job in no time because it is a technical qualification. Having considered all such factors, I decided to send him for pilot training. About three months had elapsed by now. As we were to return to Sri Lanka at the end of May 1990, Podi Putha remained with us in Brunei.

As he should be engaged in some useful work during the rest of his stay, we admitted him to an evening English class. In the sports centre, named Hasanal Bolkia near our flat was a swimming pool. As another Sri Lankan child went there for training, I sent Podi Putha too. That child's father, who was a teacher in a Brunei school, agreed to take him to the swimming class. I do not know whether he learnt to swim but associating with a peer was more useful than just idling at home.

### **Other occurrences**

From January 1990, only Prema, Podi Putha and I were at our home. On some days when I took Podi Putha to the English class, Prema was left alone at home. One day when Podi Putha and I returned after going out, Prema was seated in the living room with one leg on a chair. The toes on the foot on the chair were bandaged. Coming out of the bathroom, she had stubbed her toe against the doorstep and her big toe began to bleed. When she came to the front door and shouted, an American living on an upper floor had come and given her first aid. That American couple too were on the staff of the University.

When I removed the bandage, I saw that the head of the nail of the big toe had been injured. I took Prema for treatment to a Chinese doctor who ran a dispensary on an upper floor of a building in the Gadong marketplace. As she could not climb down the stairs, I had to carry her in my arms. The stairs were not broad enough for Podi Putha and me to hold her on either side and help her climb down. The doctor said that it was not advisable to remove the nail until the wound had healed because she was diabetic. We had to take Prema several times to the doctor to have the wound dressed. It took about two weeks for the wound to heal. Thereafter, the nail dropped on its own.

As Prema could not attend to the cooking because of the accident, Podi Putha had to learn to cook. He got instructions from her mother and got used to cooking vegetables. As I had told him how to fry seer fish slices, the lunch and dinner were prepared without a problem. Just the way I got used to cooking whenever my mother fell ill, Podi Putha got the opportunity to learn cooking, though not perfectly, because of his mother's accident.



## **Sri Lankans in Brunei**

During Prema's condition with her foot, we had a visitor. She was dressed in a Kandyan sari, her name was Arambewela and she was a teacher at Sufri Bolkliah English School in Tutong city, Brunei. She said that she heard about us and thought of visiting us when she came to the capital. As Ms Arambewela did not come to the capital often, she met Sri Lankans only seldom. She lived alone in a room in her school. As her husband was dead, and she had to look into the education, etc. of her two daughters, she had gone to Brunei because prospects there were better.

I remember she had lunch with us that day. In the evening when she was getting ready to go back, she invited us to lunch at her home. On that invitation, Prema, Podi Putha and I visited her some time later. Living alone, she was obviously delighted to see us. We were hosted to lunch. We spent as much time as possible and returned home before dark. Ms Arambepola's two children were living in Sri Lanka near the Narahenpita junction in their own house. On one occasion when Ms Arambepola had to come to Sri Lanka, she had gone to the I.T.S hostel and met Podi Duwa.

Mr Tissa Wickremasinghe, who went to Brunei at the same time I went there, lived in a house in Muara and worked in the harbour there. That couple too once invited us to lunch. We went there and spent one day with them. As they also lived away from the capital, they did not meet other Sri Lankans often. We met about twenty Sri Lankans and families who either lived in the Brunei capital of Bandar Sri Bhagavan or worked in nearby institutions. Mr Wimalatissa, who worked in the University there, had worked with us as a lecturer at Vidyodaya University. He was living there with his wife and child. Dr Rodney Fernando was a lecturer in the Science Department of that University. He also lived in a house on the lower floor of the flats where Mr Wimalatissa lived. The Beneragamas lived there. Mr Beneragama worked in the telecommunications department. Prof Sirinanda, who was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts in Brunei University, lived there with his wife. They had two children studying in London. In about four months of my arrival there, Dr Wijeweera came to work in the University. Their son had gained admission to a University in Australia.

Dr Ranjith Silva was living with his wife in a house near our place. Ranjith who was a biologist and a competent diver was working for the Fisheries Department. Their two children were studying in Australia. A Sri Lankan youth who was a freshwater fish expert of the Fisheries Department lived with his wife in a village outside the city. I cannot recall his name now. Nevertheless, they invited us to dinner and they visited us.

We met several Sri Lankan engineers in Brunei and developed good relations with them. I think Mr Silva, who worked as an engineer in the Prime Minister's Office there, was the oldest I met in Brunei. He told me that when he first came to Brunei, he came by ship. There had been an old airport but no regular service. The Brunei airport had been built later. Some school teachers who had gone there said that they did so by ship. An engineer named Pieris of the Public Works Department lived there with his son Maiya, who was studying at a Brunei school. I met two or three civil engineers working in private institutions. I remember only the name of engineer Bandara. They worked in construction companies owned by Chinese nationals. Several others, apart from Mr Beneragama, worked in the Telecom Department. A young engineer named Dissanayake spent some time there with his wife and two children and later migrated to Australia. Later, an engineer named Soysa came for work

in the Telecom Department. A technical officer named Somasiri also worked in the Brunei Telecom Department. We were told that Mr Somasiri had been living in a place close to where we lived when we were in Rattanapitiya. Two of his sons were living in Darwin, Australia. Once I met them when I went there. I also met a person who worked in Brunei Airlines. His brother Mr Wickremasinghe, worked in the pilot training centre in Sri Lanka known as the Asian Aviation Centre.

I met several schoolteachers too in Brunei. Two of them were the Perera couple. Mr Perera was an art teacher. They had a daughter who studied in a school there. When our Podi Duwa was in Brunei, I remember all four of us went to dinner in their house. Engineer Mr Silva whom I mentioned earlier was also living in a house in the same housing complex. Another teacher, whose name I do not remember now, lived there with his wife and son. He went for swimming practice with our son.

We often met all those mentioned above at dinner parties. The few Sri Lankans living in Brunei maintained rapport with each other through such dinner parties held in each other's houses. Therefore, almost every weekend, there was a dinner party in someone's house. This was a fine occasion for women to gossip and for men to have a shot of whisky and babble on. Two Sri Lankan families did not participate in any such event. They were the families of two University lecturers. One lecturer was a Sri Lankan Malay; the other was a Sri Lankan Muslim. The culture of the country was such that they perhaps did not feel lonely.

### **Arrival in Sri Lanka**

The academic year 1989/1990 ended in May 1990. The teacher himself must do the supervision and collection of answer scripts in the examination hall in the subjects he taught, during both first and second semesters. Thereafter, within a couple of days, the answer scripts must be marked and mark sheets and the answer scripts handed over to the head of the relevant department. My responsibility ended when I submitted the answer scripts and the mark sheets for the second semester. Therefore, I arranged to return to Sri Lanka at the end of May. I also took action to get all my dues for my service up to that point.

As we had to buy a few things in Singapore on our return to Sri Lanka, I booked a room for the three of us in the Y.M.C.A. guesthouse in Singapore. I had to remit cash for the purpose in advance from Brunei. As I was informed that I was entitled to 29 days' vacation leave from the day of arrival in Sri Lanka and up to the day of return to Brunei, I got that leave approved. This was actually leave within leave because it was leave due to me for my service at the Brunei University during my sabbatical. If I did not have such leave, no allowance was payable for the period between leaving Brunei and my return.

On May 31, 1990, we came to the Bandar Sri Bhagavan airport in the car allotted to me and handed it over to the representative of the AVIS Car Company. I arranged for the car to be handed over back to me on my return. I remember leaving Brunei on a Royal Brunei flight at about nine in the morning and reached Singapore at about eleven in the morning. At the Singapore airport, we left one bag at the parcels counter, and took a taxi to the Y.M.C.A. guesthouse in the centre of the city.

We were allotted a room with three beds on an upper floor. We took a wash and after resting for some time, did some window shopping, had dinner in a nearby restaurant and spent the night in the guesthouse.

The following day when the shops opened, we took a walk along Serangoon Street. We had heard that the street was a suitable place for Sri Lankans to buy sarees, etc. But there were no garments to Prema's liking, so we returned to the guesthouse and went to some Indian textile shops on the other side. We bought the garments we needed and a wristwatch from shops there, had our lunch in a restaurant in the same trade complex, and returned to the guesthouse. While Prema was resting in the guesthouse, Podi Putha and I went to the area of the Sym Lim Tower to buy a television set. We went to a few shops selling electronic and other similar articles and bought a modern 19-inch television from a shop there. We needed a taxi to bring it to our guesthouse.

We spent the following day entirely to walk around the shops. We went to the Singapore airport at about eight that night. Because of our suitcase and television set we needed two taxis for the airport trip. I sent Prema and Podi Putha in one taxi and I went in another to the airport with the television set. I took the bag, which I had left, and went to the relevant gate with the boarding passes. The flight started at about 10.30 p.m. from Singapore airport, Singapore time, and reached Katunayaka airport at about 11.45 p.m. Sri Lanka time.

Loku Duwa's husband Wasantha had come to the airport with a vehicle and we reached our house at Thalpathpitiya at about two in the morning. The house we had abandoned in the middle of August 1989 had been swept and cleaned. We arrived in the morning of June 3, 1990. Loku Duwa and Podi Duwa were at home. So, I did not feel I was entering an empty house.

### **During the holidays**

My old Nissan Sunny car that I had left at home when I left for Brunei had been taken to various places and someone had brought it back to our home. I think it must have been at Loku Duwa's house during my absence. However, as I had the vehicle now, it was quite easy to get about and do many things. I went to the Sri Jayewardenepura University and attended to some urgent business there. By this time, Prof. L.P.N. Perera had left the post of Vice Chancellor, and Prof. S.B. Hettiarachchi appointed in his place.

Podi Duwa left the hostel and began to go to the I.T.S. from home. Podi Putha had to be sent for training as an airline pilot. I went with him to the Asian Aviation Centre next to the Ratmalana airport. There, we met Captain Manamperi (who was an airline pilot) and discussed details. I believe I met engineer Wickremasinghe too. I paid the necessary fees and took steps for them to commence the training soon. I think Loku Putha had spoken to his friend Mr Sunil Abeywardena regarding this. Sunil was the owner of the training institution. He was a schoolmate of Loku Putha's. I thought that Podi Putha was engaged in some useful work. There was nothing to worry about as the situation in the country had improved. So, he worked towards fulfilling his ambition.



**Loku Putha's Wedding 16.09.1989**

After I left for Brunei, Loku Putha's wedding had taken place. As it had to be celebrated in some way, after my return to Sri Lanka, we went to a restaurant on Duplication Road, Kollupitiya, and hosted a dinner. Only a few in the family -Prema, Loku Duwa, Wasantha (son-in-law), Loku Putha, Nirmala (daughter-in-law) Podi Duwa and I- participated in the event. After fulfilling that obligation, albeit in small measure, I felt a bit relieved. After a few days, Loku Putha held a dinner party for us in his home. Mr Renton Alwis too participated in it.

### **Return to Brunei**

I arranged my return trip to Brunei via Bangkok, Thailand. Mr E. Dayaratna who was doing his postgraduate degree at the Tam Sat University was an assistant lecturer in the Commerce department of the Sri Jayewardenepura University. I wrote to him requesting him to arrange a place for me to stay when I reached Bangkok. After my return to Sri Lanka, I bought a ticket through Upali Travels to Brunei via Bangkok and to return to Sri Lanka on the same route on Thai Airlines. Upali Travels also provided the visas needed to enter Thailand.

Accordingly, I left for Bangkok on a Thai Airlines flight from Katunayaka at noon on June 27, 1990. It was dark when I reached Bangkok. After emigration and immigration formalities and collecting my baggage, I came out of the airport and found Mr Dayaratna waiting for me. There was also a bhikkhu with him -Siriratana Thero from Nagoda, Kalutara. As he had been living in Bangkok for a long period, he was a good guide. They took me to a guesthouse

near the Tam Sat University, left me there and went away promising to meet me the following day.

In the forenoon the following day, Mr Dayaratna came to my guesthouse, and took me to the Tam Sat University that was about a kilometre away. I got some knowledge about the facilities provided for postgraduate students in that University. I went to a bookshop close by and had a look at the new books. I bought a book on the fundamentals of Management. I went to the Buddhist temple on the other side of the road and worshipped there. Mr Dayaratna was living with his wife in a house on the further side of the river in the city of Bangkok. There was a ferry service at many places to cross the river. Therefore, it was usual for Bangkok residents to use the ferry service to cross the river. I met a Sri Lankan named Dr. Upali Nanayakkara residing in a room on the upper floor of a guesthouse near the place I lodged. He had come there for some work with F.A.O.

As I had time on my hands for two days in Bangkok, I walked around many places near the guesthouse and looked around textile shops and small-scale shopping complexes with tailor shops where garments were tailored within a day or two, a special feature in Bangkok. Ven. Siriratana wrote for me the address of my lodging in the Thai language with the telephone number of his temple. He told me that if I lost my way, I could show it and come by taxi or bus to my lodging. As I had an idea of going via Bangkok on my return to Sri Lanka from Brunei, there was no need to buy any clothes. etc. One day I got on a bus, got off at a large street, and walked around. I saw a large number of small-scale producers who made various products with small machines on the pavement in front of shops but were not a hindrance to passersby. They obtained their raw materials from the large shops.

On the morning of June 30, 1990, I left for Bandar Sri Bhagavan Airport on a Thai flight leaving for Brunei from Bangkok Airport. Having finished emigration formalities, I collected my baggage, went to the AVIS Car Company on the ground floor of the terminal building, got my car, and went to the Number 1 flat of the official quarters complex in the Angarek region. I resumed my work at Brunei University on July 1.

After I left for Brunei for the second time, my two children went overseas. Loku Duwa, the doctor, had passed the M.D. of the Postgraduate Medical Institute of Sri Lanka and left for England in July 1990 for further training. She began her training in a hospital in London as arranged earlier. Her husband Wasantha (my son-in-law) obtained leave from his work place a few months later and joined her. After her training in England, she appeared for an examination held in Dublin in Ireland and passed it. She returned to Sri Lanka in June 1993.

Loku Putha who was working in the Hatton National Bank had passed the final examination of the Bankers' Institute and had passed well in a computer programming examination too. Propelled by his wish to gain higher education in that field, he went to England with his wife in August 1990, and began his higher studies. After four years, he passed the degree, came to Sri Lanka, got a job in Singapore, and went to reside there in January 1996. Later, he got a job in the Treasury of the state government of Queensland, Australia and went to reside there.

## **In solitude**

After I resumed service at Brunei University for the second time, I had to spend about six months in the official quarters alone. Before the next academic year started, the first convocation of the University was held. It was held in the Hasanal Bolkiah National Conference Hall. Although that place was quite close to my residence, I did not participate in the convocation as it might have robbed me of my chance to be alone. But I watched the proceedings on TV at home. In conversation with those who went there, I felt that it could have been a better option had I been there. However, I participated in the dinner held that night at the place. Mr & Mrs Eaton took me there. The Brunei Hotel School did the catering. I also met Sri Lankan youths who worked there.

When I was in Brunei, I watched the birthday festivals of Prophet Mohamed twice. A special feature on that day was that the Sultan of Hasanal Bolkiah walked about three or four kilometres on a specific route, starting from an important place in the capital and returned to the same spot along another route. Members of royalty, ministers and important officials and the ordinary public joined in the walk with the Sultan. All of them were dressed in Brunei national dress that they wear for festivals. Simultaneous with this festival, the Sultan kept the royal palace open for the public for about three days. All those who go there on those days were served food and drink. The males of the royal family received the males at the male entrance, and the females of the royal family received the females at the female entrance. This was an annual festival. Anyone from any part of the country could visit the royal palace, have a look around and enjoy a meal.

When the academic year started, I taught in the first semester, the two subjects I taught at the second semester of the previous year. As I had prepared the lessons in the previous year, teaching them for a second time was easier; only a few random additions were necessary. The number of students who joined the optional subject Public Enterprises Management exceeded the earlier number. This appeared to have caused some displeasure among other lecturers. The Sultan's sister talked to me about joining the class but I persuaded her to select another subject because I thought that the rejection of the Sultan's sister for admission to my subject would somewhat appease the other lecturers. Whatever the University, it is not a good thing to be a popular teacher. In a foreign University, it is fraught with danger. It is always best not to offend the other lecturers within the short time at your disposal.

As I had to spend time alone, my association with other Sri Lankans outside the University increased. Some of them were as lonely as I was. Four or five persons such as Mr Rodney Fernando, a lecturer in the University, and a Sri Lankan working at Brunei Airlines met at the weekends in each other's houses. Quite often, we went to the Muara beach for a sea bath. On those occasions, Jonny Walker too was a companion of ours. And after a drink, we used to sing old hits. Once, a group of Sri Lankans living in the capital got together and, with a group of Sri Lankans working in the Kuala Belait Petroleum Corporation, went there to spend a weekend. We played a cricket match, had lunch, and returned in the evening. This was a trip of about two or three hours. The petroleum industry in Brunei was located in the Seria region of the Belait district. The town next to it was Kuala Belait. When you cross the river near it, you could go to the Sarawak Province of Eastern Malaysia. But that was a separate country.

As I was a heart patient since January 1982, I had to take regular treatment even after I went to Brunei. So, I registered myself at the modern General Hospital in the capital city of Bandar Sri Bhagavan. The hospital had been built in the name of the Sultan's queen. It was named RAJA ISTERI PENGIRAN ANAK SALEHA HOSPITAL. A large number of consultant physicians and general physicians worked there. Most of them were foreigners. A Sri Lankan too was among them. I attended the clinic there monthly. I was also treated for diabetes. All such treatments were free of charge. Once, I was told that my eyes needed to be examined, and I was asked to be driven by someone else. I went with my friend Mr Rodney Fernando. When medicine was put into the eyes for examination, it was extremely difficult to drive a vehicle in the sun. What a relief it was when there is someone from your own country to help you on such an occasion!

Once, when I was in my office room, I got a severe chest pain. As it did not go off for a considerable time, I lay down on my table. As there were no lectures on that day, I lay down like that for some time. The pain went off gradually and I felt great relief. Afterwards, no such problem arose while I was in Brunei.

When it was time for me to return to Sri Lanka, I bought a few useful things. Podi Putha wanted a small camera. He had given its shape and other details. I bought it from a shop in Gadon. I bought a big suitcase and a bag of normal size, and a small shoulder bag from the Yeohan Trade Complex in the city and gradually prepared for my return journey.

I held the examinations at the end of the semester, marked the answer scripts and handed them over. In the meantime, the University authorities invited me to dinner parties. The Deputy Vice Chancellor hosted me and a lecturer who had come from Malaysia to dinner. Mr Janin Erie and a few others participated. The Head of our Faculty Mr Chris Nutmann held a dinner in an 'English' club. The lecturers in the faculty participated in it. On both occasions, I expressed my gratitude to the authorities for the treatment extended to me in the University. Later, a few days before winding up my duties in the University, I wrote to Dr Chris Nutmann, Dr Peter Eaton, and Mr Arnold Depikare thanking them.

My Sri Lankan friends too held dinner parties for me as a mark of affection. In the meantime, I went to the Brunei branch of Thai Airlines and booked seats for my trip. For my deposits at the Chartered Bank, I got traveller's cheques.

### **Return to Sri Lanka**

I boarded a Thai flight leaving Bandar Sri Bhagavan Airport for Bangkok at about 2 p.m. on January 2, 1991. I handed over the car I used, to the representative of the AVIS Car Company, said goodbye to my Sri Lankan friends who had come to the airport as was the custom among most Sri Lankans when someone goes overseas. I boarded the plane; it was goodbye to Brunei. Though I had taken a few photographs from the plane, I am unable to trace them now. Only the memories remain. They will last as long as I live.



**Farewell “Ayubowan” UBD, December 1990**

When I came out of the Bangkok airport that day, Mr & Mrs Dayaratna and Ven. Siriratana were present. They took me to a hotel and lodged me there. Ven. Siriratana said that he was living in a temple close by. He came the following day and took me to an area where clothes could be tailored. I placed an order for a lounge suit, two ‘bush’ coats, and trousers to be done within a day.

Later we had lunch at a restaurant by the main road, owned by a Nepalese. The owner who provided meals for the bhikkhu and me did not charge for the meal. I realised that a bhikkhu in Bangkok was treated in that manner. They are not charged fares for bus journeys. Bhikkhus who come on *pindapatha* are offered food separately in shopping bags. They offer money too. Therefore, even a Sri Lankan bhikkhu needed only a place to stay. Ven Siriratana was staying in a small cabin in the corner of the premises of a large temple. Two other Sri Lankan bhikkhus also lived temporarily in the temple. They too came to Sri Lanka on the same flight with me. Mr Dayaratna told me that Ven Siriratana big-heartedly helped Sri Lankans.

After a couple of days collecting clothes, etc. in Bangkok, I came to the airport to find to my dismay that I had left the small bag containing my cash, cheques and the camera in the hotel. A bhikkhu, who was with me left immediately and gave a call to Ven. Siriratana who arranged for the bag to be delivered to me at the airport. No sooner Ven Siriratana had gone to the hotel than it was given to him. I paid him only the taxi fare. There were cheques etc. worth about Rupees 200,000 in the bag. The venerable bhikkhu whom I had known only for a few days relieved me from great distress. I thank him sincerely. I arrived at the Katunayaka Airport by about twelve noon that day and reached home in a couple of hours. I was with my wife and children once again.



## Chapter IX

### University service – the third eight years

#### Planning for the future in Sri Lanka

I returned to Sri Lanka after serving the Brunei University on January 6, 1991, but my leave ended only on February 1. There were several matters I had to attend to during this period. As the “Batu Sunny” car I had bought after my return from the Netherlands was rather old and had to be replaced. We inquired from various car sales points and one day went to one on Gampaha Road in Yakkala with Mr Tissa Jayawardene, a relative of ours. A person from Prema’s village worked at that car sales point. We selected a Trad Sunny among the cars there and bought it. Podi Putha too joined us on this trip. The new vehicle was air conditioned with “full option”, as they say. So, there was more room and better features. We went on a tour in the new car to Mahiyangana and Minipe between February 2 and 4, 1991.



**Near Rantambe tank**



**February 4 1991, near Rantambe and Minipe tanks with Prema, Podi Duwa and Podi Putha**

Podi Putha was busy with his pilot training from June 1990. During the time I was in Brunei, Prema and Podi Duwa had accompanied him to Ratmalana airport when he had training at night. An essential condition was passing an examination conducted by the Civil Aviation Department. To get a Private Pilot's Licence, it was necessary to pass the relevant examination and complete fifty hours of flight training. He did that and for the Commercial Pilot's Licence, went to England on November 21, 1991 and stayed with Loku Duwa. He passed the examination held by the Civil Aviation Authority in England and came back to Sri Lanka on May 10, 1992. As he had to complete two-hundred hours of flying for a C.P.L. Licence, he continued training in Sri Lanka. After about a year, he fulfilled the requirements and obtained the Commercial Pilot's Licence.



**Podi Putha in Pilot training**

Podi Duwa went for her studies at I.T.S. from home. After completing the required qualifications, she got admission to read for a degree at the Eastern Connecticut State University in the U.S.A. Accordingly, she went there along with some other students, passed her degree, did a job there for about a year, and returned to Sri Lanka in 1995.

I reported for duty again at Sri Jayewardenepura University on February 1, 1991. At the time, the head of the Public Administration department was Dr U.B. Ramanayaka. Later, I was also appointed, to various boards. Permanent lecturers of the faculty were members of the Faculty Board and I was selected by the faculty board as a member of the Senate for a period of three years from January 23, 1991. Later, the Vice Chancellor appointed me as a member of the Board of Management for three years from March 10, 1991 to represent the

Senate. I was appointed, the representative of the Faculty Board in the Research and Publications Committee of the University on December 17, 1991.

## **Affiliated Universities**

By this time, the government had decided to establish affiliated Universities. Mr A.C.S. Hameed of the United National Party was the Minister of Higher Education. The Chairman of the University Grants Commission was Prof. Arjuna Aluvihare. It's Vice Chairman Prof. Balasuriya was responsible for the affiliated universities. Other Universities were not very interested in creating affiliated universities, but the Sri Jayewardenepura University supported it enthusiastically and affiliated universities were established in Sabaragamuwa, Buttala, Rahangala and Anuradhapura. The University Grants Commission appointed Directors for these institutions. Accordingly, Mr W.B. Dorakumbura was appointed Director of the Affiliated University, North Central Province, Mr Dayanada Somasundara Director of the Affiliated University, Sabaragamuwa, Prof. Bamunuarachchi Director of the Affiliated University, Buttala, and a bhikkhu Ven. Sumanatissa as the Director of the Affiliated University, Rahangala Uva. All these Affiliated Universities were linked to the Sri Jayewardenepura University. Later on, such institutes were established in the Western Province, Ampara, Trincomalee and Vavuniya affiliated to other Universities.

These affiliated universities offered two-year Diploma courses. Buttala started a course in food technology, Rahangala in agriculture, Sabaragamuwa in tourism and accountancy, and Anuradhapura in agriculture and hotel management. For each course, the Vice Chancellor of the university appointed an academic coordinator. Accordingly, I was appointed Academic Coordinator for the diploma course in tourism at Sabaragamuwa with effect from October 1, 1991. This appointment was valid until April 1, 1996.

## **Academic Coordinator**

The responsibilities of this post were, preparation of a syllabus for the relevant course, getting the approval of the faculty board, passing it on to the affiliated university for implementation, follow up action, making amendments when necessary and assisting the Director in recruiting the required academic staff. Though my knowledge of this subject was minimal, I accepted it because of the chance it provided me to join a new project. As this course was assigned to the Management Faculty, someone from the faculty itself had to be appointed as Coordinator. Other teachers in the faculty too did not have expertise in the subject. It seems that the faculty authorities decided, that I was the most suitable for this appointment. As Dr. Krishan Deheragoda, senior lecturer in the Geography Department of our University, was an expert in the subject, I invited him to support me. He accepted the invitation graciously and supported me continually. The syllabus was prepared entirely by him. Dr. Deheragoda was a PhD from Sophia University, Bulgaria. His field was geography and tourism. Later on, we took steps to refer the students of the diploma course for training

of about two weeks to Air Lanka. The Sabaragamuwa Affiliated University paid for the training on behalf of the students. Though the students of the following year too requested for this training, it could not be granted for various reasons.

The Board of Management appointed me as a member of the Management Board of the Postgraduate Institute of Management effective from January 3, 1992. This was for a period of three years. When Mr Ramanayaka's term ended in November of that year, I was appointed Head of the Public Administration Department. This was for three years from November 12, 1992. But I resigned from that post on February 16, 1994. At the same time, I was appointed to the post of Student Advisor till December 31, 1994.

After my sabbatical, I taught two subjects in the Public Administration department: Public Administration in Sinhala and English to first year students and Development Administration to the fourth-year students. Both subjects were compulsory. Public Administration was the subject I taught from the commencement of my service in the University. I began to teach Development Administration only after my return from Brunei. I had taught that subject at Brunei University. In fact, I had even brought books needed to teach it.

### **Affiliated University, North Central Province**

By letter signed by Vice Chancellor W.B. Dorakumbura, I was appointed member of the board of management of the affiliated university, North Central Province for the period November 11, 1993 to January 31, 1995. At the time, the Director of this affiliated university was Prof. W.M. Jayaratna. When his term ended, I was appointed to act in the post for a period of three months. I did the work of the affiliated university while teaching at the Sri Jayewardenepura University. I left home early in the morning on Wednesdays and reached office of the affiliated university located on the Jaffna Road, Anuradhapura, by 9.00 a.m. There was an assistant registrar and a woman accountant to assist me in the office. The registrar was one Gamini Ekanayaka from Nikaweratiya, a graduate of Peradeniya University. The woman accountant was from Anuradhapura itself. A house on Air Port Road had been rented out for our accommodation. It was used as a circuit bungalow too. Gamini also lodged in this house.

