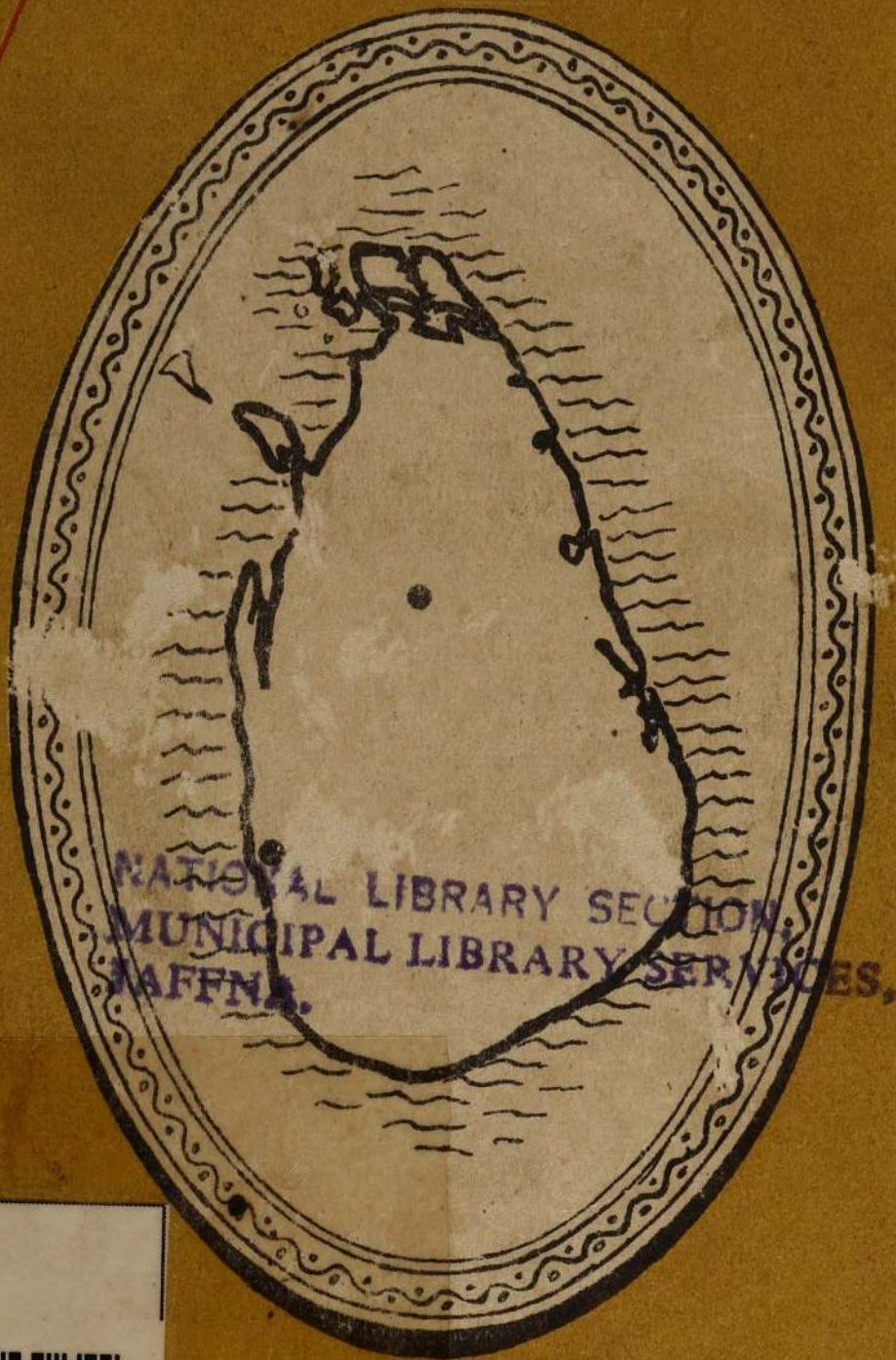


# Modern Ceylon Through a Looking Glass



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by Fijik







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MODERN CEYLON

THROUGH

A LOOKING GLASS

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This image shows a blank, aged, light brown page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf of a book. The paper has a textured appearance with some minor discoloration and small dark spots, possibly due to age or handling. There is no text or other markings on the page.



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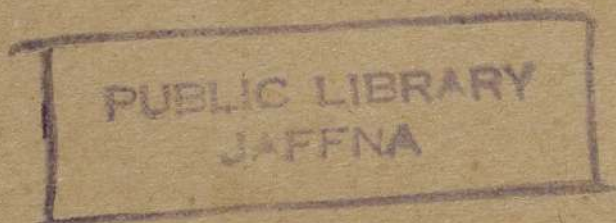
*By the same author*  
**TALES OF OLD CEYLON**



# REFERENCE



*"The time has come," the Walrus said,  
"To talk of many things:  
Of shoes-and ships-and sealing-wax-  
Of cabbages-and kings-  
And why the sea is boiling hot-  
And whether pigs have wings."  
— Tweedledee.*









TO  
A MEMORY

*“Fond memory brings the light  
Of other days around me.”*

All characters and cartoons in  
this book are purely imaginary  
and have no relation to any person.







## PREFACE

**M**ODERN CEYLON (*Through a Looking Glass*) is an attempt to draw a picture of New Ceylon. The Old Ceylon of the 1920s has faded away into the dim past. The old heroes have departed and are resurrected only for panegyrics on the anniversaries of their deaths or births. The social, economic and political climate has undergone a radical change. In the 1920s Colonialism was the target of attack but today it is a spectre. Ceylon and most Colonial countries of former days have won political emancipation.

Two World Wars, several revolutions, violent and non-violent, the march of science and the birth of new ideologies have had their impact on Ceylon. During the last fifty years she has been granted Universal Franchise (1931), Free Education (1944) and Independence (1948). Citizenship Acts have been passed — (1948/1949). She has been admitted as a member of the United Nations Organisation (1955). She has seen ten general elections and the newly enfranchised voter has registered his vote, giving his ear to



the declamation of politicians and his vote to the man or woman of his choice. Politicians have in recent years had a monopoly of the public stage.

The transition of Ceylon from the status of a Crown Colony to Independence within the Commonwealth was achieved by the politicians of the time through constitutional pressure. The operation was smooth and the agitation without incidents of a sensational nature so characteristic in the case of other lands. World conditions and violent agitations in India and elsewhere were contributory factors. But the revolutionary change, by reason of the means adopted, took time to hit the mind of the nascent nation. That a little Bit of England had become Independent Ceylon was a new idea and the assimilation of the new idea was a slow process, the more so since at its inception there was no revolutionary break with former ties.

But within a short space of time Ceylon has taken its place in International Conferences. Colombo Plan (1950) Bandung (1955) Commonwealth, World Bank, United Nations, Neutral Summit (1961), Sino-Indian (1962), Peking and New Delhi (1962) and other attempts to solve international problems by high level negotiation.



National Independence and National self-respect went hand in hand. Out of the new conditions evolved the policy of non-alignment.

The removal of the British bases at Trincomalee was the symbol of the break with the British connection which had lasted for one hundred and fifty years. But the declared policy of non-alignment has not deterred the contending power blocks from courting the Little Maid of Lanka. Her hand is eagerly sought by them and Aid is given by the one or the other, in visible and invisible forms, according to the political complexion of the party in power in Ceylon. "*Take your hands off the Little Maid*" may well be a slogan for a new political party.

"Let her blossom into full womanhood in her own way. Do not try to engraft your own ideologies, however attractive they may be to you, on her little body." But the verdict of history is otherwise. Great Powers never leave a little maid alone,

*The merry blade  
Lies in the maid,  
That out a maid  
Never departeth more!*



Wealth and Power are no longer the pre-requisites of the Western educated classes. Western ways of life have lost their former hold on the country. Oriental learning and culture have regained their ancient status. A Sahitya or literary revival (1958) especially in Sinhala have followed in the wake of a greater emphasis laid on the languages of the people and Ceylonese authors have written and publishers have published more books than were ever issued in recent centuries, some of them of high quality. Encouragement and recognition have been given to cultural efforts and a Ministry of Cultural Affairs (1956) and a Sahitya Mandalaya (1958) have been established.

English is no longer the medium of education (1943). Several Universities have been established, Ceylon (1942), Vidyodaya (1959) Vidyalandara (1959) and literacy has replaced illiteracy. Free Education granted in 1945 has been followed by the State taking over in 1961 nearly all the Denominational Schools which had sprung up since the advent of the British administration (1797). This measure was opposed by the denominations. It was a radical change in the sphere of Education and its effects will be seen by future generations. The establishment of Central Schools (1940) in many parts of the island has afforded the rural and semi-urban



population equality of educational opportunity with their metropolitan contemporaries. Its effect is already apparent.

Social changes which were in their infancy in the 1920s have gone forward, hand in hand with cultural activity. The Sartorial fight, Coat and Trousers versus Banian and Cloth, waxes and wanes according to the garb of the politicians in power. Some of them, chameleon like, move from Black Tie to Banian, from Trousers to Cloth, as they glide from dance-hall to public platform. Invitation cards to Evening functions throw an interesting side-light, "National Dress," Lounge or to Dinner Parties, "National Dress" Black Tie. The national dress has not yet been defined by convention nor has it received legislative sanction.

But Ceylon is still an Agricultural Country. Tea, Rubber and Coconut, as in the days of the *Tales of Old Ceylon* are still the basic products and the basic sources of revenue. The vulnerability of this economy was brought home to the people with terrific force during the Great Depression of the 1930s when Ceylonese owners of Agricultural estates went smash. The fluctuation in the prices of agricultural products is proverbial and estates



financed on capital borrowed at high rates of interest passed into the creditors' hands.

Agricultural estates are now faced with the dilemma of the high cost of production. Tourism is still in the doldrums. Lip service has recently been paid to Industries. Many industries of doubtful economic value but with a potential to create Foreign Exchange leaks have sprung up. The diversion of Sea borne Traffic from the Port of Colombo consequent on the Port becoming the plaything of politicians is an imminent danger which has to be averted by the exercise of all possible safeguards.

The Banking System has reflected the foundation laid by the Banking Commission (1934). Its administration and regulation is now in the charge of the Central Bank (1950). The State Mortgage Bank (1931), the Bank of Ceylon (established 1938, nationalised 1961), the Agricultural and Industrial Credit Corporation (1943), the Development Finance Corporation (1955) afford Ceylonese considerably more credit facilities. The People's Bank (1961) has brought Banking to the door of the people.

But Trade and Commerce are yet in Foreign hands. Income Tax (1931), Estate Duty (1938)



Wealth Tax (1959), Gifts Tax (1958/1959) and other financial measures have set in motion a levelling process. Ownership of land has lost its status and has become to many an encumbrance. The Paddy Lands Act (1958) restored the dignity of the cultivator. He cannot, since its enactment, be ousted at the will and pleasure of a land-owner.

Legislation took a new turn after the establishment of the State Council (1931). Measures for full development, as far as possible under Crown Colony government, appeared on the Statute book. There was a new approach to the Development (1935) and Utilisation of Crown Land (1947). Restoration of the ancient Irrigation System and Paddy cultivation in the North-Central Province were vigorously pursued. A major scheme was the Gal Oya Valley Development project (1949).

About the same time saw the beginning of legislation for the improvement of Workers' conditions, Workers' Compensation (1934) Employment of Children (1939/1956) Maternity Benefits (1939) Regulation of Factories (1942) and Mines (1947). Labour Legislation for the establishment of Wages Boards (1941) Settlement of Industrial Disputes (1950/1958) followed.



Several other Acts and amendments to the earlier enactments dealt with kindred subjects.

State Control was the characteristic of later legislation (1956 and after). State Monopolies, referred to later were established. Retrospective Legislation, affecting the substantive rights of parties from a date prior to its enactment, and Legislation (1961/1962) to oust the Jurisdiction of the Courts from its right to examine the legality of the acts of the Executive appeared on the Statute Book. The phrase that a Ministerial order or direction "could not be called in question in any Court by writ or otherwise" ate into a right which the subject had hitherto enjoyed. The Minister of Justice was also given the power to call for and inspect the records of any Court of Justice (1958), a power not hitherto vested in him.

The culmination was reached by an enactment (1962) which empowered the Minister of Justice to nominate three Judges of the Supreme Court for a Trial at Bar. This right had hitherto been vested in the Supreme Court as a body or in the Chief Justice. A Divisional Bench held that this provision offended against the cardinal principle that justice should not only be done but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done.



The establishment of a Court of Criminal Appeal (1938) was a major and necessary change.

With the expansion of the activities of the State, Ministerial Tribunals were appointed to hear and determine disputes arising from acts or omissions of administrative officers and Administrative Law grew apace. These Tribunals were constituted by Statute and their members appointed by the Minister concerned. The Income Tax Board of Review, the Land Acquisition Board, the Rent Control Board and Labour Tribunals are a few of the many institutions of this kind. Competition for appointment to these Boards became keen. The choice was sometimes neither wise nor easy as party men claimed a preferent right irrespective of their suitability for the post.

Universal Franchise has given the people a voice in the selection of their representatives and the Party System channels their voice in an organised way. But the method in which the funds of the State and the patronage of the Government in power is directed has often been the subject of severe criticism. It is said that a Minister's Constituency receives the most favoured treatment, an elected Member's comes next in order of favour and a Constituency represented



by a member whose party is not in power is neglected. This system, wherever it obtains, is a vicious system and is a negation of the franchise. One of its results is the neglect of the facilities provided by the State, such as Health, Educational, and Postal, to which every citizen has an equal right. A reorientation of vision is an urgent need.

The expansion of the Economy has in recent years lagged behind the expansion of the Social Services. Free Health Service, Free Education, the Rice Subsidy have involved a major claim on the Revenue which is still maintained by the Agricultural Products under the leadership of the Tea Industry. One heavy drain on the country's resources has been the Demurrage claims arising on delayed loading and discharge of cargo in the Port of Colombo and Customs Dues and Tourist Income have been affected.

The reason for this financial loss awaits examination. A revelation of the respective contributions made to this grand total by the ship owners, ship captains and charterers on the one hand, the Port Workers and the Port Staff on the other and the Food Department as a third estate would be an interesting piece of information. The photographs of perishable



imports discarded as damaged and not available to the consumer by reason of delays in discharge are often published by the press.

The period after 1956 has been often proclaimed as the "Age of the Common Man." "*Who is a Common Man?*" is a question that awaits an answer. "What is Truth?" was a question asked centuries ago and still awaits an answer. The Common Man of Ceylon has not yet been caught by the cartoon or the word-picture. John Bull and Uncle Sam are well known. But one may well ask whether even the John Bull and Uncle Sam of today are like their forefathers of old and whether changes, social and political, have not changed their form and features.

Of the Common Man of Ceylon there is yet no clear mental picture. Punchi Singho or Citizen Perera have failed to reflect the image of the nation. Just as much as a "Progressive" and a "Reactionary" have become interchangeable, so also the Common Man is liable to change. The Common Man has yet to be found. An Interrogator who asks an interrogated whether he is a Common Man would be told. "No Buddy, there is some mistake. It must be the other fellow over there."



The transfer of power to the Common Man did not, however, coincide with his assumption of responsibility. The age after 1956 has also been described as the Age of Transition. It can equally well be described as the Age of Strikes. An analysis of all the factors that led to this disturbing feature would constitute a valuable aid to the student of the psychology of industry.

The Strike Age hit the economy of the country hard. The Strikes were ostensibly the result of Trade Union Action. But politicians had become trade union leaders and the struggle for political power played a major part in what appeared on the surface to be mere trade union decisions to secure better conditions of service.

Statistics\* show that the Strike Age began in 1956. It continued upto 1964. Strikes occurred in the Essential Services such as the Port, the Transport Service and the Telecommunication Service. There were also strikes on the Plantations Industries and other Establishments. The average number of strikes\* a year for the period 1948/1955 was plantations (55) and others (38) and for the

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\*Ceylon Labour Gazette, Vol. XVI, January, 1963 p. 31.



period 1956/1964 was plantations (139) and, others (66). The total number of strikes for the former eight years was plantations (436) and others (306) for the latter nine years, plantations (1255) and others (681) per average increase of 85 per year. The figures for the period under review are:—

		1948.	1952.	1956.	1960.	1964.
Plantations—		33	36	99	128	154 (Jan-Oct)
Others —		20	39	115	37	75 (Jan-Oct)
Workers						
Involved	— (P)	23100	5355	56908	42528	54353 (Jan-Oct)
„	— (O)	1065	6168	31852	4830	15693 (Jan-Oct)

The demurrage incurred by the Food Department for the financial years ending in September from 1953/1954 are shown in the following figures (in millions):—

<b>53/54</b>	<b>54/55</b>	<b>55/56</b>	<b>56/57</b>	<b>57/58</b>	<b>58/59</b>
1.2	2.5	3.4	4.0	13.4	10.2
<b>59/60</b>	<b>60/61</b>	<b>61/62</b>	<b>62/63</b>	<b>63/64</b>	
1.5	2.0	4.7	3.7	5.0	



The External Assets of the country registered an unprecedented fall.

*In Rupees Million*

<b>1948</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1964</b>
997.9	873.8	1275.7	541.3	351.0

The spiral of the rising Cost of Living kept well ahead of the rising Cost of Wages. The Cost of Living index for Colombo Town taking 1938/1939 index as 100 was

<b>1948</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1964</b>
260	281	281.6	290.8	315.3

The Minimum Wage Rate Index of workers in Wages Boards Trade, registered, taking 1952 as 100 for Agriculture was,

<b>1952</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1964</b>
100	107.1	110.2	116

for Industry and Commerce



<b>1952</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1964</b>
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100	102.9	128.1	132.8
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and for Wages Board Trades

<b>1952</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1964</b>
-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------

100	106.4	111.8	117.8
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The Real Index for each year was less.

The population figures (in millions) from 1931 have shown a steep rise,

<b>1931</b>	<b>1946</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>1962</b>	<b>1963</b>
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5.3	6.7	8.1	10.4	10.7
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according to the Census for the particular years. The expenditure (in millions) on Health and Education (including the expenditure on the respective Ministries) are as follows:—

	<b>1948/49</b>	<b>1952/53</b>	<b>1956/57</b>	<b>1960/61</b>	<b>1964/65</b>	<b>1965/66</b>
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Health	59	90	114	152	159	163 (Est)
Education	93	141	183	298	359	378 (Est)



The Food subsidy has been another heavy item of expenditure, part of which is charged to Government Revenue and the balance is met by the profits on the sale of sugar, flour and other imports of food. The following figures (in millions) show the expenditure on the Department of the Food Commissioner (inclusive of emoluments, cadre and salaries, administration, services provided by the department, (recurrent and capital), and recurrent Economic Development):—

1955/56	1960/61	1963/64	1965/66
85	257	384	281 (Est)

The Budget Estimates for the year 1965/1966 give the recurrent expenditure (for services) of the Department of Food (in millions) at 271.5, made up of the following subsidies,

				Local
Consumer.	Producer.	Flour	Red Onions	Total
313.45	152.25	5.60	1.50	472.80
<i>Less</i> profit on sugar and other foods ...				201.30
Nett subsidy ...				271.50

The figure available from the Report of the Food Commissioner give the rice subsidy for



the years 1952, 1956 and 1960 at 148,162 and 371 (in millions).

These figures are a clear indication of the urgent need for the expansion of food production, in particular, and of the national economy, in general. This fact is emphasised by the Expenditure and Revenue figures (in millions) for the period under review.

	1948/49	1952/53	1956/57	1960/61	1964/65	1965/66
Expenditure	548	927	1,330	1,995	2,513	2,500 (Est)
Revenue	640	952	1,260	1,514	1,852	1,883 (Est)

The main sources of Revenue are still Agricultural Products with the Tea Industry occupying pride of place.

The Age of the Common Man and the Strike Age coincided also with the Age of State Monopoly. More State Corporations were formed during 1956/1964 than at any other period in the history of Ceylon. The following State Monopolies were established, Ceylon Transport Board (1957), Ceylon Port Cargo Corporation (1958), Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (1961) and the Ceylon Insurance Corporation (1964). The Co-operative Whole-Sale Establishment (1949)



increased its activities, extended itself into various channels and took over a large percentage of the Import and Export Trade. About twenty State Industrial Corporations were also created to engage in an assortment of business ventures, textiles, engineering, oils and fats, cement, chemicals, ceramics, small industries, salt, industrial estates, mineral sands, paper, plywood, steel, leather, tyres and sugar plantations.

The Common Man may well ask "Were all these necessary? How many millions of public funds were voted? Was the machinery imported modern or out of date? Would the product give efficient performance and stand competition? How much Foreign Exchange was involved? What new burdens did they put on the State? How were the new employees chosen? And what do the new employees know of their new jobs? Have these institutions which are business institutions been efficiently run or were they merely employment bureaus without adherence to business methods?" It is too early to assess either the value to the country or the performance of these institutions. But their number and magnitude for a small country strike the eye.

The origin of the present party system dates back to the formation of the Ceylon National



Congress (1919). This party predominated the General Elections of the State Council (established in 1931) but the votes at these elections were cast more on personal popularity than on party lines. The State Council was replaced by Parliament (1947). The United National Party (U.N.P.) formed at the time of the first Parliamentary Election (1947) was a direct descendant of the National Congress. Many of its leaders entered Parliament. The first Prime Minister met his death in an accident (1952). His successor went to the polls and the party was returned at the second Parliamentary Election (1952). The reduction of the Rice Subsidy by his Government led to opposition accompanied by a Hartal in Colombo. The Prime Minister resigned in 1953.

The United National Party continued to run the Government under its third Prime Minister. But the Opposition gathered strength. The main opposition was by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (S.L.F.P.), the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (L.S.S.P.) and the Communist Party (C.P.). The leader of the S.L.F.P. was a Minister of the U.N.P. Government and the Leader of the House of Representatives until he crossed the floor (1951). The combination of these three parties and others constituted the most formidable



Opposition the United National Party had encountered.

The tempo of change was in the air; the public mind was more critical; the voter was better educated; the U.N.P. had virtually held office for twenty-five years (1931-1956). The S.L.F.P. with the other parties formed the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (M.E.P.). It stood on the platform of religion (Buddhism) and language (Sinhala), the religion and the language of the majority of the voters. The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. were both Left Parties. Their opposition was not based on the issue of religion or language. They stood for parity (Sinhala and Tamil) advocated alignment with Left Countries, State Control and the Workers' cause. The language issue gave rise to the formation of the Federal Party in the Northern and Eastern constituencies which opposed the Sinhala only programme.

The Prime Minister sought to avert the gathering storm by a call to the Polls one year ahead of schedule. The logic or Oracular response that led him to this decision had erred. Homer had nodded.