Hotel management, accountancy, and agriculture were taught at this affiliated university. When I went there, students had staged a protest about examinations. They sat on the corridor of the Director's office daily from nine to ten in the morning displaying slogans. There was no shouting. When a student leader was questioned, he said that a special examination should be held for those who failed the semester examinations. Such special examinations could not be held according to a decision of the directors of the affiliated university. However, my view was that the director of the relevant affiliated university and the board of management should have the authority to solve domestic problems. Accordingly, this matter was tabled at the monthly meeting of the board of management, and with its approval, I decided to hold the relevant examinations. The student protest ended but the directors of other affiliated universities were not happy.

I had to travel to Anuradhapura weekly for about three months. The driver of the vehicle allotted to the Director there had met with an accident and was not in a condition to drive. So, on one occasion, I came to Colombo in that vehicle. I left my home in Thalpathpitiya after lunch for a meeting at the University Grants Commission office. Having parked the vehicle in front of the front gate, I walked to close the gate, when the vehicle moved forward along the road, struck a tree in the garden on the other side and stopped. I lodged an entry at the Mirihana Police Station and sent the vehicle for repairs. Mr Gamini Ekanayaka took action in this regard.

Afterwards, I had to go to Anuradhapura in my vehicle. By that time, I had bought a Toyota Corona on a car permit. To buy it, I had to sell both my Trad Sunny and Batu Sunny. I got Rs. 410, 000/- for the Trad Sunny and Rs. 75,000/- for the Batu Sunny. The vehicle I bought was a diesel one. At the end of three months, I completed my service at the Anuradhapura Affiliated University and Prof. Mendis Rohanadeera took over as Director.

### **Death of Bambaradeniye Nandamma**

Bambaradeniye Nandamma died during my period of service in Anuradhapura. I went for the funeral from Anuradhapura across Kandy to Bambaradeniya. My cousins Dharmasena Aiya and Gunathilaka Malli were also present. Nandamma's second son was living in the *mahagedera* (ancestral house), but he did not participate in his mother's funeral. Dharmasena Aiya and I met him and discussed the matter with him but he was unyielding. A younger son too was resident nearby but he too did not participate in the funeral. I could not understand the hatred they had towards their own mother. This was the first time that I experienced a situation like this in my life.

However, I went with Prema for the almsgiving too. I thought I was obliged to do so because of the kindness and courtesy she extended to me when I was young. After some time, Bambaradeniye Uncle also passed away, and I participated in that funeral too. My connection with the Bambaradeniyas ended with that. Now I meet and talk only with Nanda Akka who lives in Kadugannawa. She is the eldest daughter of Nandamma. She was married to a Police Sergeant named Dasanayaka. He is now dead. Nanda Akka lives with her married daughter in Kadugannawa. When Akka's eldest daughter was preparing for her Advanced Level examination, she lived with us for a brief period in our house on Wijesekera Mawatha, Mirihana. Now she is a schoolteacher. She has two children. The eldest is a son and I am told he is a second-year medical student. Her daughter is studying in the Advanced Level class. Although, I have many such relatives, I meet them only rarely. I do not even know some other relatives of mine.

### **Holiday warrants for my second sabbatical**

I applied for warrants due to my wife and me for my second sabbatical to visit Canada. When I went to meet the Controller of Exchange with a cheque issued by the University, I was told that the Prime Minister's approval was necessary to go overseas. So, I submitted the duly filled forms for the Prime Minister's approval, it appeared that the then Vice Chancellor had removed them from the University office but nothing had happened beyond that. The Vice Chancellor, who was a good-hearted man, had removed the documents to expedite matters by taking them to the relevant offices. Normally he recorded the documents he removed like that in his diary. Because of the pressure of work, he had

completely forgotten about them. I presume that my documents too suffered the same fate.

The documents so forgotten probably find their way eventually into the waste paper basket. He is no longer among the living; so, there is no way to know the fate that my documents suffered.

Somehow, in view of the obstacles I faced in my attempt to get the warrants, I returned the cheque I got to the University. Later, I applied for money for another trip. The University forwarded my application to the University Grants Commission and asked for instructions. Finally, Vice Chancellor Dorakumbura on October 11, 1995 informed me that the Board of Management had decided to grant me full warrants for my next sabbatical. The reason was that because my next sabbatical, which was less than a year, the amount payable to me was less.

## Searching Jobs for My Younger Children

**Podi Putha:** By the end of 1993, he had obtained commercial pilot qualifications. So, we were trying to find a job suitable for him. From time to time, recruitment was made to Air Lanka for vacancies from among the qualified. Only a limited number was recruited though there were many applicants. For selection, interviews as well as flight tests were done. When most applicants have similar qualifications, external influences become a decisive factor. Those factors did not work for Podi Putha as there was nobody known to me in Air Lanka or in high positions in government. So, no appointment could be obtained in 1994.

When applications were called on a later date, eighteen applicants out of forty-eight were shortlisted and eight were appointed in the first instance. Podi Putha was not within that eight. By this time, there was also a change of government. In 1994, the government of the United National Party was ousted and Ms Chandrika Kumaranatunga won the Presidential Elections. In the general elections held thereafter, the United Front headed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party came to power. The Secretary of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party Mr Dharmasiri Senanayaka was appointed Minister of Civil Aviation. I sent a letter to the Hon.Minister giving in detail the injustice caused to some of the applicants because of the lopsided methodology adopted in recruiting pilots for Air Lanka. In the meantime, some newspapers too had exposed certain discrepancies in the recruitment.





**1995 Sinhalese New Year, Thalpathpitiya**



As a result, those applicants who were on the shortlist were called for a separate flight test. For this purpose, a senior pilot was brought from England to conduct the test. Thereafter, some applicants including Podi Putha were appointed as amateur pilots from January 1996. At the time, Air Lanka had Lockheed Tri Star planes. The new recruits were trained as Second Officers in them. Those who completed training successfully were appointed as Second Officers. Podi Putha too got such an appointment on September 4, 1996. Later on, he was promoted First Officer.

In the meantime, 320, 330 and 340 airbuses were bought by Sri Lankan Airlines and the Tri Star planes were sold. Podi Putha was trained to fly those planes, worked for some time in 320 planes and was later promoted to fly 340 planes. During the last few years, he has been working as Captain in those planes. We all are happy that he got the job that he liked. At the beginning when he was under flight training, Prema was not very happy about it, but later she got over her anxiety because she had heard that Podi Putha was a competent pilot.

**Podi Duwa:** After her studies in the United States of America, she returned to Sri Lanka in 1995. As she was unemployed for some time and I got her a job through Mr Gunapala Nanayakkara, Director of the Postgraduate Institute of Management. While she was working there for some time, she applied for a post in the staff grade of the Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation and got an appointment. She worked in a branch dealing with foreign relations and obtained expert knowledge of Re-Insurance. With that knowledge, she later joined the Union Assurance Company. Now she holds a post of senior manager there.



**Three Generations – Chandra, Nirmala, Dineeth, Prema, Savini, Loku Duwa, Myself and Podi Putha, Thalapatpitiya**

## **Loku Duwa and Loku Putha**

**Loku Duwa:** Loku Duwa who went to England for postgraduate training passed her examinations and worked for about two years in hospitals there. Although she got married in 1987, she was blessed with a child only while she was in England. She returned to Sri Lanka at the beginning of June with their firstborn baby born on April 15, 1993. She worked at the Panadura Hospital and travelled from our home. She stayed with us as Prema was at home and could look after her baby. It was no doubt a pleasure for her to look after her first grandson. After some time when they found a nanny, they went to live in Wasantha's (son-in-law) house on Senanayaka Avenue, Nawala. After working for about a year at Panadura, she got a transfer to the Ragama Hospital.

Her second child was born, a daughter, on November 14, 1994. Prema's assistance was necessary to look after her. Loku Duwa went for work leaving her son to be looked after by the nanny and infant daughter by Prema. At that time, we were living in the house we bought in 1992 at Manning Town Housing Complex. So Loku Duwa could, on her way to work, come there, and hand over the baby to her mother. I bought this house with the money I earned in Brunei. Now Podi Duwa is in that house.

At the end of 1996, Loku Duwa migrated to Australia with Wasantha and the two children and found a job in a hospital in Box Hill, a suburb of Melbourne. They were living in a rented house close to the hospital for about one year and later bought a house in Mount Waverly and went to live there. It is better buying a house on a Bank loan in that country rather than living in a rented house because there is not much of difference between the monthly instalment on the loan and the house rent. Moreover, once the Bank loan is settled, the house becomes your property.

To be a Consultant in Australia, it was necessary to pass the relevant examinations. After passing those examinations, she was appointed to a hospital near Brisbane in Queensland, and they went there in August 2000. By then, the two children were going to school and after going to Brisbane, they rented a house in Springwood and lived there. The children were admitted to the John Paul College that was close by. In the process, as the children were admitted to a class higher than in Mount Waverly, each enjoyed a year's advantage. After a few months, they bought a house in Eight Mile Plains and went to live there. The schools of the children also changed. Now they are university students; the son is in his third year and the daughter in her first year. Loku Duwa too changed her place of work and is now working at Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital, in Brisbane.

As mentioned earlier Loku Putha too is now living in Brisbane. They were living in a rented house earlier but now have bought their own house. The floods in December 2011 damaged the house and it had to be completely renovated, before they go back into occupation.

## **The Provincial Public Service Commission, Sabaragamuwa**

Following the political changes in 1994, Mr Saliya Matthew was appointed Governor, Sabaragamuwa Province. The Presidential Elections and General Elections were held in that

year. I met Mr Saliya Mathew and got to know him. The Governor disbanded the Provincial Public Service Commission that consisted of seven members at the time and set up a new Commission instead comprising three members. I was appointed Chairman of the Commission. The other two members were lawyer Mr Manawadu and a retired Deputy Commissioner of Lands Mr Victor Perera. We took our oaths formally before the Governor and commenced work with Mr Andrew Jayamanna as Secretary and Mr Punchinilame as Assistant Secretary.



**Sabaragamuwa Provincial Public Service Commission, Oath's ceremony, 02 June 1995 Lawyer Mr Manawadu, Myself, Governor Mr Saliya Mathew and Mr Victor Perera**

In the meantime, the employees who were removed from service lodged a fundamental rights application in the Court of Appeal. At the time, the President of the Court of Appeal was Hon Sarath Nanda Silva. The matter was taken up for hearing before a bench comprising him and two other members and we had to attend courts on several days. A President's Counsel named Mr Seneviratna known to Mr Manawadu appeared for us and President's Counsel Mr R.K.W. Gunasekea appeared for the petitioners. It was rumoured that the Chairman Mr Gunasekera who was removed from service was the latter's brother. By mid 1996, the verdict was given in favour of the petitioners. Thereafter, we did not report for duty there. The Governor asked me whether I would work as a member of the new Commission but I politely declined. Thus, that episode ended. However, an advantage was that for the first time in my life, I was able to be present in Court and gain some knowledge, albeit scant, of how judges and the lawyers functioned.

## **Heart surgery**

In January 1982, I suffered from a heart ailment and was treated at the Cardiology Unit of the National Hospital, Colombo. The diagnosis card issued on my discharge stated that I had been admitted on January 23 and discharged on January 30, 1982. One Saturday after lunch, I began to perspire profusely accompanied by chest pains. So, I was rushed to the National Hospital in Colombo by Prema in a neighbour's vehicle. At the time Loku Duwa was an intern medical officer working in the National Hospital in Colombo. I had first been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the Cardiology Unit and then, as I gradually became better, was transferred to a general ward. At night, Loku Putha kept vigil at my bedside.

The doctor who attended on me was Consultant Cardiologist Dr Valupillai. The consultants, Dr Upul Wijewardena and Dr Atukorala worked as his assistants at the time. But Dr Atukorala did not go on ward rounds with the other doctors. Dr (Miss) Rohini Karunanayaka was the doctor in the Intensive Care Unit. She is now the Chief Cardiologist of the General Hospital, Kandy, in charge of the Cardiology Unit and is now known as Rohini Tennakoon. Dr Ruwan Ekanayaka worked as the Registrar to Dr Valupillai. He too treated me when I attended clinic.

I had to rest for about three months because of this heart ailment. During this period, I remember Podi Duwa drawing water from the well and bathing me. When water was drying up in our well, Prema took me for a bath at a nearby well. An officer who worked in the Mirihana Police and his mother were living in that house. They had to suffer harassment during the July 1983 troubles. Thereafter, they had given the house to be used as a Christian church. We did not meet those good people again.

My heart ailment worsened only in 1982, but I now think that it has a history. When I was in the Netherlands, I got a severe chest pain and had to rest for a couple of days in my room in the lodging. I took treatment from a doctor who was close by but it was not considered a heart ailment that warranted hospitalisation. But as I realised later, the symptoms were of a minor heart ailment. It may have been dormant, and four years later erupted as a serious disorder. At the time, I was also a heavy smoker, which may have adversely affected me.

Now I do not like even being in the presence of a smoker. Somehow, I had to live with my heart ailment. I attended clinic regularly for treatment. I was admitted to hospital again on November 9, 1984 because of this illness and discharged on November 21. The diagnosis card says that I suffered from ischemic heart disease.

Although I attended to my normal duties, I was taken by Loku Duwa somewhere in August 1995 to the Sri Lankan heart surgeon who had come from England to perform heart surgeries at the Navaloka Hospital as my heart ailment was gradually worsening. We took along with us an angiogram taken by Dr Shantharaj of the Cardiology Unit of the National Hospital. It was like a miniature cinema film. Something like a wire was inserted into a blood vessel in my groin and pushed towards the heart and the blocks in the blood vessels of my heart were recorded in something like a cinema film with the aid of a machine. We showed this to Dr Kulatilaka and asked him why surgery was necessary because I had kept this ailment under control with drugs for about thirteen years. His reply was that if no surgery was performed, I could live only for another year but with surgery, I could live for about at least ten years. So, we decided to go in for surgery. But Dr Kulatilaka could not perform the operation because he was due to leave for England but he said that Dr Hedley Brown who was his teacher, was coming to Sri Lanka. We began to prepare ourselves for surgery by him.

The Navaloka Hospital then charged Rs. 299,000/- for a heart surgery, which included fourteen days stay in hospital and doctors' fees. Loku Duwa was ready to foot the bill but I applied for aid from the President's Fund. I got Rupees 100,000 from the Employees Trust Fund. Therefore, only Rs 1, 75, 000/- was needed from the President's Fund. I told them that I could manage the Rs 25,000/-. Before the grant from the President's Fund was approved, the President's Office made inquiries from the Health Department about the possibility of getting this surgery done at the National Hospital. This was a rather ambiguous question, as heart operations had already started at the National Hospital. I went with my friend Mr Savimon Urugodawatta and met the then Deputy Minister of Health Ms Pavithra Wanniarachchi who told us to meet Mr Dudley Dissanayake, the Secretary to the Ministry. He gave me a letter addressed to the President's Office that the Ministry had no objection to this surgery being done at the Navaloka Hospital. An Accountant of the President's Office was a neighbour of Mr Urugodawatta's. The grant from the President's Fund needs the personal approval of the President. As the basic requirements had been fulfilled, the President's approval was received. Thereafter, a letter was sent to the Navaloka Hospital, that the sum I had asked would be remitted to them. A similar letter had been sent regarding the sum asked from the E.T.F. I paid the balance and met the expenses of the surgery.

After the arrival of Dr Headley Brown in Sri Lanka, we met him and discussed the surgery. The doctor prescribed a regimen for me to follow for one month before the surgery. I had to refrain from sugar, salt, and flour-based food (including rice). So, my food during the month was only steamed vegetables and fish. I also avoided tea. No salt was added to the steamed vegetables and fish. I got used to this food in a day or two. So, the sugar level in my blood dropped and blood pressure was under control.

I entered hospital on November 8, 1995 for surgery. That afternoon the anaesthetist Dr Anil Perera met me and asked for all particulars. Early the following morning, a hospital employee prepared me for surgery. I was taken to the surgery in the forenoon of Thursday,

November 9, 1995. There the anaesthetist Dr Anil Perera gave me an injection while talking to me. I fell asleep in a few seconds. When I awoke, I was on a bed in the Intensive Care Unit. My chest area was bandaged. I felt a great sense of relief in my heart. As a nurse told me, my surgery may have taken about four to five hours. So, I must have awoken at least after seven hours. Until a few hours had passed after I awoke, I did not feel the wounds. After about two or three days, I was transferred to a normal room from the Intensive Care Unit. I was discharged from hospital on November 19. The diagnosis card issued at the time indicates the following:

“Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting x 6 done on 09/11/95

LMA LAD x D1 (Sequential Grafts)

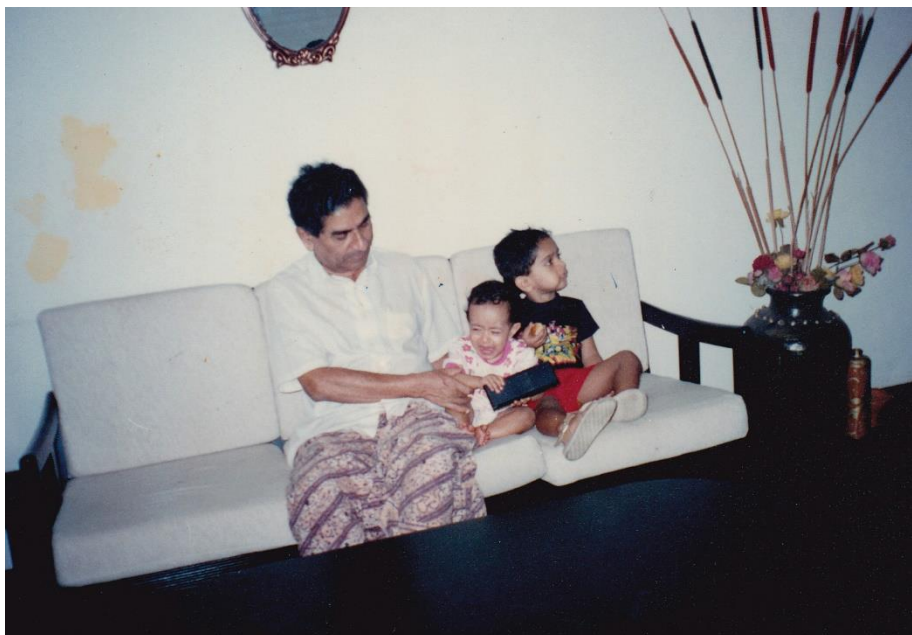
RIMA Distal<sup>®</sup> Coronary

Vein OM1 Om2, Om3 (Sequential Grafts)

Dr. H Brown FRCS, MS

Dr. A. Perera FFARCS

After about a month, I attended clinic and by that time my heart ailment had been cured. The chest pains I got while travelling, never occurred after that. As I write these lines (May 12, 2012), sixteen years have elapsed after the surgery. There are certain difficulties in breathing but no chest pains hitherto. When I underwent this surgery, I had completed twenty-five years in university service. When you add to it fourteen years of government service and five years in corporation service, I had completed forty-four and a half years of public service. At the time, I was sixty-two and a half years of age.



**After Heart Surgery with Savini and Dineeth, Manning Town**



**Nirmala and Loku Putha 1995, Manning Town**



**Podi Putha as Groomsman at the wedding, December 1995**

### **Sarath Gamini Ekanayake**

Prema, Podi Putha and I attended the wedding of Sarath Gamini Ekanayake, a son of my elder brother. The ceremony was held in the Red Cross Hall in Kandy. Podi Putha was the best man. Sarath's bride was Neranjala who was a graduate school teacher. Sarath was a graduate teacher at Gamaima Bandaranaike Vidyalaya, Teldeniya. Neranjala had worked earlier in another school but now both are working in the Gamaima School. Sarath is the

principal there and they live in the school quarters. The next chapter describes the kind favours they granted us.

Now, their daughter Sashi Prabha is preparing for the Advanced Level examination. How fast time flies!

### **Third Sabbatical Leave**

After my heart surgery, we were living in the 'S' block of flats in flat No. B/S/G.6 on the ground floor on Mangala Path in Manning Town. I had bought this flat from the Housing Development Authority in 1992. Prema, Podi Duwa, Podi Putha and I were its occupants. Podi Duwa then held a temporary post in the Postgraduate Management Institute. Podi Putha was training as an amateur airline pilot with Air Lanka.

The Sabaragamuwa University was instituted at this time. Its Vice Chancellor my friend Mr Dayananda Somasundara visited me at home one day and requested me to assist in the work of the University. He said the Uva Province Affiliated University and Buttala Affiliated University would be established with an agriculture faculty and an applied science faculty respectively, affiliated them under the Uva Campus and that I could be appointed Head of the Campus. Even though much time had not passed since my surgery, I agreed to his request, as it was a new experience. Moreover, the proposal would be useful in putting my third sabbatical, to which I would be entitled in a few days, into good use.

### **Post of Head of Uva Campus**

I was appointed Head of the Uva Campus with effect from January 1, 1996. The official vehicle of the Director of the Uva Affiliated University was allotted to me for my use. I was allotted the official quarters at Boralanda (Rahangala) as my residence. As there was a driver for the official vehicle, I could move about without tiring myself. When I went there, the staff consisted of Assistant Bursar Mr Nagahapitiya, Chief Clerk Mr Mendis, Storekeeper Mr Jayasundera, Typist Ms Nandani, English typist Ms Padma, Lecturers Mr & Mrs Amarasinghe, Mr Anil Abeyratna, Mr Prabod Ilukpitiya, Mr Samarajiva, English Demonstrators Mr Dharmasena and Mr Panditharatna. Mr Dambawinna was the Agricultural Overseer. About seven or eight women served under him. The driver of the official vehicle was one Kulasiri. I do not now remember the name of the office employee, but he was a very obedient, quiet person. There was an employee in the official quarters when I went there but he did not seem to enjoy working under me. He left in a few days, so afterwards I got down Kirimudiyanse, a person from Belihuloya for work in the quarters. He cooked my meals well and looked after the household chores with care. There was also a circuit bungalow under the Uva Affiliated University. The keeper there was one Bandara.



One Perera was in charge of the library. It seemed that he considered trade union work as his first priority. An assistant in the agriculture section seemed to have built up rapport with the employees as well as the villagers. He took part even in *pinkamas* in the village temple.

After appointment as Head of the Campus, I should have obtained leave for work there. After reporting for work subsequent to the second sabbatical, five years would be completed in February 1996. Afterwards I was entitled to eight months proportionate leave. During university vacations, it was possible to obtain vacation leave. So, I first applied for vacation leave. The Vice Chancellor, Sri Jayewardenepura University, approved it by letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1996. This vacation leave was valid until May 1996. The period of university holidays was extended from time to time and from 01<sup>st</sup> August 1996, my eight-month sabbatical was approved. So, I could hold the post of the Head of the Campus until the end of March 1997. I was appointed for a period of three years as Head of the Campus and it was an acting appointment. Within the period, the Chairman, University Grants Commission, appointed me as Director of Buttala and Uva Affiliated Universities according to a legal requirement. Afterwards I had to wind up the activities of the relevant affiliated universities and they had to be converted into faculties of the Uva campus of the Sabaragamuwa University.

At the time I went to Boralanda, the Vice Chancellor of the Sabaragamuwa University covered the work of the affiliated university. So, there was no problem entrusting that task to me. But as there were a separate Director and staff at the Buttala affiliated university, some difficulties arose in making the required changes.

### **Buttala Affiliated University**

Prof. Arthur Bamunuarachchi of the Science Faculty of the Sri Jayewardenepura University was Director of the Buttala Affiliated University. He had a Senior Assistant Registrar, an Assistant Bursar and non-academic staff to assist him. There were two courses in this affiliated university in Food Technology and English. The Food Technology course seemed to be of a high standard, the reason being that Prof. Bamunuarachchi was an expert in the subject. However, the administration did not seem to be effective. The Senior Assistant Registrar seemed to do his job as he pleased. They left for the weekend on Friday and came back only on Monday or Tuesday. There was no proper guidance for the staff. So, it was necessary to transfer the Senior Assistant Registrar and the Assistant Bursar in the first instance and allot their work to the relevant staff in the Rahangala Office. I entrusted the daily administration to a lecturer in Buttala and went often to Buttala to manage the work concerned.

Subsequently, we took steps to recruit staff for the Applied Science Faculty. We selected professors and lecturers according to the respective subjects and selected a Dean of the Faculty too. We appointed Mr Mahinda Rupasinghe, the first Dean of the Applied Science Faculty. He had been serving in the Institute of Fundamental Studies, Kandy. Afterwards it was not necessary to go into the work at Buttala minutely. But it took about seven or eight months to get this work done. We selected and appointed a professor and a board of lecturers for the Agriculture Faculty too. This also took a few months. After appointing Professor Jayasekera as the Dean of the Agriculture Faculty and delegating its work to him, I was able to function as the Head of the Campus. Until the Dean was appointed, arrangements were made to cover the duties of the post.

## **Difficulties encountered**

The students of these affiliated universities staged constant protests because of various shortcomings. The Rahangala students put up posters in all the buildings making a variety of demands. Because of this poster campaign, a few hoardings were erected and students limited their posters to them. I told them that indiscriminately pasting posters on all the buildings would result in public censure. I got all the disfigured walls painted anew and posters were limited to the hoardings. Once I told them that as I had come from a poster jungle I would not be scared. Gradually, mutual understanding developed and it was not difficult to work with the students. Even the Buttala students made various demands. When acceptable solutions were provided, it was possible to maintain order.

When affiliated universities without any hostel facilities were turned into campuses, students stage protests demanding all the facilities available in other traditional universities. Our responsibility, as those in charge of management is to resolve such problems as far as possible. With this in mind, I took action to provide hostel facilities as far as possible to students in Rahangala and Buttala Campuses. This was imperative because optional opportunities were rare in these areas. The Vice Chancellor, Sabaragamuwa University, and the Board of Management approved my proposals in this regard without hesitation.

Just like material progress, human resources progress too was crucial. It was necessary to recruit staff for various sections and meet the requirements of those who were already in service. About twelve women in the form of the Rahangala Affiliated University had been working for a long time. Some of them were on the verge of retirement. But they were still on daily pay. The inevitable result of such a situation was that they were paid only for the days they reported for work and were not entitled to leave, etc. Therefore, on a recommendation I made to the Board of Management in November 1996, the payment of monthly salaries was approved. No one had earlier paid any attention to these helpless employees.

The services of two lecturers who served on a temporary basis were about to be discontinued. I advised them to apply when posts of assistant lecturers were advertised, and having made representations to the Selection Boards, I was able to rescue them from their anxiety. When certain vacancies were filled, on the requests made by those who were already in service, I recommended some of them and got approval. A young woman thus recruited to the library later married a lecturer. Now they are overseas. The relative of another person had been recruited as Circuit Bungalow Keeper, Buttala. As he was adept in cooking, the University gave him an appointment after a test. The wife of an office employee had been employed as an office employee. All of them had qualifications well above the required basic qualifications. They are all reportedly doing good work.