*The best laid plans of mice and men  
Gang aft a — gley.*



With the aid of a No-Contest Pact with other Opposition Groups, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna won the third General Election. The Peramuna was composed of the S.L.F.P., the V.L.S.S.P. (Viplava L.S.S.P.) and the Basha (Language) Peramuna and Independents. The leader of the S.L.F.P. became the leader of the M.E.P. and the New Prime Minister. It was no easy task for him to harness together the constituent elements of his team, hastily assorted, to meet a snap election. They held several views with Right Wing adherents and Left wing infiltrations. Soon emerged strikes and communal disturbances.

The Communal disturbances spread to many parts of the island. Their immediate origin was the language issue. The Sinhala Only Bill (1956) was modified by the Bill for the Reasonable use of Tamil (1958) but this formula did not settle the issue. Communal oppositions originating with exception taken to the prefix ට in the number plates of Motor vehicles, culminated in widespread Communal Riots with loss of life. The Prime Minister said that the age was an "Age of Transition."

In Foreign Affairs the Government declared a policy of non-alignment with any foreign power. But in execution, there was a visible



tendency to lean away from the West and to lean towards Left Countries. The Government took over the Motor Transport (Bus) Services and the Port which were converted into State Corporations. But the conflict between the Right and Left Wings led to a Cabinet reshuffle (July 1959) in consequence of which some members of the Left Wing crossed the floor. The Government was thereafter an S.L.F.P. Government until September 1959 when the Prime Minister was assassinated.

On his assassination, in the absence of the Leader of the House who was abroad, the Minister for Education was appointed Prime Minister. But the new Prime Minister (fifth after Independence) was not a member of the S.L.F.P. the internal differences remained unsolved; the Government majority was thin and in December, 1959 he dissolved Parliament. At the fifth General Election (1960, March) the U.N.P. obtained the greatest number of seats and formed a Government but was defeated on the Throne Speech by a joint opposition. At the sixth General Election (1960, July), the S.L.F.P. was again returned to power and the Sixth Prime Minister (the first Lady Prime Minister ever) formed a Government.



During the period of this Government, State Control proceeded apace and more State monopolies (Petroleum and Insurance) and State Corporations were established. The State-Aided Denominational Schools, with a few exceptions, were taken over by the State (1060/1961). But the struggle for political power with the Left parties and communal differences also proceeded apace. The Left Opposition culminated in the formation of an United Left Front (U.L.F.) 1963. It was composed of the L.S.S.P. the C.P. and what remained of the M.E.P. after the separation from the S.L.F.P. The U.L.F. was the first visible sign of Left Unity. Events, however, proved that the Union was destined to be of temporary duration. The numerous strikes in many plantations and industries and the strike or go-slow policy in the Port broke the Government's back.

Negotiations for a Coalition with the Left were actively pursued and a Coalition with the L.S.S.P. alone and without the other two parties of the U.L.F. was finalised. Three members of the L.S.S.P. were admitted into the Cabinet (June, 1964). This Coalition alienated sections of the U.L.F. which separated. It also alienated a section of the supporters of the S.L.F.P. The part played by the Government in



several International Conferences, the Neutral Summit Conference (1961), Sino-Indian Dispute Conference (1962) the Peking and New Delhi Peace Mission (1962) and the recent Indo-Ceylon Pact (1964) did not allay the wide-spread opposition.

A climax was reached at the Debates on the Press — Take-Over. At the final debate a section of the S.L.F.P., including the Leader of the House, crossed the floor and the Government was defeated (1964, December, 3). The Seventh General Election followed (1965, March, 22). The United National Party secured a majority and in combination with other parties formed a National Government. The Sixth Prime Minister had also been the second Prime Minister (1952-1953). The Federal Party gave its support to the new Government.

The first Parliament (1947) was convened on the basis of constituencies demarcated by the first Delimitation Commission (1946). Eighty-nine (89) Constituencies returned ninety-five (95) elected members to the House of Representatives. To this number six (6) Nominated members were added and the total number in the House was one hundred and one (101). The Second Delimitation Commission (1953) ceased its



work mid-way (1954). It was contemplated that four (4) additional members should be added under the Indian and Pakistañi Parliamentary Representation Act (1954). This arrangement did not, however, materialise as the Act did not come into operation. The numerical strength of the House remained at the same figure. The Third Delimitation Commission (1959) divided the Island into 145 Electoral Districts and increased the number of elected members to one hundred and fifty-one (151) and with the six (6) nominated members a House of one hundred and fifty-seven (157) was constituted. The Senate was at all periods composed of thirty members, fifteen (15) elected by the House of Representatives and fifteen (15) nominated by the Governor General.

Two events, unprecedented in the recent annals of Ceylon, occurred during the period under review. One was the assassination of the Prime Minister (September, 25, 1959), and the other an attempted Coup d'Etat against the Government (January, 27, 1962). The former led to the retrospective repeal (1959) of the Act by which Capital punishment had been suspended (1958) and the latter to the Selection by the Minister of Justice of three Judges of the Supreme Court for the Coup d'Etat trial by virtue of powers



purported to be vested in him by ad hoc legislation (1962). On exception taken to its constitution, the exception was upheld and a new panel of Judges appointed by the Chief Justice. The alleged Coup d' Etat was heard at Bar by three Judges of the Supreme Court. Officers of the Public Service, Army, Navy and Police were charged and eleven accused were convicted (1965). An application was made by them for Leave to Appeal to Her Majesty in Council. Leave has been granted.

In the Preface to "Mr. Punch's History of Modern England" it is said that "to write a Social History of England at any time without reference to the political background would be difficult; it is practically impossible in a chronicle based on Punch in the (eighteen) forties and fifties." Similarly the Ceylon scene from 1948 to 1965 cannot be understood without a knowledge of the political under-currents of the time. The period from 1915 to 1948 was overshadowed by the struggle for emancipation from foreign rule, that from 1948 to 1965 with conflicts among Ceylonese, not without foreign aid, for political power.

In Ceylon during recent times the politician strode the stage like a Colossus. It may well be said of him during this period,



*“Why man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus; and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.”*

The Politician owes his name to the little city state (polis) of ancient Athens but, although during the centuries its scope and methods have been extended, the Elements of Politics still remain the same. Even Brain-Washing is not a new invention, although it is, perhaps, a new name and has added new weapons to its armoury.

Nor is a Demagogue a (demos, people, agagos, leading) a new creature. He has recently become part and parcel of the life of Ceylon but he too owes his name to the same little city state, Athens. His picture has been inimitably drawn (B.C. 424) by the great comedian Aristophanes of ancient Athens.

But in the modern age, the arena of a politician's life has widened beyond the wildest dreams of the ancient city state. He is confronted with problems, international and national, of intense complexity and subject to dynamic change. Many accusations have been made against him; that he sacrifices principles in order to get on in life; that the assurances with which he wins popular



favour or the election vote are false; that he is liable to be intimidated into decisions because he does not possess the courage to take the correct stand.

It may be that there are instances which justify this charge but every compromise and attempt to harmonise views in an age where divergent views are held do not merit condemnation. In fact, arbitrary decisions can lead to differences which prejudice the State. A political career is often a thankless one but it is and has always been a career in which the greatest service can be done to one's country, the future of which depends on a politician's judgment and integrity. It is Ceylon's good fortune that it has had during every period of its eventful history many politicians of outstanding judgment and integrity.

The colour of the United National Party is Green, of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party is Blue, of the Lanka Sama Samaja and the Communist Parties is Red. The struggle between these colours for political power in Ceylon is reminiscent of the days of the Roman Empire (527-565) A.D. as told by Gibbon.

“What will it Be? is a peep at Ceylon from the Tax Angle (1963), “I Break my Boss” from



the Strike Angle (1963), "I get into the Cabinet" from the Cabinet Angle (1964/1965) and "Salacious..... "the Film Commisar" "from the Corporation" and "Film" Angle (1964).

These tales have in part been earlier told.\* But they have been considerably enlarged and revised. The Preface, the Introduction, the Chapter form, the Notes, the Cartoons and the Illustrations are new. The characters are mental images without physical existence, so are their names and mine.

*What's in a Name' that which we call a Rose,  
By another Name, would smell as Sweet,  
What's in a Name' that which we call a Thorn  
By another Name would prick as Deep.*

**FIJJIK.**

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\*For which my thanks to the Times of Ceylon Group of Newspapers.







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# WHAT WILL IT BE

*Honey from Silk worms who can gather  
Or Silk from the yellow bee!  
The grass may grow in Winter weather,  
As soon as hate in me.*

**Shelley**







## Introduction

**I**t is Budget Time. Everyone is anxious. Taxation is heavy and no one can say whether or not taxes will be raised nor what the policy of the Government will be. The colour of the Party in power is Blue, of the Party which was in power but now out of office, Green, of the Leftist Parties, Red.

The Party in power had a No-Contest Pact at the General Election with the Leftist Parties and has shown in matters of policy a tendency to fall into line with Leftist policies, by inclination or by necessity. Hence, the uncertainty of the new Tax Provisions.

The House-Wife is unable in view of the heavy Cost of Living to meet her House-hold Expenditure and buy a Saree and her husband to buy his Cigarettes and pay his Rent. They would like to add a Dance or two to their monthly extras. It is said that only the Oracle can solve the Riddle. But you never can tell.

It is well known that Bribery and Corruption are rife and that Black-Marketeers and Racketeers



ride rampant through the land. The House Wife who says that she does not indulge in Gossip like Bad women and her Husband who says that he does not Drink like Bad Men pray that the New Taxes be directed to destroy the Wrong-Doers.

They pray that taxes be levied in the manner of Ancient Kings just as a Bee gathers Honey from a Flower, taking its honey and leaving the petals unbroken. A Stanza written by a Sinhala poet is reproduced.



## CHAPTER ONE

### What Will it Be

“**W**HAT will it be?” is the question which every house-wife and every householder is asking today.

In the old days this question was followed by another, “Will it be a boy or girl? — a girl with the father’s beauty or a boy with the mother’s brains.” That is not the question now.

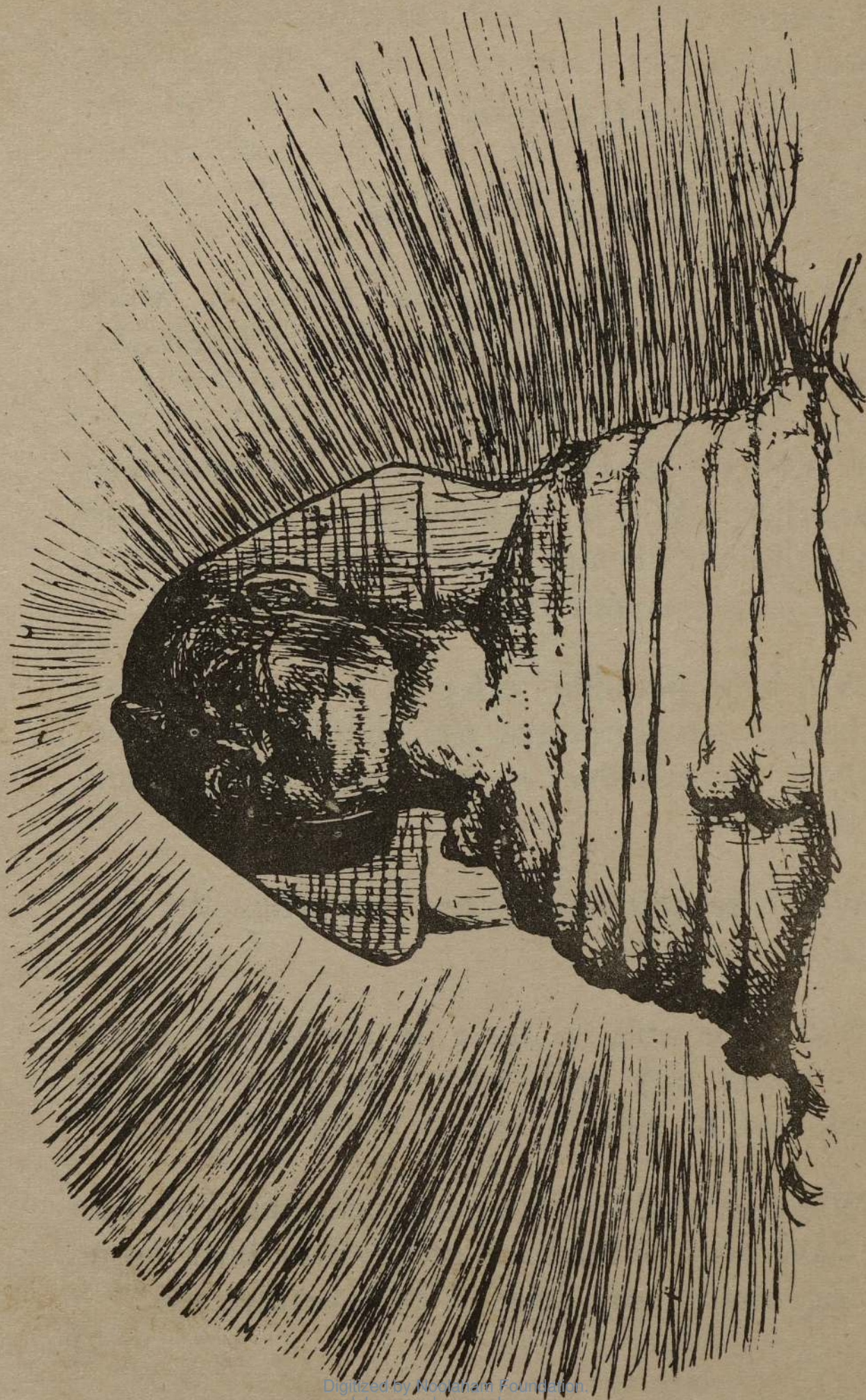
“Will it be possible” after all is said and done, the banner headlines and the photographs faded. “Will it be possible to feed my husband and my children?”

“Will I be able to pay my rent when the rent collector comes?”

“Will I be able to have an occasional dance and whisper airy nothings to my companion as I press my breasts to him in a tight embrace?”

“Will I be able to smoke an occasional cigarette and have one for the road on my way back home and say that I was delayed by an office file?”





*What will it be*



“Will I be able to buy just one saree better than what that detestable woman next door wears?”

“Will I have to put my trousers down and slip into a cloth while the man upstairs with his Walrus moustache looks at me with contempt through his haughty monocle?”

Who can say what it will be!



## CHAPTER TWO

### You Never Can Tell

**W**ill it be Red or Blue or Green? You are very green if you think that it will be Green this time. Green is gone for the present like unto the Purple Brigade now fighting in single units in sundry places.

Will it be Blue? How can it be Blue when into the basin has come all that back-wash of Red!

Will it be Red? How can that be in a basin all done in Blue?

Then will it be partly Red and partly Blue? But that is another riddle. Which part of it will be Blue and which part Red?

One has to go to the Oracle to find the answer.

After you have gone to that hope-reviving spot, made your offering and danced naked before the deity, you will get the answer. "You are a fool, it will be neither Red nor Blue nor Blue and Red. It is going to be of another colour, entirely of another hue from the nuclear strata.

"You never can tell!"



## CHAPTER THREE

### Let Us Pray

Let us pray! "Dear Minister, have mercy upon us. We are all your children, all honest and hard-working men and women. Forgive us our trespasses, for even if we trespass at times, it is by accident and not of design.

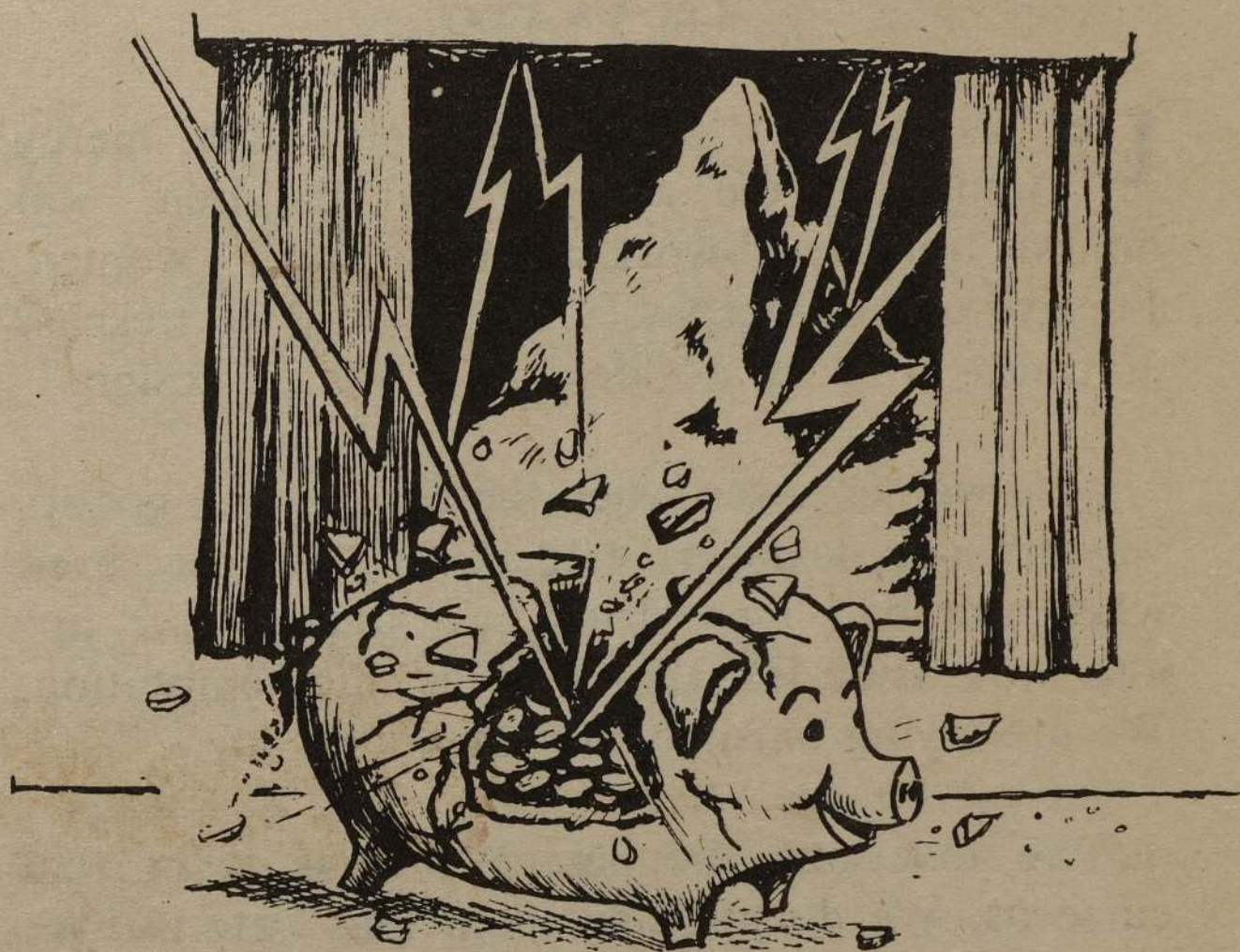
"We women, even when the bad women gossip, we turn our deaf ear to them and we men, even when the bad men drink, we tighten our lips and look aside lest they lead us into temptation. We are trying hard to live an honest life.

"We love our enemies. We bless them that curse us. We do good to them that hate us. We pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us. Hate grows not in us."

"Take not away the cents that are in our stockings, take not away the rupees that are in our shoes. But strike with your thunderbolts the idlers, the bribetakers and the corrupt. Strike the black marketeers, the currency racketeers and those of their ilk. It is they that put



the living index up and drain the coffers of the State through the down-pipes that lead into their huge bellies.



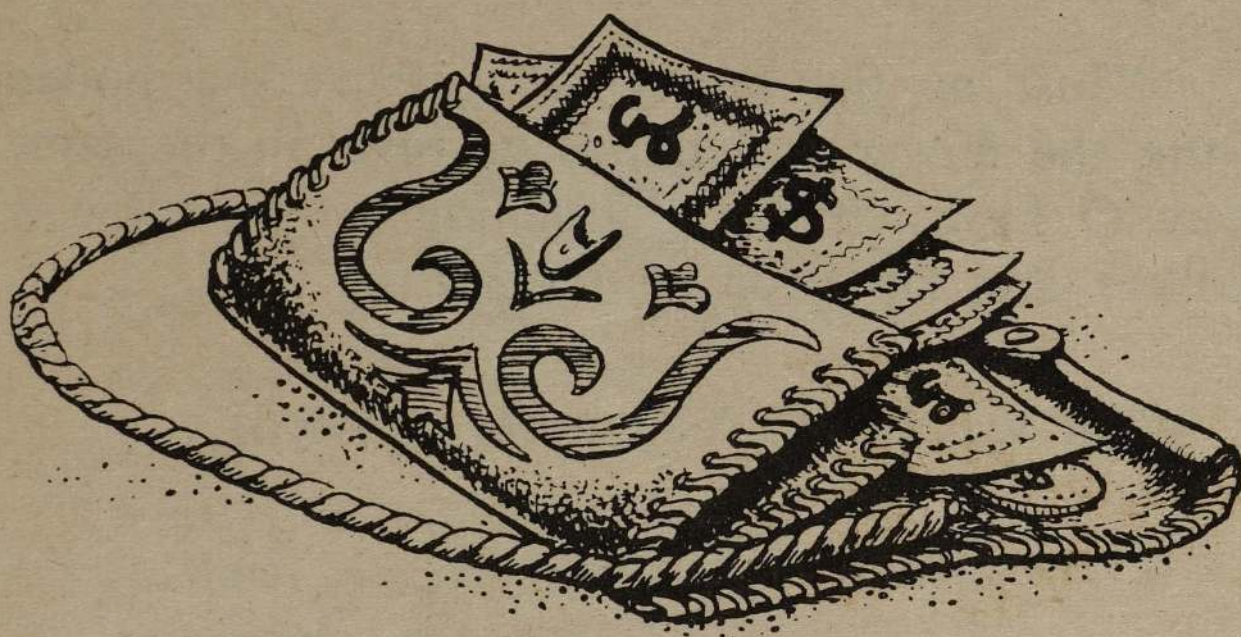
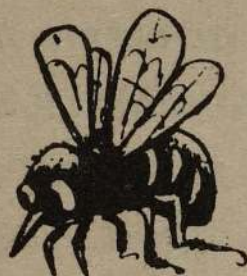
*Strike the currency racketeers*

“Let them perish. Draw them all into your net, ever widening with threads ever getting closer and closer. Let the sea become boiling hot with the curses of the miscreants. Let none of the sinners escape, for unto them shall damnation come.”



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Honey Bee



*Take not away the cents*

**B**ut we who are innocent, Dear Minister, before you lay your axe on the meek and tender necks of these your Suppliants, you who are a lover of letters and a writer of books that give delight unto the mind, recall from the storehouse of your memory the lines of the poet where he describes how a wise king gathers his taxes from his people.



රොන් අරගෙන	මලිනි
මී බඳින බමරුන්	මෙනි
ලොව නොපෙලා	යෙහෙනි
අයිත් දන රැස් කරන්	නිරිඳුනි

*Ron aragena malini*  
*Mi bandina bamarun meni*  
*Lova nopela yeheni*  
*Ayin dana räs karan nirinduni*

“Just as the honey-bee gathers the pollen from the flower and builds its hive, in the same way O king without burdening your subjects collect and lay aside your wealth.”