I worked as Head of the Uva Campus from 01<sup>st</sup> January 1996 to 25<sup>th</sup> March 1997. Within that period, I was appointed to cover the duties of the Vice Chancellor, Sabaragamuwa University, from 08<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> March 1996. Once a month I had to go to Belihul Oya or to any other place where the meetings of the Board of Management were held. Once, the meeting was held at the Renuka Hotel, Kollupitiya in Colombo. On another occasion, it was held at the FAR INN Hotel in Horton Plains. I suggested that the meeting be held in Horton Plains for the members of the Board of Management to have a look at Rahangala - a ploy adopted for the members to see for themselves the difficulties we experienced in Rahangala. During my

work at Rahangala, I invariably came home to Colombo at the weekends. On my return journey, I sometimes went to Buttala along the Udawalawe Road. Until the work in Buttala was entrusted to the Dean of the Faculty, I went there at least once a week.

Once, I did the trip to Rahangala via Ginigathhena, Hatton, and Nuwara Eliya. When I reached Kotagala after passing Hatton it may have been about 8 a.m. During this time, a comet moved daily over Sri Lanka for a period of about a month. Passing Kotagala, one could see the comet quite clearly. I saw it moving for about five to six minutes. It was a fascinating experience.

During this period, G.B. Ekanayake, Aiya's elder son died in an accident. Prema and I went to Pallewela to participate in the funeral and spent a couple of days there. He was about 47 years of age and the father of three children. In 1950, he suffered from pneumonia in Potawa.

During this time, I went occasionally to schools and meetings of public servants held in Hatton, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Hambantota, Kegalla, Kuruwita, etc. to deliver lectures on the proposals of the then government to delegate power.

I finished my work as Head of the Uva Campus and reported for work in the Public Administration department of the Sri Jayewardenepura University on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1997, on my sixty-fourth birthday. I could continue in university service for another year. In fact, that is why I came from Rahangala. Otherwise, I could have worked in Rahangala until my retirement.

While I was working in Rahangala, members of my family visited me from time to time. Prema occasionally went with me and stayed there. When I left for Rahangala from Colombo, Loku Duwa accompanied me with her two children and stayed there for a few days. Wasantha too came in between. Wasantha met a lecturer, whom he had known when he was in the University, who had come there for lectures. Before Podi Duwa's marriage, Prema, Chandra Nangi and Tissa Jayawardene came to Rahangala once and spent a few days. On their return, I went with them, and on the way, went to see the Bambarakenda Falls. Prof Sirisena Tilakaratna, a teacher of mine and Chairman of the University Grants Commission, visited with his family (wife and two children), lodged in the circuit bungalow, and went to see the Horton Plains.

Whenever I felt lonely, I sometimes went up to FAR INN in the Horton Plains. It took only forty-five minutes to go there from my official quarters by car. When I was there, I took a daily walk-up hill about a couple of kilometres on the Ohiya road. This was a very good exercise for a person who had undergone heart surgery. It took only about an hour to go to Nuwara Eliya from Rahangala. Therefore, I went there too, now and then, during the April season. After the meeting of the Board of Management held in Horton Plains, a few of us went to Nuwara Eliya and had dinner at the residence of Ayagama Vijitha Thera, who was a lecturer at the Sabaragamuwa University. He was a bhikkhu ordained in a Japanese sect.



**Horton Plains with Prema, in front of Rahangala Quarters and Edison Bungalow, Haputhale, 1996**

When I got ready to come back after my service at the Uva Campus, the staff of Rahangala and Buttala held farewell parties for me. The Rahangala staff presented me a large brass lamp. The female employees of the farm presented me two brass vases. The present from the Buttala staff was a large brass wall decoration. To me, who was known as a strict disciplinarian, these presents were very precious.

## Podi Duwa's Wedding



**Podi Duwa's Wedding – 23.05.1997**

The marriage of Podi Duwa took place at the Sashakava Hall in Kollupitiya, Colombo on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1997. She married a young man named Priyantha Premakumara who worked in the Postgraduate Institute of Management. When the marriage was proposed, Priyantha's parents came to our house in Manning Town and arrived at a final decision. Loku Duwa who was in Australia and Loku Putha who was in Singapore came to participate in the wedding ceremony. Little Savini was the flower girl and Dineeth the pageboy. Nela Nangi's daughter was the bridesmaid. Among my relatives were Gunathilaka Malli, Padma Nangi, their two sons, daughter, and a daughter in law, daughter Anula and son Abeyratna. Among Prema's relatives many including her elder sister, two younger sisters, Kudamma's sons Major General Gemunu Kulatunga, Palitha Kulatunga, Brigadier Lakshman Rasaputra, and Keerthi Rasaputra participated in the ceremony. I remember Sarath *Putha* and Neranjala Duwa also attended the wedding.

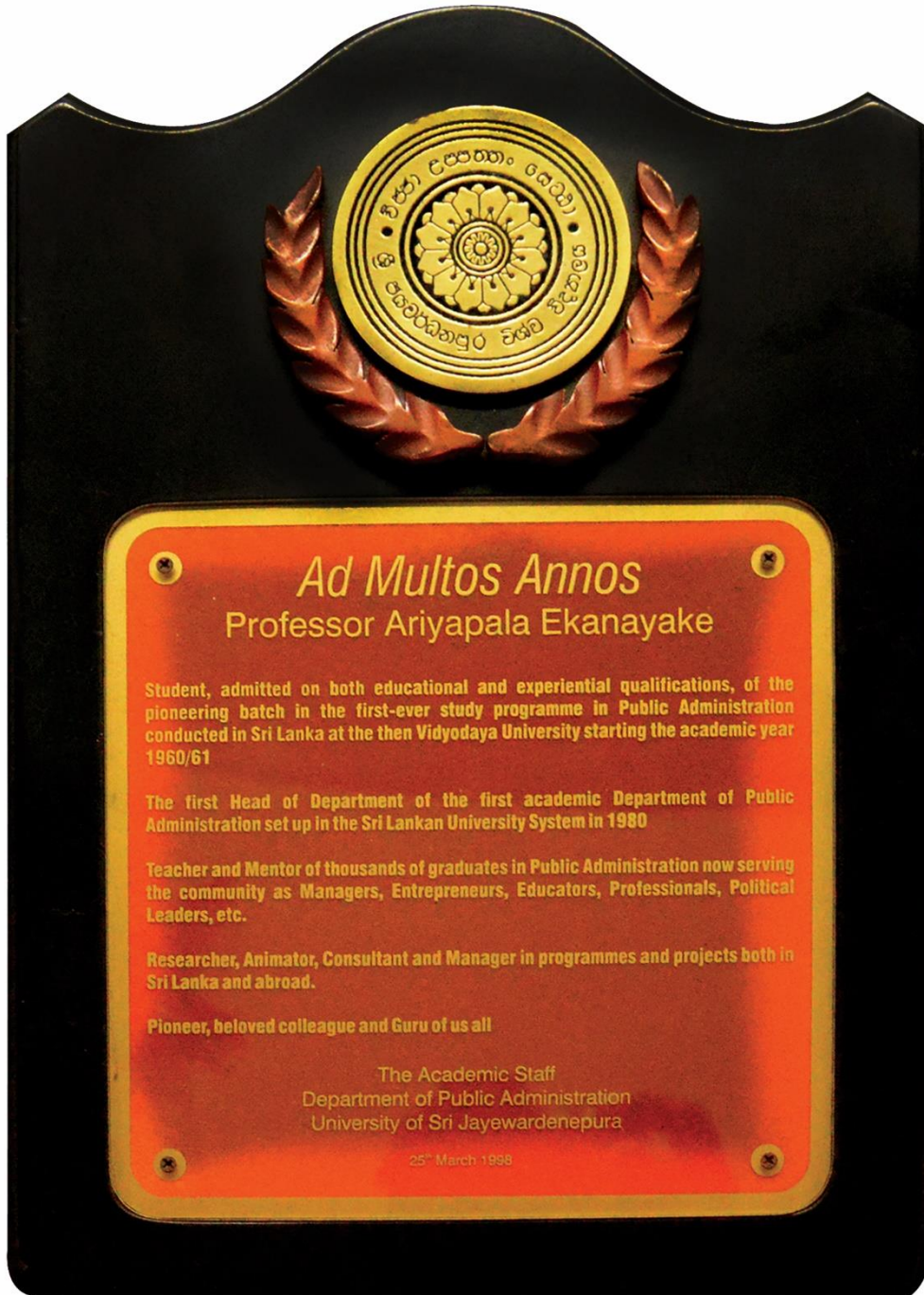
After her marriage, Podi Duwa could have lived in our house in Manning Town but they rented a house in Mattegoda and went to live there. I did not restrain them as I knew from experience that after marriage the couple must independently try to build up a family. Later on, my son-in-law became an Assistant Secretary of the University Grants Commission and on a Chinese government scholarship obtained a doctorate from the Wuhan University and now works as an Additional Secretary of the Commission.

## **Service Prior to Retirement and Retirement**

After my third sabbatical, I resumed work in the Public Administration section for one more academic year of teaching. In that year, I taught Fundamentals of Public Administration to first-year students in the English and Sinhala media. Development Administration was taught to fourth-year students. This academic year ended on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1998. As I would complete sixty-five years of age on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1998, I wrote to the Vice Chancellor on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1998 that I wished to retire with effect from that date. As the academic year ended on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1998, the Vice Chancellor Prof G. Wilson sent me a letter on 23<sup>rd</sup> February informing me that my service would be extended to that date.

In the meantime, the students in my department gave me a farewell party on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1998. I was ready to go into retirement. As recorded in a micro cassette tape with me, the party which went on for about four hours was compered by the young lecturer Mr Harendra Kariyawasam, who showed skills in this field even as a student. The Head of the Public Administration department Ms Chandra Weerasinghe made the welcome speech. Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies & Commerce Dr H.M.A. Herath described what he knew about me for over thirty years. The Director of the Rural Loans Branch of the Sri Lanka Central Bank (later Deputy Governor), Mr W.A. Wijewardena spoke on behalf of the alumni of the Public Administration department. All four persons mentioned here were my pupils. They said that they learnt from me something more than mere subject knowledge. A final-year student spoke on behalf of the students and a group of students sang a complimentary song. Mr Ranukge, a senior officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, delivered a special speech.

My wife, Podi Duwa and my son-in-law Priyantha also attended the function. In my thanks, I said if I had rendered any service, I was able to do so only because of the unstinted support of my wife.



**Ad Multos Annos Presented by The Academic Staff**







**Prema listening to Mr Narendra Kariyawasam, Dr Herath, Ms Chandra Weeresinghe and Mr W.A. Wijewardena, March 25,1998**





**Felicitations by Students**



**Podi Duwa and Son in Law Priyantha**



**In the front row – Dr H.A.P. Abewardena, Ms Janaki Edirisinghe, Lalitha Fernando and Badra Arachchige**



**Farewell Speech**

After retirement from the University service on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1998, I got my provident fund benefits, gratuity, and grants from the Employees Trust Fund within a couple of months. As I was a member of the University Death Donation Society, I could get a sum of Rupees eighteen thousand. I took steps to get my pension due to me for my public service from 15<sup>th</sup> November 1951 to 15<sup>th</sup> June 1965. Now, my only monthly income is that pension. Provident Fund grants deposited in the hope of getting a monthly income is jammed in a financial institution since February 2011.

## Schedule – I

### Vishva Vidyalayadhipathi, Heads of Campuses and Vice Chancellors

#### ❖ Vishva Vidyaladhipathi

1. Weliwitiye Sri Soratha Nayaka Thera
2. Palannoruve Wimaladhamma Nayaka Thera
3. Paravaheera Vajiragnana Nayaka Thera
4. Professor D.E. Hettiarachchi
5. Walpola Sri Rahula Nayaka Thera
6. Professor Hema Ellawala

#### ❖ Heads of Campuses

1. Dr. V.K. Samaranayaka
2. Dr. Chandra Dharmawardana
3. Dr. W.M.K. Wijetunga
4. Professor Tuley de Silva
5. Professor Jinadasa Perera

#### ❖ Vice Chancellors

1. Professor Jinadasa Perera
2. Professor T.B. Kangaha Arachchi
3. Competent Authority Mr. Karunasena Kodituwakku
4. Vice Chancellor Mr. Karunasena Kodituwakku
5. Professor L.P.N. Perera
6. Professor S.B. Hettiarachchi
7. Mr. W.B. Dorakumbura
8. Professor P. Wilson

## Schedule – II

### Deans of Faculties

#### ❖ Faculty of Arts

1. Professor K.P. Mukherjee
2. Professor L.G. Hewage

❖ **Faculty of Management, Education and Commerce**

1. Professor Dharmasena de Silva
2. Professor Sirisena Tilakaratne
3. Mr. K.A. Munasinghe
4. Mr. R.A.A. Perera
5. Mr. Hema Wijewardene
6. Mr. Ariyapala Ekanayake
7. Mr. Jagath Bandaranaike
8. Mr. K.R.M.T. Karunaratne
9. Dr. H.M.A. Herath

**Schedule – III**

**Heads of Departments**

❖ **Department of Economics, Public and Business Administration**

1. Dr. Linus Silva
2. Professor K.P. Mukherjee
3. Dr. Dharmasena de Silva

❖ **Department of Administration**

1. Professor Dharmasena de Silva
2. Mr. K.A. Munasinghe
3. Mr. R.A.A. Perera
4. Mr. K.A. Munasinghe

❖ **Department of Public Administration**

1. Mr. Ariyapala Ekanayake
2. Mr. H.A. Charles Fernando
3. Dr. U.B. Ramanayake
4. Mrs. Chandra Weerasinghe
5. Dr. H.M.A. Herath
6. Mrs. Lalitha Fernando

## Schedule – IV

### Posts Held

#### ❖ Academic Posts

1. Lecturer - 1.10.1970 – 30.09.1976
2. Senior Lecturer - 1.10.1976 – 30.09.1986
3. Associate Professor - 1.10.1986 – 20.04.1998

#### ❖ Administrative Posts

1. Head of Department - 2.5.1980 – 3.7.1986
2. Dean - 4.7.1986 – 26.8.1989
3. Covering up duties in the post of Vice Chancellor:
  - (1) University of Sri Jayewardenepura 16.8.1996-26.8.1996; 1.2.1988-16.2.1988
  - (2) University of Sabaragamuwa 8.3.1996-12.3.1996
4. Acting Director, North Central Affiliated University - 1994 (3 months)
5. Acting Director, Affiliated University, Buttala - 1996 (about 2 months)
6. Acting Director, Uva Province Affiliated University - 1996 (About 2 months)
7. Head of Campus, Uva Campus, University of Sabaragamuwa 1.1.1996-25.3.1997

#### ❖ Other Posts

1. Counsellor, Security Affairs
2. Student Counsellor - 5.6.1975-30.6.1977
3. Hostel Warden
4. Academic Coordinator - 8.10.1991-31.12.1995
5. External Lecturer, Foreign Affairs, Bandaranaike Academic Centre-1985-1988
6. Visiting Lecturer, (University of Brunei) - 6.8.1989-1.1.1991

#### ❖ Memberships (in different periods)

1. Member of Faculty Board
2. Member of Senate
3. Member, Council of Management
4. Member of Management Board, Post Graduate Institute of Management
5. Member, Research and Publications Committee

## Schedule – V

### Salaries and Salary Amendments

1. 1.10.1970 - Rs. 900/=
2. 1.10.1976 - Rs. 1,100/=
3. 1.1.1980 - Rs. 1,550/=
4. 1.1.1982 - Rs. 2,775/=
5. 1.1.1987 - Rs. 3,470/=
6. 1.1.1988 - Rs. 6,400/=, Rs. 7,100/=
7. 1.1.1989 - Rs. 12,250/= (For the post of Associate Professor)
8. 1.1.1996 - Rs. 14,375/=, Rs.14,500/=
9. 1.1.1996 - Rs. 16,500/=
10. 1.1.1996 - Rs. 21,725/= (Head of Uva Campus)
11. 1.1.1997 - Rs. 32,095/75 (Head of Uva Campus) (Revision – 1997)
12. 20.4.1998 - Rs. 34,427/=

## Schedule – VI

### Academic Staff of Department of Public Administration

1. Mr. Ariyapala Ekanayake - A
2. Mr. Gunapala Nanayakkara - \*#
3. Mr. Gunasiri (Deceased)
4. Mr. Sirinimal Vithana - \*#R
5. Mrs. S.L.R. Samaratunge - \*R
6. Mr. H.M.A. Herath - \*
7. Mr. Jagath Wijenayake - R
8. Mr. U.B. Ramanayake - \*
9. Mr. H.A.C. Fernando
10. Mrs. Badra Hewapattuarachchi - \*
11. Mrs. Chandrika Jayaweera - R
12. Mr. Athula Manawaduge
13. Mr. W.M.N. Weerathunge
14. Mr. Ranjith Ihalanayake - \*R
15. Mr. M. Niyaz - R



- |     |                              |   |    |
|-----|------------------------------|---|----|
| 16. | Mr. S.L. Seelanatha          | - | *R |
| 17. | Mr. E.A Weerasinghe          | - | *  |
| 18. | Mr. B.Y.G. Rathnasekera      |   |    |
| 19. | Mrs. Chandra Weerasinghe     | - | R  |
| 20. | Mrs. Lalitha Fernando        | - | *# |
| 21. | Mrs. Wasantha Rajapaksha     |   |    |
| 22. | Mr. M.L. Rupasinghe          | - | *R |
| 23. | Mrs. M.D. Pushpa Kumari      |   |    |
| 24. | Mrs. Geetha Tharangani       |   |    |
| 25. | Mrs. Hemamali Gunathillake   |   |    |
| 26. | Mr. Harendra Kariyawasam     |   |    |
| 27. | Mr. Disa Bandara             | - | *# |
| 28. | Mrs. Sunethrani Amaratunga   |   |    |
| 29. | Mr. Sudath Manjula Amarasena |   |    |
| 30. | Mrs. Nilmini Senanayake      | - | R  |

\* = PhD    # = Professor    A = Associate Professor    R = Resigned

## **Chapter x**

### **Period of Retirement After 1998**

Most of us have to work according to other people's programmes from childhood to retirement. We rid ourselves of such inconveniences only after retirement. Although I was requested to teach in the University even after my retirement, I did not like to lose the chance I got to work to my own programme. Besides, if I had accepted the request to teach the subjects I taught, it would have deprived a young lecturer of a chance of employment for that purpose. It was not good for the department. Above all, it was not correct to keep Prema, who devoted herself to my children and me all her time, alone. For all such reasons, I did not accept any requests after my retirement that would have made me work to others' programmes leaving, Prema alone at home. By this time, our children also had left us. Podi Putha was not yet married, but he had built his own house and was living there. Therefore, Prema and I were free to work and live the way we liked.

Left to ourselves in our house at Thalapatpitiya, we began to look after each other's well-being more closely. We took care to protect ourselves from sicknesses that invariably accompany the ageing process, take necessary medical precautions and lead relaxed lives. In the meantime, we paid a visit one day to an old friend of ours, Piyadasa, in Alawala, his birth town. We had not gone there after we attended his wedding some forty years ago. When we went to his house and made inquiries, we met Mr Piyadasa's elder brother in that house. He told us that our friend was living in Kurunegala. I got his telephone number and as soon as I came home, gave him a call. He gave me his address. We went there shortly afterwards. My friend and his wife received us with open arms and gave us lunch too. We also met Mr G. Samarasinghe, an amateur technical officer whom I knew when I was in Minipe. He was living in a house in front of Mr Piyadasa's. A daughter of his was married to the elder son of Mr Piyadasa's. We were told that they were living in Melbourne, Australia. Our Loku Duwa and her family were then resident in a suburb of Melbourne. This was a delightful occasion for all of us who met after a long time. We set off on our return journey at about four in the evening with the promise that we would come again.

#### **Foreign Trips**

##### **First Australian trip**

Within five months of my retirement from university service, Prema and I once went to Australia using travel warrants due to me for my sabbatical. By this time, our Loku Duwa and her family were living in Box Hill, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia. Loku Duwa was working in a hospital there, and my son-in-law was working in a property sales institute. Dineeth, the elder of their two children, had started going to school. But their daughter was still a child of three years of age. When parents went for work, she was left in a day care centre.

On November 29, 1997, we left for Singapore by Air Lanka from Katunayaka. As our Loku Putha was living in Singapore at this time, we spent a couple of days with him and on December 2 left for Melbourne, Australia on a Qantas Airlines flight, which leaves Singapore by eight in the night. It was about a seven-hour flight. So, when we reached Melbourne Airport, it may have been about five in the morning, Melbourne time on December 3. There was a difference of about two hours between Singapore time and Melbourne time. After going through emigration formalities and collecting our baggage, we came out of the terminal and found Wasantha waiting for us.

We reached home after a drive of about half an hour. Our only grandson Dineeth and our only granddaughter Savini seemed to be very pleased over our arrival. Dineeth, who was about to leave for school, wished that I accompanied him, so I got in with him into the car driven by Wasantha. After a trip of about fifteen minutes, we came to the Blackburn Primary. Dineeth went with me to his class and introduced me to the lady class teacher. After exchanging the usual pleasantries, she introduced me to her class as Dineeth's grandfather. My little grandson seemed delighted.

Back home, I took a wash, had breakfast, went to our room and relaxed. I remember that Loku Duwa and Wasantha had taken leave on that day. As Wasantha had asked me to buy a small video camera from Singapore, I took it along with me to Melbourne. With that, I videoed our grandson and granddaughter dancing and singing. When I showed them to Savini, she seemed to be overjoyed.

As time permitted, Loku Duwa and my son-in-law took us sightseeing around Melbourne. One day, we were taken to the highest building in the centre of Melbourne city. When you go into the observation chamber on the top, you enjoy a panoramic view over the city up to the horizon. There was also a film show depicting Australia of a hundred years ago. On another occasion, we went to the zoological gardens in Healsville. We could see animals indigenous to Australia -kangaroos, koalas, platypus, etc. and various species of birds. The koala is like a small bear perch among Eucalyptus trees. Their food is the leaves of the tree. They always seem like sleepy and move rather laboriously. The kangaroo is an animal indigenous to Australia and is omnipresent there. Platypus is a quite a small aquatic animal. It is like a small tortoise but it has no shell. A small wild dog like a fox was also seen.

On this trip, we got facilities on our air ticket to go to Sydney from Melbourne and come back. It is an additional service provided by the Airlines now. So, Prema and I went to Sydney on December 18,1997 and went sightseeing by bus from the airport. We saw the Sydney harbour, Opera House, Parliament, and the Monorail, etc. Our return journey was scheduled for nine in the night, but as we were tired, we went to an office of the airlines, got it changed to a flight at six in the evening, and went to the Sydney Airport. We reached Melbourne Airport in about an hour and went to Box Hill by train. Wasantha came to the railway station and took us home.



**At the Katunayake Airport**



**Singapore Airport**



**Heallsville Sanctuary 1997 December**



**Box Hill House Dineeth and Savini**



**Sydney Botanical Gardens 18.12.1997**

### **City of Darwin**

As I had to report for university service again, we set off on our return journey on December 24, 1997. At the time, Mr M.L. Rupasinghe, a lecturer in our department was in the Northern Territory University in Darwin reading for his PhD. He was living there with his wife and two daughters. So, we came back via Darwin. On December 24, we left Melbourne Airport, and via Adelaide Airport (southern end of Australia), we came to the city of Darwin in the northern end. As the trip was during the day, we were able to view at least some of the geographical diversity of Australia. The trip from Adelaide to Darwin, which was about four hours, was over desert and arid jungle. There was heavy rain when we reached Darwin Airport accompanied by high humidity and constant sweating.

Mr Rupasinghe had come to the airport in a friend's vehicle. He escorted Prema and me to his home, and after we rested for some time in the room allotted to us, he took us to another house for lunch. I was told that the house belonged to a son-in-law of Dasa Mudalali. Some other Sri Lankans also were gathered there. The young owner of the house and his young wife gave us a warm welcome. I also met a son of Mr Somasiri, a telecommunications officer whom I met in Brunei. All of them entertained us quite cordially. Perhaps the occasion was one for them to get together. Christmas fell the following day. We went to see places of interest in the city of Darwin. A special feature was the Kangaroos that frequent the open and the Australian Aborigines who gather in shops. The appearance of these Aborigines is similar to that of ancient humans, not like Sri Lankan Indigenous people.

We spent the nights of December 24 and 25 in Mr Rupasinghe's house. In between, we visited Mr Rupasinghe's University too. There we met a young Pakistani professor, who was Mr Rupasinghe's supervisor. We came to Darwin airport in the afternoon of December 26 and came to Singapore on a Qantas flight coming from Cairns. That trip too probably took about five hours. It was early in the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> when we came to Colombo on an Air Lanka flight from Singapore. A fact that needs to be mentioned about Darwin is that it is where Brunei Sultan's dairy farm is located and that Sri Lankans in Brunei after finishing their service come to Darwin and settle down there.



**Coming back to Srilanka Decmber 26, 1997**

### **Second Australian trip**

My second trip to Australia was after my retirement. As Podi Putha was working as a pilot in Air Lanka by then Prema and I, as his parents, got the opportunity to travel free of charge to Air Lanka destinations. This time on our Australian trip, we got those facilities only up to Singapore. We went to Katunayaka Airport on December 23, 1998 to go to Singapore but as no seats were available on that flight, we had to go home and come back the following day. Seats were allotted to those who travel free of charge only if there are vacant unsold seats. We went to Singapore on December 24, spent that night in Loku Putha's home and left for Melbourne the following day by Qantas flight leaving Singapore Airport at 8.00 p.m. We reached Melbourne early in the morning on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Wasantha had come to the Airport. Still, they were residing in the house in Box Hill. This time we spent one month in Australia. In the meantime, there was a change of residence. Loku Duwa bought a house in Mount

Waverly and went to live there. Even if you get a bank loan and buy a house, the monthly instalment on the loan is equal to the house rent. After the settlement of the loan, you are left with an asset. If necessary, it may be sold later. Therefore, most of the people in Australia are living in their own houses. Only those on a short-term basis are living in rented houses. Although they went to live at Mount Waverly, Loku Duwa worked in the Box Hill Hospital. But Dineeth had to go to a different school. He was admitted to Mount Waverly North Primary, which was within walking distance from home. Granddaughter Savini was admitted to a nursery school. As there were two cars at home, travelling posed no problems.



**Box Hill Hospital**



**Waiting for the Penguins**

This time, when Wasantha and Loku Duwa could find the time, we went to several faraway places. Once, we went to a place called Phillip Island and spent a few days in a holiday home. We went to see a place in the island where Penguins live. The animals that swim in the sea searching for food during the day come to the shore as night falls to their resting places. Tourists come to this area to witness this marvel. There are platforms built for



tourists to wait until the Penguins appear on the shore. This event ends by about eight or nine in the night.

One day from Phillip Island, we went to Wilson's Promontory in the southern end of Australia. The trip takes about four to five hours along a road across an arid jungle area. On our return journey, we crossed over on a floating bridge and went to see the area that had been subject to sea erosion known as Twelve Apostles. Remains of limestone stacks eroded by the seawater resembling human beings are referred to as apostles. It took about five or six hours to come past the spot to the city of Melbourne.

As Ramani and Tissa living in Clayton had invited us to dinner, we went there by about nine in the night. They invited us several times for meals. Chandrika too treated us in that manner several times.



**In Melbourne City with Ramani and Chandrika**

On another occasion, we visited Ballarat where there had been ancient gold mines. Now there is no gold there and the city of the nineteenth century is conserved. Horse carriages run back and forth on the roads. The coachmen are dressed in ancient period costumes. There is a restaurant too that is a replica of an old one. Caverns dug for gold are maintained as tourist attractions. We also visited open zoological gardens in a place called Weribee. It covered a large area of land and the animals were allowed to roam freely in the area. We were able to see large animals like lions, leopards, rhinoceros, camels, giraffes, zebras, buffaloes, etc. The tourists were taken to see the zoo by bus, not on foot.