What will it be? You never can tell!



## I BREAK MY BOSS

*Oh, it makes him bug,  
the strike does. See him  
land home after being out  
on the spree for hours,  
and gives him orders, my sirs!  
Oh, strike sets the men up,  
it does. Nothing have they to do  
but gizzle and gallivant.  
Their wives'll keep them, oh yes.  
So long as they get something  
to eat at home;  
What more do they want.*

**D. H. Lawrence,** — *Strike-pay*







# I BREAK MY BOSS

## Introduction

**M**ottaputha is entrusted by his father to his Old Friend who was running a business in Colombo and passes away happy that his son had secured Employment. The Boss was a round-little man of middle age and according to his lights was kind to his Employees. Things go on well for the Boss and his establishment until Sukuruthan (the strategist) enters.

No one knew the antecedents of Sukuruthan. He had been in foreign lands but the source of his funds was a mystery. He changes the whole atmosphere of the establishment. Each man should be his own boss and joint earnings should be jointly shared. All the employees accept him as their Hero and the picture of the Little Boss fades out.

Going slow and overtime become the order of the day. The Pay-Packets are doubled and the Boss loses his genial smile. The Employees are introduced to a Pub by Sukuruthan and from there to a Gambling House. As custom improves



the Pub is brought closer and named *Hotel de Sukuru* in honour of Sukuruthan. Its Sign is a Pig with Wings. Then follows a Demand and the Boss, taken by surprise, grants the demand.

At the Pub, Mottaputha meets Dandy Singho, a powerfully built, handsome man with a black moustache. His Silk handkerchief carries a sweet perfume. He is a Select Customer and offers Mottaputha a drink. One drink is followed by another and Mottaputha, now tipsy, begins to talk about his wife who will be waiting for his return. Dandy Singho asks the young man not to worry. He will tell her that her husband is delayed by an urgent office File. Mottaputha gets Drunk and is tucked up in a corner room.

He wakes up in the morning and makes his way home where he finds his wife fast asleep with a look of happiness which he had not seen on her face since they were newly wed. He does not report for duty on the next day but on the day following he goes to office armed with a "Medical."

The neglected customers patronise other shops. The Boss tries Piece-Work without success. The Pub incidents recur and Mottaputha sleeps away from home, happy that Dandy Singho is looking after him.



Pothsena (the Bookman) is brought in by Sukuruthan as his assistant. Pothsena knew the Texts by heart and tells them what the next step should be to Break the Boss according to the texts.

But he becomes afraid. He says that in some countries when Employees become troublesome there is a Purge and difficult men disappear. Sukuruthan brushes him away. Ceylon, he says, is the employees' Paradise.

A conference is held to decide on the next step. It is decided to make a demand for a complete Revision of Salaries and a doubling of the Basic. If the demand is not granted, it is agreed that the next step should be a Strike. To a heckler, Pothsena says that a strike is a Stroke which floors the Boss. A notice for Revision of Salaries with doubling of the Basic pay is sent but this time the Boss ignores the notice.

A strike follows. There is a Demonstration in which two Big Men join. One Big Man takes special notice of Mottaputha. At the end of the month Sukurtuhan provides the pay-packets from an unknown source. There is a compromise with the Boss at an increase of one-quarter of



the Basic pay with shouts of "We have Won!"  
"He has given in!"

The Boss now does not accept fresh orders or bring in new goods. Pothsena says that this is a Danger Signal and firm action is necessary. But before anything is done the employees find one morning that the establishment is closed and a placard put on the front door, "Closed for Stock-Taking."

Sukuruthan and Pothsena have both disappeared. The Employees wait but the Boss does not appear and Mottaputha goes to the Pub and decides to go home, afraid that he has lost his job. He finds his House Closed, except the front doors. He enters and finds his house empty.

There is a Note on his Pillow in large letters. He reads it. He is bewildered and rushes out, a Double-Decker comes in front of him. He seems to see the figure of his Old Boss all around him. He puts up his hands and Falls Flat. The Brakes creak. He shouts "Stop! Stop!" And then comes a noise, "Tut" "Tut." Was it not the Bones of his Boss Breaking under the Double-Decker?



## CHAPTER ONE

### My Boss

My boss was a round little man of middle age, visibly growing bald. What little hair was left now grew only on the sides, in long, single lines combed upwards and across the top.

He wore a Shakespeare collar and a bow neatly tied. An immaculate white suit with a double-breasted coat and waist-coat showed off to advantage the little paunch that was a mark of the affluence of his purse and the geniality of his mind.

When he was young he had run a small store in the country-town where my father lived. The two of them had become intimate friends. Later he had established himself in Colombo and when my father was smitten with a mortal illness my father turned to him for help. He entrusted me to the care of his old friend and passed away peacefully with the satisfaction that he had made a wise investment.

I was happy with my boss. He was liked by all who served him and the pay packets we



received were in fair proportion to what he collected from his customers. There was no overtime.

My associates and I worked hard and at the end of the day all the entries had been made, the books posted up and the correspondence closed.

There were no differences or disputes. At the end of the year our boss gave us an extra payment. This payment was a mark of his satisfaction with our work. We accepted the token with good grace.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Sukuruthan Enters

**I**t was then that Sukuruthan joined our staff and with his entry our lives underwent a complete change. Wicked people even said that he had been introduced.

Sukuruthan had been in many countries. How he found the money to feed his many trips abroad no one knew. He was an excellent conversationalist and kept us interested in his talks; how different things were in other lands.

According to him, in those happy lands far, far away, there were no bosses. Each man was his own boss and what all jointly earned all jointly shared according to the number of heads and not according to the nature of each man's work.

Two or three of us at a time were taken to a side and told those enchanting tales. Then he would take us to a pub and stand us drinks.



Gradually it dawned on us that he was right and that he had opened our eyes to life. Sukuruthan became the man we admired and the little body of our boss and his genial smile began to fade away.

What a clever man Sukuruthan was! There was nothing which escaped his attention and nothing that he did not know about us. The marvel was the speed with which he collected his facts.

When he learnt that the little Boss had been my father's friend, he seemed delighted. And from that time he began to take a personal interest in me and I began to feel highly flattered.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Going Slow

From the pub, when we were feeling fine after a couple, he took us to an evening's entertainment at places where we could try our luck.

If the boss could go to a fashionable club and have a night out, why, he said, should we not do the same? Life to us had changed.

Sukuruthan also taught us another trick. Our pay packets, he said, were small and the boss was exploiting us. There was a simple way of beating him down. It was by overtime.

He taught us how to go slow and how to avoid working during the normal hours. We were to commence our day's work near closing time. It became quite simple to put this lesson into practice and it did not take long to double our pay packets.

All of us began to get the feeling that victory was now in sight and we noticed that the genial



smile of the boss became less and less frequent. He had begun to feel the strain of the ingenious attack on his purse, which was Sukuruthan's invention.

“We shall soon break him,” said Sukuruthan. “They all show the same symptom and breakdown in the same way.

The main thing is that we should keep together and strike at the right moment. Timing is my job.”



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Demand

**B**ut Sukuruthan had not yet exhausted his bag of tricks. "The time has now come," he said, "to make a demand."

"What is a Demand?" We asked.

"That is a simple question," said Sukuruthan. "A Demand is a Command to the boss.

It has to be made in strong language, with short notice, and has to end with the words that if the demand is not obeyed it will be followed by swift and joint action.

Then the demand will be granted — if not the whole of it, at least a part, and that is the important part, because we can stand on that part and make the next demand."

The picture was now clear to us. All these years we had mistaken our rights. It was the boss who was working for us. We were his masters.



The demand came as a surprise to the boss. He had either to grant our demand or close his business. The boss, all in a panic, granted the demand.

Sukuruthan was a born leader and was now our hero. We all carried him shoulder high. The little Boss, as he was leaving the store, noticed the demonstration and looked aside.

“He is beginning to show the fear complex,” said Sukuruthan. “Our next demand will be granted as soon as it is made. Victory is now in sight.”



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Dandy Singho

Was it not a day for celebration? All of us went to the pub and emptied our prospective extra pay packets at the counter. It was on that day that Dandy Singho and I became close friends.

I had not met Dandy Singho before at the pub. He was sitting in an inner room and was being treated as a select customer.

A powerfully built, handsome man, he had a black moustache with a twist at each end. In appearance he was quite unlike the lean and hungry Sukuruthan with his crafty eyes.

The end of a coloured silk handkerchief was visible from the top of the upper pocket of his coat and as he pulled it out, from time to time, the odour of his glass was masked by the sweet perfume which came from its folds.

We were about to leave when he called me to a side and said "what about one for the road?"



I felt highly honoured by the invitation of this select customer and as the second, third and fourth went down, all as he said on the House, the road became less and less visible.

Until that evening I had never known that I had the gift of the gab. My whole life was soon an open book to him.

From time to time he favoured me with a smile and when I cracked a joke, he would give a hearty laugh. Never in my life had I felt so fine and never had I met a man so nice as Dandy Singho.



## CHAPTER SIX

### A Sweet Woman

I was soon exchanging confidences with him. "This is entirely between us" I said and he clasped my hand in a solemn pledge to keep the secret. "You know, you know," I continued, "my wife is a sw..... sweet woman. She must be yet up and waiting for my return. She..... She always does."

"Don't you worry," said my companion "It is always a good thing to keep a woman waiting, even to give her a smack at times. The more erratic and unpredictable a man is, the more a woman likes him."

I shall go myself and tell her that you are being delayed by an urgent office file."

I was much relieved. What a good fellow Dandy Singho was. I took a fifth and a sixth and at the seventh I passed out.

It was near morning when I raised my head. Dandy Singho had left, the pub was empty and



I was tucked away in a corner of an inner room. I slipped out and found my way home.

The front door was closed but not locked. My wife was not awake as usual. She was not waiting for my return.

She was in a deep sleep and on her face was the look of satisfaction and happiness that I used to see in the old days when we were newly wed.

What a good friend Dandy Singho had been to assure her that I was safe and well! I got into my bed and fell into a deep sleep myself. I did not report for duty that day. On the following day I went to the office armed with a "medical."

"Medical" was the term in common use among us for a medical certificate. It was Sukuruthan who showed us what a handy weapon it could be when we had no inclination to report for work.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### We Break the Business

Things were going on merrily. The more demands we sent, the bigger became our pay packets and the thinner became the little boss. His face was fast becoming haggard. He tried his luck with piece-work but piece-work brought him no salvation. The customers became less and less and complained of delay. We lost business and there were no profits.

The little boss had no printing press to print new notes. He was too timid to get an expert to do the job for him. We knew that he was drawing on his savings.

But that said Sukuruthan was not our concern. In the old days the employer was the Boss and the employees carried out orders. But now we have changed all that, it is the other way about.

We are the Bosses and the employer has to carry out our orders. We must squeeze him out. That added Pothsena is exactly what is written in the book.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Pothsena's Fear



*It is written in the book*

The only snag was Pothsena. He had been brought in by Sukuruthan. He was Sukuruthan's man of works. He wore spectacles on his nose and had read the books.

"The pattern of attack" he said "is all written down in the book." He used to cite the relevant extracts when Sukuruthan was at a loss about the next step.



But Pothsena had read other books as well. He always had a fear. In some countries, he said, there were organised counter-attacks.

Difficult men disappeared and never returned and were never even heard of by their relations or friends. "There can even be a Purge."

I almost felt a rumbling in my stomach and all of us asked Pothsena, "What is a purge?" But before he could reply Sukuruthan intervened. "Don't be a fool."

"Those are false stories spread by our enemies. In our country there can never be a purge. We have only to demand and we can get all we want. Our country is what Adam and Eve missed after the fall."

*"This other Eden, demi-Paradise.  
This fortress built by Nature for ourselves  
Against employers and their evil ways."*



## CHAPTER NINE

### The Next Step

And so the days passed. Sukuruthan went from success to success. At the Pub we were given a special room. The Proprietor took us round to the new room which was decorated in the modern style.

Most of the figures were of nude women. "That" said the proprietor, "was to give us a fillip for the next drink." The place of entertainment to which we used to go was brought closer to our establishment. It was now only a hundred yards away.

As a compliment to our Hero, the Manager had named it "*Hotel de Sukuru.*" Its Sign was a Pig with Wings. It was more spacious and more games were introduced and the nights became too short. Loss of sleep did not much matter as there was hardly any work now in the establishment of the little Boss.

One day we noticed that Sukuruthan and Pothsena were having an earnest discussion.



Pothsena had the book in his hand and he was reading out certain passages to Sukuruthan. The latter did not seem to agree and three of the oldest employees were summoned to a conference. After an interval, a secret meeting was arranged at our private apartment in the Pub.

We had never felt so important before. The atmosphere around us suddenly became tense as though an electric current was running through the store.

What would be the next step? And what would be the reaction of the little Boss?



## CHAPTER TEN

### The Meeting

At the meeting Pothsena was the chief Spokesman. "The time has come," said Pothsena, "for a strike." There was an interruption by a back-bencher who had by this time reached the quarreling stage. "What is a Strike," he asked. "I want — ugh — an explanation — ugh"



*It floors the employer*



“A Strike”, replied Pothsena, who was fast losing his normal composure at so silly a question. “A Strike is a Demand at a high temperature. It is a Stroke. It floors the Employer.”

“And—ugh—ugh—” said the back-bencher, “how—ugh—do you ugh—strike.” We expected Sukuruthan to send the back-bencher out. On the contrary, Sukuruthan who was in the chair, ruled that the question was in order.

“It begins”, said Pothsena, reading from the book, “by sending a notice to the employer that he has paid no regard to our just demands and that unless by twelve noon the demands are granted we will be forced to take direct action.”

“And what—ugh—” said the back-bencher — “is ugh—Direct—ugh— Action?” This time it was Sukuruthan’s turn to lose his temper. He ordered the back-bencher out and the back-bencher was deposited in an inner verandah where he passed out.

“We have decided”, said Sukuruthan, “to state that there has never been a Revision of Salaries, that the Cost of Living has shot up and that unless our Basic is Doubled, the Boss will compel us to take direct action. The Boss should not



be given time to think. But the notice should be sent only after the monthly advance is paid."

We clapped applause; the notice was accordingly delivered — The Boss was silent; and on the next day the strike began.

"Strikes" said Pothsena, "assume many forms and have many names. What we are staging tomorrow is called, according to the book, a lightning Strike."

"It never fails," added Sukuruthan. "It is one of the most effective weapons in our armoury."



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Strike

It was great fun. We had enough funds to carry on until pay-day and if the Boss held on, Sukuruthan assured us that he will deliver the pay-packets. The strike Banners were prepared and we stood in front of our establishment holding up the banners high. We became, we thought, the admiration of the passers-by.

The Boss made no overtures. He came as usual to the office but accompanied by two men whose names or residences we did not know. Two policemen had also been placed on guard.

One day when the Boss was himself serving a customer, there was a diversion. Sukuruthan, from behind me, sent an egg flying on the Boss's head and, as the pink liquid began to spread itself on his immaculate waist-coat, both of us disappeared. But it struck me that Sukuruthan was a trained hand. His aim was sure, his movement deft. Where he had been trained was another mystery!



Pothsena had instructed us that any black legs should according to the book be thrashed on their return home. Our homes had been marked out on a sketch, each with a cross. But as we were all loyal to Sukuruthan no one reported for work. Then Pothsena said that it was time for "The Demonstration."

The back-bencher who was in one of his sober moments did not ask "What the Demonstration was?" But Pothsena explained what it meant. There was to be a Procession, each one of us carrying a red placard with the word "Strike" written in large letters and above and below the words, "We want More Pay." "Share the Profits." We were to shout these words as our slogans as the Procession moved.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### The Procession

On the following day "The Procession" began. Sukuruthan had recruited two Big Men for the occasion. They went at the head of the procession, shouting even louder than our boys. What exactly Sukuruthan's relations were with them no one knew and we dared not ask our hero the reason why.

It was different from the earlier days when "Each Man was to be his Own Boss." We were now taking orders which we did not dare to disobey.

The Procession was a great success, street urchins joining in from time to time. The two Big Men shook hands with us, one by one, and said that we had done extremely well. "Well done, Comrades" said one of them, "we will Break Your Boss and the Business will be yours, Share and Share alike."

One of the Big Men singled me out for special mention. He had evidently been told by



Sukuruthan that as the son of his Old Friend the Boss had been kind to me. To have got me round was the first step in breaking the Boss.

“Mottaputha”, said the Big Man patting me in the back, “You are a fine lad. We are making special mention of you in our official record. One day you will be a Squadron Leader.” I could not believe my ears, “I, Mottaputha, a Squadron Leader to be,” What would my father have said of my marvellous rise had he been alive!

Was that not worth fighting for? Was it not worth living for? Then we could do everything that the Boss now did and He would have to take Our orders. We would have followed the Big Men even to their graves but, to their misfortune, the necessity to test our loyalty did not arise.

But the little Boss was holding out, He made no overtures. A few customers were still to be seen. From what we could judge it was “Business as Usual.” Sukuruthan’s orders were that on no account was there to be a clash with the two Policemen on duty, although the Back-Bencher was ready to tuck up his sleeves.



“Policemen” said Sukuruthan, “had the habit of framing false charges against innocent people.”

But although the Strike was a great success and the pedestrians halted and watched us as we marched along shouting “Jaya weva” (Victory) according to Sukuruthan’s instructions, there was a dark speck in the horizon.

As usual it was Pothsena. From time to time he was turning the pages of the book and from time to time wrinkles came on his fore-head. “From all the signs”, said Pothsena, “there is danger in sight.”

“Shut up”, said Sukuruthan, “We are on the road to Victory.”



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### Closed for Stock-Taking

**P**ay-Day came and Sukuruthan brought our pay-packets. We dared not ask him what was the source of the funds. As usual we went to the Pub and to the Hotel de Sukuru. Each time I passed out, Dandy Singho, who had informed himself of our affairs, was at hand. What a fine fellow he was!

The monthly advance was now due and Sukuruthan and Pothsena had another conference. We decided to compromise at half the basic. The Boss gave them an appointment and they came out of the offices shouting "We have won!" "He has given in!"

They had in fact lost and compromised at one quarter of the basic with no back pay. But we carried them shoulder high. Was it not another victory? It was duly celebrated and on the next day we reported for duty.

Although the establishment was open, we noticed that the Boss was not accepting new



orders or bringing in new goods. Pothsena said that it was a danger signal. We had to take firm action.

Shortly after this discussion I went to the store one morning and could not believe my eyes. The doors and windows were closed.

There was a placard in large letters on the front door. "Closed for Stock-Taking." It was against all precedent. The last stock-taking had been held only a month earlier.

My associates also turned up, one by one, and began chatting in little circles. There were no signs of life within the shop nor were there any signs of Sukuruthan or Pothsena.

The little boss was nowhere to be seen. We waited but it was to no purpose. When it was getting on to noon I went to the pub to refresh myself and then decided to go home to think matters over. Had we outplayed our hand? Had I lost my job? Had the little Boss got his own back?



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### I Break My Boss

As I walked back slowly home, I recalled the day when my father had entrusted me to the little Boss. The even tenor of our lives until the entry of Sukuruthan.

And then the sudden change, the pay-packets, the pub and the Hotel de Sukuru. Events had moved so fast that I had been taken along by the current like a dead log.

As I came closer home I noticed that our doors and windows were also closed. The front door was not locked. I went in but my wife was nowhere to be found.

On her pillow there was an envelope, "To Mottaputha" and inside was a note in pencil in large clear letters, "You have lost your job. I am going with Dandy Singho. You.....You can go to the Devil."

I rushed out. Even if I had lost my job, I could not lose my wife. The blood was rushing to



my face. I stood in the middle of the street and the street was whirling round me.

I seemed to see my little boss in front and all about me and before him a double-decker was coming fast. Yes, was it not the boss putting up his hands? Closer and closer the double-decker came and was it not my boss that fell flat on the road?



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### My Father's Friend and Mine

**I**t was a terrible moment. I was bewildered. A vision of my Boss with his kindly face and genial smile seemed to flash across my eyes. Was he about to be run over by the Double-Decker?

“Stop, Stop.” I shouted. “Don’t run over him. He was My Father’s Friend and Mine.”

I could hear the creak of the brakes and then “Tut” — “Tut.” What was that noise? Was it not the bones of my Boss breaking under the double-decker?



## I GET INTO THE CABINET

*The man without wisdom who knows that he is not wise can for that reason be called wise; a man without wisdom who thinks he is wise can, indeed, be called a fool.*

(Dhammapada 63.)

*I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom; ..... he was a politician. When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me. I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is — for he knows nothing and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. He, O, men, is the wisest, who like Socrates knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing.*

**Socrates (Plato, *Apology*)**







## Introduction

**M**r. Nikan (Nothing Doing) is downcast; he has not had a rise in the social ladder. In a reverie he envies the quick ascent of Mr. Good-for-Nothing, when his friend, Depita-Kāttuwa, walks in with a bottle of Consolation (Home-Brew) under his arm. Depita-Kāttuwa, as his name implies, is a man who plays out both sides.

In the course of their talk between drinks, he puts into Mr. Nikan's head the idea of getting into the Cabinet. The family astrologer had predicted two weeks earlier that Mr. Nikan's good time was close at hand and that the horoscope of his wife, Kadisara Hamine, was good for her husband.

Mr. Nikan is diffident. He is conscious of his own shortcomings. He says that he has no Brains; he is afraid of Press Interviews. He cannot distinguish between a Progressive and a Reactionary. He is of the view that a Promise should be kept and that a Politician should solve not only Present Problems but also Future Problems. He should have Future Generations in mind.



Depita-Kāttuwa, a man of many wiles, brushes aside Mr. Nikan's fears. "Brains" says he, are now not essential. He relates an Old Tale which described how a Leather-Tanner and a Sausage-Seller got round Old Demos. Mr. Nikan could see the world and all the V.I.P.S. would bow low to him. He then describes the technique of International Practice and Foreign Aid.

All that a Politician needs is Brass. Even the Script of his speeches is written out for him. But he must know how to say it Loud. A Political Promise is not like other promises. It need not be kept. As for Future Problems no politician worries about them. He is unable to solve even the Present Problems of his Own Country. That is why he spends his time in solving the problems of Other Countries.

Mr. Nikan sees a vision of his coming greatness, and ultimately gives way. He consents to be put into the Cabinet. Depita-Kāttuwa says that what a Politician needs is Finesse of which he gives a demonstration. Mr. Nikan intoxicated with Cabinet Visions and Consolation gets into bed, but on the wrong side. His wife is fast asleep, snoring, and an incident follows.