Loku Duwa and her family and many others known to us went to the Dandenong temple. It is a suburb about half an hour journey from Mount Waverly. Ms Chandrika Jayaweera (nee de Alwis) who worked in our department for some time and her husband were *dayakas* (benefactors) of this temple. We often met the husband of lecturer Kanthi Samarasinghe at this temple.

A friend of Wasantha's Mr Pushpasiri and his wife were also living in a house near the city of Dandenong. Pushpasiri's father-in-law was one Mahawala. He had been working in the Co-operative Department in Sri Lanka. The senior Sri Lankans who were living in the environs of Dandenong met once a week in a Municipal Council club for lunch. As Prema and I too got an invitation to participate, we went by bus from Mount Waverly and spent the day with them. There we met an elder named Ekanayake. They were all schoolteachers in Sri Lanka and had migrated to Australia with their children. On a day when these senior citizens met, some artists including Lucian Bulathsinhala, Anula Bulathsinhala, their son, daughter-in-law, and Rodney Warnakula came there and entertained us with their singing, etc. They had come to Melbourne to hold a musical show, which was held in another place in a school hall.

This time we set off on our return journey to Sri Lanka on January 29, 1999. We were in Loku Putha's house in Singapore, left by plane for Sri Lanka on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and reached Katunayake early in the morning on the 31<sup>st</sup>. As we both were still living in the house at Thalpathpitiya, Podi Duwa and my son-in-law Priyantha looked after the house and the car for about one month.

### **The third Australian trip**

By the time, we left for Australia for the third time, Air Lanka had begun its flights to Sydney. Podi Putha who worked as a pilot with Air Lanka was entitled to free tickets for his parents. Therefore, we were able to travel to Australia on a direct flight from Colombo to Sydney. Another facility we had was that, if seats were available, we could travel Business Class, which provided enough space to stretch our limbs. And there was no crowding. There was also a visible change in the provision of meals. When going on trips by air, Prema and I always ask for vegetarian diet. Now liquor is served before meals free of charge on almost all airlines, if required. When I went to the Netherlands in the first instance, liquor was served on payment. But as competition among airlines increased this was dropped. As recognised by many, meals provided in Air Lanka flights are of a high standard.

This time we went to Australia on December 5, 1999. The flight left Katunayaka Airport at five in the morning. Breakfast was served about an hour and a half later. Then, the lights within the cabin were dimmed letting anyone sleep if they wished. Even the air hostesses seemed to rest for about four hours. Lunch was served at about twelve thirty Sri Lankan time. By then, the flight had entered Australia from the area called Broome in the north-west end of Australia. Now the plane was travelling towards the sea at the southern end of Australia past an arid area in the south of Western Australia. This area reportedly consists of large mineral deposits. Iron, coal, as well as petroleum were available in the area. When you approach the southern sea beach, you could see virgin forests. The city of Perth in Western Australia is near the Fremantle Harbour, an ancient shipping centre.

The plane, which fly towards the southern sea beach, then turn east and fly straight to Sydney. By this time, Australian time was about three in the afternoon. There are several time zones in the Australian continent. The time in Western Australia (zone) is two and a half hours ahead of Sri Lankan time, viz. the sun rises in Perth two and a half hours before Colombo. The time difference between Melbourne, Sydney and Sri Lanka is four and a half hours. But during summer, the clock is put back by one hour and the time in Sydney and Melbourne is five and a half hours ahead of Sri Lanka. Therefore, our plane reached Sydney

at about seven thirty in the night, Sydney time. In Sri Lankan time, it was two in the afternoon. The flight from Colombo to Sydney takes about ten hours. To us who were on the plane, our lunch ends at about six in the evening Australian time (by Sri Lankan time, at about one or two thirty in the afternoon). The flight would reach Sydney Airport in another one hour or so. In these airports, which are the busiest, air traffic consists of international flights as well as domestic flights to various places in the country. At the Sydney Airport, after immigration and emigration formalities, it is necessary to collect your baggage. No plants or uncooked food whatever is allowed to be imported to Australia from foreign countries. Therefore, the customs check is stringent. Every travelling bag has to be opened and shown. The customs declarations must be accurate. After these formalities, you go to the internal flights counter. Prema and I took a Qantas flight to Melbourne. We handed over our baggage, got our boarding passes, and proceeded to a separate terminal. After some time, the doors were opened to board the plane. After about a one-hour flight, we reached Melbourne Airport at about nine-thirty in the night. When we reached the house at Mount Waverly in Wasantha's car, it may have been about ten thirty or eleven. Having been awake the whole of the previous night and the day, we wanted nothing but a wash, something to eat and go to sleep.

This time we spent about four months in Australia. So, we got the chance to do many more things than on the earlier visits. I shall describe some of the important things, not chronologically but as they come to my mind. It was when we were there, that the twentieth century ended and the twenty first century dawned.

It was the second year since Loku Duwa and her family moved to Mount Waverly and the second year of our grandson Dineeth at Mount Waverly School. It was the first year of granddaughter Savini's Primary School. No sooner she returned from school she sat down to her homework set for the next day. She displayed the temperament of a person carrying an onerous responsibility on her head. She appeared relieved after finishing her allotted work. When asked about the school, she replied that when pupils enter the classroom or come out of it, she always gets priority. The class teacher had told the other pupils that Savini was a V.I.P. Therefore, she always got preferential treatment over other pupils, the reason being that she had fallen off a shopping trolley in a trade complex when she was young and suffered a disability. This event helped to build the self-confidence of this small child. Despite her physical disability, she showed that she was extremely clever in her studies.

My grandson never took anything seriously at the time. He was quite active when young. Even when he went to another's house, he preferred sliding along the arms of a seat rather than be seated. After he went to the Mount Waverly house, his behaviour became much more aggressive than in the Box Hill house, as there was more space and furniture. There was enough room within the house and in the courtyard to run about. He could go to school from home in five minutes even on foot. Normally, Wasantha took the two children to school almost daily. One day when they went with me to school, Savini fell down and got hurt her knees. I was told that the schoolteacher gave her first aid in school. Afterwards, Savini was wary of walking.

On our earlier visits to Australia, we travelled in Loku Duwa's Mitsubishi Gallant car. The law in that country is that only five including the driver are allowed to travel in a vehicle like that. With the four in Loku Duwa's family, Prema and I added up to six. Wasantha had sold

his small car and bought a seven-seater. We went in it even to distant places such as Adelaide. More of that later.

An important event this time was meeting my friend Mr M.K. Piyadasa and his wife. Mr Piyadasa and I worked in the Minipe Irrigation Office once. He was my best man and a witness at my marriage. I have already mentioned about the trip I made to Kurunegala, where he lived in his retirement. He had come to visit his elder son, who was living in some place in Melbourne. Prema and I went from Mount Waverly via Melbourne by train to his elder son's house. The trip took about an hour. We were treated to delicious tea with sweets brought from Sri Lanka. Later, Mr Piyadasa visited us too with his elder son. Noticing that he was somewhat uncomfortable, when asked, said that he had been suffering from a stomach ailment for a long time. I came to know that they had returned to Sri Lanka after a few days.

A few male and female lecturers of the Sri Jayewardenepura University were living in various places in Melbourne. Ms Kanthi Samarasinghe was a lecturer in the Property Management Department and was at Melbourne University for postgraduate studies. She was living in a place to the east of the city. Ms Ramani Samaratinga of the Public Administration Department was reading for her PhD at the Monash University. She was living with her husband Mr Tissa Rajapaksa and two children in Clayton near the Monash University. Another lecturer Ms Chandrika Jayaweera was living with her husband (Mr Alwis) and two children near Clayton. Both Ramani and Chandrika were my pupils. I am told that Ms Ramani Samaratinga is now a professor at Monash.

Lecturer Mr Navaratana of the Business Administration department who went for postgraduate studies before all the others was living there with his wife and a brother of hers. He had met with an accident and was getting aid from the Social Services department there. His wife was employed. When we went to Box Hill on an earlier occasion, they invited us to dinner. Mr Navaratna's brother-in-law took us there and brought us back. Mr Navaratna had built his own house and had an infant child too. If they were in our country what would be their plight? It would have been a life dependent on the mercy of others.

A group of Sri Lankans, who lived in the area that Ms Kanthi Samarasinghe lived, invited us (Prema and me) for a one-day excursion to the Great Ocean Drive. We were dropped at Kanthi's house by Wasantha, and from there, about fifteen or twenty of us went by bus from Melbourne along a road by the sea beach, reached the resort, and had lunch. Afterwards we travelled further, reached a certain spot by the beach, and relaxed. When we returned, Wasantha came and took us back to Mount Waverly.

On this trip, we went to see a cricket match in Adelaide. We went from Melbourne to Adelaide in Wasantha's seven-seater wagon, a distance of about six hundred kilometres. We left home at about nine in the morning, had our lunch on the way, and reached the holiday home at Adelaide by about eight in the night. A room for Prema and me and a larger room for the four in Loku Duwa's family had been reserved in the holiday home.

The Sri Lankan cricket team on their trip to Australia played a triangular limited over match at the Adelaide Oval. During this series, as umpire Darrel Hair repeatedly no-balled our bowler Muttiah Muralidaran, our captain Arjuna Ranatunga protested strongly and

threatened to leave the ground causing pandemonium. That day only Wasantha had gone to see the match and I saw the incident on TV.

Another match with England was to be played at the same grounds two days later. After meeting few Sri Lankan friends in the house of a friend of Wasantha's and lunch, all of us went to see the match that started in the afternoon. Even on that day, when Darrell Hair behaved as on the previous day, a protest was made. The captain of the English team Michael Atherton did not like it. If I remember right, Mahela Jayawardena scored a century in the match, which I believe was the first century he scored in an international match. Aravinda de Silva who suffered a leg injury a few days earlier at the Melbourne grounds did not play in the Adelaide match.

We spent that night in the Holiday Home and set off on our return journey the following day at about nine in the morning. In the meantime, we went sightseeing in Adelaide. After passing the Adelaide urban area, the main road runs across arid land. The container transport trucks that you met on the way drove very fast and it was difficult to drive past them. Along that main road, there were special areas for overtaking other vehicles. In areas where overtaking vehicles were going in one direction, the vehicles going in the other direction drive on one lane. When you pass about five kilometres, you find the overtaking area for vehicles going in the other direction. So even if vehicles are driven at excessive speed, it is rarely that accidents occur. When you enter urban areas, the speed must be reduced to fifty or sixty kilometres. On the Highway, the speed limit is one hundred kilometres. After a very long journey, we reached Mount Waverly at about nine in the night.

While Prema and I remained at home, Loku Duwa and her family went on a tour of a few days to a remote place called Griffith in New South Wales. A doctor named Wijeratna, who was married to a sister of Wasantha's, was working in a hospital in that city. Wasantha's elder brother Lal Liyanagama and his family (Kumudu and their two children) came there and then to Melbourne. The two children came in Wasantha's van and Lal and Kumudu by train. The Mount Waverly house had enough room for them too to stay. With that family, we went to Phillip Island again, and lodged at the same holiday home as on the earlier occasion. Two vehicles were needed for the journey: Wasantha's van and Loku Duwa's car.

Lal's family went to see the penguins. Following day in the afternoon, we went by boat in the nearby sea to see the Sea Lions, a kind of large fish. There was a fine beach near the harbour there. We spent one pleasant day there with our children. Next day on our way back home, we had lunch at a restaurant and by evening reached Mount Waverly. On another day, we climbed up to the summit of the Dandenong Hill. At the top, you are rewarded with a panoramic view of the surroundings. We celebrated the dawn of the new millennium with all of them. After a few days, Lal's family returned to Sri Lanka.

### **Canberra tour**

On this visit too Prema and I participated in the Sri Lanka Senior Citizens' Association that meets weekly at the Public Hall in Dandenong. This removed the monotony of being isolated at home to some extent. Once, they organised a three-day outing. Mr Amarasekera, who studied for the degree with me at the Vidyodaya University, played a leading role in organizing it. He was living in Australia. About twenty to thirty Sri Lankans went on a bus

belonging to a Sri Lankan youth. Some of those we met were Mahawela, Ekanayake and their wives.

By the time we left Melbourne, it was past noon. Having collected the necessary food and drink from a trade centre on the way; we went a little distance more and took our lunch at a tourist resting place. I recently found with me a photograph taken on the occasion. We set off on our journey after lunch and reached a tourist holiday home in Canberra as night fell. Although the road was interspersed with hills and slopes, travelling was not arduous. There were facilities in the holiday home to cook our meals and to sleep. The participants themselves did the cooking.



**On the way to Canberra**

After breakfast the following morning, we went sightseeing in Canberra, the capital of Australia. We got the opportunity to see the Parliamentary sessions too. Both chambers of the House of Representatives were accommodated on two sides of the same building. Its architecture is exceptional. An outsider would see a hill that looked like a turf. The Parliament building looks as though it is built within that hill.

To spend the night, we went to the region known as Wollongong. There on a hill was a Taiwanese Buddhist Centre. On the top of the hill was the Buddhist monastery, and just by it, on a lower plane was a restaurant. About a hundred meters away at a lower level, there was a hotel. The tourists (pilgrims) who go there can occupy rooms in it. It was a place that was maintained neatly and methodically. The day we went there, we got our dinner and breakfast the following day from the restaurant. Before breakfast, we participated in the morning temple offerings.

Our return journey was by the Sydney-Melbourne main road. It passed the beach and then through highland jungle. I do not remember now, where we took our lunch on that day. On

the way, we had to use “jungle toilets” a couple of times (This is common even among people who go on pilgrimage to India). We reached Dandenong by about eight in the night. Mr Mahawela’s son-in-law Mr Pushpasiri (a friend of Wasantha’s) gave Prema and me a lift in his car to Mount Waverley. Mr Mahawela also came with us and went back. His death occurred in Australia. At the time we were back in Sri Lanka, his body was brought to Sri Lanka and buried in Anniewatta in Kandy. We also attended the funeral. During his lifetime, we met Mr Mahawela for the last time during parties held by senior citizens.

One evening Prema called me to join her on her constitutional walk. As I was not willing, she got out alone and went for her walk. As she did not return even after about an hour, Wasantha and I went by car along all the nearby roads looking for her. We went along those roads several times and returned thinking of informing the Police, when we met Prema on another road. When we asked her what had happened, her reply was that she was unable to find the road home. This was of course the truth. Even a person well accustomed to the place sometime loses his way. As she usually went out with me, there was no necessity for her to remember roads. During my first days in Mount Waverly, even I lost my way. After this, Prema never went out alone.

Within this period, Loku Duwa and Wasantha took us sightseeing to places of interest in various areas. Once we went to another mountainous area. That was a one-day tour. It was very cold there and was known to be a region where snow fell.

During this period, Loku Duwa completed the examination needed to practice medicine in Australia. Although she had passed examinations in England and Ireland and worked as a medical specialist in Sri Lanka, it was necessary to pass the relevant examinations in Australia to get that status there. Otherwise, you have to work as an amateur for a very low salary. The convocation after passing the examination in Australia was held at the beginning of May 2000. As we had to come back to Sri Lanka on April 22, we could not participate in it. Wasantha sent a video recording of the convocation to me.

On April 22, 2000, we took a Qantas flight from Melbourne to Sydney. Our Srilankan flight was scheduled to leave Sydney at about 8.30 p.m. It was a direct flight and reached Katunayaka by about 3.30 a.m. the following day. As the return journey was at night, it was not as strenuous as the journey from Colombo to Sydney.



**Liyanagama Family**

### **A child is born to Podi Duwa**

After Podi Duwa's marriage, she rented a house in the housing complex at Mattegoda and lived there. Her Punchi Amma (Chandra Nangi) lived with her husband Tissa Jayawardene in a house they had bought in front of Podi Duwa's house. It was Tissa who found the house for her. She worked in the Head Office of the Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation. Priyantha (son-in-law) worked at the Postgraduate Management Institute. The couple rode to work daily on his motor bicycle.

While Prema and I were in Australia for the third time, we came to know that Podi Duwa was pregnant. We all were glad about the news that came after about two and a half years of marriage. As it was not advisable to travel from Mattegoda, she asked for my house in Manning Town. I agreed. They left the house at Mattegoda, came with their belongings, and took occupation of the house in Manning Town. Even in that house the necessary furniture, etc. was available. Afterwards, it was easy for Podi Duwa to get about and consult doctors, etc.



When we came to Sri Lanka at the end of April, she was about five months pregnant. When her delivery was approaching, she suffered from constant fever but nevertheless went to work. Finally, she entered the Castle Street Hospital for Women in August 2000 for treatment, and her child was born on August 22. However, the infant baby had to be kept in a cubicle in the Intensive Care Unit. Podi Duwa's fever did not leave her either. The opinion of the Consultant Gynaecologist was that it was difficult to save the life of the baby. In about a week the baby, named "Apoorva" died. The interment was done at the Kanatta Cemetery in Colombo. Podi Duwa was admitted to the National Hospital for treatment. She recovered in a couple of days and left hospital.

Loku Duwa, who was awfully shaken by this incident, sent two air tickets for Podi Duwa and Priyantha to go to Australia at the end of September. As the Olympics were held in Sydney at this time, the two of them went there and later to Brisbane. At this time, Loku Duwa and her family were living at Springwood. We were told that they toured places such as Toowoomba. They returned to Sri Lanka after about a couple of weeks and got back to their normal routine. Annually, they help in childcare homes, etc. to transfer merit.

### **Other events**

The son of Punchi Aiya, a brother of Prema's is in the Police service. We were invited to his wedding. The ceremony was held in a reception hall at Nupe Junction, Matara. Prema and I attended the ceremony. My car was giving trouble at the time, so I went with Harris, a younger brother of Prema's, and got it attended to at garages in Nupe and Pamburana, Matara. I remember that most of the relatives had dinner at Harris' house on the day of the ceremony. After midnight, a few of us went to a night boutique in Broadway, Matara, ate *roti*, drank tea, and came back.

The following day Prema and I left Matara at about eleven in the forenoon and began a tour of a few days. We had lunch at the Hambantota Rest House, located on elevated ground overlooking the beautiful fisheries harbour and the sea. We spent an hour or so there and continued our journey. Our next stop was Bandarawela. We reached Bandarawela at about five in the evening having passed Wellawaya, Koslanda, Beragala, and Haputale. After Koslanda, we had to pass a place where the main road had eroded. As no rooms were available in the Bandarawela Rest House, we lodged in a house belonging to the Rest House Keeper. The house was used as a Holiday Home. We spent the night in that house in Bandarawela.

Our next destination was Badulla. I had spent two years in Badulla about forty years ago when I was working in the Irrigation Department. We got a room at the Badulla Rest House and spent two days there. We went here and there in my car to see the old familiar places.

The most important stop was at the Muthiyangana Vihara where we worshipped as we pleased. After two nights at the Badulla Rest House, we continued our journey. That day we went across Dunhinda Falls, Meegahakivula, Karametiya, Mapakada and Mahiyangana. In the years 1973/74, I had often gone to Komarika, Meegahakivula. We went in my vehicle along the Ketawatta main road to those places.

Having worshipped at the Mahiyangana Vihara, we had lunch at the Rest House in the New Town. After resting for about one hour, we set off towards Kandy. We came to Teldeniya (old Karaliyadda) passing Pallewatta, Hasalaka, Gurulupotha, the eighteen bends, Tispaha,

Panawelulla, Tammitiyana, Tawalantenna, Kovilmada, Udadumbara (Madugoda), Hunnasgiriya, Medamahanuwara (Urugala), Moragahamula, and Rambukwella. We spent the night at the new Rest House in Teldeniya. Had we proceeded about a kilometre or so from that point onwards we could have gone to Sarath's guru *nivasa*. But on this trip, we did not wish to bother our relatives. We could have saved money that way, but our wish was to relax in places we have not been to before.

Our last retreat was the old Rest House, Kadugannawa. Located near the Captain Dawson Memorial Tower in Kadugannawa, near where the Kadugannawa hill begins to slope down, it had an ancient look in every way. Although facilities were not of the best, it was nevertheless a desirable experience. The following day on our way to Colombo, we had lunch there and it was evening when we reached our Thalapathpitiya home. We completed our journey without any problem with the car and without any of the problems we encountered at the beginning.

### **Harris' death**

Harishchandra Wijesiriwardena (Harris), the younger brother of Prema's, returning home after some work in the Insurance Corporation, Colombo, had been run down by a bus at the Pettah bus stand, taken to the Accident Ward of the National Hospital, but died. As soon as we received the news, we went to the Accident Ward and saw Harris' dead body. Harris's son Ravi, who was a planter, handed over the body to a florist in Colombo to attend to it and then took it to the house in Matara. Prema and I went to Talpawila, Matara, the following day, and participated in the funeral activities. All his brothers and sisters were present. The death occurred on July 7, 2000.

Harris' wife Rupa died on December 13, 2006. Before that, when she came to Colombo with her daughter, she paid us a visit at Thalapathpitiya. They came to see Prema who was ill. Rupa too seemed to be not in the best of health. Not long after her return to Matara after her visit to us, we heard about her death. But I could not attend the funeral because Prema was critically ill.

Somewhere in July 2006, Prema's elder brother Edmund Wijesiriwardena (Punchi Aiya) died. I had to go to pay my last respects to him because he was one who helped us in numerous ways since the beginning of our married life. I went with Podi Duwa and my son-in-law Priyantha early in the morning from Thalapathpitiya to Talpawila and returned the same day, as I could not spend even one night away from home because of Prema's illness.

Before Punchi Aiyas' death, somewhere in 2002 when Prema was healthy enough to journey, we went with a few others in our family to Matara to attend Punchi Aiya's second daughter's wedding. The wedding ceremony was held in a reception hall in Pamburana, Matara. After the wedding ceremony, we went to a circuit bungalow of the Ruhunu University and spent the night there. My son-in-law Priyantha, who was working in the University Grants Commission, had booked the place for us. Podi Duwa, Podi Putha, Prema and I joined on that trip. On our return journey the following day, we had lunch at the Hotel Corporation Restaurant in Bentota. It was evening when we reached home.

### **The fourth Australian trip**

After Loku Duwa passed the examination of the Australian college of Anaesthetists, applications were sent to hospitals where there were Specialist vacancies. When there were vacancies in main cities like Sydney, Melbourne, etc. the competition was high as applications were received from Australians too. There was no rush for hospitals in other states. In the meantime, she had been selected after an interview, in a hospital called Logan in the state of Queensland. As she had worked for about three years in a hospital in Melbourne in the state of Victoria and was familiar with the environment and as most of Wasantha's friends lived in the neighbourhood of Melbourne, migrating to an area nearly two thousand kilometres away posed certain difficulties. However, as the climate in the state of Queensland was more congenial and a post with higher pay would be granted, it was beneficial in many ways to accept the post in Brisbane.

In August 2000, Loku Duwa accepted the appointment at Logan Hospital, and she along with her family rented a house belonging to a Malaysian in Springwood near the hospital and went to live there.

So, our fourth Australian trip was to Brisbane. As earlier, we took a Sri Lankan flight early in the morning of June 23, 2001 and reached Sydney by about 7.30 p. m. This time too we got Business Class seats. From the Sydney Airport, we went to Brisbane on a Virgin Blue Airlines flight.

This airline was a subsidiary company of Virgin Airways Company owned by the billionaire businessperson Richard Branson. No meals were served free of charge on it like on other flights. A service was maintained on the flight from which anyone can buy what they needed. But as the flight takes only about an hour, most of the passengers bring their own, a bottle of water and some snacks with them, as it was cheaper. We reached Brisbane Airport by about ten in the night. As Wasantha had come there, it was possible to come to the Springwood home without delay.

Our grandson (Dineeth) and granddaughter (Savini) had been enrolled to a private school named John Paul College of a religious sect. They had been admitted to grades higher than those of Mount Waverly School. Therefore, they had an advantage of one year. Loku Duwa went for work at Logan Hospital, a journey of about twenty minutes. Wasantha had joined a property sales company near Brisbane. The two children's school was over at about 3.30 p. m., so it seemed convenient.

Loku Duwa bought a house in Eight Mile Plains on Maisie Place and went to live there with her family. It was more spacious than the Springwood house. Another important difference was that they owned the house. About a kilometre or so away from the house was a supermarket named Garden City and a bus stand. A bus ran from near Maisie Place to the Garden City and back about every hour. If you go on foot, it takes about half an hour. It was not easy to walk with Prema. Therefore, when needed, we always took the bus on this trip and went with Loku Duwa on other trips.

This time we did not intend to be in Australia for long but with the attack on the Katunayaka airport by L.T.T.E. terrorists, many Sri Lankan planes were destroyed and, therefore, the flights to Australia were suspended. So, when we were thinking of an option, we got the news that we could return by Emirates Airlines for which arrangements needed to be made

with the Sri Lankan Airlines agent in Brisbane. Therefore, we were able to return to Sri Lanka without additional expenses.

Once, we went to a sea beach called Byron Bay. You had to go from Brisbane on the New South Wales Road some three hundred kilometres and go a little distance along a small road to the light house in the beach. Byron Bay is reportedly the spot furthest to the east from the centre of Australia. A special attraction there was, during a particular season, from June to October, you could watch whales in droves in the sea around the place. On either side of the main road to this place, there were virgin forests and sugar cane plantations extending to about one hundred kilometres. The railroad from Sydney to Brisbane is visible from place to place.

About eighty or so kilometres away from the city of Brisbane is a beach called Gold Coast. The area has been developed for tourists. The Gold Coast city also covers a large area. Once, we reserved a holiday resort there and went with Loku Duwa and her family and relaxed for about two days.

Sri Lankan Buddhist expatriates in those countries seem to engage in regular religious activities. Our Loku Duwa and her family also followed suit. When they lived in the neighbourhood of Melbourne, they went to the Dandenong temple. After coming to Brisbane, they offered alms to a Sri Lankan bhikkhu who used a house as an *avasa*, a 'bhikkhus' dwelling. Later they associated themselves with a temple in Forest Lake. It had a Bodhi tree, stupa, *dharmasala* and an *avasa*. Sri Lankan bhikkhus live there.

Sinhalese Buddhists gather in these temples on Saturdays. The *daham pasala* was also held in the afternoon on that day. Sinhalese Buddhist children were taught Sinhala too (writing, reading) in addition to religion. On Saturdays, if anyone wishes to take his or her dinner, there was a small restaurant. Things like string hoppers were brought from outside. Hoppers were cooked in the restaurant. Women who gather in the temple do these things voluntarily. The income realized was used for the maintenance of the temple.

In the Forest Lake temple, I met a person named Galketiya, whom I had known a long time ago when I was in Badulla. Mr Galketiya who had businessmen brothers was a Technical Officer in the Irrigation Department. Later on, he went overseas, arrived in Australia and now lives in Brisbane. He said that he contributed generously to the construction of the bodhi tree in the Forest Lake temple.

One Mr Abeydeera plays a leading role among the *dayakas* of this temple. He is the youngest of the three Abeydeeras I knew in Sri Lanka. The elder brother of that family worked as an Assistant Secretary of the University Grants Commission and later held the post of Registrar of the Sri Jayewardenepura University. Later he took residence in Australia. This Mr Abeydeera was a *dayaka* of another temple in Brisbane. Having heard that I had come to Brisbane, he came one day to Loku Duwa's house and met me. The other two Abeydeera brothers are those whom I met when I worked in the Fisheries Corporation. They are still living in Sri Lanka.