Mr. Nikan awaits his friend's return which is overdue. At last he arrives and says that he



has had a holiday in the North with his friend V.V.T. He tells an interesting tale of how he got V.V.T. out of a patch of trouble and of his car and launch trip. V.V.T according to him is a man of no occupation but fishing between South India and North Ceylon is his hobby. He is afraid of the Evil Eye. Sometimes he carries both Goods and Humans in his launch. Depita-Kāttuwa discusses other matters but makes no mention of Mr. Nikan's entry to the Cabinet.

A conversation on Corporations follows.

He reveals at last that due to a numerical excess of applications, a decision has been made to take a part of each applicant and put all into a Cauldron. Mr. Nikan is worried about the nature of his own vivisection but is reassured. He, however, in a reverie recalls a school incident and a conundrum of his school master which was solved by the Dull Boy of the class, Moda Singho. The idea of the combination of parts had been given by an Oracle.

The oracle, says Depita-Kāttuwa, was a New Oracle at Hitha-Sanasana-Pura. Mr. Nikan retorts that a Great Persian Monarch and a Great Empire were defeated by a misinterpretation of the



reply of the famous Delphic oracle. The reply had a double meaning and the Monarch acted on the wrong interpretation. His friend is taken aback but replies that the Delphic Oracle must have been a heathen oracle and cannot be compared to the Manthri-Rawatana-Devale which never deceives. He is himself the Patron and it was his idea to consult the Devale.

The next step is to form a Cabinet which will last for eternity. A Cabinet Architect gives the idea of a Cabinet Brew. All the Architects dance round the Cauldron and sing a song, making the Cabinet Brew. It is named the Cabinet Architects' Song.

*“Double, double, toil and trouble:  
Fire burn; and a cauldron bubble.*

*Round and round the cauldron go  
In the poison'd entrails throw —”*

And round and round the cauldron went the Cabinet Architects Singing the Song. And all clapped applause. So saying Depita-Kāttuwa walks away.

“It has come off fine”, said Depita-Kāttuwa on his return. But in fact it transpires that there



had been a miscarriage. The Cabinet Plan had been marked "Top-Secret" and put into a secret draw, double locked and sealed with sealing wax but there had been a leak. The applicants had come to know one another's names.

There had been a free-for-all and in the scuffle they had kicked one another and the cauldron and that was the end of the Cabinet Brew, "It was great fun", said Depita-Kāttuwa, "to witness the free-for-all. It will go into the text-books in the library of political research."

But Mr. Nikan has a more serious problem. Kadisara Hamine who had sensed the gist of the conversations from behind the door was at him to find out the colour of the saree which she would have to wear when she became a Cabinet Minister's wife. And Mr. Nikan himself had to buy his scarf.

He poses the colour problem to Depita-Kāttuwa. That stage, replied his friend, had not been reached. They were still choosing the material; the texture of the new material had to fit the old material. The design of the new looms was unknown as the looms were three months in the harbour as they were unable to tackle the harbour boys.



Mr. Nikan gets the feeling that his friend is putting him off with tales of his own invention and loses his temper. Depita-Kāttuwa warns him that a politician should never lose his temper and tells him another tale, the New Tale of the New Front. Mr. Nikan is fascinated. It is so like a view of Modern Ceylon (Through a Looking Glass.)

Mr. Nikan is puzzled. Now that the cauldron and the Cabinet Brew have gone out of the picture. How will the selection be made? "That is simple," said Depita-Kāttuwa. We are doing it through the New Twist. They get together and separate. And in the space of three months triplets have been born."

Mr. Nikan wonders whether the man who plays out both sides is going to play out Mr. Nikan. "What if they get together and do not separate," says Mr. Nikan. His friend reassures him. The applicants will not keep together. Even if they wish to do so, it will be so arranged that they will break one another's heads. Don't you worry, Old Fellow," says Depita-Kāttuwa and walks away.

Mr. Nikan is in a quandary. *"Into the Cabinet through the Port and not through the Vote — a*



*new Import.* Get together and keep together. Was it the End of the Beginning or the Beginning of the End?" Suddenly he hears light music. To his surprise it is Depita-Kāttuwa who has burst into a light song.

*As thro' the land at eve we went,  
And plucked the ripen'd ears.*

*We fell out, my wife and I,  
O we fell out I know not why  
And kiss'd again with tears.*

Depita-Kāttuwa does not return. Mr. Nikan abandons all hope of getting into the Cabinet but his wife is hopeful. One day she leaves home without informing her husband and returns quite excited. Mr. Nikan taxes her and she confesses that she has paid a visit to the Devale and has been made to dance. She is made to describe her dance costume and Mr. Nikan's blood pressure goes up. He goes to bed and dreams a dream.

The next morning the Hamine is penitent and suggests a pilgrimage. It was the customary way in which domestic differences were resolved in Mr. Nikan's household. He agrees and on the following morning both are off to Anuradhapura. The moment they set foot on Anuradhapura



Mr. Nikan's wife assumes command and becomes a changed woman.

In the evening both offer flowers and pour oil on the lamps at the base of the dagaba when they see a devotee kneeling in devout worship. They are thrilled by his devotion. He gets up and glances at Mr. Nikan and moves quickly away.

Mr. Nikan notices that his gait is familiar. He walks upto him, gurgles his throat and coughs. "Ssh...Ssh", says the devotee and requests Mr. Nikan to meet at his Ashram in the Night. Even the voice is familiar. In the night he meets the devotee, still in "sil" attire, surrounded by visitors to whom he is expounding the Buddhist doctrine. Mr. Nikan experiences a surprise.

After the visitors leave, the devotee leads him into the inner room where he experiences another surprise. He has a long conversation on many matters and returns to find his wife asleep. The next morning she expresses her high regard for the holy man that they had met the previous evening. "Sadhu, Sadhu", she says, "It is because of our good deeds in our former births that we have been blessed with the sight of such a holy man."



# **PART ONE**







## PART ONE

### CHAPTER ONE

#### Mr. Nikan's Reverie

**L**ife with me was at a low ebb. I had run through my patrimony and my wife's dowry.

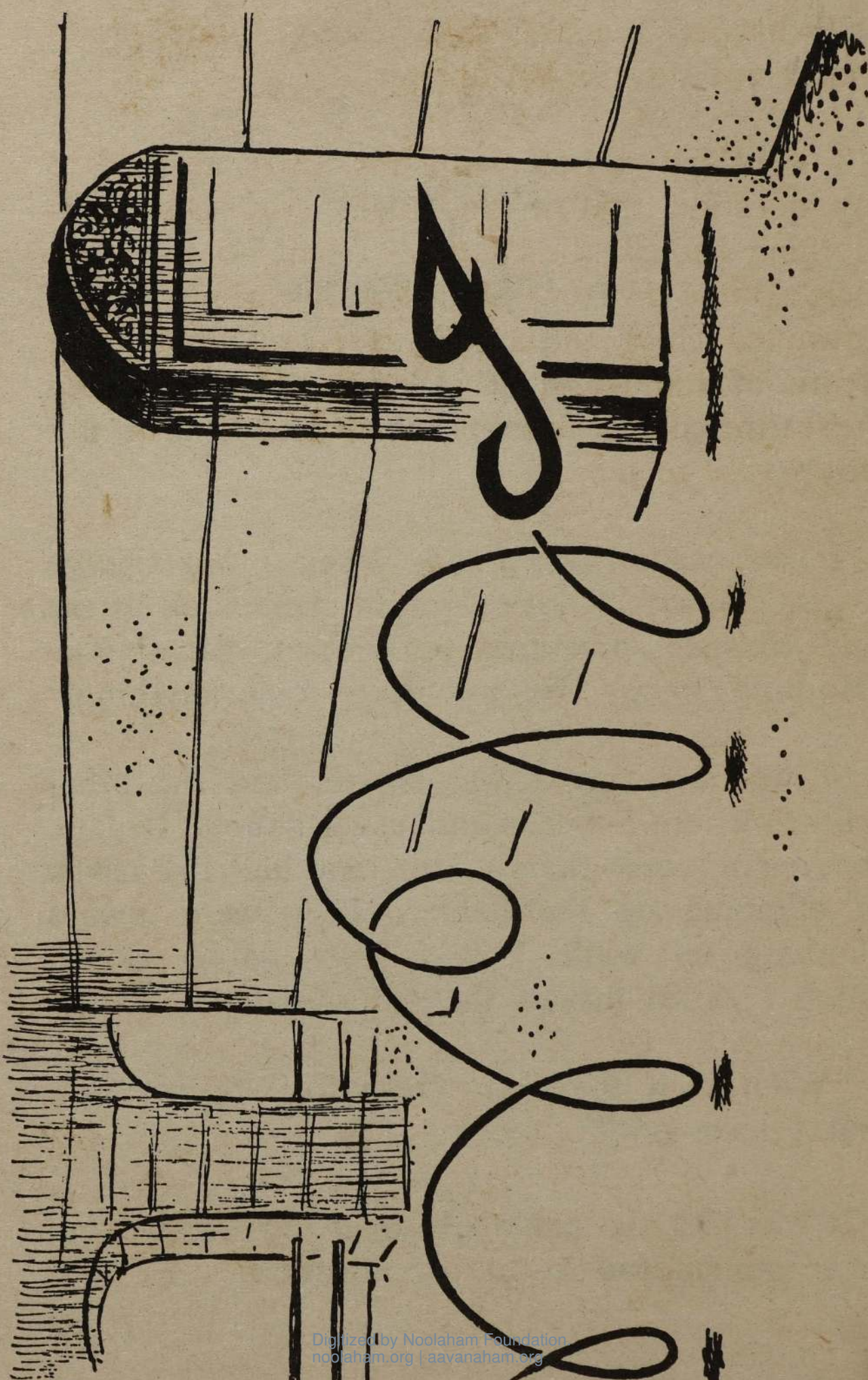
I had never made good. When I was one of a group I would notice one of them look at me and whisper something to another. Mr. Nikan (Nothing Doing) "He has never done anything."

It was not that I was worse than the other fellows whom I met in our usual haunts. In fact, they were worse than I. But they had the knack of climbing up the ladder. They were always climbing up while I was daily going down. Often I asked myself the old question.

"What is it that Mr. Good-for-Nothing has, that I have not?"

It was like the other old question which from time immemorial awaits an answer.





*I get into the Cabinet*



“What is Truth?” said jesting Pilate, “and would not stay for an answer.”

I consoled myself with my own answer to my question that it was luck. Mr. Good-for-Nothing had all the “Luck.” I had no d.....mn luck. Dame Fortune had left me alone as an unwanted child and here was I down and out, weary of the world, an Angry Man, ready to break the other fellow’s head and smash my lady’s vase to pieces.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### Depita-Kāttuwa Enters

**I**t was just at that moment that my old friend Depita-Kāttuwa (the Man Who Plays Out Both Sides) entered, with his usual bottle of Consolation under his arm, for an evening's gossip and for drinks.

With his wakeful eyes he noticed at once that I was more downcast than ever and quickly poured a "double" for each of us. We clinked our glasses. I sent the golden liquid down my parched throat and gave a sigh of relief. The sensation was so soothing.

"What's up, Old Fellow? Never be downhearted. Your time will come if you would only set about it in the right way," said my friend with that smile of his which came from nowhere and went nobody knew where. That smile always put me on my guard.

"And what is the right way?" I asked him.

I could not restrain my admiration for this Man of Works who was never at a loss, who



was always getting into tight situations and was always getting out of them with complete ease. The worse the peril into which he got, the quicker worked his nimble brain.

“Why man,” he said. “Why are you downhearted? You never had a better chance. You can fill the gap.”

“What gap?” I asked him, taken by surprise.

“Why man, the gap in the Cabinet. They are short of men at the top. You are the exact fit. Why don’t you get into the Cabinet?” said my friend.



## CHAPTER THREE

### A Vision of the Cabinet

**I** was astounded with the non-chalance with which Depita-Kāttuwa shot his bolt. He knew my disabilities even more than I. He knew I had no brains. How could a fellow like myself fit into the Cabinet?

It was true that there was a rush for Cabinet Seats. But was it not already a Full-House and how could I be the exact fit?

All that I had done in life was to tell other..... people what they should do. As for myself I had never done a d .....nd thing. But visions of my entry into the Cabinet began to float before my eyes as, drip by drip, I drank down my glass of Consolation and my friend's new idea.

Get into the Cabinet! I could hardly believe my ears. I tried to think hard and grasp the turn of events. But my friend gave me no chance.

“Why man!” he said. “the door of your new car will be opened for you by the chief man of



the show to which you are invited and a garland thrown round your neck.

You will head the procession and the cameras on all sides will flash. On the following morning the words of wisdom which fell like pearls from your lips will appear in all the newspapers with banner headlines.

*Mr. Nikan (Nothing-Doing) says 'Go ahead.*

*Fix your eyes on the Stars. Go forward unmindful of the ravines below. You fall to rise again.'*

“Think of it man! Is that not worth living for?”



## CHAPTER FOUR

### A Progressive and a Reactionary

“**A**nd suppose”, I said. “I had to give an interview to the Press I would not know what exactly I should say.”

“Oh nothing is easier than that,” said my friend. “Say that you a Progressive and that the other fellow is a Reactionary.”

“And what if I am asked to define what is meant by a Progressive and what is meant by a Reactionary? You know yourself what difficult chaps reporters are.” I stammered.

“Never worry about that,” said Depita-Kāttuwa “No one will ask you that question. The words are now a part of the dullest politician’s vocabulary. Even the man-in-the street knows that now-a-days the words mean nothing. The man who speaks has to say that he is a Progressive and that the man whom he abuses is a Reactionary.

“That is the first lesson in the “Elements of Politics” which is a standard work. It was written



by no less a person than Gay Deceiver who is the Dean of the Faculty of Politics in the famous University of Humbarg. But if you are pressed by a young reporter who does not know the ropes you can tell him what I once told one of them.

“A Reactionary and a Progressive are ..... are like the two main stars in a film-show. A Reactionary is like the Hero who fights with a rusty and blunt old sword and a Progressive is like the Villain who stabs the hero in the back with a sharp and shining imported dagger which he always has up his sleeve for the kill.”



## CHAPTER FIVE

### My Astrologer's Forecast

**M**y blood pressure which had registered a new height in my old arteries, full of Consolation and Colesterol, was gradually coming down as my friend in a few simple words, explained the technique of a game which I had never quite understood. I felt that I had now come to the cross-roads of my life.

I began to recall that only two weeks back the family astrologer had predicted me an early rise. Benign Jupiter, he had said, was coming into his own house and the malefic Kehetha (Dragon's Tail), who had made me keep the company of associates below my status, was moving away. These two planetary changes heralded high office and wealth and the end of my bad period.

But the main reason for my elevation, according to the Gurunnanse, was the powerful horoscope of my wife. "Kadisara Hamine's horoscope" said the sage, "is excellent for the husband, never have I seen one that was better. Even if



the man she marries is a labourer, she will make him king."

Kadisara Hamine (කඩ්සර හාමිනේ) was my wife. She was a symbol of activity and it was by a strange coincidence, almost prophetic, that she had been given that name by her father. She was the antithesis of my own inactivity. She rose with the roseate dawn and gave directions for my breakfast and sometimes the delicious string hoppers which whetted my appetite were prepared by her facile fingers.

Before the Buddha Statue every morning she recited her gathas after taking the five precepts and the jingle of the little bell which was kept on the pedestal on which the statue stood was the signal that recitations were to follow. But by the time I opened my eyes and was about to rise from bed, the warm cup of coffee with its exquisite flavour was placed in my hands.

"Tell Kadisara Hamine," continued the Gurunнанse, after he had mastered his chew of beetle, emptied the contents of his mouth into the receptacle by his chair and cleared his throat, "tell Kadisara Hamine that soon she will be a leading lady and presented with a bouquet at the very moment that a garland goes round your neck."



I returned home with a light heart and conveyed the Gurunnanse's forecast to my wife. She was overjoyed with the prospect that at last our good time was at hand.

“මට ලැබෙන්නේ ඔයාගෙ වාසනාව තමයි. මම වෙන මිනිසෙකුට අයිති වෙන්නේ නැතුව ඔයාගෙ එක්කෙනා වුණේ මං පුරුවෙ ජාතියෙ කළ පිනකින්. මං ඔයාට කිව්වේ නැද්ද ඉක්මනටම රෝදෙ කරකැව්ලා ඔයා උඩින් හිටියි කියලා? එතන තමයි ඔයාට හරි තැන.”

“It is your good fortune that is shedding its light on me,” replied Kadisara Hamine. “It is because of a good deed that I have done in one of my previous births that I have become your wife and not the wife of another man. Did I not tell you,” she said, “that the wheel turns and that soon you will be on top. That is where you should be.”

But in spite of my seer's prediction and my wife's remark I had not even for a moment thought of so dizzy a rise as what my friend held out to me. The vision of the Cabinet was like a dream.

Depita-Kāttuwa noticed at once that he had begun to make an impression on me and that I had begun to waver. He knew that now was



the time to hammer hard. He poured out two more doubles of Consolation and after we had clinked, I said,

“But I have no brains.”



## CHAPTER SIX

### Brains Not Wanted

**“Y**ou have no Brains,” repeated Depita-Kāttuwa. “That does not matter” said he in his best style. “Brains are not now wanted! We have changed all that. It was in the old days that top men had brains. Today a top man has very little to do in top matters.

He is a figure head. He has no time to think for himself nor is he expected to think. All that he has to do is to make himself accessible to the voter. Then he becomes the people’s man.

He has to be present at the wedding, at the child-birth, at the weaning ceremony and at the rice-feeding ceremony. If there is a death in his voter’s family, he should call at once at the funeral house and look sad and say to the chief inmate as he leaves “This is life. It can happen to you and..... to me.”

Even the script of a speech that a top-man has to deliver is written out for him by a specialist who is expected to know his job.



“Why is that?” I asked. It was all so puzzling.

“That is to prevent a top man opening his mouth so wide that he puts his foot in.

Today brains can even be a disqualification. If you have brains, it can be put against you that you may pull a string and tie the other fellow up in knots. That is why you are a good bet for the Cabinet Stakes.”

“But it is only a man with education that can get into the Cabinet. I have none,” I persisted.

“Have you not heard the Old Tale” said Depita-Kāttuwa.” It is still true.”

“And what is the Old Tale?” I asked. My friend lived so much in the present that it was hard to believe that he knew an old tale.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### An Old Tale

“It is the Tale of the Leather-Seller and the Sausage-Seller and how between them they played the fool of Old Demos.”

“And who was Old Demos,” I asked, taken aback.

“Why man,” said my friend. “Demos is the people, the father of Democracy which means the people’s strength. All the Democrats, the Socialist Democrats, the Capitalist Democrats, the Communist Democrats, the Pure Democrats, the Impure Democrats, the Pseudo-Democrats and the Unbelievers are all the offspring of Old Demos, in the direct or collateral line.”

“So, what did the Leather-Seller and the Sausage-Seller do to poor Old Demos?”

“Well, the Leather-Seller cajoled the testy Old Man and became his Minister. By degrees he got more and more power into his own hands. He slandered the others, called them rogues



and blackmarketeers. He squeezed their wealth out of them and imposed heavy taxes until all of them began to creep under his huge legs.”

“Then what happened?” I asked. I was already interested. It almost sounded like a Tale of Modern Ceylon.

“Then, two generals got together” and before my friend could complete his sentence, I interrupted him and said “And they staged a Coup.”

“Nothing of the kind. Wise Generals do not take the risk of getting caught if the Coup fails. They set up a Sausage-Seller to beat the Leather-Seller.”

I nearly exploded. Could it be possible that in the old Aristocratic Days, a Sausage-Seller could fight a Leather-Seller for a Cabinet Seat. “And how did they do such an impossible thing?” I burst out.

“It was very simple. They stole the Leather-Seller’s Book of Oracles from under his pillow. In the Book, the Oracle had prophesied that the Leather-Seller would be ousted by a Sausage-Seller.”



“And how did the Generals get hold of a Sausage-Seller.” It was a marvellous tale and smashed the Arabian Nights into smithereens.”

“One of the Generals got drunk and read out from the Book of Oracles what the Kapurala of the Oracle had prophesied when the Kapurala himself was drunk,” replied my friend.

“And then, what happened?”

“Then, both the Generals looked out and behold! a Sausage-Seller, as though sent by Providence, was walking along the street and the drunken General beckoned to him and said,

*“O’ happy man! Celestial Sausage-Seller:  
Friend, guardian and protector of us all,  
Come forward, save your friends and save the  
country.”*

The Sausage-Seller was taken aback and he could not believe his ears.

“And then?” I asked.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Sausage-Seller

“**A**nd then, said Depita-Kāttuwa, “the Sausage-Seller asked ‘Do you call me?’ And the Generals, taking his tray and basket from him, told the Sausage-Seller that he was unconscious of his glorious destiny. Tomorrow he was to be the mightiest of the mighty.”

“And after that what did the Generals do?”  
The tale was acquiring momentum.

“After that the drunken General showed him the multitude of people who had assembled and sang.

*“You shall be their lord and master,  
The sovereign and ruler of them all,  
Of the assemblies and the tribunals, fleets and  
armies,  
You shall trample down the Senate under  
foot,  
Confront and crush the Generals and  
Commanders,  
Arrest, imprison and confine in irons,  
And feast and fornicate in the Council House.”*



“You are playing the fool of me”, I interrupted.  
“It is a Tale of Modern Ceylon, Every word is true to life.”

“You fool,” burst out Depita-Kāttuwa, Don’t you know that our armies only do civilian work, except when they are billeted in the North, during a Satyagraha Campaign there. And our fleet consisted of only four tiny ships and that two of them were, to our misfortune, put out of action by a cyclone.

I was immediately back in my proper senses, “And how did the tale continue? I asked. “Did the Sausage-Seller consent to be a Minister? His case was so like my own predicament.”

“At first he was reluctant to accept the job. He said that he was not sure of his descent but the drunken general assured him that the fact that he was a Common Man was a blessing. It will give him a footing. It will be a groundwork for confidence and favour at the outset.

Don’t you know that it is the Age of the Common Man?”

“And what about his education? I inquired. I was really thinking of myself.



“Yes. The Sausage-Seller was ashamed of his own education. He asked the same question.

“What about my education. I can barely read.....in a kind of way.”

“And what did the drunken General say in reply?” I asked.

“Almost what I told you. The drunken General said that the Sausage-Seller’s only disqualification was that he could read at all and the General added,

*“For now; no lead nor influence is allowed  
To liberal arts or learned education,  
But to the brutal, base and under-bred.  
Embrace then and hold fast the promises  
Which the oracles of the gods announce to  
you.”*

“But times have changed, I emphasised. Today there are no base and under-bred. We are living, as you said, in the Age of the Common Man. He may be brutal but he is never under-bred. Who was the man that told this tale?

“An old man, who lived in a little city State, told the tale in B.C. 424 and it won the first prize for the year.”



I was amazed. The tale was indeed a Tale of Modern Ceylon, but it was unwise to make the admission. The people of other lands then have fought for democracy in the same way that our locals fight.

“And who won and how?” I asked. “Was it the Sausage-Seller or the Leather Seller?”