In Brisbane, I met Mr Yapa Bandara, lecturer in the Commerce Department of Sri Jayewardenepura University who was reading for his PhD at Queensland University. He was living there with his wife and son. Once he invited us to lunch. Loku Duwa also invited them to lunch once. Our grandson and the young son of Mr Yapa Bandara's became close friends.

He later told me that after his studies, he went for work at Waga Waga University in the state of New South Wales and took residence there. Mr Yapa Bandara is a brother of Mr Ganepola who was a Secretary to the Ministry of Information.

The state of Queensland situated in the northeast quarter of Australia has been used for sugar cane plantation as well as other fruits. Sri Lankan vegetables and fruits are grown there because of the climate. Even things like banana, jak, *polos*, etc. are available in markets there. There were shops run by Sri Lankan expatriates selling food items like red raw rice and other Sri Lankan food. Some do business selling string hoppers, hoppers, etc. Therefore, it was not difficult for Sri Lankans to buy their customary food and drink.

I got the chance to watch a couple of cricket matches held at the Gabba Grounds in Brisbane between Sri Lanka and Australia. On such occasions, large numbers of Sri Lankans living in Australia come to watch the matches and cheer the Sri Lankan players, as they do at matches held in the MCG Grounds in Melbourne and in other cities too. During the time of LTTE terrorism, (although no reports of protests in places where matches were held), some of their supporters staged sporadic protests.

When the World Trade centre in the U.S.A. was attacked, we were with Loku Duwa and her family in Eight Mile Plains in Brisbane. When I go to bed at night, I usually listen to the B.B.C., A.B.C., and C.N.N. on a small radio. On the night of 11<sup>th</sup> September, I heard the horrific news of the New York attacks. This broadcast was live and the following day I could see all the pictures on television. This incident occurred about one and a half months after the attack by terrorists on our airplanes at Katunayake.

As was mentioned earlier, there were no Sri Lankan flights, so we went to Sydney and on an Emirates flight to Singapore on September 16, 2001. Early next morning we went to Loku Putha's new place of residence and spent about a week in Singapore.

We visited some places of interest in Singapore such as the zoological garden there. It had been developed more as a green garden than a zoological garden. Trees and plants had been grown quite methodically and some places were covered with wire mesh for birds to fly freely. A cave for a snow bear had been built maintaining the correct temperature. Mr Lyn de Alwis, who was director of the Zoological Garden, Dehiwala, had reportedly planned and launched this green garden.

On another day, we went to Sentosa Island, which you could enter by cable car from the upper floor of a building near the Singapore Harbour. Then you can go on foot to see many interesting things. There was a hall showing models of British administrators signing certain pacts during the Second World War. At a certain other place, you could see an underwater aquarium complex. On the highest plane of the hill was a rail track, when you go downhill passing it, was a complex of reservoirs full of fountains. There were places to obtain food and drink. It is an island where you could relax for hours without feeling bored.

So, we went sightseeing with Loku Putha and Nirmala as well as by ourselves. About a week later we returned to Sri Lanka on a Sri Lankan flight on September 22, 2001. From Katunayaka airport, Podi Duwa took us back to Thalpathpitiya.

## **Fifth Australian trip**

This time Prema and I went to Brisbane again. We left on November 8, 2002 from Katunayaka and via Singapore and reached Brisbane in the forenoon of the 09<sup>th</sup> November. By this time, Loku Putha too had got a job in the state of Queensland in Australia and gone to live in Brisbane. From the airport, Loku Putha took us to Loku Duwa's home. We spent three months in Australia. I give below some of the important events of that period.

We reserved two holiday homes in Bunya Mountains for a few days at the end of 2002 and went with Loku Putha, Loku Duwa and their families. Prema and I went in Loku Putha's vehicle. This trip from Brisbane takes about four to five hours. When you travel a little distance, you come to a mountainous road. On the way there is a city called Toowoomba. There we had lunch and continued our journey. When we reached the holiday homes, it may have been about five in the evening. There was a separate house for Loku Duwa and her family. Loku Putha, Nirmala (daughter-in-law), and the two of us went to the home on another side of the mountain slope. From there, magnificent scenery greeted us.

The house was built on pillars a couple of feet above the ground. The walls were of timber and the roof thatched of steel sheets. Water was obtained from separate water tanks. Water flowing from the roof gutters of houses during the rainy season was channelled to the tanks. When the taps inside the house were opened, a pump starts, and water flows. There were no water fountains on the top of this mountain. Food for all of us was prepared in the house of Loku Duwa. On January 1, *kiribath* was cooked for breakfast. As we had taken the necessary ingredients, a tasty *lunu miris* had been prepared to eat with the *kiribath*.

There were footpaths near the mountain for walking, but as Prema and I found it difficult to go down the hill and climb up again, we walked a little on the level ground and rested. In all these places, kangaroos were invariably present. They walk about even on the grass near the houses. We returned to Brisbane also in Loku Putha's vehicle. On the way, we saw an ancient swing bridge in a small town. We reached Loku Duwa's home by about three or four in the evening. They had come home before us in another vehicle.

The illness that Prema was subject to from time to time cropped up again often during the night. She would get up from her sleep at night, show me various shadows seen through glass panes of the window, and ask me who was there. Because of the electric light in the room, your own shadow is seen, through the glass windows, as if there is someone else outside the room, owing to some hallucination. Loku Duwa consulted a Sri Lankan psychiatrist in Sydney, she said that the condition was known as dementia resulting from Alzheimer's disease. Forgetfulness is also a symptom. She could recollect most of her childhood experiences, but not recent happenings.

During this time, Loku Duwa and her family had planned to visit Sydney. A brother of Wasantha's, Bandula Liyanagama, was living there with his family. So, we two also reserved seats on Virgin Blue Airlines and joined them. Loku Duwa and her family went in their vehicle. In Sydney, we met the doctor known to Loku Duwa, who examined Prema. The examination confirmed that her Alzheimer's' Disease was getting worse.

During these days, the Sri Lankan cricket team was on a tour of Australia. We watched a limited overs match at Sydney Cricket Grounds. The Sri Lankan cricket team won the match

that day. As I remember, Sanath Jayasuriya and Marvan Atapattu paved the way for this victory.

We left Brisbane Airport on February 7, 2003 and reached Katunayaka the same night via Singapore on an Emirates flight. This was the last foreign tour of both of us. We had done enough trips. Furthermore, we fell ill quite often. As the children would have to bear the burden if something untoward happened in a foreign country, we thought it best to live in our own country.

So far, I have described only the foreign trips from April 1998 up to February 2003 after my retirement. I must record here some trips within Sri Lanka and other relevant matters.

### **After foreign trips**

After our return from Australia for the last time, we lived in our house on the Kanatta Road at Thalpathitiya. By this time, we had the “Wingroad” vehicle that Podi Putha had bought for our use. I got a permit in 1994 to import a duty-free vehicle. On that, I had imported a Toyota Corona diesel car through Conda Agency in Nugegoda. To buy that car I had to sell both my Trad Sunny and Batu Sunny. The latter I had bought on my return from the Netherlands. The Trad Sunny was the second car I bought after my return from Brunei. To buy my third car I sold both my first two cars. Many were the times I had to face problems because of the Toyota Corona diesel car. Once, on a return trip from Kandy, the engine stalled at Warakapola and refused to start, and we had to spend four to five hours in the Hotel Corporation Restaurant in Ambepussa until my son-in-law Priyantha came with a mechanic from Colombo in another vehicle and took us back. On that day when we were there my friend Mr Abeyratna Bandara gave his mobile phone to me and went to Kandy. As I had the mobile with me, I could give a message to Priyantha.

Because of such nuisances, I sold the diesel car and gave the money to Podi Putha. He had to supplement that with a lot more money to buy the “Wingroad” vehicle. However, as it was a petrol vehicle and rather new, we were able to use it for about nine years without any trouble. After 2002, Prema and I used that vehicle to go on many trips and it never stalled on the way.

By this time, Podi Putha had bought a newly built house on Edirisinghe Road, Mirihana. As Prema and I frequently fell ill and Podi Putha led a lonely life in his house, our children thought that the two of us should go to live in that house. Therefore, I published a newspaper advisement in 2003 to either sell or lease the house at Thalpathitiya. In response, one Kularatna met me one day and expressed his wish to get our house on lease. When I agreed, he said that he must come with his wife and see the house, and he came at about five in the evening with a woman and a small child. The woman said that she was a pupil of mine. She was one Thilaka Jayasundara, who was an officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service. After finalising the transaction, I gave them the house on lease.

Prema and I went to live in Podi Putha’s house. Then we began treatment for Prema’s illness. We went to Dr G.P.S. Fernando, a psychiatrist at the Oasis Hospital. He undertook to attend to her. We went to him about once a month for a review. The disease was not curable. Only temporary palliation was possible. Somehow, I realised the need for a doctor. Although these problems existed, Prema could still manage by herself. She tried to be

always clean. As there was a domestic in Podi Putha's house, it was easy to get the meals prepared.

We came to know that Podi Putha, who was now thirty years of age, was having an affair with a girl named Melanie. One day she came to our house too. Prema seemed impressed with her. When I asked Podi Putha about marriage, he replied that they intended to get married in January 2004. I myself thought that it was better to marry rather than live a lonely life.

## **Residence in Udadumbara**

Udadumbara is the place where I was born. After retirement, I had the opportunity to visit my birthplace quite often. My elder brother's family was living there. One son of his, who was teaching at the Gamaima Maha Vidyalaya, Teldeniya, was living in the teachers' quarters. Whenever we went to my village, we spent a couple of days in Sarath Putha's place. I was also toying with the idea of buying a block of land with a house in my birthplace and living there. When I discussed it with Ranjith, a son of my elder brother's and Sarath Putha, they also pursued the idea.

We got the news that a land with a house belonging to a young Madugalle couple was available for sale in a place called Kanahampitiya in our neighbouring village. Once when I was there, I went with Sarath Putha to take a look at the land and the house. The land was about a quarter of an acre. A family was living in the house, which had been built recently. They said that they would be leaving soon for another house. The main problem in this area was the paucity of water during the drought. But there was a well full of water in one corner of the land. It was however necessary to rebuild it. There was a water pump too probably to pump water to a tank near the house. The location of the house was attractive. As it was by the side of a tarred road, a vehicle could be taken up to the courtyard. The owners of the house were living at the time in Rambukwella, Teldeniya. I went there with Sarath Putha and discussed the transaction.

We got Mr Ratnayaka, Proctor and Notary of Wattegama, to write the deed, and finalised the transaction on the July 4<sup>th</sup> 2003. The following day the Madugalle couple came to Kanahampitiya and the ownership of the house and land was transferred to me. The family living there had left.

On the same day, I went to Mahiyangana with Sarath Putha and bought a large eight-foot concrete cylinder from a shop selling Hume pipes and got it transported to Kanahampitiya in a lorry belonging to them and got it sunk into the well with a crane in the lorry. Later, the well was built and I got pipes laid to pump water. I got the Jinasena pump that was with me, fixed to pump the water. A plastic water tank was also placed to collect the water. The water problem was thus solved.

There was a lot of work in the house to be completed, such as permanent wiring, painting the walls, building a bathroom, fixing ceiling fans, excavating the rear courtyard for more space, building a drainage system around the house, fixing a gate from the main road and



building a stone wall, etc. This took about six to seven weeks. Sarath Putha helped me a lot to get these things done. Transporting iron, cement, a gate, timber, etc. needed for the construction work was handed over to a driver known to Sarath Putha. It was cheaper to buy those goods from Teldeniya. Rajah, Ananda, Ranjith and M.B., sons of my elder brother, helped me in numerous ways. The co-operation extended to us by Sarath Putha and his wife, Neranjala, was invaluable in providing accommodation and food to Prema and myself during our visits there.

In these visits and visits to see the new house, Prema had to endure many difficulties. As she was diabetic, she often needed to use the toilet on the way. Once when getting ready for the trip, she suffered from a stomach ailment. She fell off a retaining wall in the courtyard of the Kanahampitiya house and sprained her shoulder once. We got local treatment for her there and after coming to Colombo, I got her treated at the Asiri Hospital. An X-ray showed that there was no internal injury.

I removed some of our belongings I had in our house at Thalapathpitiya in my car. Furniture was transported by lorry. When the renovations of the house were over, we went into occupation on August 27, 2003. On that day, Podi Putha, Podi Duwa and son-in-law Priyantha came from Colombo. On the day of the house warming, Ven. Sumangala Thera of the Pallewela temple and Ven. Sarananda Thera of the Kiripattiya temple chanted *seth pirith*. Nanda Akka, daughter Kalyani, Rajah, Podimenike, Ananda, Ranjith, Sarath, daughter Neranjala, and granddaughter Sashi Prabha attended the *seth pirith* ceremony. My children spent a couple of days there and then went back to Colombo. There were two routes to our house via Kandy from Colombo. One was from Udadumbara town (Madugoda), turning right from there and taking the road to Kanahampitiya; the other was the road that turns to Kiripattiya at Elamalpotha passing the 41<sup>st</sup> km post on the Kandy Mahiyangana Road. These are shown in the Udadumbara map.

Afterwards, Prema and I returned to our usual work in the house and the garden. Before coming into occupation of this house, I described the situation to psychiatrist Dr Fernando that we were changing our residence. He told me that it might help cure Prema's illness. Although we went to Udadumbara in the dry season, it was a temperate climate for all of us who went from Colombo. As the water was cold there, I had fixed an electric water heater too. But Prema took her daily bath in cold water. She washed her own clothes too. When there was a large amount of clothes for washing, we used the washing machine. There were frequent power outages, which necessitated keeping a couple of lamps. We found a kitchen help, so cooking was not a problem.

I prepared the garden to grow vegetables. I put two men on the job from the neighbouring village. We built dams to stop soil erosion and planted *sevendara* bushes in necessary places. We planted vegetables such as chillies, capsicum, carrot, *mekaral*, okra, and bitter gourd. As long-term plantations, we planted about 150 pepper sprouts and 75 Teak saplings. In one place, we planted some ginger. It takes about two years for the ginger root to mature well. We had to take extra care to protect certain kinds of vegetables from monkeys. About two or three flocks of monkeys roamed in the surrounding jungle. Planting was done between September 2003 and April 2004. As we grew vegetables first, that was enough for our consumption. We sold any excess.

Prema and I came to Colombo once a month to take treatment for both of us. More than me, Prema had to be shown to Dr Fernando once a month. It was from a medical store belonging to Bower & Co. located in Grandpass that her medicines could be bought. On such visits, we stayed with Podi Putha. The bedroom set apart for us before we left for Udadumbara continued to be reserved for us. One day in December 2003, Prema fell at night and knocked her head against the wall. She was immediately removed to the Accident Ward for treatment. We were advised to be vigilant for a few days because of possible internal haemorrhage. After a few days, we went back to Udadumbara.

In December 2003, a group of relatives from Colombo spent a couple of days in our house. Among them were Daya Liyanagama, brother of Wasantha, his wife, and wasantha's sister's family. Loku Duwa and her family were also present. The year 2004 dawned when they were in our house. Grandson Dineeth and son of Wasantha's sister lit firecrackers to their heart's content. This was a novel experience for them because in foreign countries where they live, they do not have such opportunities.

### **Podi Putha's Wedding**

Podi Putha's wedding took place on January 9, 2004 at the Mt. Lavinia Hotel. Loku Putha, Loku Duwa and their family's resident in Australia came for the wedding. After the ceremony, Loku Duwa and her family went with us to our house in Udadumbara and spent a few days there. That time they went in my vehicle to places such as Mahiyangana. On their return to Colombo, they went with me in my car to Kandy and from there by private bus to Colombo. I was told that they reached Colombo in about three hours.



**Podi Putha's Wedding -Wasantha, Loku Duwa, Dineeth, Priyantha, Podi Duwa, Prema, Savini, Myself, Loku Putha and Nirmala 09.01.2004**

Loku Putha and Nirmala (my daughter-in-law) who routinely come to Sri Lanka at the end of the year spent a couple of weeks in January 2004 because of Podi Putha's marriage. In the meantime, they both came to our house in Udadumbara and spent a couple of days with us. One day they went to see the Wasgamuwa Wild Life Sanctuary and returned on the same day. Podi Duwa, who attended our house warming ceremony, came there thrice afterwards from time to time. Once she came from Colombo to Udadumbara during a weekend by bus. I came to the market place, picked her up, and went to our house. Podi Duwa went back also by bus. On another occasion, she came by bus, spent a couple of days with us, went to Lewella, Kandy, with Prema and me in my car, and went to Colombo with Podi Putha and his family. During the Sinhalese New Year in 2004, Podi Duwa and Priyantha visited us with a couple who were their friends. The visits of our children in this manner delighted Prema more than it did me.

### **Receptions by neighbours**

Not long after we went to live in Udadumbara, some of our neighbours invited us to dinner. They were people whom I had known from childhood. *Egodawele Lekam Mahattaya* ran a business at the Kanahampitiya junction. He studied in a higher class in the Mediwaka School when I was there. He was married to Podimenike who was with me in Grade Five. *Egodawele Lekam Mahattaya* was the eldest son of Mr L.B. Abeysekera, Registrar of Births, Marriages, and Deaths in the area when we were small children. Podi Menike was a daughter of Principal Mediwaka who was a neighbour. Major General Egodawele is a son of these two. *Lekam Mahattaya* was one among those who hosted us to dinner. By this time, his wife, Podimenike, was dead.

Another girl who studied with me in Grade Five at the Mediwaka School was Punchi Kumarihamy, a daughter of the Korale Mahattaya of the area. When she grew up, the school teacher whom we knew as Pallewela Tikiri Banda married Punchi Kumarihamy and lived in Kanahampitiya. When we went to live in Kanahampitiya, this school teacher was also dead. Punchi Kumarihamy too hosted Prema and me to dinner. A close neighbour of mine was Mr A.B.A. Mediwaka, the retired Grama Niladhari of Mediwaka.

When I was schooling there, Mr Mediwaka was in a grade lower than mine was. Later I knew that he studied at Vidyartha Vidyalyaya in Kandy. He was married to a daughter of the Pitawela family in Pitawela. They too hosted us to dinner. A Muslim family lived on the other side of the road in front of our house in a new house built by them. There were a few Muslim families traditionally living in Kanahampitiya. During our schooling, there were several Muslim families in this village. Our present neighbours raised cattle. They sold milk to Udadumbara tea kiosks daily. Moreover, they collected cattle from time to time and sent them to the butcher by lorry. On one of their festival days, they had sent us some food in a basin. We gave it to Ranjith, son of my elder brother, because there was some kind of meat in it.

### **Pallewela**

When we were living in Udadumbara, we went to the Pallewela temple for religious observances. Our elder brother's wife Nanda Akka and one or two children were also living in a house in Pallewela. That was their ancestral home. When we were children, we too visited that house often. Therefore, Pallewela was not a strange place to me. We took part

in the *katina pinkama* of the Pallewela temple in 2003. Earlier on many occasions, the *mataka dana* ceremonies of Pallewela uncle, *Nendamma*, our elder brother and his elder son were held in the Pallewela temple. I have participated in them too. After we went to Udadumbara in 2003, we bought a paddy field and worked it in the *maha* season. Ananda, a son of my elder brother, worked in it as a tenant farmer. Ananda was a good farmer. During that season, I got thirty bushels as my share. I stored them in the corner of a room in the Kanahampitiya house. We gave it in small quantities for milling, and used it for food. Before this yield, I bought red raw rice from the nearby paddy mill at Rs 23 a kilo. After I got the yield that money was saved.

### **Strong winds in Udadumbara**

For about six months following April, there are strong winds in the Udadumbara region and trees and plants wither, water fountains dry up, and there is a shortage of water. You had to go to mountain streams for bathing. Electricity fails for two to three days. Officials from the Hasalaka Electricity Board must come to restore the electricity supply. They come only after you give several telephone messages. Telephone facilities were available only in the Udadumbara town. During the period, mobile telephones were not common. Once, a representative of a mobile phone company fixed a mobile phone at our home but the service was not satisfactory as the signals were weak. However, it could be used at least from time to time, which was better than having no telephone at all. Therefore, we could talk at night with Podi Putha and Podi Duwa living in Colombo. Once, I spoke to Loku Duwa in Australia. But the line gets disconnected in no time.

### **Schoolmates**

During this time my friend Lewelle Mr H.B. Rajapaksa's wife died. When we got the news over the radio, Prema and I came to Lewella in my car and participated in the funeral. Wijesinghe Aiya who was a schoolmate of mine lived in Senarathwela, Teldeniya. Once, we went there and spent one night. Wijesinghe Aiya and Akka welcomed us warmly. We bought certain things from hardware shops in Udadumbara town too for repairs for our new house. From Bilindu Mudalali, who was from our village, we bought cement, metal, etc. When we met him on such occasions, he said he believed that rheumatic disorders are on the increase in Udadumbara area because of the cold climate. My experience too confirms it.

I participated in the prize-giving ceremony of the Mediwaka School at the end of 2003 as Chief Guest. I received my primary education in that school. The buildings have now been changed. Mr T.A. Mediwaka was the principal. His father too was the Head Teacher of the school some time earlier. An elder brother of Mr T.A. Mediwaka studied with me. He was in the Police and now lives in the village after his retirement. I met him there. The Divisional Secretary of Udadumbara invited me to deliver a speech at the Independence Commemoration Day celebrations on February 4, 2004. I spoke on the importance of independence before the large crowd that had gathered from the outlying villages. This happened, I believe, because most of the people in the area had a good opinion about me. Although there were persons who held high positions in government service, there was no University professor. Situation is still the same. This may have been one reason for the recognition given to me.



**Mediwaka School December 2003**

### **Prema's illness**

Since the beginning of my retirement, one item in Prema's and my daily routine was taking a wash at about five in the evening, observing *pansil* and chanting the *thun sutra* before dinner. On most days, we added the Dhajagga Sutra too. After we went to Udadumbara, we engaged in this practice of keeping two chairs close to each other in the hall. Apparently, Prema derived some solace from this.



**Follow wherever you go**



### **Overflowing affection**

On certain days, she said that her father brought her here, and left leaving her alone. She said this not only to me but also to several of our female relatives. Prema's father died in 1950. It was apparent that she fell into this condition because of some mental disability. When I asked her whether we should go to Colombo if she felt lonely, she asked me to do whatever I liked. When I went for some work in the garden, she was quite vigilant lest I should go away leaving her alone. She seemed to forget that I was her husband. So, I had to get more and more close to her in order to console her.

At midnight on May 18, 2004, Prema woke me up and asked for the torch. The lights seem to have gone off in the house. When I gave her the torch, she went to the attached bathroom and immediately I heard her shouting. She was fallen on the floor and bleeding from her head. I raised her and wrapped her head with a towel to stop the bleeding. I decided that she should be taken to the hospital immediately, I got her dressed in the dark itself and went to Ranjith Putha's place in my car. Ranjith is a son of my elder brother and is the Grama Niladhari of a nearby village. He was living with his family in his own house within two to three minutes walking distance. I woke Ranjith Putha up and took Prema to the Udadumbara Hospital. Even the hospital had no electricity. We showed the patient to the lady doctor who was on the night shift at her residence and went to the hospital with a chit from her. The nurse on duty dressed Prema's wound by lamp light. Ranjith Putha left for the nearby official quarters and came back to the hospital with Tennakoon Putha (my sister's elder son) who was a nurse in the hospital. After the wound was dressed, Prema was kept in the ward to show her to the D.M.O. when he arrived in the morning. Tennekoon Putha stayed behind in the hospital and Ranjith Putha and I went back home.

When we went to the ward the following day at about nine in the morning, the D.MO. had examined the patient and discharged her. We were told to come back again to the hospital in two days to get the wound dressed. We had planned to go to Colombo on May 21. So, we went to the hospital in the forenoon of that day, got the wound dressed and left for Colombo. The last night Prema and I stayed in the Udadumbara house was on May 20. While returning the following day, we participated in a house warming ceremony in Pallekele. The house built by the elder son of my elder brother G.B., his wife Ira and the two

sons were located in a place a little distance within the Pallekele Gam Udawa site. Nanda Akka, her elder daughter Kalyani, and Tennakoon Putha's wife too came with us to Pallekele. On the way, Tennakoon Putha's wife went to see a relative while the others went to the new house. We set off after lunch and came to Colombo via Kandy and when we reached Podi Putha's house it was night.

The following morning, I went with Prema to the Oasis Hospital and got her head injury treated. Surgeon D.W. Weerasuriya examined the wound and advised that it must be dressed and bandaged again. He asked about us and said that he had served as an intern in the Madugoda Hospital. We went on Monday as instructed to get the wound dressed. We decided to remain in Colombo until the wound completely healed.

On Friday that week, my daughter-in-law Melanie, Prema and I were having dinner when Prema showed signs of drowsiness. I arranged for her to go into our bedroom and sleep. I remained awake and vigilant. I saw at about ten in the night that Prema was sitting on her bed, a hand covering her mouth. She wanted to vomit. I took her immediately to the bathroom and after a long bout of vomiting, I got her hands and mouth washed and let her recline on the bed again. At the same time, I called Melanie who was in her room on the upper floor. We discussed the matter between us and decided that Prema should be taken to hospital immediately. She called Podi Duwa also, who was in Manning Town.

We first went to the Oasis Hospital. When we went there, Podi Duwa and my son-in-law Priyantha were present. As there was no doctor available in that hospital at that time, we went to the Asiri Hospital. The doctor in the OPD told us that there was no room in the hospital. When we discussed among ourselves whether we should go to Navaloka Hospital, she said that there was no room there either. Because of dengue patients at the time, the hospital was full. Our next target was Apollo Hospital, which was nearby.

As soon as we went to the Apollo Hospital, the patient was examined, scan photos were taken on the advice of consultant physicians, and the patient admitted. The advice of the neuro-physician Dr Kumaravel, whom we met early the following morning, was that we should consult the neurosurgeon. The neurosurgeon was Dr Ravi Palur, an Indian. When we met him at about nine in the morning, he said that there was a haemorrhage in the brain and surgery was needed immediately. When we agreed to it, Podi Duwa deposited the money needed for it. I think Podi Putha was also there by this time. Podi Duwa sent a message to Loku Duwa and Loku Putha in Australia.

Prema's surgery was done in the afternoon on Saturday May 29, 2004. The surgeon who came out of the operating theatre told me that the operation was successful. Prema had been sent to the Intensive Care Unit. When I went there, I saw that two holes had been bored in two places of the head. The resident physician Dr Ratwatte explained the condition of the patient to me. He showed me the scan photos and told me that the dark and light patches on it show old and new haemorrhages. He said that through the holes bored, the blood was pumped out. While I was there, Prema seemed to awake from her anaesthesia.

Many relatives had come to see the patient. Most of them were relatives of Wasantha and Priyantha, my sons-in-law. Loku Duwa and Loku Putha had arrived from Australia on Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup>. Loku Duwa, who is a doctor, began to make inquiries about the patient. This was a great consolation to us. She met doctors and discussed details. After a few days, Prema was

transferred from the Intensive Care Unit to another room. There were facilities in the room for another to stay with her. I stayed with her at night. I remember the two daughters were also with their mother. We took Prema home from the Apollo Hospital on June 7, 2004. According to the discharge ticket, the surgery had been performed in the following manner:

“Left frontal and Parietal Emergency Burr Holes and evacuation of Chronic SDH was done on 29 May 2004.” – RAVIKANT PALUR, NEUROSURGEON.