## CHAPTER NINE

### The Fighting Kit

“As prophesied by the Oracle, the Sausage-Seller won,” said Depita-Kāttuwa, “he was in top form.”

“And how did he get into that class? How could a Sausage-Seller know the tactics of the political game,” I inquired with seeming innocence. I was in fact trying to get some information for my own adventure.

“In fact you are asking me the same question that the Sausage-Seller asked the drunken general. The Sausage-Seller was doubtful whether a man of his dimensions could administer a State. But that is a simple matter.”

There was nothing that was not simple to my ingenious friend. “And how do you administer a State if you have no education.”

“The answer is told in the tale. The drunken general told the Sausage-Seller that it was the easiest thing.”



*“The easiest thing in nature, nothing easier,  
Stick to your present practice; follow it up  
In your new calling. Mangle, mince and  
smash,  
Confound and hack, and jumble things  
together.”*

“Why was that called his present practice?  
I asked. I did not see how the lines could  
apply to the Sausage-Seller.”

“My dear fellow! A Demagogue and a Sausage-  
Seller do it the same way. You should have  
known that long ago. Mangle, mince and smash.  
Confound and hack and jumble things together.”

My friend had now brought in another  
mystery. What exactly was a “Demagogue.”  
That was another conundrum. “And what is  
a Demagogue?”



## CHAPTER TEN

### What is a Demagogue

“**W**hat is a Demagogue? he is also an offspring of Old Demos,” said my friend. “He was in his origin a people’s leader (demos, agagos, leading).”

“And now what is he?”

“He has fallen into disrepute. He is now a people’s Mis-leader.”

“Why do you call him that,” I asked. “Does he do anything more than confound? To confound the other fellow is the road to success.”

“Yes, he does other things as well,” said my friend. It is all in the old tale. The rhyme continues,

*“And interlard your rhetoric with lumps  
Of mawkish sweet, and greasy flattery.  
Be fulsome, coarse and bloody. For the rest”*



The tale added that the Sausage-Seller had a combination of all the other requisite qualities which equip him for command.

“And what are the other requisite qualities?” I inquired. I had to accoutre myself for my new adventure and I did not want to leave an Achilles heel in my new Fighting-Kit.

“The other requisite qualities are also told in the tale,”

*“A filthy voice, a villainous countenance,  
Nothing is wanting, absolutely nothing,  
And the oracles and responses of the gods  
And prophecies, all conspire on your behalf.”*

This recitation amazed me. I had from time to time attended our own political meetings. It seemed as though I had been listening to one of our own locals at his best. The lines

*“And interlard your rhetoric with lumps  
Of mawkish sweet and greasy flattery”*

were like an echo of our own times.

“And did the Sausage-Seller win?” I persisted.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Out-Bawling

“Of course, he won. Oracles never lie. The Sausage-Seller relying on the prophesy beat the Leather-Seller at his own game. He out-bawled the Leather-Seller. He stood in his way and did not give him place. He did not give the Leather-Seller a chance to talk” said Depita-Kāttuwa.

“But the Leather-Seller could not have been beaten as easily as that. He must in course of time have become an expert in his trade.”

“Yes, but the Sausage-Seller did more. He brought out, one by one, the slips that the Leather-Seller had made during his tenure of office. He said that the Leather-Seller had plenty of other irons in his fire. He accused him of filling his empty paunch at the public board. And then the combatants began to abuse and out-bawl each other.”

L. S. — “I’ll overbear ye, and out-bawl ye.”

S. S. — “But I’ll out-scream ye and out-squall ye.”



L. S. — “I’ll impeach you, whilst abroad,  
Commanding on a foreign station.”

S. S. — “I’ll have you sliced, and slashed  
and scored.”

L. S. — “Your lion skin of reputation  
Shall be flayed off your back and  
tanned.”

S. S. — “I’ll take these guts of yours to hand.”

“Did they abuse each other like that even in ancient times?” I inquired. I had thought that the election tactics of modern days were an accompaniment of modern civilisation.

“Of course, they did”, said Depita-Kāttuwa, “you must beat the other man at his own game.”

“And then what else did the Sausage-Seller do?”



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### The Victory

“**T**he Sausage-Seller went to the Senate House where the Leather-Seller was bawling out, calling the Senators traitors and conspirators and terrorising them and announced that the price of anchovies had come down and proposed a vote in the Senate that they should seize all the trays of the anchovy-sellers in the market place.”

“And then what happened?”

“Then the Senators all smiled and were happy that they could buy anchovies cheap but before the Senators could reach the market place the Sausage-Seller rushed up there and bought up all the cabbages to serve as a garnish for the anchovies.”

“Why did he do that?” The sequence was again getting complicated.

“That is simple. He donated the cabbages free to the Senators that they may serve as a garnish



for the anchovies when they were brought to the table of the poorer Senators. They were overjoyed and thanked him profusely."

"And how did he get round Old Demos?" I inquired.

"He out-bawled the Leather-Seller who was talking to Demos and accused the Leather-Seller of taking bribes. He cajoled poor Old Demos by flattery. He gave him a nicely padded seat to sit on and said that the Old Man should not keep standing and that there should be something soft on which he could place his buttocks."

"And then?" The tale was so fascinating.

"Then when the Old Man was coming round, the Sausage-Seller took off his own waist-coat and gave it as a present to him. The waist-coat was comely and new and had sleeves. It was of flannel, warm and pleasant, and the Old Man was duped and delighted.

"And what happened next?" I asked.

"The Leather-Seller, not to be beaten at the game, gave the Old Man his own mantle," said Depita-Kāttuwa. "But the Old Man threw it



away, saying it had a filthy flavour, that it made him sick and that it smelt of hides and leather. He then installed the Sausage-Seller as his Minister.

It was a famous victory.”







## **PART TWO**







## PART TWO

### CHAPTER ONE

#### Play Your Own Game

The Sausage-Seller's victory solved only one problem. I could get into the Cabinet without brains. But I had yet another hurdle. I was not a Party man. The moment when the newspapers flashed, "Mr. Nikan gets into the Cabinet," the party would shout, "Nikan is not a Party man."

"But I am not a Party Man," I said with some diffidence.

"That is your best qualification," retorted my friend. "You will be playing your own game as you have done all your life. No one can tax you for letting down your side to buy place and power. You remember what was said of The Lost Leader" in the old rhyme.

*"Just for a handful of silver  
he left us.*

*Just for a riband to stick in  
his coat —*



*Found the one gift of which  
fortune bereft us,  
Lost all the others she lets us  
devote:*

*They with the gold to give,  
doled him out silver,  
So much was their's who so  
little allowed:*

*How all our copper had gone  
for his service,  
Rags — were they purple, his  
heart had been proud.*

*He alone breaks from the van  
and the freeman, —  
He alone sinks to the rear and the  
slave."*

"Who said that" I asked. The words were so like Remembered Yesterdays and so appropriate to the world around us.

"Never mind who said what" retorted my friend. What do you say? Am I to put you into the Cabinet? Think for a moment what that means.

A free House of the kind that you have never seen, a Benz Car, and all Travelling found by



the State. All the V.I.P.s will bow their heads low to you and you can shake hands with them. Think of that Old Fellow!

Mr. Nikan Gets into the Cabinet and sees the World!”



## CHAPTER TWO

### International Practice

“**A**nd why do V.I.Ps bow low?” I asked. I was not yet a citizen of the world in which my friend appeared to thrive.

“That is all according to the Protocol,” said Depita-Kāttuwa with an air of mystery.

When I had sold all the lands that I had inherited from my father in order to pay my debts, the Notary who attested my signature had asked me to sign three documents, one of which he had said, was the Protocol. Here at least I was on a sure wicket. It was my turn to take my friend unawares.

“Why do you say that Notaries are V.I.Ps?”

“V. I. Ps,” corrected my friend, “are not Notaries. They are all Big Shots. The term includes foreign Big Shots and Local Big Shots. Some of the former represent foreign countries.”

A representative of a foreign country is called a Diplomat from the Greek word, diploma,



which means a letter folded double (diploos). The proverb is that their function is to lie abroad for the good of their own country. It is a foreign V.I.P. that carries the Protocol.

“And is it said in the Protocol that a Diplomat should bow low?” I was determined to get to know the set up of the new world that I was about to enter.

“Oh’ no! The Protocol is a body of ceremonial rules to be observed in all written or personal intercourse between the heads of different States or their Ministers. It is in short the code of International Politeness.

But it is an immutable convention among Diplomats to bow low. Even a Diplomat of a Big Country bows low to our Locals in the Cabinet. That is part of International Practice.”

“And why does he bow so low if it is not in the Protocol?” I timidly inquired.

“My dear fellow! When the Big Fellow bows low to our Little Fellow, our Little Fellow is taken off his feet and it is easier for the Big Fellow to take the next step.”



“What is the next step?” I asked. I was becoming a citizen of the world.

“The next step is for the Big Fellow to put the Little Fellow into his pocket. It works like a See-Saw,” said Depita-Kāttuwa, with a look of triumph. “That is International Politics.”



## CHAPTER THREE

### Foreign Aid

“Do they do anything else” I inquired,  
“I mean other than bowing low.”

“Why not! They give Foreign Aid.”

“And what is Foreign Aid?” I was now getting the feeling “in for a penny, in for a pound.”

“Foreign Aid, is given by a Big Country to a Small Country to enable the little fellow to stand on his feet until he can walk by himself.”

“And how long does that take? Does it take very long?”

“Of that we have not yet got the statistics,” said my friend. “As a rule the little fellow is never taught how to use his legs and the big fellow is always at his side unless another big fellow displaces him by a bilateral agreement.”

“And what is a Bilateral Agreement?” I asked. I was again in deep water.



“That is an agreement according to which the little fellow and the big fellow both walk, side by side. It is derived from two Latin words (bis, twice, latus, side). The word is descriptive of the movement, the big fellow and the little fellow walking side by side.”

“And how long do they walk like that?”

“Oh, they are well tied up. They are expected to walk side by side for all time. But when it does not suit the big fellow he separates. It is only a temporary separation to join again on better terms.”

“And are there other ways in which Foreign Aid is given,” I inquired.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Machinery

“Yes, there are other ways,” said Depita-Kāttuwa, “sometimes the big fellow gives Machinery.”

“And then what happens,” I asked. “A gift of machinery appears to be a most useful form of aid because our fellows have lost the use of their hands since the days when they were educated to be clerks.”

“The gift is as a rule a long term loan carrying interest. What happens is that the little fellow is never able to square his account. That happened even to Raja Singha II, when the Dutch gave him Military Aid. Before the loan is paid, the machinery is obsolete and the little fellow has to get another gift.”

What did my friend mean by “obsolete?” I was again getting confused. Was it a mistake for “absolute?” I had to get that cleared. “And when does machinery get obsolete?”



Depita-Kāttuwa had realised that I was not strong in language. "Obsolete, my dear fellow, means "discarded, antiquated, no longer functional." Often the machinery is obsolete even at arrival in Ceylon. But always before the loan is paid.

Machinery, my dear fellow, is a tricky thing. You can never say what is new and what is old. It is like a well-dressed and painted woman who carries a virgin hue even after long user.

Old machinery can never compete with New machinery, however well the old machinery is painted. It is the same thing again. An old woman can never compete with a virgin, if the latter can be found."

The conversation had now gone entirely beyond my comprehension. I tried, however, a last shot. "And is there any other kind of Foreign Aid," I asked.

"Oh yes!" said my friend. "There is Invisible Aid."



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Invisible Aid

“**A**nd what is Invisible Aid?” I asked. My friend’s classification of aid was mysterious. I could not imagine how aid could be invisible.

“Invisible aid, my dear fellow, is seen only by its effects. If you hear a local shouting or writing vitriolic stuff, it is a fair guess to infer that he has received Invisible Aid.

“Is it what medical men call a virus? The sort of thing that has a deadly effect but cannot be caught by any instrument or light?”

“You are at last showing some signs of incipient intelligence. It is a kind of virus. You get infected by association. The ostensible method is kindness itself but its result is to create in you a qualitative change.”

“And then what happens?”

“Then you become a violent protagonist of your associate. You begin to think in the same



way and to do the same thing. You begin to assert with vehemence that your associate is a jolly good fellow and that his country is the best country in the world."

"And how does a local get the virus into his system?"

"The contraption takes various forms. It is so innocent in appearance that no one gives it a second thought. It may be a travel grant or an educational scholarship. It may be a conference or seminar which is not complete without a touch of our local fellow's learning and experience."

I was amazed at the cynical way in which my friend criticised the noble efforts which are made to make the whole world kin.

"What is there wrong in that?" I remarked. "We should applaud every effort that is made to promote the exchange of ideas and broaden our narrow views."

"You are still new to the trade, my dear fellow. You do not know the way of Power Blocks. Like atoms in the chemical world, the blocks join and part, they part and join with amazing



velocity. And little countries and their people are indoctrinated with their divergent views. It is a natural process in power politics."

"Then why are our fellows not kept within our country to prevent their defloration?"

"Even a great King tried the same thing. He had a beautiful daughter but the Oracle had said that he would be killed by his grandson. So he kept her in a brazen tower, all alone."

"How sad! Then what happened?"

"Then the Greatest Power in the world of classical mythology felt pity for the pretty maid and began to visit her in a Shower of Gold."

"How interesting? And then what happened?"

"Then the king's pretty maid became his pretty maid and a baby boy was born."

*Danae in a brazen tower  
Where no love was, loved a Shower.*

"Did the people know that the Great Power was coming in a Shower of Gold? Why don't Great Powers leave pretty maids alone?"



“That, my dear fellow, has never happened in history. Great Powers, like great warriors, regard pretty maids as their prize. The people cannot know what they cannot see. That is why it is called Invisible Aid.”

“And what happened to the grandfather?”

“The Oracle was true to form. The grandson killed the grandfather with an accidental shot at a game of quoits.”



## CHAPTER SIX

### Know — How

“**A**nd has Foreign Aid any companions?” I asked. “Is it accompanied with anything other than the aid itself?”

“Yes,” replied Depita-Kāttuwa, the receiver has often to learn the Know-How in order to make use of the aid. Often the aid comes in the shape of machinery and then the machinery is of no value unless you have also the Know-How.

It was an intriguing term. Know-How! Something like an invention of the Devil. I almost fell in love with the word at first sight. It had almost a sexual attraction. “And what is Know-How?”

“Know-How” said my friend in a mysterious way, “is the exposure of the Hidden Thing. You are shown, as it were, into the secret. The Big Countries that know show the Little Countries that do not know how to manipulate the machinery and the raw material that they sell to the little countries.



“And they make no charge,” I added, “for the Know-How. It is most kind of them.” I was now getting used to the term and the word “Know-How” almost shot out of my lips.

“On the contrary,” said my shrewd friend, “our manufactured stuff costs more than the imported stuff at the end. The Technical Expert is sent at the cost of the little country which has also to pay a percentage on the Turn-Over, whether there is a Profit or a Loss.”

I was again getting out of my depth and I regretted my first question. But it was too late to trace my steps back-wards “And what is Turn-Over,” I asked.

“Don’t play the fool!,” retorted Depita Kāttuwa. “We are discussing Big Business with Foreign Aid. The turn-over is the total value of the sales. We manufacture the product here and sell it to our local fellows. The total of the receipts is our Turn-Over.

But for the Know - How of the Technical Expert, it is said, that we cannot produce and therefore cannot turn-over. So there is a cut on the receipts. In other words, it is the Tech-



nical Expert that helps the local fellow to turn over with the help of the Know-How."

"And what does the little country get after paying for the machinery, the technical expert and the cut," I asked. My friend was more exasperating than ever.

"Don't you know, old fellow? said my friend. "It gets experience. It has to pay for experience."

"And what about the Know-How that we get?" I was determined to find out the operation of this strange mechanism."

"The Know-How is, as a rule taken back home by the Technical Expert. He leaves behind with us the How-Not to Know, and carries with him to his mother country the happy memories of his sojourn in our Sunny land and the realisation that we are complete fools.

Don't you know, old fellow, that nobody ever discloses trade secrets. It would be nothing less than suicide. You have to learn it yourself, now or never."

"And what does the Technical Expert tell his Boss and his friends at home?"



“He tells them that Ceylon is a lovely country but that we are Damn Fools,” said Depita-Kāttuwa. “For the Big Fellow it is always a Famous Victory.”



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Brass

I was astonished at the way in which Depita-Kāttuwa maintained his equilibrium in what appeared to be a game, national and international, played for high stakes and full of hazards.

But his manner was so matter of fact that one could not quarrel with a man who was so confident of himself and of his subject. I decided, however, to test him with what I thought would be a poser.

“And what should a man have in order to get into the Cabinet?” I asked, resuming our main topic and hoping to see my friend get into difficulties at last.

“BRASS, man” was his prompt reply. “All you want is BRASS. You should be able to say again and again that You are the One and Only Man who can Deliver the Goods.

The people want, apart from what the oldest profession in the world still gives them, food, clothing, shelter and employment.



You must say that you will give them all that and that the other fellow can give them nothing. And mind you! you must learn to say it loud. Can you not say it Loud?"

Of course I could say that loud. There was no difficulty about that. In every argument with my wife I had got the better of her and had the last word because I always said it Loud.

*'In my youth', said his father, 'I took to the law,  
And argued each case with my wife:  
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,  
Has lasted the rest of my life.'*

I was beginning to get a dim vision of the game which Depita-Kāttuwa wanted me to play. A politician did not need Brains but he needed Brass and he had to say it Loud.

He had to play his own game. And then he reached the stars.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Promise

**B**ut would it all end there? If I made a promise to deliver the Goods, I was bound to keep my promise. I had to thrash out this last point before I could agree.

“And what if I cannot give the people what I promise?” I asked tremulously.

“My dear fellow” said my friend “never worry about keeping promises. A politician never has to keep a promise. It is never part of the game. Conditions are always changing and a politician has always to change with the times. He has a perfect alibi.

Mind you, it will be only a Political Promise. You do not intend, and you are not expected to keep it. A promise of better days, of better pay, of less taxes to those who do not evade them, better homes, less work, that is the only way which one can keep the spirit of the people up.



*And as long as you live, we shall give  
You wealth and health, and pleasure and treasure,  
In ample measure;  
And never bilk you of pigeon's milk,  
Or portable gold; you shall live to grow old,  
In laughter and mirth, on the face of the earth  
Laughing, quaffing, carousing, bousing,  
Your only distress, shall be the excess  
Of ease and abundance and happiness.*

You must give them Hope — and Hope is Life. In fact, to sum up, Hope is Life and Life is Hope. He is a fool who expects anything more.”

My friend who had all his life been playing out both sides was now clearly turning out to be a philosopher. This was a new and remarkable trait which I had yet to discover in this sphinx. But I could not let the matter lie at that.

“And what of the future?” I asked. “One must do something for the future — the children to come? What about them?”

“Don't be a fool” said my friend. “No politician worries about the future. It is too far off. We cannot solve the present problems in our own country. We can only solve the problems



of other countries. Think of the present, that will give you enough food for thought. More than you can digest.”



## CHAPTER NINE

### The Finesse

And so it happened that I decided to get into the Cabinet and Depita-Kāttuwa assured me that I had a one hundred per cent chance.

“Leave it to me” he said. “All that is required is finesse. FINESSE is my job.”

“And what is finesse?” I asked, as we emptied the bottle of Consolation. Then Depita-Kāttuwa, with a deft move of hand, stood the bottle up on its neck on the table in perilous balance. I was amazed at his dexterity.

*‘You are old’, said the youth, ‘one would hardly suppose*

*That your eye was as steady as ever;  
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your  
nose —*

*What made you so awfully clever?”*

“Finesse” he said. “That is simple in politics. It is nothing more than playing one man against



another. Sometimes you play one party against another. It is only another game. What about Baseball, Cricket, Roulette, Mah Jong? What about our own dear unimported and unadulterated Pandu. It is the same thing.

Or what about Chess, with its many pieces and its many moves? If you select the right piece, you can move in any direction, vertical, horizontal, diagonal or sky-wise. You can make a Knight jump about; You can Rook a Bishop, you can Check a King; You can Stalemate. You can even make a Pawn a Queen.

It is the same in politics. Is that not worth living for?"

"And what happens when you finesse in politics?" I asked in all innocence.

"Can I somersault myself into the Cabinet?"

"In politics everybody wins. No one ever loses. It is always a famous victory! Be careful not to break your neck" said Depita-Kāttuwa, as he walked away carrying under his arm the empty bottle of Consolation for its next refill.



## CHAPTER TEN

### At Queen's House

**I**t had been a delightful night. I was dizzy with new-found visions of the Cabinet and frequent draughts of my Consolation mixture, a friend who unlike other friends, never let me down. I went to our bedroom and as I entered I heard my wife snoring hard. It had been too long a wait. I stumbled into bed in such a state of exhilaration that I did not check on which end of the bed I laid my head.

As I was dozing off, the visions all came back, getting hazier and hazier — Yes, it was all true. I was really — getting — the Cabinet into me — Into the Cabinet — I getting — was Cabinet into getting — I was — into Queen's House — driving — House — into Queen's — driving — I was hands — shaking — with His Excellency the Governor-General and bowing low. Yes — it was the Governor-General's hands that I was kissing — there were ten — Yes — ten fingers — I was kissing all the ten fingers.

I woke up with a start. I had put my head on the wrong end of the bed and had placed between



my lips and my nose the toes of my wife's feet. And then suddenly I received on my head two kicks which brought me back to earth.

So ended my first Cabinet Meeting. I had been one of a Cabinet of eleven, of different heights, shapes and sizes — and even of smells!







## **PART THREE**







## PART THREE

### CHAPTER ONE

#### A Long Wait

Evening after evening I sat in my favourite armchair on the verandah of my house, watching and waiting for the return of my friend, Depita-Kāttuwa. But there were no signs of his reappearance. I did not dare to write.

The written word is so unlike the spoken word; the latter you can recant and deny even the utterance thereof but the former can damn you for ever.

My friend had advised me not to put down his name in any letter since he would be on the rack, if it fell into the hands of mischief makers.

After a fortnight's watch and many anxious moments, I saw my friend's figure in the distance, as he sauntered along with the Consolation refill under his arm and chewing what I discovered on his arrival to be the end of a black, short cigar of the home-made kind that comes from North Ceylon.



It had a silvery shine and its inside was full of knots, but it gave untold delight to the connoisseur of that special brand. The frequent expectorations which its flavour stimulated was of no concern to my friend, because to him one place was as good as another for the deposit.

I was all a thirst for news of my entry into the Cabinet. I was on the point of asking my friend what progress he had made. But he appeared to be quite unconcerned about his previous promise. It was exasperating.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Depita-Kāttuwa's Holiday

“I have been to the North,” said Depita-Kāttuwa as he took his usual seat. What a wonderful time! A friend of mine out there had got into a spot of trouble. I had to interview a friend of mine here. And he patched it up. It took only one visit to one of his big friends. The Big Friend said that he would do his best.

When we went to my friend a week later, he took up his telephone and dialled a number. “Is that ..... X of Y,” he asked. “This is A.B.C.D. speaking. Have you been able to do anything for D.P.K. and V.V.T. on whose behalf I had a private chat with you. They are here, very anxious” ..... Yes, Yes, ..... Yes, it is a difficult matter ..... Yes, Is it alright? It is alright. Would you like to put their minds at ease yourself. .... Yes. You are very busy. .... Yes. After 10 p.m. Thanks.”

The whole job cost us only a few bundles of cigars, for my friend and for his friend. They are fine fellows. Fine fellows! And after that



my friend V.V.T. took me in his car to the North for a holiday. It was a fine trip! He has one of the fastest cars in Ceylon and on those level roads we flew along. He said that he had bought it from a Diplomat who was leaving the Island. Cheap! Quite Cheap!

“How much did he pay?” I asked, my curiosity getting the better of me.

“Oh! nothing much, some sixty or seventy thousand rupees. It is a Super-Something and my friend said that it has already brought him more.”

Sixty or seventy thousand rupees? To Depita-Kāttuwa these figures meant nothing. “Your friend must be a very rich man,” I said, “what is his business?”

“He has no occupation. His recreation is fishing. But to help the poor and needy, he transfers both humans and goods across the Strait between South India and North Ceylon. He is an angler, a Compleat Angler. Has not the poet said,

*O the gallant Fisher's life  
It is the best of any,*



*Tis full of pleasure, void of strife  
And 'tis beloved of many;  
Other joys  
Are but toys;  
Only this  
Lawful is  
For our skill  
Breeds no ill,  
But content and pleasure.*

Besides he has the fastest launch in North Ceylon. He took me out on a cruise. It can beat the Naval Crafts by lengths. But he is a superstitious fellow, most superstitious! There is nothing he fears more than the Evil Eye.

When he has a Catch, even a Big Catch, if he suspects that any fellow is watching by the shore to see what is in his launch, he drops the whole catch, with even goods and humans into the sea and returns to shore with nothing on board for the gaze of the Evil Eye.

What do you think of that Old Fellow? And my services cost him only my holiday and a few bundles of these cigars. They are better than any Havanas. Arn't they lovely? Will you have one?"



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Take Over

I was silent. I was not interested in his black cigars or his Havanas. The Cabinet dream had got into my head but my friend did not give me a chance to speak.

"My trip to the North has given me an idea. It is an excellent idea. We can make a few rupees in the Strait between South India and North Ceylon where our friend V.V.T. goes fishing. We can set up a Corporation."

"What is a Corporation? I asked. How do we set up a Corporation?"

A Corporation, my dear fellow, is the new machine by which we get at the other fellow's business and give our own fellows employment.

"And how do we set it up? I keep no trek with new devices."

"It is simple. Quite simple." We first get Government finance so that nothing goes out



of our pocket. On the contrary money is always coming into our own pocket. Then we get a flying start. A flying start!"

I was again quite out of balance. Depita-Kāttuwa read the bewilderment on my face.

"You are new to the trade. The first step is to get public support. Without public support we cannot get government aid and we cannot set up a Corporation."

"And how do we get public support for a private enterprise?" I asked. It was again all so puzzling.

"We engineer an agitation. Then we get the public support. It is the old game to play on the emotions of the people."

My friend was now lecturing on social psychology. It was out of bounds for a man of my education.

"How can we engineer an agitation?"

"It is simple! We shout and get our friends to shout with us that the business which we want to get hold of is stinking with corruption. It is



run by fellows who have no love for the country, who are putting all the profits into their own pockets, who are running about in limousines, while the employees are starving and are being victimised."

"How can we say that the employees are starving if that is not so in fact? That would be a canard."

"A well-timed canard never misses its mark. Many men who have timed their canards well have made history, Bismark was one of them. And once you say that the employees are hit in the stomach, the doom of the business is sealed."

"I had never heard of the bis mark. It must have been of German origin and a lovely canard." But my friend's new scheme was unravelling itself with elegance and had to take its course. "Then what happens?"

"Then a Commission is appointed to investigate and report on the business. Before the panel of Commissioners is announced, we can, with little finesse in the right quarters, arrange to be the Commissioners with an "Yes" man to make the third."

"How clever? So it is all done according to National Planning. What an ingenious device."



“It is fool-proof. We can prepare the Report before we are appointed. And at the same time the fellows, including overselves, who are to run the business and the employees down to the workers are hand-picked and their names put on our Chart.”

“What happens to the Report which we prepare?”

“We prepare the Report making it as long and using as many long and rare words as possible so that no one can understand or read the Report. Then we get it put on the Agenda when the House is keying up to discuss an emotional issue. The Report is passed as a matter of routine. All's well that ends well!”

“What happens to the Business and the Report?”

“We take over the Business and the Report is consigned to the Government Archives.”



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Corporation

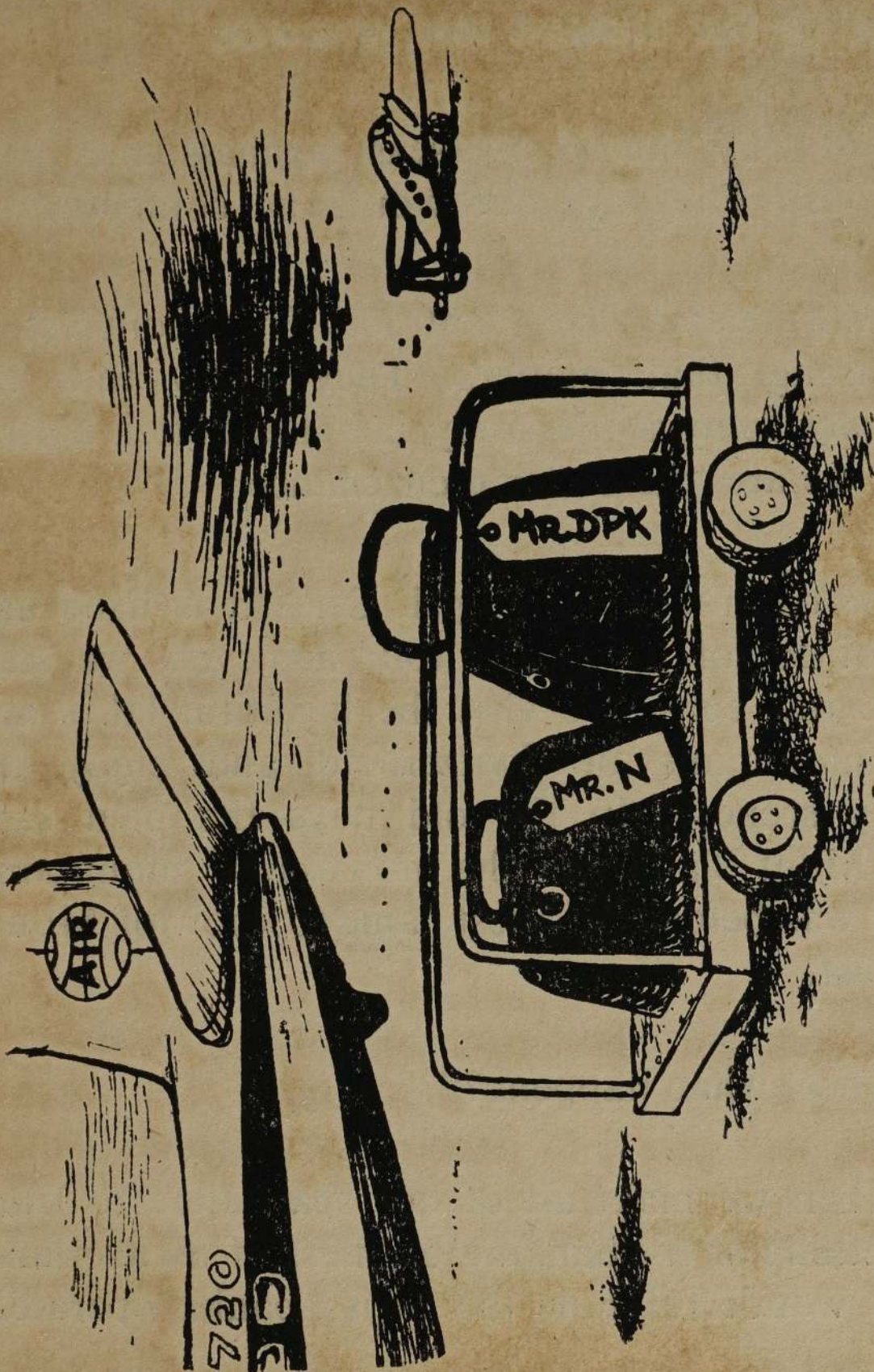
To my untrained mind it was a perfect scheme, like unto the perfect crime in detective fiction. But I had no experience of business or of business methods. "How can we run a business of which we know nothing ourselves."

"That is simple." said my friend. "We next go on a world tour to study how a business of that kind is run in other countries. Think of it, my dear fellow, the Press Report will say,

*"Mr. Nikan and Mr. Depita-Kāttuwa left this morning by air on a World Tour to make a comparative study of business methods in developed and developing countries. Mr. Depita-Kāttuwa, who is already a crack shot in many fields, will study, in particular, the profit making and the non-profit making possibilities of State Corporations."*

"But we have no funds, neither of us, how can we finance a world tour?"





*The World Tour*



“Everything at this end will be found by the State and everything at the other end will be found by the business men overseas.”

“But why should overseas business men look after us? They are our would be competitors.”

“Why man? The contract! The contract is the thing that matters. They know that the contract follows the study and the better looked after we are, the better their chance.

The contract is arranged. Once it is fixed and the object of our study tour achieved, we start for a rest cure. We visit the beautiful lakes and the mountains of Switzerland and enjoy the lovely scenery. In the old days the poet sang that Mont Blanc was the monarch of mountains. That was before the West came to know of Mount Everest.

“Then what happens?”

“Then we make use of our spare time to learn something of the banking business of Switzerland. It is wonderful how the Swiss banks operate!”

“What is Wonderful?”



“The Swiss banks do it with numbers. You become a number, like in Leftist countries, and no one knows your name or your identity or that you have a bank account, not even the Inter-Pol.”

“How wonderful! I wish I had some money. I would bank with a Swiss Bank and get the thrill of a new experience. It is so different to passing the money over to a friend or to a relation who later denies its receipt. Kadisara Hamine will then not be second to any leading lady of our country.”

“Then what do we do?”

“We return home after seeing the world with memories of a wonderful time. Everything comes off fine, except that on our return our wives look sadly at us and say;

‘Darling! How tired you look! What a busy time you must have had! You have dark rings under your eyes!’

‘Conferences during the day, dear. And grappling with figures in the night.’

You must have your reply ready, pat, before you go on the jaunt.”



The idea was superb. It would be a rich experience and worth a sacrifice. In my case, Kadisara Hamine always took things for granted between us and never made personal remarks about me. She knew the poet's lines.

തമാ ഹിമി സിതു ലെ	ස
ദുവുവോത് വെന്ത സെനേസ	സ
നുവന് കണ്ടുലന് മി	സ
യലിത് നോകിയന് ഐടിൻ പിളിവി	

*Tamā himi situ lesa*  
*Dutuvot venata senehasa*  
*Nuvan kandulen misa*  
*Yalit nokiyan basin pilivisa.*

If you see your man's love drifting to another woman, tax him not again and again with words but let the tears flowing from your eyes tell their tale. "Then what happens?"

"The Corporation runs on merrily. The funds are voted by the State, the Corporation expends the funds and employment is found according to plan until.....



## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Probe

“Until what? Surely there never can be a break in so perfect a plan. The revolutions of the Corporation should be without friction and for eternity.”

“The trouble comes from many sources. Sometimes from others who see that there is honey in the honey-comb; at other times from the applicants who have failed to get jobs in our Employment Bureau. They start a re-agitation.

It is again a similar cycle. State-funds have been wasted, our goods are dearer and not upto standard and sold to our favourites, and we have put the profits into our own pockets. It has become a stinking Corporation.”

“You mean that there is a counter-agitation and again the Government has to intervene since there is a public demand?”

“Exactly so! Now you are beginning to understand how to run and run away from a Corporation.”



“And what happens when the Government intervenes?”

“Then there is a Probe! And the Auditor-General is alerted.”

“And what is a Probe? I do not understand these mysterious terms.”

“A Probe in our country is like a Purge in some other countries. In them, the operators are despatched to

*The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns.*

In our country they are given enough time to show a clean pair of heels.”

“Even in my school-days I had never read so colourful a tale of fiction — the Agitation — the Commission — the Report — The Take-over — The Corporation — The Jaunt Overseas — the Contract — the Re-Agitation — the Probe — and the Auditor-General. It was like the evolution of the Butterfly from the Chrysallis and the breaking of the Butterfly upon a Wheel.”

“And what does the Auditor-General find?”



“By the time the Auditor-General gets on to the job he finds that the steed has been stolen from the stable.”

“Do not talk in parables. What does he find?”

“He finds, my dear fellow, he finds.....*the dung!*”

I collapsed. Depita-Kāttuwa, who saw my discomfiture, stretched out his hand to his favourite brew to console me.

“Have a sip, my dear fellow, have a sip.

*These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.*

Pull yourself together. The Old World is as dead as a Dodo. We are now living in a Brave New World where rogues run rampant.”



## CHAPTER SIX

### Into the Cauldron

Suddenly I had a fear that my friend had been spinning a yarn. Was his story about his trip to the North in a flying car and his angling in a flying boat nothing but pure invention on his part? Was his tale of the Take-Over and the Corporation a fable?

Was he trying to put me off the track? He had not yet said one word about his promise to put me into the Cabinet. I could not stand it any longer. "But will I be put into the Cabinet?" I burst out "Is it alright?"

"Of course, my dear fellow, it is alright. What else did you expect? Don't you know that I touch nothing which I do not adorn and that there is nothing which I do not touch. You will be put into the cauldron."

"I shall be put into the what?" I asked. Had this Devil who knew no mercy and no remorse arranged to boil me in oil as was the ancient custom before benign civilisation invented gas



chambers and concentration camps? Had he sold me also out as he had often done to others to whom he had promised timely aid?

“You will be in the cauldron,” he repeated without demur. “Simpletons like you do not understand top-level politics. There are so many delicate operations which the man in the street cannot understand.

A politician must give and take. He must take and give. Ultimately he intends to take everything and give nothing. But he must make the other fellow believe that he is giving everything. All this takes time.”



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A Cabinet of Many Parts

I was quite puzzled. I could not understand his jargon. It was wiser from my point of view to look after myself rather than to attempt to follow the technique of this slippery trade. I put my friend the direct question. "Why do you say that I shall be put into the cauldron?"

"The architects are now in the process of making a Cabinet Brew. So many applicants have sent in their names that if they are all taken in, we shall be short of chairs in the Cabinet room. So it has been decided to take the characteristic parts of each and drop the rest.

Of course, the part that we take in should exactly fit the parts we have. This is a most difficult job and we have hired the services of a Doctor of Bio-politics and Assembly to perform the operations."

"And what will you do with the parts you reject?" I asked.



“Nobody worries about what is cast off. It is like the slough of a snake. It just goes back to the earth from whence it came. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

The Devil could cite scripture for his purpose. But the idea of a Cabinet composed of the different parts of applicants was worthy of exploration. Which part of me was to be cut off? Would my wife have a say in the matter or would Depita-Kāttuwa do it alone?

He was such an uncertain quantity. I shuddered at the thought of a domestic quarrel in the offing. There would be nothing short of a feminine explosion on the discovery of a wrong amputation.

Depita-Kāttuwa, as usual divined my thoughts.

“Dont you worry, my dear fellow. I know what you are thinking about. You will be my personal care. I have, in fact, a big hand in the ultimate choice and the combination of the parts. You can get what you want and I shall see that your wife and you can also lead your normal life.”



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Tale of the Bug

**I** thought of my boyhood, when our class master decided to try his hand at a general intelligence test, and suddenly said:

“Now, boys! I want to find out who is the cleverest boy in my class. Which of you will be the first to answer the following question?”

We all stood at attention, each one of us sure that he would win that coveted distinction.

“If I were to take” drawled the master, “the head of one bug, the legs of another, the eyes of a third and the body of a fourth and put them all together in their proper places, what is the name of the bug that I create?”

We were all taken aback at this conundrum. Even the brilliant Burgher lad, Wonder-put, who was always first in the class and the master’s pet, began to bite his finger nails and was lost in thought.



But, lo and behold! up went the hand of the dullest boy. His name was Moda Singho and all of us took him for a joke. Now even the class master was struck by this new entrant to scholarship.

“What is the name, Moda Singho?” asked the class master, sure of his own ground, and of Moda Singho’s stupidity.

“The name, Sir,” said Moda Singho, “is Humbug. You can never make a real bug with the several parts of different bugs. Is it not a joke, Sir?”



## CHAPTER NINE

### The Oracle

“What are you thinking about?” interposed Depita-Kāttuwa. His keen eye had noticed my reverie.

I pulled myself together and without disclosing what was passing through my mind said, “Excellent idea! Who invented the combination?”

“It was the advice of the new Oracle. Its prophecies are wonderful. They always come right.”

I had not heard of a new oracle. “Where is this wonderful oracle? What does it do?”

“It is at Hitha-sanasana-pura. It is now the resort of every mind wearied politician. Its custom has grown by leaps and bounds. It comforts the mind.”

It was evident that my friend was on the verge of opening out another fascinating tale. “And how does it comfort the mind of politicians? Has it discovered a new mental cure?”



“It has adopted the latest scientific methods of progressive countries .....

“Brain washing.....” I gasped. I could not restrain myself. I had cut short my friend’s description of the new treatment.

“Don’t get alarmed! My friend. That treatment cannot be given in a public place like an Oracle. That is done within closed doors or underground. We have adopted a somewhat similar device. It is psychosomatic treatment.”

“What on earth is that? I have never heard that word before. It must be Hebrew.”

“No, my friend, It is two Greek words put together. Again it is the fault of your education.

They mean the mind and the body. In developed countries the manipulation of the mind through the body has been made a fine art.

They give drugs, they use techniques for electric and electro-chemical stimulation. They call these techniques by names that you will never understand, for instance, psychopharmological control, chemopsychiatric control.....”



“Stop it!” I shouted. “You will make me madder than the politicians. You are playing the fool of me because I am a man of no education.”

“Not at all my dear fellow. I was about to tell you that the developed countries have merely given Greek names to the techniques used by our ancestors long ago.”

“What did our ancestors do to manipulate the mind?”

“Our ancestors also had similar methods. They gave herbal “oils” and “pills”; they did it by “devil dancing” “*bali* ceremonies” “*huniak*” “*manthras*” and even by “cutting lemon” as they chanted. These were all processes of mind stimulation and the people who did not understand the processes said that our ancestors were barbarians.”

“In other words the civilised people did not know how the brain re-acted on the body and other organs.”

“Exactly so, my dear fellow. It is only now that they are coming into line with us. In the old days our practice of mind stimulation led the civilised people to call us heathens who practised idolatory and they killed the science. To-morrow



you may be advised to fly to the Soviet Union and get that stone in your kidney dissolved by a supersonic operation."

"Don't play the fool. And how are the mind wearied politicians treated by the Oracle?"

"They consult the oracle when they do not know what to do next. When they become a bundle of emotional disorders which upset their sleep. Like the madman of the poet, they begin to see more devils than vast Hell can hold."

"You mean their political enemies."

"Exactly so. And to console the mind, which is the seat of their disorder, the Oracle makes the body and the mind work in harmony and the devils vanish. That is the psychosomatic cure of the new Oracle."

"You mean it is a kind of mental home for mind wearied politicians?"

"You have hit the nail on the head. The Oracle always gives the expected response and creates in them visions of grandeur."

"As in the case of the fellows who put their chests forward, stand on their toes and shout,



"I am Napoleon. I am Hitler. I am the Emperor of China. I am the Czar of all the Russias."

"But they are not all there."

"They are here, my dear fellow! They are all here at the new Oracle. The Oracle gives the response they want and fixes the date of the Coronation. Comforted in mind, they go home, fall into a deep sleep and dream not of devils but of the Coronation ceremony."

"And what is the name of the new Oracle?"

"It is called by those who know the method, The Manthri Rawatana Devale."



## CHAPTER TEN

### The Prophecy

“**A**nd how did the Oracle solve the troubles of the Cabinet Architects? What did it say?”

“Wise words! Very wise and mind comforting words! You should have heard it gurgling its wisdom out of its cavernous throat. Its words were full of meaning.....

If you get all your troubles together and put them into one bag and get into the same bag yourself and live with them, there the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.”

“And what does that mean? Have the words a double meaning?”

“The words mean what they say. When you rest in peace, even the wicked can no longer give you trouble.”

“Long ago another oracle gave similar advice to a Great Persian King.”



“What was that?” asked Depita-Kāttuwa.

“That Great King too had visions of grandeur and he wanted to conquer the world. He decided to make war on Greece and consulted the Oracle.”

“And what did that oracle say?”

“That oracle said, ‘If you go to war, O’ Great King! A Great Empire will be destroyed!’ The King inferred from these words that he would win and went to war with a mighty army.”

“And he won?”

“No, he was defeated; his fleet was destroyed and his army was routed; the King fled back to his own kingdom; a Great Empire was destroyed.”

“Was that oracle as famous as our Manthri-Rawatana Devale?”

“It was even more famous. It was the Delphic Oracle. It was consulted on all important occasions. You should know that double meaning is the way of oracles, just as much as double dealing is the way of politics.”



Depita-Kāttuwa, who had by this time cited the scriptures twice, for once in his life seemed to feel uncertain of himself. He stretched out his hand towards the bottle of Consolation and we each had a double.

“But he was soon his former self. “SSh, SSh, you should not spread these malicious tales. The Manthri-Rawatana Devale will lose its custom. The idea that the Cabinet Architects should consult the oracle was mine. I am the Patron and on important occasions, the Officiating Kapurala.”



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### The Cabinet Brew

“**A**nd how did you hit upon the idea of a Cabinet Brew? It is a novel experiment.”

“It came from one of the Cabinet architects. We were in a dilemma. It was difficult enough to get the parts of the applicants together. But the more difficult problem was to unite them, since the part of one applicant had an obvious aversion to the part of another. It was virulent hatred.

Then one of the architects shouted, “I have found it”. He had recalled a school play in which he had acted where three witches had made a Witches’ Brew. They had danced round a caldron, singing a song,

*Double, double, toil and trouble;  
Fire, burn and caldron bubble.*

“We clapped applause,” said Depita-Kāttuwa, and gave the architect an encore. He continued:—



*Round and round the caldron go;  
In the poison'd entrails throw—  
Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the caldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog.”*

It appeared to me that a horrible mixture was taking shape in song. But my friend was intoxicated with his own recitation. “Then what happened?” I asked.