Because of this accident of Prema, we could not go back to the Udadumbara house where we were living, as she had to be under the constant care of the surgeon. Podi Duwa and Priyantha who were living in our house at Mangala Path in Manning Town provided accommodation for us. Loku Duwa arranged for two nurses from the Ceylinco Home Nursing Service to attend on Prema day and night. On the seventh itself, Nurse G.K. Sriyani came on the night shift. On the following day, Nurse Chandra Lawrence reported for day duty from 7 a.m. onwards. Each nurse worked for twelve hours. We had to provide meals for them. After a couple of days, a girl named Menaka came in place of Chandra. Menaka attended on Prema until September 2006. After a few days, someone else came for work in place of Sriyani.

Initially, as we did not have anyone to prepare our food, I took over that responsibility. When I was cooking in the small pantry, Prema used to walk in and keep watching me. At the time, she was able to engage in normal conversation and walk within the house and in the yard. She seemed to be worried about my having to cook. Perhaps that was why she came to the pantry from time to time. But I tried to pretend that I enjoyed it.

Although the blood accumulated in Prema’s brain was drained out at the Apollo Hospital, subsequent scans showed that some residue remained in the brain. She used to doze off now and then. Loku Putha and Loku Duwa did not go back to Australia until about two weeks later. They consulted a specialist doctor known to them in the Neuro-Surgery Unit of the National Hospital, and on his advice, admitted Prema to the neuro-surgery ward and some more blood was removed. Subsequently, we saw Dr Ravi Palur at the Apollo Hospital clinic and when he was told about this, he was not quite happy that we had not gone to him. Another scan was taken, which showed that another major surgery was necessary. But that was not done immediately. Two weeks later, Loku Duwa and Loku Putha went back to Australia. We took Prema to Dr Ravi Palur’s clinic regularly for treatment and advice. He told us that another surgery should be performed somewhere at the end of June. When we told Loku Duwa about it over the phone, it was agreed to perform a minor surgery as earlier to drain out the blood.

Therefore, Prema was admitted again to Apollo Hospital on July 21, 2004. This time the discharge ticket mentioned as follows:

“RE – ACCUMULATION OF CHRONIC SUB-DURAL HAEMATOMA LEFT FRONTO-PARIETAL. Chronic sub-dural haematoma was done on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2004.”

Prema protested strongly when her head was shaved to prepare her for surgery before removing her to the theatre. In the trolley, she wept inconsolably. So, I pretended that I too would accompany her to the theatre, but quietly left on the way. After the operation, she was removed to the Intensive Care Unit as usual. When I went there, she was in deep slumber. When she awoke, I went there but I found she was unable to identify me. I went



up to her several times but there was no response from her. When I asked the doctor, he told me that there was a temporary memory block and that she would be all right gradually. However, after this Prema could not talk. Moreover, her right hand and leg were frail. Prema who could walk well, could not walk now without someone else's help. These infirmities had arisen because of the damage caused to the brain cells during the second operation. I think the protest Prema made against the operation was the harbinger of this infirmity. But it was too late now. In the opinion of the doctor, if the operation had not been done, it would have endangered her life. So, what option did I have? There were no reasons at all to think prior to the operation that such a plight would befall her. When she was transferred from the Intensive Care Unit to a normal room, we again got the help of nurses from Ceylinco Home Nursing Service. Menaka continued her duties.

This time she was discharged from hospital on 02<sup>nd</sup> August. Priyantha had got down an employee from an employment agency in Kurunegala known to him for work in the kitchen. Her name was Madhuri. She helped us until December 2005. We went to the clinic regularly and got advice from Dr Ravi Palur.

### **Back to Thalpathpitiya house**

I mentioned above that during our time in Udadumbara, we leased our house at Thalpathpitiya. Because of Prema's illness, we needed that house back. Even before I informed the tenants, they themselves asked me whether we needed the house. Afterwards they went to reside in some other place in about a couple of months. Through a contractor known to a brother-in-law of Priyantha's, we got the house completely overhauled.

In early June, I went with Loku Putha, when he was here in Sri Lanka during Prema's first surgery, to Udadumbara and kept the household goods packed ready for transport. On that trip, I brought bags of clothes, etc. that could be transported in my car. While the Thalpathpitiya house was being repaired, Sarath Putha brought the rest of the goods in a lorry belonging to the Teldeniya Co-operative Society. Several months later, I sold the Udadumbara house to a lady named Hulugalle living in Colombo. She is using it as a house of care for disabled children. I am glad about it.

On November 4, 2004, Prema and I went to live in the Thalpathpitiya house. Menaka came there to look after Prema. Another came on the night shift. Madhuri came to attend to the household chores. There was enough space in the house for those who looked after Prema. I had a separate room for my use. The employees had a room to rest in. And, Prema again got her usual room. As I brought the water heater at Udadumbara house and fixed it here, Prema could get her hot water as needed. As she took a body wash morning and evening, and she was given a daily bath at about eleven in the forenoon; she was neat and clean. Menaka took special interest in this regard. At about five in the evening, I got her to sit by me and after observing *pansil*, I chanted the *thun sutra*. Prema was asleep by the time I ended. Then the nurse on night shift would take over and look after Prema. She woke up on and off, but she was in her bed until morning. The nursing staff duly fed her morning, noon and night. During the daytime, I took her outside and spent the day sitting on the front verandah.

When she fell ill with other disorders, I got her treated at the Oasis Hospital. After surgery, Dr Ravi Palur had sent a note to Dr G.P.S. Fernando and asked him to continue the

treatment as already given. As a result, she did not suffer from any other serious complaints until about May 2007. But from May 28, 2007, she took treatment for five days from the Resident Physician Dr Kumar Fernando of the Oasis Hospital. Dr A.T. Alibouy also examined her.

By this time, a woman named Padmini had come from a Kurunegala employment agency to attend on Prema. Menaka worked during the day. Prema seemed to be quite attached to Menaka. Unfortunately, she stopped coming at the end of September 2006. We heard that she had left the Ceylinco Nursing agency, and sometime later got married. Girls who came for work after Menaka did not seem to have done their duty well. There was some relief because Padmini was present. When daytime nurses changed their shifts, Padmini instructed them about attending on Prema. Several months before Menaka left, Madhuri's employment was terminated and a young woman called Wasanthi came for work in the kitchen. Mr Ratnayaka, a businessman in Nanuoya and a friend of my son-in-law Priyantha, sent Wasanthi for work in our house. Although Wasanthi came for work in the kitchen and in the house, etc. she helped in attending on Prema whenever the need arose. Madhuri never lent her hand in such matters.

On September 20, 2006, I had to undergo surgery for an inflamed spleen. I entered Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital on September 18, and left on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Surgeon Lalith Piyarisi performed the operation. I was in Ward 15. Loku Duwa came to Sri Lanka even when this operation was done. Apart from these few days, I did not go anywhere leaving Prema alone. Once, I went to Talpawila, Matara for Punchi Aiya's funeral but returned the same day.

Not long after my surgery, Wasanthi too left because of some family problems. The woman who replaced her picked up a row with Padmini, so she was sent away. We dropped the idea of getting a kitchen help again, and got down a servant from the Care Service Lanka agency at the Moraketiya junction, Pannipitiya run by Abeygunaratna, a pupil of ours. They work for twenty-four hours of the day and live with the patient. This was convenient, but as some of them lacked experience, they had to be trained for a few days. The first to come for service from that agency was a nurse named Malkanthi.

As Prema fell ill, she was admitted to the Oasis Hospital in May 2007. We got treatment for her from Dr Kumar Fernando from 30<sup>th</sup> May to 13<sup>th</sup> June. A few days had to be spent in the Intensive Care Unit too. This time Prema suffered from pneumonia. She left the Oasis Hospital on June 13 but was readmitted to the Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There we took treatment from the Consultant Physician Dr (Mrs) Anula Wijesundera. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, she was treated in the normal ward, and on the next day transferred to a second-class room and later on to a first-class room. After Malkanthi, another woman came for work. She worked until July 18. When Podi Duwa went to the hospital when Prema was getting well, Consultant Physician Dr (Mrs) Anula Wijesundera had told her to take Prema home and let her rest. According to the diagnosis card, this time Prema had Aspiration Pneumonia. She was treated for the same disease at the Oasis Hospital too. According to the advice of the doctor we got Prema discharged from hospital on June 20, 2007 and took her home. Our Thalapatpitiya house is near the hospital.

By this time, there was a female employee of the Care Service Lanka Agency to look after the patient at home. She was with the patient twenty-four hours. Padmini went back before the Sinhalese New Year. She said that she would not return. So, according to a message

given to Ranjith, my elder brother's son, to find a kitchen help, he came with a woman named Sriyalata from Wadawalakanda area at the beginning of May 2007. Therefore, it was some help to us in household chores. Otherwise, I would have had to do the cooking.

As Prema fell ill often, Podi Duwa had arranged for emergency services from an institution named MEDI-CALLS. I had obtained services from that institution once on June 30, 2007. When a telephone message is given, a doctor, and a nurse come in an ambulance. They bring an oxygen cylinder too to be used in an emergency. Afterwards, services from that institution were obtained on July 10, 2007. That night Prema died.

## Prema's Death

About six in the evening on 10<sup>th</sup> July, after Prema had had her dinner, I got her to sit by me in the hall, observed *pansil*, and began to chant the *thun sutra*. But Prema felt a suffocating pain in her chest area. The obstruction was in the throat. So, I stopped chanting *pirith*, took Prema to the bedroom and made her recline on the bed. In the meantime, I gave a call to Medi-Calls. I called Podi Duwa and asked her to come to our place. In about half an hour, a doctor and a nurse of the Medi-Call arrived. The patient was given oxygen. The advice of the doctor was that she should be rushed to hospital. When I was awaiting the arrival of Podi Duwa with the idea of going to the hospital, the doctor examined the patient again. A few moments later Podi Duwa arrived, but the doctor said that taking the patient to hospital now was useless. A cassette near Prema's head chanted *pirith*. I was seated on a side of the bed, stroking her forehead. Podi Duwa kept on holding her mother's hand. The doctor who examined the patient again pronounced that Prema's pulse was getting weaker. After a few moments, the doctor placed his stethoscope on her chest and left the room without a word. I asked him, "Has she gone?" and he said, "Yes." Prema died at 9.15 p.m. on Tuesday, July 10, 2007.



**lost lotus**

We informed Loku Putha and Loku Duwa of their mother's death. Podi Putha had gone to Bangkok for Simulator Training. Melanie gave him the sad news. Jayaratna Florists were contacted; they arrived about an hour later and removed the body. Podi Duwa and

Priyantha followed them. The following morning Podi Duwa and Melanie went to the florists, gave them the clothes to dress the body and other necessary instructions. I went to the Thalpathpitiya Registrar of Deaths, got Prema's death certificate and passed it on to the florists.

### **Farewell**

Anusha and Sarath, cousins of Priyantha, came early on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, and arranged the house and the environs for the funeral. Temporary sheds, chairs, etc. were brought. It was about two in the afternoon on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> when Prema's body was brought home. Having got the views of the two elder children in Australia, we fixed the funeral for six in the evening of Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> at the Borella crematorium. Accordingly, Jayaratna Florists arranged for the obituaries to be published in the newspapers and broadcast over the radio. We informed of the death over the telephone to my relatives in Udadumbara and other areas and the relatives of Prema in Matara. A few of Prema's relatives living around Colombo got the news from the newspapers and the radio.

Loku Duwa, Loku Putha, Nirmala (daughter-in-law) and Podi Putha came to Sri Lanka on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>. Son-in-law Wasantha and Loku Duwa's two children, Dineeth and Savini, were expected to arrive in Sri Lanka by Saturday. Among Prema's brothers and sisters, only Ramachandra Malli, Chandra Nangi and Nela Nangi were among the living. During this time, Nela Nangi was in a Middle East country with her daughter. The sons and daughters of Prema's brothers and her elder sister's daughters were present.

On the last day when religious rituals were performed, my elder brother's son Sarath Ekanayaka, the Principal of Gamaima Maha Vidyalyaya, Teldeniya, functioned as Master of Ceremonies. From Wednesday up to Saturday afternoon, friends of my children and mine came to our house and to the cemetery and expressed their condolences. Nirmala's family and the neighbours helped by providing food and beverages. During the entire period, Priyantha's mother took great pains in looking after the affairs of the house. Daughters Loku Duwa, Podi Duwa and Melanie fulfilled their obligations in numerous ways. Loku Putha, Podi Putha, son-in-law Priyantha, Anusha and Sarath performed various tasks. My son-in-law Wasantha came from Australia on the 14<sup>th</sup>. He contributed his share to the tasks to be done. Wasantha's brothers and sisters also came from time to time. Wasantha's father, retired Principal Mr D.A. Liyanagama, though ill, came twice and took part in the final rites.

When the cortege left home for the cemetery, daughter-in-law Nirmala's brother Major General Nimal Jayasuriya had arranged for Police assistance. In the forenoon on the day, an Army Major met me, asked for details, and said that the Mirihana Police would give assistance. Religious observances were performed by bhikkhus headed by the Chief Incumbent of the Thalpathpitiya Dhammaniketanaya. The religious rites were performed at home and the cortège left home at about four in the evening on Saturday July 14, 2007. It proceeded on the Thalpathpitiya Kanatta Road to the Etulkotte Junction and reached the Borella cemetery at about five in the evening.

The body was placed in the crematorium hall for people to pay their last respects and it was taken into the crematorium at about six in the evening. Rama's son and son-in-law Priyantha performed the funeral rites as nephews. In a few moments, black smoke escaped into the sky from the chimney of the crematorium. Prema, who had lived with me for fifty-one years,

was now only a heap of ash. A couple of days later we got a pot containing the ash from the florists. All in the family (children and I) went to Kelaniya and to the middle of the river by boat, broke the pot, and let the ash float down the river.

Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhita Thera, the Chief Incumbent of the Kotte Naga Vihara, delivered *mataka bana* on the seventh day. Bhikkhus of the Dhammanikethanaya came for the *dana* ceremony the next day. The third month *dana* was offered on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Ven. Devahandiye Pannasekera Thera, Chief Incumbent of the Jayewardenaramaya, Borella, delivered the *dharmadesana* on the previous day. Bhikkhus of the Dhammanikethanaya came for the *dana* ceremony. Now, the children perform various *pinkamas* annually in memory of their beloved mother.

### Loneliness

I was glad that my wife Prema had lived with me even with her illness. I regarded looking after her more as a duty rather than a responsibility. I fulfilled those duties without a murmur. What I always wished was that I should live until the end of her life. If I had to “go” before her death, she, who was ill, might have been a burden on my children. There was no doubt at all that they would look after her well, but my wish was that I should bear that responsibility myself.

With the death of Prema, who was ailing for about three years, I felt that she fulfilled two obligations. The first concerned her, which is that she at least temporarily released herself from suffering. How many more births and deaths there will be in the cycle of *samsara* is not known, but it was a consolation to be free of the suffering she underwent. The second was that she relieved me of my responsibility; not that I was glad about it, but that was what actually happened.



However, since July 18, 2007, I began to feel more and more lonesome, isolated. After the funeral and the seventh day *dana* ceremony, our relatives left. Although there were two of my children in Sri Lanka, my wish was to spend my time at home on my own. Podi Duwa and my son-in-law Priyantha who knew it well went to work in Colombo from the Thalapathpitiya house. Padmini was brought down to assist in the three-month *dana* ceremony. After the *dana*, I went to Lewella on the invitation of a schoolmate of mine who was living there. Podi Duwa who did not like it much and again took up residence in the

Manning Town house. After going to Kandy, and relaxing for a couple of days with my friend Rajapaksa in Pilawalawatta, I came back to Thalapathpitiya and began to live alone.

From time to time, I felt the void caused by Prema's death, but as I had to do my daily work alone, the feeling was somehow suppressed. Considerable time was spent on preparing my meals morning, noon, and night, buying the required groceries from the shops, and cleaning the house, yard, and the small garden. I got more free time now to listen to *bana* and read books and journals. As Loku Duwa and the family came to Sri Lanka annually, there was not a dull moment in our house in December. Not only Loku Duwa, son-in-law Wasantha, Dineeth (grandson) and Savini (granddaughter) but also those who came to meet them gathered in the house. This time Loku Duwa arranged to go on a pilgrimage to India with me. Under the Indian Tour Programme of the Bank of Ceylon, we went on a twelve-day tour in the second and third weeks of December.

### **Dambadiva (India) Pilgrimage**

Normally this pilgrimage starts by plane from Katunayaka to Chennai and from there to New Delhi. Loku Duwa and her family using air tickets from Australia to Sri Lanka went on a Sri Lankan flight to New Delhi. With Podi Putha's entitlements, I travelled from Colombo to New Delhi on a Sri Lankan flight. Podi Putha piloted the plane in which we travelled. In fact, I went with him to the Katunayaka airport. When we reached New Delhi, a tourist guide was at the airport to take us to a hotel in the city for the night.

The following morning, we met the others of the pilgrims group. They had come to the hotel at about two or three in early morning. A bhikkhu from a temple in Pamankada was also in the group. I went to a money-changer and changed Sri Lankan money to Indian money. I kept with me some Sri Lankan money. A big bus had arrived at about ten in the morning for our tour. We were about twenty-five to thirty pilgrims in our group. Some were alone while others were in family groups of two or three. Gradually, we got to know each other. I give below a description of places we visited and worshipped at during the tour, which took about ten or twelve days.

#### **New Delhi – Agra**

The first city we visited was Agra, two hundred and three kilometres and five hours from New Delhi. We saw the magnificent Taj Mahal built by King Shah Jehan by the Yamuna River. I shall not attempt to describe its history or architecture. We spent the night in a hotel in Agra.

An Indian guide accompanied us along the route and arranged accommodation for us. When facilities were not up to expectations, he invariably took the blame. He was the ombudsman of the tourist agency. When we protested against an attempt to change the route given by the Ceybank Travels Agency, our guide called the Indian representative in New Delhi and solved the problem.

## **Agra – Lucknow**

On the second day, we set off very early for Sankesia. This village was reportedly the place to which the Buddha returned, after visiting heaven and preaching the abhidhamma to his mother. A monument on a small hill, a small Hindu kovil on one side of the foot of the hill, and a Bodhi tree were there. Some distance away there was a temple. I saw a Sri Lankan bhikkhu there. I was told that their requisites were provided with the support of Sri Lankan pilgrims. After lunch in Sankesia we went to Lucknow. The journey from Agra to Lucknow takes about ten to eleven hours. We spent the night in a hotel.

## **Lucknow - Varanasi**

We left quite early the following morning and after a journey of seven hours reached Varanasi. On the way, we were given a packet of lunch. We got our dinner from the hotel where we lodged in Varanasi. In the evening as there was time to spare, we listened to the chanting of Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta by a group of Sri Lankan bhikkhus at the Saranath Temple. Early the following morning, some went to see the ghats of the river Ganges.

After breakfast, we went to see Migadaya (the deer park) where the Buddha preached the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. The place where the Buddha preached the dharma to the five disciples was at the foot of a Bodhi tree. The Mulagandhakuti Vihara too was nearby. When you visit these places, you cannot help but realise the unique service rendered by Anagarika Dharmapala (Ven. Siri Devamitta Dharmapala Thera). An Indian arrived to explain about the ruins. A Sri Lankan *silmatha* explained in Sinhalese. It seemed that the *silmatha* subsists on the support of the pilgrims. An important activity of most of the pilgrims was buying clothes. Perhaps the guides too find it profitable. So, they direct pilgrims to nearby textile shops. That night too we spent in the Varanasi Hotel.

## **Varanasi – Buddha Gaya**

After a journey of about eight hours, we came to Buddha Gaya and lodged in a hotel. Early the following morning we went to the Sri Maha Bodhi and offered milk rice. Afterwards, we observed *atasil* at the foot of the Bodhi tree administered to us by a bhikkhu of the Bodhiraja Vihara in Pamankada. He was a member of our pilgrims' group. There was a huge Buddha statue inside the *vihara* in the premises of the Bodhi tree. Devotees of various countries offer *chivara* (robe worn by bhikkhus) to the Buddha statue. The robes were changed once every half hour or so. A tall wall surrounds the Bodhi Tree. Outside it, bhikkhus of various countries and lay Buddhists make offerings to the beat of drums, etc. Sometimes it turns into a riotous noise. As it takes place on one side outside the barrier, it is not audible on the other side.

Near it were depicted places where the Buddha spent seven weeks after enlightenment. The Golden Bridge, Ajapala Nigroda (Nuga) Tree, etc. were near the Bodhi tree. The place where Muchalinda Nagaraja gave shelter was depicted within a pond. Outside the Bodhi tree premises was seen the Buddha Gaya Lankarama temple. From there we went a short distance by bus and passed the Neranjana River. The river covering a large area was dry at the time we went there, probably because it was not the rainy season. And a little further away, passing the place where Brahmin Soththiya offered grass for the Buddha's seat, you

come to Sujatha Vihara, where reportedly Princess Sujatha offered milk-rice to Siddhartha Bodhisattva.

We had lunch at the hotel and after a few moments of rest, went by bus to the Durgeshwari Cave Temples. It was within these caves that the Siddhartha Bodhisattva practised severe austerity (*dushkara kriya*). We went back to the foot of the Bodhi tree and after the observances, went to the hotel. After dinner, we spent the rest of the day in the hotel.



**Offering 'Kiri Pindu Dana' (Milk Rice) in Buddha Gaya**

### **Buddha Gaya-Rajagaha (Rajghir) - Nalanda- Pataliputra (Patna)**

Early the following morning after breakfast, we set off on our journey to Rajagaha. Here the *Veluvana* (park of bamboo trees) was evidently maintained beautifully. There was an attractive pond. Many climbed to the top of the Gijjakuta Mountain on foot but I went there by cable car. Only one could travel in one car. The Peace Pagoda built by the Japanese was on the top of the mountain. When you look down from the top of the mountain, you could see the place where Devadatta rolled stones at the Buddha. Those going on foot could go closest to that spot. On the summit were ruins of a royal palace. Reportedly, it was in this palace that King Ajasatta imprisoned his father, King Bimbisara. From there you get a view of the mountain where the Buddha reposed.

Coming back from the place, you see a boulder where it was said, "Cartwheels sank." Even now, you could see on the boulder what was said to be imprints of cartwheels. From there



we went to Nalanda, the world's most ancient university. There were ruins of a building complex covering a large extent of land. The Moguls reportedly torched the library of this University. Some believe that the fire raged for about six months. After Nalanda, we went to Pataliputra for the night.

### **Pataliputra - Vaishali - Kusinara**

We had a very early breakfast and set off for Vaishali. After lunch, which we carried in packets, we went to Kusinara and stayed in a hotel there. I do not remember now anything that we did or saw in Vaishali. In the afternoon, we went to Kusinara and worshipped at the Maha Parinirvana Vihara built to mark the place where the Buddha attained Parinirvana. When you see the Buddha reclining on his deathbed, the joy of seeing the Buddha vanishes in a moment because the fact that he was on his deathbed comes to mind. Contemplating on it, you feel tears spontaneously coming into your eyes. Devotees have plated the statue of the Buddha with gold. The robes were wrapped around the body neatly. When we left the place and went to the monastery area, met Sri Lankan bhikkus who seemed to live there. Rooms were available for pilgrims. At nightfall, we went to the hotel where we lodged.

### **Kusinara – Lumbini**

We left early the following morning for Lumbini in Nepal. After a few hours of travel, before entry to Nepal, our passports had to be surrendered and visas obtained at the Indian-Nepal border. After those formalities, we came to Lumbini within a short time, got down at a bus halt and walked up to the birthplace of Prince Siddhartha. A building has been erected with an enclosure at the birthplace of Prince Siddhartha. Within that was shown the spot where he walked on the seven lotuses. Outside the building was a pond. It was said that after Siddhartha was born, he was washed in that pond. Near that, were a number of large stupas built by Japanese and Burmese Buddhists. On our way back to the bus, I met a Nepalese bhikkhu who had received his education in Sri Lanka. For the night we came back to a hotel in India.

To come back to India from Nepal a visa was needed and if you do not have multiple visas, entering India could be a problem. A member of our group faced such a problem, but our Indian guide solved it. I am not sure whether there was an exchange of money.

### **Lumbini – Kapilavastu – Shravasti**

We left early the following morning on a mist-laden road. Our bus stopped on the way at a small marketplace, and the driver and the others had their breakfast and tea. I too had a glass of tea from a kiosk. We continued our journey through the mist and reached Kapilavastu. We saw the ruins of the city of Kapilavastu where Prince Siddhartha spent his lay life.



**Among the Ruins in Kapilawasthu**

On the same day, we went to Shravasti and spent the night in a hotel there. A few in the group lodged in a rest room in Lankarama. They also came to the hotel for their meals. The following day we went to see places of interest in Shravasti. Gandhakuti (the Buddha's hut), Dharma Pavilion, and Ananda Bodhi were sacred places located close to each other. The well from which the Buddha drank water and a beautiful reservoir were located a little distance away. Further away was the Sariputta Chetiya. In the same premises, were the ruins of the palace of Anathapindika., the chief lay disciple of Gautama Buddha. All these were situated in a magnificent park, the Jetavana. A little distance away from this sacred place was the monastery where Arhant Angulimala lived. Near it was a stupa of ordinary size. The spot where Chinchu Manavika entered hell was located in these premises.

#### **Shravasti – Lucknow – New Delhi**

Now it was time for us to return. We left early in the morning by bus for Lucknow. After lunch, we went to the Lucknow Railway Station. At 3.35 p.m., we started journey to New Delhi by luxury train "the Sathabdi Express." On the trip, we were treated with food and beverages several times. Even dinner was served on the train. The service was excellent and much better even than that of an airline. The staff was active and alert. We reached the New Delhi Railway Station at about 10.00 p.m. Porters who dash towards the compartments, grab your luggage almost by force. They were driven by the urge to earn

some money, but they seemed to be quite innocent people. At the station, we started our journey again and went by bus to the hotel from where we began the journey.

Others in the pilgrims group left early morning the following day to return to Sri Lanka. The five of us (Wasantha, Loku Duwa, Dineeth, Savini and I) went in a taxi on a tour of New Delhi. We went to a Buddhist Vihara there and visited the Hindu kovil close to it called Birla Mandir. There were Sri Lankan bhikkhus living in the Buddhist Vihara. Pilgrims made donations for the upkeep of their monastery.

We visited the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial and Museum, the India Gate and Parliament Complex, and went to the hotel for lunch.

In the afternoon, we went to the Indira Gandhi International Airport to catch a Sri Lankan flight leaving New Delhi for Colombo. I bought a copy of the Bhagavat Gita from a bookshop near the airport. We entered the departure lounge where boarding passes were issued. That day I got a business class seat. The plane was piloted by *Podi Putha*. On the way, I entered the pilot's cabin, sat in an additional seat, and until the plane landed at Katunayaka, observed the surroundings and the equipment in the cabin. This was a new experience. Before this, I had a chance of seeing the pilot's cabin on a K.L.M. flight from Amsterdam to Colombo. That was a Boeing 747. This was an Air Bus 320.

It was at night that we reached the Thalapathpitiya house. After a few days, Loku Duwa and her family went back to Australia and I found myself lonesome again. I had time now to contemplate the pilgrimage to India. Before this trip, I was not much interested in pilgrimages to India but after this experience, I realised how important it was. They say that viewing sacred places such as Prince Siddhartha's birthplace, his Enlightenment, preaching the dharma, and Parinibbana, etc. is indispensable for a Buddhist. I am glad that I was blessed with that fortune. I am grateful to my children who helped me in achieving it. Numerous were the occasions when I wished that Prema was with me. I shall now console myself by transferring any merits I gained from the pilgrimage to her.

#### **After the Indian journey (January 2008 onwards)**

After the Indian tour, I was left alone in the Thalapathpitiya house again as Loku Duwa and her family had gone back to Australia. But I enjoyed the liberty to do anything I liked. I awoke early in the morning, had a cup of tea, and prepared something for breakfast. I took my breakfast while listening to the radio or watching television between six and seven for the news. Afterwards, by the time I finished cleaning the house it would be about nine in the morning. I had time until eleven in the forenoon to read a book or a newspaper and go to the market for anything I needed. As I had my Wingroad vehicle those trips were easy. I took about an hour to prepare my lunch. As I prepare my dinner too at the same time, I had no work in the kitchen afterwards. I could relax for about an hour or so after lunch. If I had nowhere to go afterwards, I had the time to listen to *bana* or read a religious book.

The subsequent period was marked by the illnesses and deaths of close relatives and my own hospitalisation for poor health. At the beginning of 2008, I heard about the illness of Nanda Akka (my elder brother's wife). Once, when I went to Udadumbara to look her up, her elder daughter Kalyani had bought a house by the main road and they were living in it because transport was not readily available to come to the hospital from Pallewela and the

trip took time. When I went there later, I took a wheelchair and a commode seat that were in our house. It was possible to get any urgent information over the telephone.

### **Dharmasena Aiyya**

I heard about the death of Dharmasena Aiyya at the end of March 2008. I attended the funeral with Podi Putha. We went there and after some time went to the Kandy hospital too because we heard that Nanda Akka had been admitted to the cardiology unit of the Kandy hospital. When we returned to the funeral house, many relatives had come. Bambaradeniye Nanda Akka was also among them. Some of the staff of the Agriculture Department where Dharmasena Aiyya's elder son worked were also present. Among them, I met a person who claimed to be a pupil of mine. The body was taken to the Pilimatalawa Crematorium for cremation. The two of us (Podi Putha and I) also went there and when the cremation was over, we set off for Colombo from there itself. On my way back, I suddenly recalled that some time ago Prema and I had participated in both the wedding and the homecoming of Saman, the elder son of Dharmasena Aiyya. At a wedding ceremony, I met my friend Mr Saviman Urugodawatta too. He attended the wedding because the bride's party was known to him.

Dharmasena Aiyya was the second son of our Bala Heen Appachchi and Heen Amma. As a child, he had come to Sumangalarama, Punchi Borella and became a bhikkhu, and after completing his education got an appointment as a teacher and started his career at a school in Kantale. I met him in Minipe when he told me that because of numerous problems he had left the robes. While he was working at the Morayaya School in Minipe, he had married a relative of teacher Ms Pathiraja on her proposal and became the father of three children. His elder daughter and the second son are teachers. The eldest son Saman is an accountant. I recalled how as children we played together. I remember how Dharmasena Aiyya came home for the Sinhalese New Year before he became a monk; he and I recited poetry before our elder brother and received beautiful boxes of Chinese firecrackers as presents. Dharmasena Aiyya wore a national dress made of silk. He was a handsome young man.

### **Nanda Akka**

We heard of the death of Nanda Akka in the forenoon of 05<sup>th</sup> April 2008. After lunch, I went by car and reached Teldeniya by evening, bought some goods suitable for the funeral house from a shop where Sarath Putha buys provisions, and left for Pallewela, Udadumbara. I stopped at the *roti kade* passing Meda Mahanuwara (Urugala), and was having tea when Sarath Ranasinghe Putha of Kegalle and his two sons who had come by bus, got off having spotted my vehicle, and came to me. Going alone to a funeral house when night was falling, I now had company. We reached the Pallewela house at about nine in the night.

Nanda Akka's burial took place on 07<sup>th</sup> April. On the following day, I attended two funerals at Mediwaka and Karandagolle with Sarath and Ranjith. During this time, Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle was assassinated in Weliveriya. Even though the seventh day *dana* in memory of Nanda Akka was scheduled for the 11<sup>th</sup> it was necessary for me to be with Podi Duwa and Podi Putha on the first Sinhalese New Year after Prema's death and I returned to Thalapatpitiya via Weliveriya.

Nanda Akka married my elder brother in 1945. That was the year I entered Walala Central College. Our relationship with Nanda Akka's family was traditional. Father of Nanda Akka

(Pallewela Mama) was a cousin of my father. Even before my school going age, I had gone to Pallewela Mama's place with my mother. Our mother was quite close to Karalliyadde Nendamma (Nanda Akka's mother). I remember playing with Navaratna Malli (Nanda Akka's brother). There were two girls in that house. One was Nanda Akka and the other, Akka's Nendamma, my kudamma by relationship. Both of them were of school-going age.

I remember Nanda Akka clearly in the kindergarten. At the time, rice with a dhal curry was given as school lunch. The girls of the higher classes served the meals. I remember quite well Nanda Akka serving me dhal. A year or so later, these two girls took me to Pallewela on a day I had come to school. Coming with them to school the following day, I remember walking along the dam of a canal.

When my elder brother got married, he was the Chief Clerk of the office of the Divisional Revenue Officer, Bintenna. As I remember, that office was in the Potawa village near Bibile. In my adolescence, I went to Potawa several times during my holidays. I remember too that each time I went there, Nanda Akka gave me a delicious meal. Her meals were as tasty as those prepared by my mother. Whenever I went there, she treated me as her own brother. As Nanda Akka was an adult, I looked at her with a certain sense of reverence and fear. So, I was careful not to do anything to offend her. A girl who went to school in a buggy cart fascinated me but I was careful not to give even an indication of it before Nanda Akka.

Later on, when I was a teacher at the Urugala Junior School, my elder brother's family went to live in our village. I lodged in a house near the school, and when I went home during the weekend, I rid myself of starvation with delicious meals. The cook's meals at the lodging were like hay or straw while those of Nanda Akka's were mouth-watering and nutritious. After my departure to Colombo, it was rarely that I saw my elder brother, Nanda Akka and their children. This relationship withered further as I had to go to remote places in the country after my marriage.

After my retirement when Prema and I were living in Udadumbara, we visited the Pallewela house quite often and we were then attended to by Kalyani, Nanda Akka's elder daughter, because at the time Nanda Akka was in poor health. But she was as lively as ever in her conversation. Nanda Akka's death marked the end of an epoch.

### **My ill health**

While living alone in the Thalapatpitiya house, I went monthly to Dr Chula Herath's clinic at the Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital for treatment. By this time, I was suffering from kidney malfunction, diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol imbalance, etc. Many kinds of medicine were necessary but that too resulted in physical weakness. When I met Dr Herath once in a state of serious weakness, he advised me to enter hospital immediately. So, I was warded in Ward 7 from May 9 -18, 2008.

On occasions when I was discharged, I would go to Podi Putha's house, spend a few days with him, and go to Thalapatpitiya again as usual. But Loku Duwa, Podi Duwa and Podi Putha constantly called me over the telephone for information. In July 2008, a domestic help named Ratnasiri from Horana was found for me by Nimal, a friend of Wasantha. Ratnasiri went home once a month saying that he was going for a land case in the courts.

The day he would return was not certain. He told me once, that when he went to court, he was taken into custody and remanded for other cases. When he was with me, I found him very obedient. However, as it was not certain when he would return after going home, I asked him not to come again.

Prema's *dana* at the end of one year fell on July 10, 2008. Podi Duwa and the others got together, offered *dana* and *pirikara* to the bhikkhus of the Dhammanikethanaya and transferred merits to their mother. Loku Putha had sent me a certain sum of money to be used for a *pinkama* on behalf of his mother. I used that money to sink a well in the temple at Halyale, my hometown. Later on, when I went to the temple, I was able to see the completed well.

## **Degree Honoris Causa**

I heard that the Sri Jayewardenepura University and the Sri Lanka Sabaragamuwa University were proposing to offer me degrees honoris causa somewhere at the end of October 2008. Ten years after retirement from the University, a degree honoris causa is proposed only if the authorities determine that I had rendered valuable service to the University. If this happened just as I retired, it might be interpreted as an act of those who had taken advantage of me. A decision to offer me a degree honoris causa ten years after retirement perhaps means that I had been of some use to my university. I decided to accept the offer provided it was done in recognition of my service.

Sri Jayewardenepura University awarded me the D.Sc. honoris causa. The convocation was held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall on December 2, 2008. Dr Sampath Amaratunga, Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, read out the citation, which is reproduced below. Ven. Bellanwila Wimalaratne Nayaka Thera, Chancellor of the Sri Jayewardenepura University, conferred on me the degree honoris causa. The Vice Chancellor was Dr. N.L.A. Karunaratna. One of my most brilliant pupil's Dr. Ramani Samaratunga and the Tissa Rajapaksa Couple, my son-in-law Dr. Priyantha Premakumara, Podi Duwa and Podi Putha were present at the convocation.

**Dr. Sampath Amaratunga, Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce presented the introductory speech on the occasion of the conferment of the D.Sc. degree honoris causa on Prof. Ariyapala Ekanayake (English translation).**

Venerable Most Honorary Chancellor,

Venerable Maha Sanga,

Vice Chancellor,

Deans,

Members of University Grants Commission, Council and Senate,

Members of the Academic, Administration and Non-Academic Staff,

New Graduates,

Distinguish Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A younger son was born on 26 March 1933 to Ekanayake Rajapakse Mudiyansele Tikiri Banda and Abeysinghe Mudiyansele Bandara Menike in the remote village of Halyala in Uda Dumbara in the District of Kandy. He was named Ekanayake Rajapakse Mudiyansele Ariyapala Ekanayake. Ariyapala Ekanayake received his primary education at the Vernicular Mixed State School in Mediwake, Kandy. Thereafter based on his outstanding performance at the scholarship examination he was fortunate to be admitted to Walala Central College for his secondary education.

Though fluent in Sinhala language, he studied in the English medium and achieved exceptional results at the Senior School Certificate Examination in 1949. Thereafter he started his career as an assistant teacher in English language. After passing the General Clerical Service Examination in November 1951, young Ekanayake joined the public service. He commenced his employment at the Irrigation Department and was assigned to provide a service to the communities in Minipe, Badulla, Hingurakgoda, Giritale and Minneriya.

In 1960, a new chapter in Ariyapala Ekanayaka's life commenced with the appearance of an advertisement by Vidyodaya University of Ceylon, calling for applications for the newly introduced evening degree course for employed candidates. On his application being accepted, he embarked on his higher education journey. Being married by then with two children, whilst meeting the challenges of family life, he embarked on his higher education journey. In 1963, he graduated with a second lower class in Bachelor of Public Administration (B.A.) Degree.

He joined the Fisheries Corporation as an Assistant Manager. Soon after, he was appointed as a visiting lecturer in the Department of Economics, Business and Public Administration at Vidyodaya University where, whilst imparting knowledge to university students with great resolve, he continued his higher studies as well as his employment at the Fisheries Corporation. He was then awarded the inaugural Masters Degree in Public Administration (M.P.A.) by the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon with a Merit pass.

In 1970, he joined Vidyodaya University as a Lecturer thus permanently moving to the higher education arena where he imparted knowledge and education to university students.

After the successful completion of a postgraduate degree at the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, The Netherlands in 1978, he returned home to share his novel experiences with the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce and to establish and expand post graduate courses in Public Administration. In 1986, he became an Associate Professor in Public Administration, disseminating knowledge in Public Administration at the highest level, Island wide. Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake was a pioneer in that he was instrumental in establishing in 1980, the first and only academic department to award an undergraduate degree in Public Administration among Sri Lankan Universities. Professor Ekanayake was

appointed the inaugural Head of that Department. The Department and Public Administration studies developed and expanded on the foundation established by him. He received accolades from his peers for his pioneering contribution as founder of the Department of Public Administration and for his exceptional services in expanding and improving the Department.

In 1986, after a few terms as Head of Department, Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake became Dean of the faculty of Management Studies and Commerce as well as Acting Vice Chancellor, in which roles he demonstrated excellent leadership qualities.

Professor Ekanayake also rendered exceptional services as an active and valuable member of the Sri Jayawardenepura University Board of Administration, the Senate, Post Graduate Institute of Management, Board of Education, University Grants Commission and the Management Studies and Commerce, Humanities and Science sub committees.

In addition to being an outstanding teacher, he was an exceptional leader and administrator and upheld ethical standards at the highest level. His leadership was never questioned. His patience and impartiality were of the highest standard and valued by all. His services were not limited to the University of Sri Jayawardenepura, in that in 1996 he was appointed the Rector of Uva Campus of the Sabragamuwa University and Acting Director of Affiliated University of Buttala.

As visiting lecturer at the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration and at other educational institutions, he contributed at a national level, to education and the improvement of services provided by those institutions. His contribution to advancement of Public Administration studies through numerous research papers and educational articles is to be respected and applauded.

After an outstanding and valuable service spanning three (3) decades, Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake retired in 1998. He continues to be a permanent member and a valuable contributor and advisor to the Alumni of the Faculty of Public Administration.

Most Venerable Honorary Chancellor,

In recognition and appreciation of the exceptional contribution to Public Administration studies, outstanding services in that arena, pioneering services in the establishment of the very first Department of Public Administration in the country, valuable services to education of Affiliated Universities and as a member of numerous higher educational Boards, it is with great respect I present to you Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake, an outstanding candidate for admission to the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*).





***Honorary Degree – 02.12.2008***



UNIVERSITY OF SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA  
SRI LANKA

This is to certify that

*Ariyapala Ekanayake*

was conferred the

*Degree of Doctor of Science*  
*(honoris causa)*

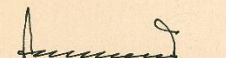
*at the Convocation held*

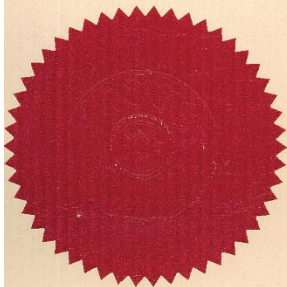
*on*

*02<sup>nd</sup> December 2008*

Witness our hands this Second day of December  
Two Thousand Eight

  
Vice-Chancellor

  
Registrar



***D.Sc. Honorary Degree Certificate***

The convocation of the Sabaragamuwa University was held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009. This University conferred on me the degree of D.Litt. honoris causa. Mr D.A.I. Dayaratna, Dean of the Faculty of Management, read the citation, which is reproduced below. The degree honoris causa was conferred on me by Ven. Prof. Kamburugamuwe Vajira Nayaka Thera, the Chancellor of the Sabaragamuwa University. Mr Mahinda Rupasinghe was the Vice Chancellor. On the same day, degrees honoris causa were conferred on Prof A.V.D. de S. Indraratna and Prof B.L. Panditaratna. My son-in-law Wasantha Liyanagama, Loku Duwa, Podi Duwa, grandson Dineeth Tharusha Liyanagama, and granddaughter Savini Dulanga Liyanagama were also present. I participated in the convocation dinner too that night.

## **PROFESSOR ARIYAPALA EKANAYAKE**

Introduction and Presentation by Mr. D.A.I. Dayaratne,  
Dean, Faculty of Management Studies.

Venerable Chancellor,

Ariyapala Ekanayake, the youngest son of Ekanayake Rajapaksha Mudiyanseelage Tikiri Banda and Abeysinghe Mudiyanseelage Bandara Manike was born on March 26, 1933, in the village of Halyala, Udadumbara in the Kandy District. He received his primary education at the Rural Vernacular Mixed School in Mediwaka, Kandy. Due to his brilliant performance in the 5<sup>th</sup> standard at school, he was awarded a government scholarship and held it throughout his secondary education. That won him the opportunity to enter Walala Central College for his secondary education. There he studied in the English medium even though he was perfectly proficient in Sinhala. After the completion of his Senior School Certificate (SSC) in December 1949, he started a career in 1951 as a Teacher Assistant in English. In the month of November of the same year, he passed the Government Clerical Service Examination and received his first appointment in the Department of Irrigation, which eventually led him to serve in different parts of the country (Minipe, Badulla, Hingurakgoda, Girithale, Minneriya etc).

As a result of young Ekanayaka's enthusiasm to continue his higher studies, in 1960 he entered the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon, as a student of the first batch taken for the Bachelor of Arts (General) Degree. He pursued his studies in the Public Administration stream and graduated in 1963 achieving a Second Lower, being the only person in the first batch to obtain a class. With many years of devoted service in the public sector and numerous achievements, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Manager at the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation. Given his excellent performance at the University, he becomes a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Economics, Business and Public Administration which was within the Faculty of Arts of the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon.

Mr. Ekanayake continued to demonstrate his sincerity of purpose in advancing intellectually by gaining admission to the first batch of the Masters in Public Administration (M.P.A.) offered by the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon, and completed it obtaining a merit pass in 1969.

In 1970, Mr. Ekanayake joined the Academic Staff of Vidyodaya University of Ceylon and served for six years as a lecturer until he was promoted to the post of senior lecturer in 1976. In recognition of his valuable services to the University and of his academic achievements, he was promoted in 1986 as Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration, University of Sri Jayawardenepura.

In 1978, Professor Ekanayake was selected from the University, to pursue a Masters Degree in Development Studies, offered by the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) at the Hague in the Netherlands. The training that he received has been beneficial, not only to the University but to the entire country, since it enabled the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce to commence and develop postgraduate courses in Public Administration. Professor Ekanayake's contribution to the Department of Public Administration took the form of pioneering the establishment of the first and only academic department to offer an undergraduate Degree in Public Administration in 1980. He became its first Head and the course leader for the subjects of Public Administration, Public Enterprises, Public Finance and Political Science. Based on his contribution to the department, he is also still identified as the Founder of the Department of Public Administration. Until his appointment as Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce at Vidyodaya University of Ceylon in 1986, he functioned as the Head of the Department of Public Administration and contributed immensely to its development. Professor Ekanayake's involvement in various other organizations, universities and schools includes, his service as Rector to the Uva Campus, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (1996 to 1997); Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration, Sri Lanka Library Association and Federation of Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies Ltd of Sri Lanka. He also contributed to the field of social sciences through his extensive research and articles, which have been published in prestigious academic journals both local and international.

Prof. Ekanayake immensely contributed for the development of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka from its inception as an Affiliated University College. He was the first Academic Co-ordinator of the Travel and Tourism Management Programme of the Sabaragamuwa Affiliated University College. As the co-ordinator, he gave the leadership for the formulation of curricula for the above academic programme.

He played an important role as Rector of Uva Campus in the development of the Uva Affiliated University College and subsequently, for the formation of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Likewise, he contributed immensely to the development of the Buttala Affiliated University College and to the establishment of the Faculty of Applied Sciences of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

During the inception stages of the Uva Campus of the Sabaragamuwa University, Prof. Ekanayake extended his valuable services as the Rector of the Uva Campus, fulfilling the requirements of physical and human resources of the Faculty.

Prof. Ekanayake served as a Council Member of the Sabaragamuwa University and chaired various key decision-making committees of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. His experience, knowledge, and expertise were very much useful in enhancing the quality of academic and administrative performance of the University.

Venerable Chancellor,

For the invaluable service rendered for the fostering and development of the discipline of Management and Public Administration in Sri Lanka, it is my privilege to present to you Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake, for the conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa, of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.



**With Ramani, Podi Putha, Podi Duwa and Priyantha**



**Celebrating with the family**



## **SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**

This is to certify that  
as approved by the Council  
on the recommendation of the Senate of  
The Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

***Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake***

was conferred the degree of  
**Doctor of Letters**  
*(honoris causa)*

at the convocation held in Colombo on  
**15<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

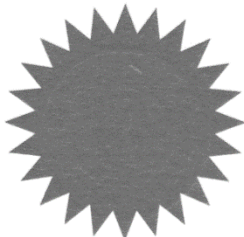
Witness our hands this  
Fifteenth day of January Two Thousand and Nine

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rupasinghe'.

Professor Mahinda S. Rupasinghe  
Vice Chancellor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. K. W. F. Thalagune'.

T K W F Thalagune  
Registrar



**D.Lett: Certificate 15.01.2009 – Sabaragamuwa University**

### **Grandson Chamila's wedding**

Chamila is a grandson of mine. He is the elder son of my elder brother's eldest son, G.B. Ekanayake. Chamila's mother Ira urged me to attend her son, Chamila's wedding on June 9, 2009. I was rather doubtful of attending such functions, as I was subject frequently to various illnesses at the time. Somehow, I bought a return ticket for travel in the Colombo-Kandy intercity train on the wedding day. That was to travel in the observation saloon. I think my son-in-law Priyantha dropped me at the Fort railway station at 7.00 a.m. on that day.

When the train reached Kandy railway station at about 9.45 a. m., I went to the station rest room to change into an appropriate dress for the wedding. The rest room that was well furnished sometime ago was now only an empty room. There was neither a clothes hanger nor a mirror. After changing my clothes, I went to the Station Master's room, where I met Karunatilaka, a nephew of ours who was on duty. As he said that he was also going for the wedding, I handed over my travelling bag to him for safe custody, and we left in a three-wheeler to Devon Hotel on the Ampitiya Road. A large number of relatives were present.

Mr Sarath Ekanayake, the Chief Minister of the Central Province, and another official were witnesses at the registration of the marriage. When the registration was over, the Chief Minister left without waiting for lunch. I sat in the chair where he was seated and fell into conversation with the other official who signed as witness. He told me that he was the Divisional Secretary, Yatinuwara, and the bride's father was working in his office. When he asked me who I was, Kalyani (my elder brother's daughter) told him about me, the official got up from his seat, came to me and knelt down before me to pay his regards. He said that he was a pupil of mine at the University and asked my pardon for not being able to recognise me. Which teacher would not be moved by such a humble pupil who would kneel down and pay his respects before such a large gathering? Because of such experiences, numerous were the occasions when I thought what good fortune it was to be a teacher.

After lunch, I went with my nephew Karunatilaka to the railway station, got my travelling bag, changed clothes, and got on the Colombo-bound train. The train left Kandy at 3.00 p.m. and reached Colombo Fort by about 5.45 p.m. As my son-in-law Priyantha had come to the station, I reached home at Thalpathitiya in about half an hour.

### **Grandson Kosala's wedding**

Son of Anula, eldest daughter of my younger sister, got married on June 25, 2009. The ceremony was held at the Barjaya Mount Royal Hotel in Mt. Lavinia. I attended the ceremony with all in our family who were in Sri Lanka, namely, Podi Duwa, son-in-law Priyantha, Podi Putha and daughter-in-law Melanie. A notable incident that happened there was meeting Poddalgoda Nangi. This was after about fifty-five years. This *nangi*, Anula's *nendamma*, is the only younger sister of my Poddalgoda cousin (my younger sister's husband). During the time I worked at the Minipe Irrigation Office, I met Poddalgoda Nangi who was then a young child. Long afterwards, after her marriage and with children and grandchildren, I could recognise her only because she came up and spoke to me. Even on the homecoming day, I met her with our sister and other relatives. I heard that one of her sons was a commerce graduate of our university. I was told that he is working as an accountant in Doha Qatar. I have not met him. Poddalgoda Nangi had married a postmaster



named Wickremasinghe in Marassana. The younger daughter of Bambaradeniye Nendamma who is married to a person from Marassana said that she knew Poddalgoda Nangi. Relatives are spread out in Sri Lanka and overseas. Looked at it that way, are we not all relatives of all, after all?

As a matter of routine, Loku Duwa and her family come to Sri Lanka for a period of about one month and stay at the Thalpathpitiya house. Then the loneliness pervading the house disappears completely. Many visit the place. And it is possible to go on trips with them. I set apart my vehicle for the use of Loku Duwa and her family. When they go back, I return to my loneliness, but gradually I have got used to that too. On July 10, 2009, two years after the death of Prema, we offered the morning *dana* to the Naga Vihara. In addition, to transferring merit to Prema, I made a financial contribution towards renovating the wards of the Udadumbara hospital. Even Kalyani helped in this. At the time, we had a domestic help named Kidnasamy from Bagawantalawa. Because of some family problems, he left after a few days. Later Kidnasamy himself brought an elderly person called Raju. Raju's problem was that when he went home on holiday, he was unaware that he should return. Someone like Kidnasamy had to go to bring him back. He went home like that once or twice but came back, and stayed with me until April.

### **Other important events**

During the Presidential Elections in 2010, I was in hospital between January 17-21. A few of the hospital employees appeared to be supporters of candidate Sarath Fonseka. A bhikkhu who was in the ward spoke in his support. Going on that, there was no doubt at all about Sarath Fonseka's victory. But that was not the public opinion. A person who could think logically could have assessed public opinion correctly. However, when you are under an illusion, the truth hides behind a veil of darkness. At the General Elections held in April the United People's Freedom Alliance gained a resounding victory.

The year 2010 was significant to me for many other reasons. First is that my daughter-in-law Melanie's father died on April 17. Mr Nihal Halangoda who was living in his house at Lewella died of a heart ailment. The dead body was placed in a florist's shop near the General Hospital, Kandy. Podi Duwa, Chandra Nangi, Tissa Jayawardene, and I went to Kandy to pay our respects. There, I came to know two people - Panabokke and Nugawela. On our way back, we went to the Peradeniya Rest House for lunch. When we were passing Polgahamula, Podi Duwa suggested dropping in at Goonatileka Malli's place, but it was not urgent, we came direct to Colombo to save time.

Unfortunately, however, Goonatileka Malli, Padma Nangi's husband, informed me that Padma Nangi died on April 22. Early the following morning, while Podi Duwa and I were on our way to Iriyagama, we picked up Anula too on the way. We reached Goonatileka Malli's place by about eight in the morning. Once we were there, I sent a message to Yasawathie (our elder sister's eldest daughter) informing her of the death. I met a large number of relatives, among whom were Bambaradeniye Nanda Akka, her elder daughter, her daughter, a few nephews of Goonatileka Malli, several nieces, and other relatives whom we meet only seldom. I had no personal knowledge of some of them. I was also able to renew my contacts with Padma Nangi's relatives. The interment was at the Mahaiyawa cemetery in the afternoon that day. After the religious rites were performed at the house and the

cortege had left, we set off on our return journey. The journey was obstructed by heavy rains. We reached the Thalathpitiya house by evening.



### **Two Lonely Men**

Afterwards I went to Uda Iriyagama for the *dana* ceremony too. That time I went by bus from Pettah. When I got off at Polgahamula, Goonatilleke Malli's son Indunil, who had come in his vehicle, took me to the house. Ven. Narampanawe Ananda Thera, Head of the Asgiri Maha Vihara Pirivena, had delivered the *dharmadesana* the previous evening. The *dana* the following noon was offered to the bhikkhus of the nearby Polgahamula temple. That day too I was able to meet a large number of relatives. The following day at about ten in the morning I went to Kandy and from there to Nugegoda on a Panadura-bound private bus. That time I brought along with me a youth named Raja for household chores. Aiya's son Ranjith found him for me.

Later I came to know that Raja was a kidney patient. However, until he left for the Dipavali festival in November, he attended to household chores. As he had fallen ill on his way back, he entered the Kandy hospital for treatment. Afterwards, as I myself fell ill seriously I was not interested in getting him back. He was the last domestic help I had.

### **Dance classroom**

Prema's third year *pinkama* fell on July 10, 2010. In her memory, I made a financial contribution this time towards the building of the dance classroom at the Gamaima Bandaranaike Maha Vidyalaya, Teldeniya. The following is the text on the memorial plaque unveiled on the day the dance classroom was opened:



Dance Classroom in Memory of Prema



We offered *heel dana* to the Dharmanikethanaya, Thalapathpitiya. Rangala Rajah had prepared a good *dana*. I prepared *kola kenda* with various kinds of greens. When I asked Rajah how he was so conversant with Buddhist rituals, he told me that his mother was Buddhist and father was Tamil. As I mentioned earlier, as Rangala Rajah went home for the Dipavali festival I went to my Podi Putha's place because it was not prudent to be alone with my growing physical disabilities. Somehow, my decision turned out to be a wise one.

## Hospitalisation

On the night of November 17, 2010, I found breathing extremely difficult. So that night itself, I got ready for hospitalisation the following day. As dawn was breaking, I told Podi Putha about my illness and requested him to take me to hospital. My daughter-in-law, who was listening, got ready immediately and took me in her car to Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital. In the meantime, Podi Putha had called Podi Duwa.

Just as I was admitted to the emergency unit of the Jayewardenepura hospital, another patient who was in a more serious condition than me, was admitted to the hospital and sent to the Intensive Care Unit. I was taken up next. As usual, I was referred to Dr Chula Herath's ward. Dr Herath who came to the ward in the morning, referred me to the cardiac unit for an ECHO test and then to the Intensive Care Unit. Again, I found breathing very hard. So, action was taken to put me on oxygen. I had a feeling that I might pass away in the Intensive Care Unit itself on the night of the 18<sup>th</sup>. Although oxygen was essential, I found the mask put on me most uncomfortable. I tried to pull it away; I am sure someone must have seen my agitation.

Having experienced this agitation, a strange thought crossed my mind. It was about Ven. Sariputta. I had heard that he suffered extreme pain because of being seriously ill. The thought was that if illnesses affect even such noble persons, a person such as me having to suffer is not a matter for surprise. With that thought, I felt a great sense of relief. I fell asleep in a moment. I awoke only the following morning.

It was evident that proper and prompt treatment saved my life that day. I spent a few more days in the Intensive Care Unit. Every morning and evening, Dr Chula Herath examined me. An assistant of his also came early in the morning and checked me. In the meantime, Loku Duwa also came from Australia and constantly watched my progress.

After five days in the Intensive Care Unit, I was transferred to Ward 7. I was there until December 7. Even there the supply of oxygen continued. Throughout the day Loku Duwa spent time talking to doctors, bringing me meals to the ward, and doing everything possible. The hospital staff too was more conscious about a patient, when there was some informed person about the place continually looking after his interests. Nursing sisters, nurses and other employees took special interest in me. And there was a separate attendant for me. (We had to pay them).

After I was discharged, I went to Podi Putha's place. The usual room was reserved for me. When Loku Duwa's children and Wasantha came to Sri Lanka, they stayed in the Thalpathpitiya house. They used my vehicle. After this, I did not go to live in the Thalpathpitiya house. Still my house is Podi Putha's house. They brought the Dialog satellite antenna that was in the Thalpathpitiya house and installed it at Podi Putha's house. The internet connection at the Thalpathpitiya house was transferred here. So, my room was a self-contained unit. I have a separate mobile phone too. I could listen to *bana* and other religious programmes on the radio and television. I could talk to Loku Duwa daily and report my health condition. And I could talk to anyone I wanted to on my mobile phone.

### **Kurunegala trip**

An old friend of mine, Mr Ananda Jayatissa (L.A.D.A. Jayatissa), now living in England, once gave me Mr Gamini Ratnayake's telephone number. In Chapter 05, I have mentioned about a young officer named R.N.G. Ratnayake. Mr Jayatissa had given my telephone number to Mr Gamini Ratnayake. So that paved the way for renewing our relationship. On December 25, 2010, five of us went to Gamini's place. Loku Duwa, Podi Duwa, Dineeth, Savini and I were the five.

After a journey of three hours, we reached Gamini's place on Circular Road, Kurunegala, at about 11.00 a.m. He had seen my Loku Duwa when she was about two or three years of age, but it was this time that we met Gamini after that. As Gamini was married to a Catholic lady, we were hosted to a delicious tea party. We were invited to lunch, but as our elder sister's elder daughter was living in Mallawapitiya, Kurunegala, and we had to go there, we excused ourselves. We met Mr Kulasiri Tennekoon too, whom I had known when I was working at the Fisheries Corporation, at Gamini's house. He is married to a sister of Gamini's wife.

We went to niece Yasawathie's place for lunch. My niece had laid a table fit for a wedding reception, for Heen Mama and his children and grandchildren. A nephew who was an undergraduate of the Moratuwa University and Abeyasinghe Putha were at home. Abeyasinghe Putha had worked with Gamini at the Provincial Council Office. So, he spoke

highly of Gamini. We left after lunch and on the way dropped in at Nela Nangi's house and the home of a lady doctor named Sumedha who had studied with Loku Duwa at Medical College. We returned to Thalpathpitiya at about eight in the night. The joy of meeting old friends and relatives lingered in my mind.

### **Suffering a relapse**

I have mentioned above that I fell ill seriously in November 2010, after which I began to feel more and more physically weak. In January 2011, because of a haemorrhage in the nose I was admitted to Ward 11 of the Jaywardenepura hospital for treatment. Its chief was Dr Asoka Jayasena, but a senior doctor treated me. Later on, when I went to his residence for treatment, his advice to me was to refrain from cleaning my nose because inserting your fingers into the nose to clean it might injure the delicate blood vessels in it causing bleeding. This proved to be a successful remedy.

When I was in the hospital ward, an old singer Mr Harun Lantra was hospitalized. As he was one of my favourite singers, I asked him what was wrong with him. He replied it was a throat ailment and his voice was weak. When a singer is afflicted with such an ailment, it threatens his entire career. Sanath Goonatilleka too visited him and it appeared that he volunteered to help him. I left hospital and I do not know what happened thereafter.

I was treated in Dr Chula Herath's ward from January 27-29, 2011. Later, I went regularly to his clinic and one day I was referred to the Cardiac Unit. The Heart Specialist Dr Jagath Herath and an assistant of his decided that I should get a Holter Monitor test. On July 27, 2011, I entered hospital, and spent nearly twenty-four hours with a mobile phone size of a computer fixed on to my chest. When information recorded by it was printed, it was decided that an Electro-Physiologist should examine me.

I regularly consulted Heart Specialist Dr W.S. Shantaraj for treatment for my heart ailment. When I showed these records to him on August 8, 2011, he advised me to consult Dr Asanga Dunuwila. Dr Shantaraj gave me a letter too to be given to Dr Dunuwila. When I met Dr Dunuwila on August 11, 2011, he told me that a pacemaker had to be implanted to control my abnormal heart rhythms and asked me to enter Asiri Hospital, which I did on August 18, 2011. In the forenoon of the following day, I was taken to the operating theatre, a pacemaker was placed inside the muscle on the left side of my chest. I was in the Intensive Care Unit for a day or two and then transferred to a normal room, and a day later, I left hospital.

Before this operation, my heartbeat was 66 per minute. Afterwards it increased to anything between 80-90 times. When I brought this to the notice of Dr Dunuwila at the clinic, he said that if I do not feel any discomfort, the speed was not excessive. However, by January 2012, I began to feel some difficulty in breathing.

Once I went to a hotel in Hikkaduwa with Loku Duwa and her family who came to Sri Lanka at the end of 2011, and spent a few days there. Podi Duwa and Priyantha too joined us. Later, I went with Loku Putha, Podi Putha, Podi Duwa and their families to a hotel in Bentota for a couple of days. There was a big change in my diet on both these trips. I had to enter hospital on January 8, 2012. First, I entered Dr Chula Herath's ward but afterwards I was transferred to the cardiac ward. I felt difficulty in breathing. According to the diagnosis card,

there is a defect in the left side of the heart. My heartbeat was 84. I left hospital on January 13.

However, I met Dr Shantaraj and got his advice. When I recline on the bed, I need to get up instantly due to difficulty in breathing. As the situation aggravated, I entered Durdans Hospital on January 24 and got treatment from Dr Shantaraj. I was in the Intensive Care Unit. Dr Dunuwila, using a computer, made certain alterations in the pacemaker. I went home on the 27<sup>th</sup> but I had to go back on February 5. The diagnosis card indicated, "Admitted with Clinical Heart Failure (LVEF – 30%)." The pacemaker was readjusted and the heartbeat was reduced to 60. It had been adjusted to decrease during the night (9.00 p.m. – 5.30 a.m.) I was discharged on February 9, 2012. Afterwards, my condition improved gradually. I feel that all my difficulties have disappeared now. But to maintain this balance I have to ingest seven to eight kinds of drugs. This costs over rupees five thousand per month. Quite often, my children bear the expenses.

## **The Future**

Such was the past, but now I live with great hopes for the future; the main reason being that another grandson is born. Podi Putha told me a few months ago that Melanie was expecting a child. I was particularly delighted that they, who were without a child for nearly eight years of marriage, were going to be blessed with an heir. Which grandfather would not be happy when Ariyapala, the son of farmer Ekanayake Rajapaksa Mudiyansele Tikiri Banda is getting a heir to continue the generation? I have a grandson and granddaughter but they are the children of Loku Duwa. Therefore, this birth, which occurred on June 3, 2012, is most significant. My beloved wife, Prema, has bestowed upon me four children, two daughters, and two sons. Because of them, I have two sons in law and two daughters in law. So now, I am the father of eight children. All of them have the strength and courage to lead a peaceful life. I have with me a card given to me by my children, grandson, and granddaughter in January 2011. This has made me realize that I have done something for them too. That is more than enough for me.

I try to overturn any new expectations as much as possible. I have no further expectations in my life. An oil lamp, when nearing its end of life, gives the maximum light. It gives a bright light and then die. If I can also add some good scent to the air before the end of my life, that is sufficient to me. My body will add to the dust as it was born from dust. However, this is not the end. I have one more thing that is very close to my heart, my school, Walala Central School and the Central Schools Alumni Association.

with love  
Dimpleth

## Thatha

You never look for praises  
You are never one to boast  
You just go on quietly working  
For those you love the most  
Your dreams are seldom spoken  
Your wants are very few  
And most of the time your worries  
Will go unspoken too  
You're there.... A firm foundation  
Through all our storms of life  
A sturdy hand to hold to  
In times of stress and strife  
A true friend we can turn to  
When times are good or bad  
One of our greatest blessings,  
The man that we call Thatha

with love  
Prigyanthe  
m.m.p.f.

THANK YOU FOR  
BEING A  
GOOD DAD  
FATHER, AND  
LOTS OF LOVE  
FROM  
PUNYA

with lots of love  
and regards  
Melanie

## Thank you for all you have done for

with love, 2588

US

with love  
Nivonia  
January 2011

Thank you for  
the love you  
have given  
us and being  
your Hindu son

\* Best father in law  
one could have  
- Please don't change  
Wasantha

With love  
Nivonia

with love  
Chandini





**New Grandson – Miura Kaveen Ekanayake – 03 June 2012**



**Three Generations**



**New Relative**



**With Proud Parents**

## **Walala A. Ratnayake Madhya Vidyalaya (Central College)**

My life evolved from the central school's system. Hence it was imperative to record my school days at Walala Central School which is now renamed Walala A. Rathnayake Madhya Vidyalaya. I continued to visit the school to meet with the teachers a few times since I completed my school education on September 12, 1950. Once my teachers have transferred or retired my visits discontinued.

During Principal Mr. Manthilake's time (1966-1967) some of my friends, Rajapaksha, Gunasena, Herath and I initiated discussions to set up an alumni association. However, my transfer to Colombo made it difficult to attend further discussions or meetings. I attended Alumni Association meetings in 1990's during Principal Mr. Migelrathna's period. By this time, I had my own vehicle so travelling to attend meetings was not an issue.

Principal Mr. Migelrathna invited me to give an inspirational speech at the morning assembly in March 1992. Some of the highlights of this speech were how I entered Walala Central School after passing the scholarship exam, benefits I reaped from the free education system, services rendered by Mr A. Ratnayake and Mr C.W.W. Kannangara. During this time Vice Principals of the school were Mrs Ranmeike Wijesinghe and Mr Hemantha Prematilake.

I attended various important functions of Walala Central School from time to time. In 1994 during Principal Mr Prematilake's period I attended the "Swarna Jayanthi" celebrations of the school where President D.B. Wijetunga was the chief guest. In 23 February 1995, I was the chief guest of the sports meet. In later years I attended school events with another alumni of Walala Central School Mr Mahinda Kalpage. Last two events were the functions held when Member of Parliament Mr Earl Gunasekera donated a bus to the school and the annual prize giving where the Minister of Education Mr Bandula Gunawardena was the chief guest.

I am pleased by the performance in sports events at national level by current students of A. Ratnayake Madhya Vidyalaya where they excel. This brings back sweet memories from my school days.



**Principal Mr Hemantha  
Premathilaka**



**Vice Principal Mrs Ranmanika Wijesinghe**



**23.02.1995**



23.02.1995

## Central Colleges Past Pupil's Association of Srilanka



### **With Lot of Petals – Samastha Lanka Madhya Vidyala Adi Sishya Sangamaya (Central Colleges Past Pupils Association of Srilanka)**

When Dr C.W.W. Kannangara was the Minister of Education, fifty-four Central Colleges were opened in various parts of the island within the period 1943-47 (Schedule VII). What was expected by this was to give an English education to poor children. English education was a *sine qua non* to seek higher education or to get a government job during the colonial period. Facilities for this were available only in a few schools run by missionaries in urban areas. Fees were charged for education in those schools. Children in urban areas as well as children of rich families in rural areas received English education on payment of fees for staying in hostels of those schools or in other lodgings. Therefore, English education was a privilege of the well-to-do. To make this privilege a right of all talented children, it was imperative to provide English education free and create a network of appropriate schools.

Minister Dr Kannangara got an Act passed in the State Legislative Assembly for the government to provide free education, and established fifty-four Central Colleges, one for each electorate. At the time, there were only fifty electorates but as more than one College was established in certain electorates, the initial number of Central Colleges was fifty-four: 9 colleges in 1943, 14 in 1944, 13 in 1945, 14 in 1946 and 4 in 1947. A scholarship programme was also launched to provide education with hostel facilities to poor children. Accordingly, an island-wide examination for students in Grade Five was held and scholarships were granted to those who scored good marks. Thus, children in remote areas received secondary education with hostel facilities.

The medium of education from Grade Six onwards was English. However, since 1946 teaching in the mother tongue was begun and gradually, year by year, this was extended to

higher grades too. So, by 1956 the medium of education in secondary schools was the mother tongue. English was only one subject. This was a compulsory second language.

These central colleges established in this manner were eligible to be known as “*vidyala*” after they presented students for the Senior School Certificate and University Entrance examinations. Some students who had studied in these colleges established an association in 1961 called ***Samasta Lanka Madhya Vidyalaya Adi Sishya Sangamaya (central colleges past pupil’s association of srilanka)***. The pioneer in this was Mr Berty Galahitiyawa, an old boy of Thalathuoya and Nugawela Central Colleges. Mr Somapala Gunadheera, who was in the Ceylon Civil Service at the time, was appointed President. Mr Berty Galahitiyawa was Secretary. He informs me that some of the grateful students got together, met Dr Kannangara, who was destitute and was in his old age, and helped him.

This Association continued until about 1971, but as Mr Galahitiyawa and some other members were under surveillance by the C.I.D. in connection with the April insurrection, it became inactive. Somewhere in the middle of 1991, the renowned Batik artist Mr Vipula Dharmawardana tried his best to rejuvenate the Association. Mr Dharmawardana is an old boy of Nugawela Central College. A few of the old boys of other Central colleges were also invited to a meeting at the Agricultural Research Institute auditorium to form a Colombo branch of the Old Boys’ Association of that college. He hosted the participants to lunch at the Sinhalese Sports Club Hall and took the first step to revive the ***Samasta Lanka Madhya Vidyalaya Adi Sishya Sangamaya***. Later on, they were invited to his house and after several meetings, the inaugural General Meeting was held at the beginning of 1992 at the Sausiripaya Auditorium.

A large number of old boys of Central Colleges attended this meeting from various parts of the island. Among them were Ranbanda Seneviratne, Tilak Iddamalgoda, Alawattagoda Premadasa, Savimon Urugodawatta, Berty Galahitiyawa, P.B. Wanninayaka, and M.C. Matupala. Some distinguished invitees such as Pundit Amaradeva, Panibharata and Gunadasa Liyanage were also present. The draft Constitution presented by Mr Savimon Urugodawatta was adopted and a board of officials appointed. The following were the key office-bearers:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| President          | - Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake (Walala Central College)                                      |
| Secretary          | - Mr. P.B. Wanninayake of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service (Anuradhapura Central College) |
| Treasurer          | - Mr. M.C. Mathupala, Director General NIBM (Galahitiyawa Central College)                    |
| National Organiser | - Kalashuri Vipula Dharmawardana (Nugawela Central College)                                   |
| Editor             | - Mr. Savimon Urugodawatte, Writer (Pelmadulla Central College)                               |

A list of those elected to key posts in subsequent years are given in Schedule VIII.

All expenses in connection with the General Meeting held at the Sausiripaya, lunch and the meetings at his residence were borne by Mr Vipula Dharmawardana.

Owing to various limitations during the first few years, it was not possible to launch any comprehensive programmes. But with new members and more funds, it was possible to extend the activities. From the inception, annual orations were held to commemorate Dr C. W.W. Kannangara. Although considerable expenses had to be borne for such activities, it was possible to continue with the work because of the generous contributions of a few enthusiastic members. In 2012, cricket competitions were scheduled to be held for the twelfth time.

Now, the Association has been approved as a corporation by an Act in Parliament. Initial steps have been taken to build a headquarters for the Association and to erect a statue of Dr Kannangara in the Parliament premises for which the Association has donated a large sum of money. A sub-committee of the Association has taken action regarding educational reforms. Although some members complain that the activities undertaken by the Association are inadequate, as an old member, I am glad of the progress so far achieved, slowly but steadily, by an Association dedicated to serve, without any personal benefit, the network of schools that educated us. As I was able to participate in many activities of the Association, I was relieved of the monotony of my humdrum life. I was able to deliver Kannangara commemorative orations at the Nugawela, Tholangamuwa, Ibbagmuwa, Galahitiyawa, and Ruwanwella Central Colleges and surrounding schools over several years, and was a great delight and satisfaction to me. I also joined a few annual tours organized by the Association. The last such tour when my wife was living was the one to Rantambe. I wish to participate in as many meetings, etc. of the association as possible. I appreciate the impatience and enthusiasm of the members. This too can help in the progress of the Association. The wish of an old man who had gone on a long journey, inspired by the Central College network is, "May this Association live long!"

## Schedule VII

### Inaugural Central Colleges (In alphabetical order)

	Inaugural Year
1. Akuramboda	1943
2. Anuradhapura	1947
3. Bibile	1946
4. Dehiwala	1946
5. Deniyaya	1944
6. Dikwella	1943
7. Galahitiyawa	1944
8. Gampola	1946
9. Ginigathhena	1946
10. Hadunawa	1946
11. Hanwella	1944



12. Henagama	1944
13. Hikkaduwa	1944
14. Hunumulla	1945
15. Ibbagamuwa	1943
16. Irutilanpidi	1944
17. Karandeniya	1944
18. Karawita	1947
19. Kaththankudi	1943
20. Kekirawa	1945
21. Kotahena	1946
22. Kuliypitiya	1947
23. Madampe	1946
24. Mahawa	1945
25. Maradana	1945
26. Matugama	1943
27. Mawatagama	1943
28. Minuwangoda	1943
29. Muslim Ladies Alutgama	1947
30. Narammala	1944
31. Nellyadi	1946
32. Nugawela	1944
33. Passara	1946
34. Pelmadulla	1946
35. Piliyandala	1944
36. Poramadulla	1945
37. Ruwanwella	1945
38. Sandalankawa	1945
39. Seevali, Ratnapura	1944
40. Stanley, Jaffna	1944
41. Thalathuoya	1945
42. Taxila, Horana	1946
43. Telijjawila	1946
44. Tissa, Kalutara	1945
45. Tholangamuwa	1945
46. Vasavilan	1946
47. Velanei	1945
48. Veyangoda	1943
49. Wadduwa	1945
50. Walala	1944

51. Wanduramba	1944
52. Wannaramulai	1945
53. Weeraketiya	1943
54. Welimada	1945

### Schedule VIII

#### Office-Bearers of the *Samasta Lanka Madhya Vidyala Adi Sishya Sangamaya* (1960 – 2013)

##### Presidents

01.	Mr. Somapala Gunadeera	Galahitiyawa	1960-1962
02.	Professor Ariyapala Ekanayake	Walala	1992-1993;1994-1995
03.	Mr. Vipula Dharmawardena	Nugawela	1993-1994
04.	Mr. D.M. Jayathilake Disanayake	Welimada	1995-1997
05.	Brigadier Priyantha Samarathunga	Nugawela	1997-1999
06.	Mr. S.M.S.B. Niyangoda	Nugawela	1999-2001
07.	Mr. Janath Gunaratne	Tissa, Kalutara	2001-2003
08.	Dr. A.W. Mohottala	Piliyandala	2003-2005
09.	Mr. M.B. Warsakoon	Mawathagoda	2005-2007
10.	Mr. Walter Marasingha	Madampe	2007-2009
11.	Mr. Pandula Andegama	Seevali, Ratnapura	2009-2010
12.	Mr. Mahinda Kalpage	Walala	2010-2013

##### Secretaries

01.	Mr. Berty Galahitiyawa	Nugawela	1960-1971
02.	Mr. P.B. Wanninayake	Anuradhapura	1992-1993
03.	Mr. Saviman Urugodawatte	Pelmadulla	1993-1994
04.	Mr. Vipula Dharmawardena	Nugawela	1994-1995
05.	Mr. Walter Marasinghe	Madampe	1995-1996, 2001-2002
06.	Mr. W.H.M. Undugoda	Tholangamuwa	1996-1997

07.	Mr. Janath Gunaratne	Tissa, Kalutara	1997-1999
08.	Mr. G.G. Rupasinghe	Pelmadulla	1999-2001
09.	Mr. S. Wanniarachchi	Anuradhapura	2002-2004,2011-2012
10.	Mr. J.M.K.B. Jayasekera	Handunawa	2004-2006,2012-2013
11.	Mr. Hubert de Alwis	Piliyandala	2006-2009
12.	Mrs. Sripali Gunaratne	Tissa, Kalutara	2009-2010
13.	Mr. Dhammika Soysa	Madampe	2010-2011

### **Treasurers**

01.	Mr. M. Bokalamulla	Tholangamuwa	1960-1962
02.	Mr. M.C. Mathupala	Galahitiyawa	1992-1993
03.	Mr. Jayatissa Samaranayake	Gampola	1993-1994
04.	Mr. Piyadasa Ratnayake	Nugawela	1994-1995
05.	Ms. Wimala Edirisinghe	Ibbagamuwa	1995-1997
06.	Mr. P.G.P. Porowegama	Anuradhapura	1997-1999
07.	Mr. M.E. Cyril Fernando	Tissa, Kalutara	1999-2000
08.	Mr. Pandula Andagama	Seevali, Ratnapura	2000-2001
09.	Mr. J.M.U.B. Jayasekera	Hedunawa	2001-2003
10.	Mr. N.G.K.K. Seneviratne	Telijjawila	2003-2005
11.	Mr. L.B. Wattegedera	Akuramboda	2005-2009
12.	Mr. R.B. Abeysekera	Thalathuoya	2009-2011
13.	Mr. Somasiri de Silva	Taxila, Horana	2011-2013



## EPILOGUE

Our father was disciplined by conventional customs and manners. In paddy cultivation, he took action to protect the yield without harming animals and birds and in all other activities, he gave prominence to religious rituals and astrology.

Whenever he started work on a chena or a paddy field, he did so only at auspicious times and days. In order to protect cultivation from animals and birds, he made use of certain *gathas* in pirith. At the time, there were no insecticides, so he had to employ conventional methods; as they yielded the expected results there was no need to go after modern methods.

Going by his attitude towards me, it was clear that he placed much faith in astrology regarding the affairs of his children. When a boy was born to a farmer family, it was the normal custom to get him to work in the paddy fields even as a young boy but he did not do so in my case. Even in my adolescence, he did not call me for paddy field work. If I did so, it was of my own volition.

Children were admitted to schools at the beginning of the calendar year. I was admitted to school on 1<sup>st</sup> September. At the time I was six years and five months of age. Probably I must have suffered from 'evil effects' up to that time. After I started my school education, I never failed in any class. Quite often I was the first or second in class. My education was disturbed only after I passed my Senior School Certificate examination.

Although I myself had some sort of faith in horoscopes, I did not meet a proper person to get my horoscope read. At the beginning of the 1970s my friend Mr. Thanthirige introduced me to one Dharmadasa, a retired employee of the Government Press.

Mr. Dharmadasa read the horoscopes of my children and mine. Although we did not believe some of the forecasts made in those readings at the time, most of them became a reality afterwards. When it was predicted that a person would go overseas it was difficult to believe how it could happen in view of the circumstances prevailing at the time. Mr. Dharmadasa predicted that all in our family would go overseas.

After I went to live in Udadumbara in 2003, and when I gave my horoscope to a person from a famous astrological family in our village, he read my life on the computer. Some of the things he predicted were as follows:

### **Evil effects**

Not very consistent in his work. No interest to continue tasks already undertaken. Life is beset with suffering. Subject to illnesses. Physically weak. Spends money unnecessarily. Many financial commitments. May be involved in court cases. May lose wealth and property. Will have to face things that cause worry and anxiety. Will

travel overseas. Subject to excessive travelling. May be fond of liquor. Self-confidence is lacking. Will be forced to engage in things that may result in suffering.

Will waste money on entertainment and being attractive and handsome. Education may be disturbed. Tendency to do irregular things on the sly. Highly selfish. Considers only things which are worldly and in one's own interest. Will associate with only low-class people. Lacks virtue. Always thinks of exploiting others' property. There are many enemies. There is no reliable friend.

### **Good effects**

Tirelessly work morning and night for worldly success. A kind reliable person. Sympathises with others' pain and suffering. Has a good knowledge of how the mind works. Always thinks deeply before doing something. A person with a strong mind who can take appropriate action in any given situation. Has a calm mind, which can tackle any situation.

Has the ability to make others understand a point of view. Outsiders get more benefit than one's own relatives. Has lofty ideas and is law-abiding. Receives income from state institutions and activities of which others are unaware. Has a sharp mind in adjudication and criminal investigation. Receives a good education and becomes a scholar. Likes to invent new things. Likes to read books, listen to music and live a luxurious life. Can understand others' minds.

Domestic life is peaceful and honourable. Marries a powerful person for love. Has self-respect. Children achieve high positions in society. Devoted to religion and sincere to the partner and children. Tries hard to protect the honour of his family. Is a person endowed with courage, straight and energetic habits and manners. Skilled in earning money. The latter part of life is full of wealth. Very sincere to friends and the partner. Has a special knowledge of religion. Receives respect of relatives. Enjoys long life.

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### My Horoscope

There were many journeys and transfers in my life. I was separated from my birthplace. Some incidents have been repeated. For example, I may cite the flood damage in 1947 and 1957 during my period of work in Badulla and Hingurakgoda, problems about official quarters, duties neglected by predecessors, separation of the sub divisions into two, the two postgraduate degrees and the two degrees of Honoris Causa. I have mentioned about people who have had an adverse effect on my life only if it was relevant to the main theme. I have helped many people, but I mention here only those who helped me.

The reader will have to judge how far the horoscope predictions are true against the information given in this commentary.

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