“Then the architect began to dance round the architects’ table and sang,

*Adder’s fork, and blind-worm’s sting,  
Lizard’s leg, and howlet’s wing—  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.*

\* \* \* \*

The Cabinet Architects were delighted. By a strong coincidence of fate, the three witches had, as it were, pointed their uncanny fingers to the characteristic parts of the applicants and disguised their names by the use of pseudonyms. The architects came to an unanimous decision to make a similar Cabinet Brew.



The name of the Witches' Song was changed, according to the present custom of changing names, into "Cabinet Architects' Song." And dancing round the table, they sang the balance of the Cabinet Architects' Song.

*Scale of dragon; tooth of wolf;  
Liver of blaspheming Jew;  
Gall of goat; and slips of yew  
Make the gruel thick and slab;  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For the ingredients of our caldron.*

.....  
*Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good."*



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### The Embryo

“What a wonderful idea! Every applicant will be given a chance and all welded together from here upto eternity.”

“That is the wisdom of witchcraft. The three witches did not omit any vicious human or animal. The Cabinet architects have outstripped even the Mother of Parliaments. There can be no Opposition after the new Cabinet is formed out of such a Cabinet Brew.”

“What about the Party System? Is that not an integral part of Parliamentary Government? We cannot do without an Opposition.”

“That was in the old days. But we have changed all that. Now none are for a Party. All are for the State. The complex problems of the modern age cannot be solved by the Party System. The Parties begin to fight one another and forget that there is such a thing as the State which should be their real care. “We have abolished the Party System.”



“Then what will happen to the Cabinet? The Cabinet has always been the Holy of Holies in which the State Secrets of the Party are hidden. How can there be a Cabinet without a Party System?”

“We have changed that as well! There are no top-secrets now. They all leak. The Parliament will be the Cabinet and the Cabinet will be the Parliament. All will get the same pay-packets; all will get houses for residence; all will get Benz cars; all will get the same privileges. Every politician will be a Cabinet Member in embryo.”

“And what will happen to the voter?”

“Every voter will be a member of Parliament and the voters will give an unanimous vote in favour of one another.

It will be government of the people, by the people, for the people.”



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### The Population Explosion

“All the voters to give an unanimous vote! That cannot be! In my school days my master used to say that every man should be free to have his own opinion. He used to cite a Latin tag, something like Hot..... Hot! I could never catch the words.”

“*Quot homines, tot sententiae!* that old adage is now as dead as a door post. We have changed all that, we have stream-lined public opinion. Public Opinion is our opinion. We have only to press a button and we get the answer. We are now in the Automaton Age. Old theories do not fit in with the population explosion.”

“The Population Explosion!” I gasped. “What the devil is that? Is that caused by a new dynamite?”

“Not a new dynamite. It is an old dynamite. It has come down from the days of Adam and Eve and is almost as old as life. Adam and Eve were the first nuclear scientists.”



“Good gracious! You are cracking a joke. In that pre-historic age there were no scientists, far less nuclear scientists.”

“Don’t you know that the first professor was Satan. He came to Eve in the form of a Serpent. He was the cleverest of all professors and more subtil than any of the beasts. But with all his genius, he did not teach in the manner of modern Dons. He did not make his pupils sit at his feet.”

“Then where did Professor Satan make them sit?”

“Softly he sat at the feet of his pupil, Eve, and twining round her thoughts, as tenderly as the ivy ever twined round the Mother Oak, he asked simple questions and told her an enchanting tale.”

My friend was superb. His new yarn kept me spell-bound. “What was this enchanting tale?” I asked.

“He showed Eve the Tree of Knowledge and its Forbidden Fruit.

‘How pleasant to the eyes was the Fruit,’ he said. ‘How easy it was to touch! How luscious



the taste of its tender flesh! And the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall know both good and evil.'

No professor has yet charmed the human mind with such inimitable skill."

I could almost see the scene. I could almost touch the pleasant fruit? I could almost feel the taste of the tender flesh, so vivid was the picture that my friend was drawing on the canvass of my mind. I felt as though Depita-Kāttuwa was no other than Satan himself in disguise and leading me unto Temptation. I was now getting a glimpse of the tale.

"Was the Forbidden Fruit the old dynamite?" I asked. "And what did Eve do with the Forbidden Fruit?"

"She plucked! She ate! And gave also to her husband and he did eat. And then both Adam and Eve were electrified. Then came the first fission, the first explosion and the first embryo. And thereafter for evermore went the chain reaction."

"Marvellous!" I said. "So Adam and Eve were the first nuclear scientists and it was Satan



who was the first professor of Science. And all that has been hidden from us by their later rivals. And now that the population explosion has come to stay, what does it all mean?"

"It means that the curve of the birth-rate is vertical and the curve of the death-rate is horizontal; that reproduction is at the winning post and production is at the starting post. In the year 2000 Asia will almost triple its 1950 figure. The population problem is the first world problem."

"Let Asia go to the devil! We are concerned only with little Ceylon. Surely we are alright and we have no problem?"

"On the contrary, my dear fellow, we are all wrong. Since D.D.T. killed the malaria mosquito, our population curve is also vertical. In 1931 we were five millions; to-day we are eleven; to-morrow we shall be twenty."

"Don't play the fool. It is a matter of life and death. What the devil will happen to us? What does it all mean?"

"It means that, if it continues, we can never have enough maternity homes, enough schools, enough universities, enough trains, enough busses,



enough jobs, enough houses, enough hospitals or even enough cemeteries, far less enough food."

"And what will be our dress?"

"What Adam and Eve wore after the fall, if enough trees are left where-from we can pluck the leaves."

"Then what is all this talk about food for the nation, and the taking from the haves and giving to the have-nots?"

"That is all political bunkum. The million flowers will never bloom. The politicians all over the world are as helpless as you or I. They are merely training the people to live in hope and to die in misery and starvation."



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### The Remedy

It was a horrid picture that Depita-Kāttuwa had unfolded. He had in other words said that the population explosion would end in a World Explosion and the world would go up in flames.

“But don’t politicians know that while they are trying to feed the living brutes, their numbers are growing with compound interest and soon the world will go up in flames.”

“They know that, since medicine and hygiene brought in death-control, a population explosion was bound to follow. But the job is too big for them. It is the same tale again. They are doing what old Nero did long years ago.”

“What was it that Nero did?”

“Old Nero was put to do a job which he could not do. So like his modern prototypes, he left the job alone and began to play his fiddle and play with his mistresses and drink his wine.”



“Then, what happened?”

“Then, Rome, of which he was the Emperor, went up in flames. Some say that he lit the fire and Old Nero kept playing his fiddle. Modern historians have been hard on him. They did not understand his problem. In his time there were no nuclear bombs; otherwise he would have found a simpler solution.”

“But if the job is too big for the politicians, what about world thought, what about our great thinkers and scientists. Surely the job is not too big for them. They are so full of wisdom.”

“World thought has always been divided since the beginning of the world. The same thing happened when the thinkers and scientists had to decide at which end an Egg had to be broken. Some said that it was at the Big End and others said that it was at the Small End.”

“And then what happened?”

“Then one of the disputants by accident dropped the Egg. It broke and all agreed that it was a simple thing to break an egg and they dropped the dispute.”



“Don’t play the fool!” I shouted. “Babies are not like eggs, they are little darlings. You cannot drop them like eggs. But I admit that most of them are unwanted. What is the dispute about babies?”

“One view is that the more babies we have, the better for the world and what is suggested is to levy a tax on bachelors on the false assumption that bachelors are not doing their job?”

“And what is the other view?”

“The other view is that the less babies we have, the better for the world and what is suggested is to levy a tax on babies on the false assumption that babies are responsible for their entry into the world.”

“But why can’t they come to a mutual agreement and end this squabble. Cannot they come to a compromise like sensible business men who conclude the deal with a cut on their margin of profit? Here it will be only a cut on the margin of babies.”

“That, my dear fellow, can never happen. It is like the Tale of the Egg. All were agreed



that the egg should be broken but they could not agree on the method. Here all are agreed on a cut on the babies but they are unable to agree on how to cut.”

“Surely it is their duty to make a compromise in order to alleviate human suffering?”

“That idea is again the fault of your education. Don’t you know that scientists and ideologists never compromise; they are too jealous of their own reputations. They put the women kind to the blush in the sphere of jealousy. That is why it has been said that they can,

*Distinguish and divide*

*A hair ’twixt South and South-west side.”*

My friend was too puzzling for words. I tried my luck with a mundane question. “And what will happen to us as a result of the population explosion?”

“Soon there will be no horizontal standing place in our planet,” said my friend without moving a muscle.

“And what can we do then?” I asked.



“Then every man and woman will have to stand on one another’s heads in alternate rows, six feet apart to avoid collisions, until they reach the Moon or Mars.”

“And then what will happen to us? ” I gasped.

“Then, there will be no more fissions, no more explosions, no more embryos. That will be the end of the population explosion and the first defeat of Professor Satan after the Temptation and the Fall.”



## **PART FOUR**







## PART FOUR

### CHAPTER ONE

#### Sabotage

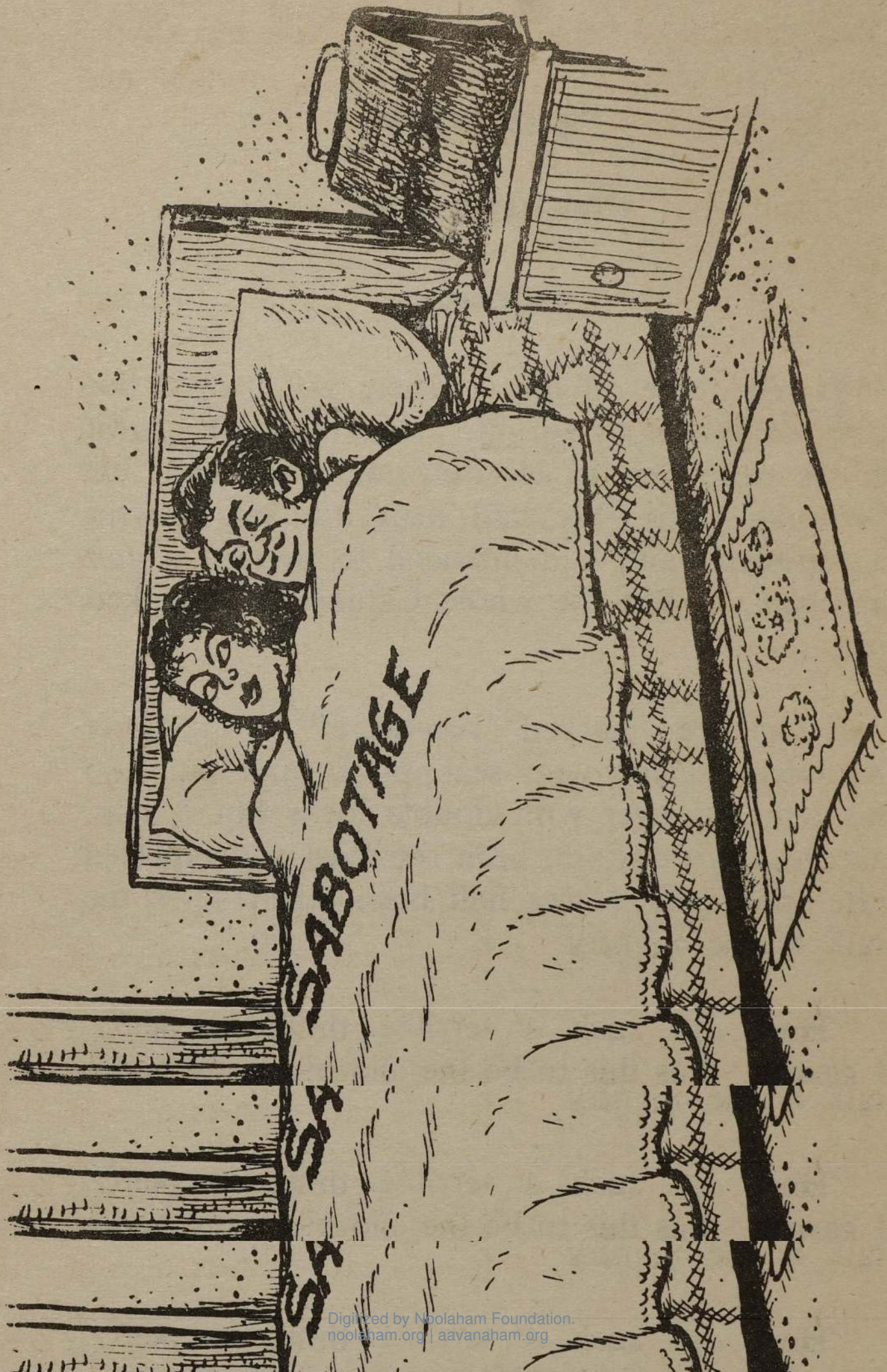
“It has come off fine. There was a miss but it is now all alright,” said Depita-Kāttuwa as he sauntered in leisurely and sank into his favourite chair. We had kept our manoeuvres a top-secret and had intended to present a *fait accompli*. But the whole Cabinet Plan leaked out.

It had been marked “Top-Secret” by the Chief Architect, sealed with sealing-wax and put into his secret drawer with double locks but it had, according to custom, been removed and replaced after photostat copies had been taken. It is the talk of the country.

“How did such a terrible thing happen?” I gasped. Was this to be the end of all my hopes and all our plans?

“Sabotage, my dear fellow; Sabotage! Politics and Sabotage go hand in hand. They are twins





"The top secret leaks."



that cannot be separated. While you are spying on the other fellow, he is spying on you and each smashes up the plans of the other."

"And what is Sabotage?" I inquired.

"It is the Devil's own invention. No one can ever say what form it will take or from where it comes, whether through France, or Turkey or Arabia or whether it came in a boot, an old shoe or a sandal. But it is like a spanner in the works."

"But what is it that they do when they sabotage?"

"All kinds of things. It is so simple. They tap your telephone, they examine your files, they open your safe, they listen to your conversation, they get a man to drink with you or a woman to sleep with you. And then "the top secret leaks." It is a game, national and international, played for high stakes."

This revelation of the wicked ways of the world alarmed me. "How wicked!" I said, "but it is some satisfaction that there is no personal violence."



“On the contrary personal violence is also a common feature; the difference is only in the method. The ingenuity of the human mind baffles description. It can be the dagger, the revolver, the silencer, or the bomb. A train can get off the rails or a signal may be false and there can be a smash up or the aeroplane carrying important personnel can descend in flames.

Or a trap will be set for a flying car to knock you down as you are walking on the road or to smash your car. Or it can be the time old method of kings and queens, the powder or the liquid in the cup in which you drink to your friend's health and he drinks to yours. Or in so many other ways.”

“How horrible!” I gasped. “What a cruel world! You mean that I am now out of the Cabinet; Out with the Cabinet Brew.”

“The Cabinet Brew is now out of the picture. But don't you worry, old fellow. Don't you worry. It will come all alright in the end.”

“What will come out of it in the end?” I asked. The high politics of my friend was too much for me. “What will come out and what will be the end?”



“The end,” said Depita-Kāttuwa, “will be only the beginning. Don’t you know that when one goes round and round in politics there is no beginning and no end. And nothing comes out.”



## CHAPTER TWO

### A Free — for — All

These mysterious words of the man who lived by playing out both sides had no meaning for me. It was easier to come to grips with reality by asking him about something concrete, something which one could see and touch. That, I thought, would be a better start.

“What happened to the Cauldron into which the Cabinet Architects were to put the Cabinet Brew?”, I asked.

“Thereby hangs a tale,” said my friend. “There was a free-for-all when the secret was out and each applicant came to know that the other had applied. In fact there was a general scuffle.

The applicants formed into sides which began to kick one another and all had a kick at the Cauldron, although in fact they were most anxious to get into the Cabinet Brew.”

“It was great fun to see them having a free-for-all, each one trying to make elbow room for



himself to reach the top. What do you think of that, old fellow? What do you think of that?"

"I have taped it all out and one of these days it will go into the research library, another book on the practice of political theory. It will be better reading than the old texts now out of date."

"I thought old texts never get out of date. Hungry authors who live on sales and royalties are continually revising old texts or adding a new introduction!"

"That was in the old days. Now the world spins too fast. Old authors cannot play their old game. Young readers demand a new approach but the old authors have exhausted their bag of tricks and cannot meet the demand."



## CHAPTER THREE

### Kadisara Hamine's Saree

I was not interested either in my friend's research or in the free-for-all of the other applicants. My troubles were nearer home. My wife, with the wisdom of her sex, had sensed that I was up to something.

From behind the door she had caught snatches of our earlier conversations and had stitched them together. She was over-joyed when she realised that she and I would soon be snapped coming out of the House of Representatives. But she herself had a problem.

What was the colour of the saree that she was to buy? That was the one question on her lips. It was a question to which I could not give an answer. In order to satisfy her curiosity and for my own peace of mind, I thought that it was best to pose the problem to Depita-Kāttuwa.

"My dear fellow," I said, "can you not at least tell me what should be the colour of my scarf?" With his answer to that question I could settle accounts with my wife.



“The colour of your scarf?” said my friend, with visible signs of irritation. “You are putting the cart before the horse. We have not gone as far as that. It may not even be a scarf. It may be a shirt and tie or even a bush coat.”

“But what about the colour?” I persisted. It was my wife’s problem that I had to settle. In a flash it struck me that the answer was more likely to come if I disclosed that my wife was also interested.

“Kadisara Hamine is anxious to buy a saree of the right colour. The Hamine, as you know, buys only one saree a year. ‘What is the colour? What is the colour? The new stock of textiles is going into the black market and to favourites’, are her words which keep ringing in my ear.”

At the mention of Kadisara Hamine’s name, a change came over my friend. He smacked his lips. Evidently he was calling to mind the hot cup of coffee and the sweets that were sent round before the black cigar and the Consolation began.

Kadisara Hamine’s presence was a living fact but her face was seldom seen, except when



she followed the tray for a moment as evidence that she was the author of its precious contents.

It was Depita-Kāttuwa's turn to go into a reverie. The Kavuns were delicious and how crisp the āsmis were with the honey sprayed across? But the Kalu-do-dol was like ambrosia.

“By the way I cannot remember when Kadisara Hamine last sent me a dish of ambulthial. It tastes fine with rice grown in our own country, not like the imported stuff from China. Did she learn the culinary art at Galle or Matara?”

I parried my friend's deft shot at my wife's descent and another dish of ambulthial.

“The colour? Man! What colour will it be?”



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Material and Looms

“The colour?”, said Depita-Kāttuwa. “We have not yet come to the colour. It depends on the material we can get. We have to mix the material we have with the new material and then decide on the colour which would best suit the new textile. It will depend on our colour and our strength and the colour and the strength of the new material.

What is more, it will depend on the design of the new looms. The new looms have been in the harbour for the last three months. They cannot be cleared owing to the back-log and we are unable to tackle the harbour boys. We cannot say whether the material we have can be woven in the new looms.”

The new textile and the new looms. It sounded to me very much like the new bug which my class-master of old had put together with the parts of different bugs and the wise Moda Singho (Silly Boy) had aptly called a Humbug.



“And how do you propose to decide on the new material which you will blend with the old? How are you making the selection now that the Cauldron and the Cabinet Brew have been kicked out of the picture?”

“Oh, that is simple,” said my friend unperturbed. To my friend’s nimble brain everything was simple. “We have been getting the applicants for some time to do the Twist.”



## CHAPTER FIVE

### A New Tale

I was not interested in the material or the looms or the harbour boys. Like every wise man, I was interested in myself. It was time I had some idea of the form of dress I should wear.

“Never mind your harbour boys,” I exclaimed. “They can play cards while the cargo is on ship or shore, in the same way as Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. And d...mn your material and looms! Can you not at least tell me what form of dress I should wear? Will I have to put my trousers down or my cloth up?” I asked with evident signs of irritation.

But my friend was not taken aback. No situation was either pleasant or unpleasant to him. Each new gadget got mechanically into its own compartment and he remained unperturbed. If the world were to break into pieces and come upon him, he would have walked along undismayed.



"And thereby hangs a Tale" said Depita-Kāttuwa with his inscrutable smile.

I was now in the throes of exasperation. "What is the Tale?" I asked defiantly.

"My dear fellow. pull yourself together. Don't lose your temper. No Cabinet man can afford to lose his temper. He may pretend to do so, for instance, he can throw his pair of spectacles on his table, without smashing them.

But if you lose your temper, the other fellow always gets the better of you. It never pays. I was about to tell you of one of the finest pieces of political strategy of recent years. It is not new but it still works."

The words, "Out with it", were on my lips but I took my friend's advice. I quietened down. "And what is this wonderful Tale?" I inquired.

"It answers your question, as to your form of dress", said my friend. "In ancient days, the dress of the Emperor was Imperial purple to distinguish the Emperor from the rabble."

"But today there is no 'rabble. Those



aristocratic terms are dead. They are all 'Comrades.'"

"But why is everyone called a Comrade. I thought that term was reserved for a special chum." I observed.

"So it was" replied my friend, "originally it was a fellow who slept in the same room. But now you call the other fellow a comrade because you want to do a make-believe. You want it to appear that you are like the other fellow and the other fellow is like you, although you are on a chandelier canopied red carpet and the other fellow is on the mat."

But my friend was not getting to the point, "Don't philosophise" I interrupted, "what is this Wonderful Tale?"

"It is" replied my friend, "the Tale of the Cloth and Banian Front." And down his throat went a double of Consolation as though to clear the passage for the tale.



## CHAPTER SIX

### The New Front

“**A**nd what was the Cloth and Banian Front?” I asked. My friend’s manner was mysterious. He appeared to have something up his sleeve.

“Don’t you know, Old fellow! that today you must wear what the masses wear. Otherwise you are sunk. It is only when you wear what the people wear that you become one with the people, at least in dress. No one can see your mind,” said Depita-Kāttuwa now at his best.

“And the Tale? What was the Tale?” I repeated.

“One morning a New Cabinet presented its Cloth and Banian Front to His Excellency the Governor-General garbed in immaculate Gubernatorial Uniform. And the people said that at last it was “Our Government” (අපේ ආණ්ඩුව, *Ape Ānduwa*).

“And what is meant by අපේ ආණ්ඩුව” I asked.



“Government of the people, by the people, for the people” was my friend’s reply.

“And what is wrong in that.” I asked. “That is exactly what it should be. Did not some great man say the same thing. And what happened when the Cloth and Banian Front presented itself to His Excellency?” I inquired.

The New Tale was gathering momentum, I began to recall the Old Tale and how the Sausage-Seller gave a cushion to Old Demos to pad his buttocks.

“Don’t you see, Old Fellow? It was the death sign of the old regime. The shades of the former Governors of Imperial Britain rose simultaneously from their graves with the look of sorrow writ large on their faces.”

“Alack a day!” they murmured, “A little Bit of England gang back Native! Alack a day! Black—Tie east of Suez! Ah never more!” And each sang in Chorus “The Song of the Cloth and Banian Front.”

*‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil’  
Prophet still, if bird or devil;  
By that heaven that bends above us—  
By that God we both adore.—*



*Tell this Soul with sorrow laden,  
If, within the distant Aden,  
It shall clasp this radiant maiden  
Whom the angels gave before.*

*Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore!'  
"Take thy beak from out my heart  
And take thy form from off my door,"  
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore!'*

"Wonderful" I said, "Truly pathetic but yet most wonderful! Radiant maid of Lanka. Was anyone watching them?"



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Moritura Te Salutam

“Was anyone watching them?” said Depita-Kāttuwa, “Why not my dear fellow! The Governors were under close scrutiny. As they said “Quoth the Raven, Nevermore,” simultaneously two invisible Silhouettes, standing opposite them, became faintly visible. Simultaneously each Silhouette unrolled a map of the world glittering with Red Spots.

Simultaneously moved two pairs of hands, invisibly visible, and each dropped a red spot at the point where our Lanka stood on the map. And then our Lanka began to glitter red like the rest of them.

The Tale was getting tense and my old blood pressure registered a new height. “And what did the Silhouettes say?

“Both sang a Community Song”, said Depita-Kāttuwa.



*One more Devils' Triumph  
And Sorrow for Angels,  
All Hail! Little Lanka,  
Mother of Comrades to be!*

“And what did little Lanka say?”

“Twas pitiful!” Twas wondrous pitiful! Little  
Lanka sang

“The Maid’s Lament.”

*And I am still so young — so very young.  
And must I die so soon? — and I was fair,  
And I was fair, and that was my undoing,  
Spare me — I never saw thy face before.*

The Silhouettes again singing together replied.

*Ah Nevermore’.  
Can you slip  
From our grip.  
Little Maid’ ”*

“Then what did little Lanka do?”

“Little Lanka clasped her tiny hands together  
and sighed. And turning to each Silhouette,  
said to each.



Moritura te Salutam”

I was again out of my depth. “Moritura te Salutam. Is that Greek?” I asked. It was Greek to me.

“My dear fellow, It is not Greek. It is Latin” said Depita-Kāttuwa. “It is a relic of the days of the decadent Roman Empire when it enjoyed human sacrifice under the guise of public games.”

“Why Public Games”, I asked. “Any one can play games. Why were they called Public Games?”

“Because they were arranged so that the public may have some fun. Every Big Shot on assuming Office had to please his supporters. And so he gave them a good time by an exhibition.”

“And who performed at the exhibition,” I asked.

“Mostly slaves and semi-slaves and sometimes even free men who wished to catch the public eye;” said Depita-Kāttuwa. “They were called gladiators. And they fought each other in pairs or groups until one side put the forefinger up.”

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“Why the fore-finger up.” The Tale was getting interesting.

“The fore-finger went up when its owner went down on the ground,” said my friend. “The fellow was begging that his life should be spared.”

“And what happened? It was only a game. His life was spared?”

“On the contrary, as a rule, the spectators clenched their fists and down went their thumbs. That meant a fight unto Death.

“And then? what happened next?,” I inquired, horrified.

“Then” said my friend and again the old smile reappeared. “Then the gladiator on the point of death turned his eyes towards the Big Shot and said,

“On the point of Death I Salute Thee.  
Moritura te Salutam.”



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Origin of Colour

“**M**oritura te Salutam. On the point of death I salute thee. How sad!” The words escaped my lips. But I pulled myself together before Depita-Kāttuwa could size up my mental agony. Sorrow and joy could have no place in a future politician’s life. He has more than he can hold to get on with the day’s job.

“And did the Cloth and Banian Front believe in Colour.” I asked in an attempt to hide my silly display of emotion.

“Of course, my dear fellow. Every politician believes in colour. Colour is as old as Old Demos. It is the thing that strikes the eye. Political theories go in through one ear and go out through the other. But the mental picture of colour remains.”

“And what were the Colours of old. Did they use the same paint? The world today is so different from the days of old.”



"Then as now, the colours were the same," replied my friend. The colours were Red, White, Blue and Green. It all started with the chariot races of old. At first there were two chariots and the drivers wore Red and White liveries. And then, as usual, two became four and Blue and Green liveries joined the race.

"How did they hit upon Red, White, Blue and Green?"

"In the old days our ancestors took nature as their model. The colours, it is said, came from the Seasons, the red dog-star of summer, the snows of winter, the deep shades of autumn and the cheerful verdure of spring, became Red, White, Blue and Green."

"How interesting! And then what happened?"

"Then the number of chariots went into hundreds to increase the pomp and pageantry of the circus and four factions of charioteers were born, Red, White, Blue and Green."

"How did the political parties come into the picture?"



“Political parties are always on the look-out for a new technique. They stole the colours and adopted the colours for themselves. But the Blues and Greens were predominant.”

“They represented autumn and spring?”

“Yes, but some said, they represented the elements; the struggle of the green and blue was supposed to represent the conflict of the earth and sea.”

It sounded like a fairy tale. Was Depita-Kāttuwa taking me for a walk. I had to test this intriguing story. “And then what did the political parties do?” I asked.

“They did the usual thing. They began to break each other’s heads. And later the popular frenzy was influenced by religious zeal and the foundations of the government were shaken. Don’t you know, old fellow that to the philosophers all religions are equally true, to the historians all equally false and to the politicians all equally useful.”

“Don’t philosophise! Apart from colour, was each party distinctive?” I asked.



“Of course, each party was distinctive. For instance, one party assumed long hair, close sleeves and ample garments, a lofty step and a sonorous voice.”

I could hardly believe my ears. Red, White, Blue and Green, a distinctive dress and a sonorous voice, popular frenzy and religious zeal. It was so like a Tale of Ceylon. I was now certain that my friend was playing on my ignorance and was surreptitiously describing Modern Ceylon.

“Your story is pure invention,” I remarked. “You are talking of Modern Ceylon.”

“That is the fault of your education. You are like the Sausage-Seller” The Colour scheme, the Dress and the Voice of parties were in fashion even in the time of Old Justinian.”

I had at last got a clue. Justinian was the old fellow who made some laws. “I had heard it said that he was a law-giver.”

“Don’t be a fool. He was an Emperor. No Emperor makes laws. He only puts his signature under the laws which his lawyers make. It is the same thing with his speeches. He reads the

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speeches which his politicians make. And so it is even with husbands."

"Why, what is it that husbands do?"  
I asked in all innocence.

"Husbands, my dear fellow," said Depita-Kāttuwa, and there came again over his face that inscrutable smile, "husbands give their names to babies which paramours make."



## CHAPTER NINE

### Through the Looking Glass

I got the shock of my life. The callous way in which this man of the world spoke of the sacred relationship of matrimony was unbearable. I had often heard the words, "For better for worse, for richer for poorer, knowing no other man, knowing no other woman, until death us do part."

I had always done my best to live upto this promise, repeated from time immemorial amidst solemn silence. If ever I failed it was not due to want of effort on my part. My wife would have been horrified had she been behind the keyhole. I gently opened the door and to my intense relief I saw her in the back verandhah preparing a steaming hot cup of black coffee for my friend, the prelude to his Consolation and black cigar.

"And why did Old Justinian allow parties to break each others heads?" I asked. "Is it not an Emperor's job to maintain order and see that the people obey the laws?"



“For the simple reason,” said my friend, “that the Emperor was afraid. Don’t you know that all rulers live in fear. They barricade their doors and gates, wear shirts of mail and skull-caps and when they move about, the intelligence fellows are all around them.”

“But why do rulers allow the people to break each other’s heads,” I persisted.

“That is simple. They allow the people to break each other’s heads in order to save their own. The historian has said that Old Justinian had, like all rulers, his own troubles, his own favourites and his own fears. He had fallen in love with a pretty little prostitute with lovely black eyes and made her his Empress. He wore the Imperial purple and she ruled the Roman Empire.”

I was again getting quite mixed up with heads, historians, prostitutes and Emperors. “Who was this historian?” I enquired. “Did he say anything else?”

“Never mind, who the historian was. He was a great historian, perhaps the greatest of all historians, not like the insipid fellows who falsify history to promote a cause. The great historian writing of one of the parties said,



“Every law human and divine was trampled under foot. So long as the party was successful, the followers were careless of private distress or public calamity.”

“Even in the old days were the people so callous. I thought it happened only in our time?”

“You are a fool! People do not change. Their wishes, their fears, their angers, their pleasures and their joys remain the same. Mechanical gadgets change, not human nature.”

“And did this historian say anything else?”

“Yes,” was my friend’s reply. “He said that the licence without the freedom of democracy was revived and the support of a faction was necessary to every candidate for civil or ecclesiastical honours.”

“Whoever could have put it better. In other words,

A fellow could smash his neighbour’s window with impunity. But he could also be put in jail without a trial. If he was not a Party man, he could not get a job.



Is that what the historian said," I asked.

"You have taken the words out of my mouth," said Depita-Kāttuwa. "Now you are getting Brains."

It was indeed, a Tale of Ceylon. It looked as though the historian had seen Modern Ceylon through a Looking Glass. History was repeating itself.

But I had lost my way in this exciting anecdote. I had to get back to Depita-Kāttuwa's New Twist and get into the Cabinet.



## CHAPTER TEN

### The Twist

“**T**o do the Twist?” I asked. “What is the Twist? I have never heard of that. Do you get hold of them and twist their necks or do you twist their bodies or which part of them do you twist? Or do you allow them to twist each other until death do them part?”

“That is the word,” said Depita-Kāttuwa, displaying the half-smile which he seldom showed; “We wish that we could twist their necks. But we have no option but to let them do the Twist with one another. It is not in the way you think. It is the new Twist. It is a dance.”

“The new Twist. It is a dance.” I repeated. “Then it must be like the Baila or the Kaparinje which the wicked foreigners introduced in the old days into the country. I do not like foreign dances. How do you get your new materials by getting the applicants to do the Twist?”

“That is simple. The Twist is not like either the Baila or the Kaparinje. In either of them the



dancers do not get together. In the Twist they do — that is why the girl said to her boy friend after their first best evening that she felt so different. That she had never felt like that before.

They get together and separate. They separate and get together. They get together and separate. The applicants are now doing that and every one is enjoying the dance. At present they have produced triplets. In three months' time, three fine boys have come to pass. Quick work!"



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Will They keep Together

“**A**nd what if they get together and keep together?” said I, “Where will I be? Will I be in the Cabinet and where will the old material in the Cabinet be?” I would have liked to add, Or will you as usual play me and the old material out?

But I did not dare to say that as I was entirely at the mercy of this man who took an infernal delight in playing out every one who had any thing to do with him.

“Get together and keep together,” said Depita-Kāttuwa “Don’t be a fool. If they get together they will soon break each other’s heads. And even if they do not wish to do so, that is a small matter. That can be arranged.”

“And what about myself?” I stammered in agitation. “I did not take part in the dance and I am not among the triplets. What will my wife say?”



“Don’t you worry, don’t you worry, old fellow, You will be there in good time,” and he walked away with the bottle of Consolation under his arm. Depita-Kāttuwa had at least the bottle of Consolation, but my wife’s problem and mine were still unsolved.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### The Beginning of the End

Into the Cabinet through the Port and not through the Vote. A new Import! "Get together and keep together." I pondered. "Was it to be the end of the beginning or the beginning of the end?"

Suddenly I heard someone singing. I got down the steps of my house and lo and behold! It was Depita-Kāttuwa who had blossomed into light music. Until then I never knew that side of his life.

*"As thro' the land at eve we went,  
And pluck'd the ripen'd cars,  
We fell out, my wife and I,  
O we fell out I know not why  
And kiss'd again with tears.  
And blessings on the falling out  
That all the more endears,  
When we fall out with those we love  
And kiss again with tears!  
.....  
And kiss again with fears."*

The singing was atrocious.



## **PART FIVE**







## PART FIVE

### CHAPTER ONE

#### My Wife Visits the Devale

Many months had passed. My wife and I awaited the arrival of my friend, at first in hope, but as the days went by, in despair. In course of time we reached the third stage, the stage of reconciliation with failure and defeat.

After Depita-Kāttuwa's departure, blossoming into light music, my wife had been jubilant. Her merriment had been infectious and I could hear her singing an old school song in the back verandah.

In my own mind I had grave doubts of a change of fortune but I left her to herself, recalling the age old maxim that it is safer to leave a woman alone if you are not obliged to make contact. One day she returned home, quite flushed, and, to all appearances, excited.

“Hamine,” I said, “where has Hamine gone?”  
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Her reply was that she had paid a visit to the Manthri Rawatana Devale. I was taken aback. Although I was nursing a Cabinet job, I had refrained from asking for favours from the Devale.

“And what did you do?”, I asked in order to assure myself that nothing untoward had taken place. My wife looked down but did not reply. I followed the answer up with the next question. “And did you dance?” I said it loud. I felt that my old blood pressure was at it again.

“The deity replied from within that the manthra (charm) would not work unless I danced,” said my wife “and I was made to dress for the dance.”

“Dress for the dance.” The picture was now getting clear to me. “And what did you dress?” I shouted. The suspense was getting on my nerves.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Devale Dance

“I had to wear a loin cloth,” she replied abashed. Even a loin cloth was some consolation. I had heard some lurid rumours of incidents at this Devale. “And on your body?” I asked. My wife turned aside. “And on your body what did you have?” I repeated.

“I had my brassières on. But I had to untie my kondé,” said my wife.

The picture was now clear. She had been made to dance with her hair dishevelled, wearing only her brassières and a loin cloth.

The words “Were you taken behind the curtain?” were on my lips but I restrained myself for fear of an explosion. It was terrible to think that my wife of all persons should have been made to take part in this uncanny performance. It was against all rules of our national culture.

Had not a great poet said that a woman should never show her breasts or her navel in public and that she should be clothed down to her ankles.



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*Nābiya nodakvā*  
*Salu anda bolata dakvā*  
*Nopava tana sakvā*  
*Sinā nomasen dasan dakvā*

*Dress down to your ankles,*  
*And show not your navel.*  
*Display not your breasts,*  
*And when you smile,*  
*Let not your teeth be seen*

Of course, the writer was a priest and may have taken too puritanic a view, not knowing a woman's physical make up. Yet she was my own wife, difficult even to me at times. I would not have worried had she displayed only her knees but the revelation of the rest to strangers I could not stand.



## CHAPTER THREE

### We Make Up

I went into my room, banging the door behind me and drew out my own bottle of Consolation from my trunk. After several copious draughts had refreshed me, my blood pressure slowly came down. I was normal once more. I got into my armchair and fell asleep.

I was in the Manthri Rawatana Devale in a loin cloth and dancing, forwards and backwards and in circles, in front of a painted curtain. And so was my wife, keeping steps with me. Faster and faster beat the drums and faster and faster moved our steps. A sudden and louder beat meant a jump, and my wife and I jumped in tune. We were more off than on our feet. It was a maddening rhythm.

From time to time I cast an anxious glance at my wife. It was a relief to see that her loin-cloth and brassières were bravely holding on in spite of the terrific strain on them and the unnatural user. But her kondé with its massive knot had gone under. Her false head of hair



was on the floor and each time I trod on it, I felt a spasm in my heart. What little of her own hair was left on her head was flashing round, tugging at the roots.

And dominating the scene was the figure of the Kapurala, in a multi-coloured robe, his greyish curly hair falling on his neck, his forehead with stripes of red and white ash spread across its breadth and his well trimmed grey beard and heavy moustache giving his figure an added dignity.

He was chanting the Manthras at the end of which the Oracle from behind the curtain would give the response. His height reminded me of a familiar figure. Suddenly the thought struck me, "Was he no other than Depita-Kāttuwa taking a turn as Officiating Kapurala?"

As the rhythm of the dance became more and more tense, faster and higher rose the Kapurala's voice until the Devale reverberated with noise. The frenzy of the dance had seized upon us and we danced like beings possessed. The mystic curtain was waving forwards and backwards with its pantheon of painted deities and from behind its folds weird notes came from a musical instrument invisible to our eyes.



On a sudden, down I fell, faint with exhaustion, my throat was parched, my lips dry. I seemed to hear a whisper in my ear. “ඔබ! ඔබ නිදි ද? දැන් එළි වෙලා.” “You there!” it said “is you there asleep? It is dawn.”

I opened my eyes to see my wife's deft fingers re-arranging my cloth which had evidently moved up and down, keeping tune with our dance and was at the up stage at the moment of her arrival. It had been another dream. The doubles of Consolation had worked themselves out. Before I could reply, my wife had slipped out of the room, as softly as she had entered.

The next morning my wife came upto me after breakfast, meek and pensive, still looking down and suggested that we should go on a pilgrimage. I knew the old sign. When we had a difference, a pilgrimage was the solution. The distance of the temple varied with the width of the difference. It was always a wise solution. We would return with soothed nerves.

“අපි අනුරාධපුරේ වන්දනාවේ යමු ද? දැන් එහෙ නව නගරයක් වගේ ලු. අපිට වන්දනා කරගන්න පුළුවන් සිද්ධස්ථාන එහෙ තියෙනවා.” said my wife.

“Shall we go on a pilgrimage to Anuradhapura. They say that it is now like a new town and



there are so many sacred places at which we can offer flowers.”

I could not reject the overture of peace and on the following morning we were speeding to this sacred place of worship, sitting side by side in a red and blue painted bus. After the trials of the recent weeks, it was with a sense of immeasurable relief that we left the city of strife and intrigue with its cosmopolitan crowd. If any part of Ceylon was not Ceylon, it was Colombo, its metropolis.

As I gazed out, I seemed to see the Cauldron flying past, spinning round and round and spurting out the Cabinet Brew; the Governors and the Silhouettes were dancing in circles, holding hands; my scarf and my wife's saree were flying in and out, changing chameleon-like into multicoloured shades, now getting entangled with the brassières and the loin cloths and now flying free. Out of our minds and out of sight flew the Cabinet dream.

It dawned on both of us that reconciliation was the only panacea for disappointment. My wife who had slept by herself the previous night had realised in her meditation that the Oracle could not come to her aid and that her dance had been in vain.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### At Anuradhapura

It was a sudden halt. Our double-decker had missed another but our heads met, knock for knock. We had arrived at the sacred city.

And as we stepped out, and our feet set on the sacred soil, my wife suffered a sea-change into something rich and strange. The quiet woman who had effaced herself in the city and presided only at our meals, adding just the three additional spoons of rice, that made all the difference between the awakening and the sleep, underwent a metamorphosis. She assumed command.

She was once more with her forebears. Into the worship of the sacred shrines she passed, as her ancestors had done, and back again into their way of life. Into them she melted. Out of her hand-bag she pulled a little book of *gāthas* (*gāthās*, religious recitations), with pages made all the dearer by use, and began to recite,

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සාරීරික ධාතු මහාබොධිං  
බුද්ධරූපං සකලං සද්දං



*Vandāmi cetiyam sabbam  
Sabba thānesu patitthitam  
Sārīrika dhātu Mahābodhim  
Buddha rūpham sakalam sadā*

“At every dagaba, wheresoever built, before every sacred relic, before the Sri Maha Bodhin-vahanse, before every statue of the Buddha I shall bow down at all times and worship.”

And true to the words, ahead she went, with me as her camp follower, each carrying a tray of flowers, a bottle of coconut oil and incense. First at the Sri Maha Bodhin Vahanse, the revered Bodhi tree (Bo—tree), 2500 years of age sprung from a sapling of the very tree under the spreading shade of which the Buddha had fought in his mind the forces of evil and attained Enlightenment, she placed the flowers, lit the lamps and held the incense and repeated the precepts which were to give her guidance in her own journey towards Enlightenment which the Teacher had attained and which she had to attain by the strength of her own will.

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අක්කාතාරො තථාගතො.

*“Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappan  
Akkātāro Tathāgatā.”*

“You yourselves shall exert  
The Buddhas only show the way.”



## CHAPTER FIVE

### At Ruvanvelisaya

And from there she passed on to the many dagabas and places of worship which the city holds, all redolent, as it were, of the religious fervour of the past. The simple faith that had bound generations together as one people, for which they fought and for which they died. The simple faith that is now the meat of the political stew.

I followed. She gave the order and I obeyed. I dared not say it loud. And as she placed the flowers, she would repeat the stanza.

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පුප්ඵං මිලායාති යථා ඉදං මෙ  
කායො තථා යාති විනාස භාවං

*Pūjemi Buddhāṃ Kusumenanena  
Puññena metena ca hotu mokkham  
Puppham milāyāti yathā idam me  
Kāyo tathā yāti vināsa bhāvaṃ*



“To the Buddha these flowers I offer that by this act I may attain Nibbana. And just as these flowers wither away, so will my own body wither away to the state whereat it shall perish.”

Late in the evening, as we stood together, side by side, before the majesty of the Ruwanvelisaya dagaba and poured oil into the lamps and placed flowers at its base, I noticed a devotee in deep prayer. He was clad all in white, and the way his cloth was draped round his shoulders was a sign that he had taken “Sil.”

He was repeating, what I thought were, gathas and the many precepts which a devotee who has taken Sil has to observe. Again and again I saw him raising high his clasped palms and bringing them slowly down in deep worship, kneeling, or lying flat on the ground. We were both struck by the fervour of his devotions.

Slowly he raised himself, and, as he rose he glanced at us, turned quickly round and walked away. It struck me that it was a familiar gait and, as I looked more closely, even a familiar figure. I could not believe my eyes.



I rushed quickly forward. I closed up with him, gurgled my throat and coughed loud. It was the customary way of announcing one's presence. "Shsh, Shsh" came a sound from the devotee. "There are many pilgrims. Do not talk to me here."

It was a familiar voice like unto that of my old friend, and round his neck I noticed a string of beads.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Was it Depita-Kāttuwa

**T**he shock was complete. Was Depita-Kāttuwa the devotee in Sil attire, kneeling before the ancient shrine and counting his beads in fervent prayer? Was this still another side of the inimitable acrobat. Had he really taken to the saintly life or was it another pose? I touched his hand. "Shsh, Shsh" he whispered. "Not here, see me at my Ashram at Pinkaranawatte (place where meritorious acts are done) tonight."

And there I was in the night. It was not difficult to find out the Ashram as there was a conspicuous board with the words "Pinkaranawatte" written in large block letters. I was quite beside myself at this new and unexpected turn of events. And there was my friend, Depita-Kāttuwa, still attired as in the evening.

I felt as though I should make obeisance to him, he looked so devout and holy. He had other visitors, all of whom, I gathered from the conversation that followed, had come to him to discuss ancient religious texts and passages



relating to the doctrine which were difficult to understand. And to them Depita-Kāttuwa gave answers, expounded the doctrine, and preached with the same ease and confidence that he had displayed when he had beguiled me with the theory and practice of politics.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### In the Inner Chamber

As the time passed, one by one of his new disciples left and the two of us alone remained. His acolyte also retired and my friend beckoned to me in his usual manner and pressed a device in what appeared to be a wall. A hidden door slowly opened and to my surprise I saw a layman's room exquisitely lit and furnished with all the needs of the material world.

My friend locked the door and, with a quick change of clothes, there was before me again the old Depita-Kāttuwa, the man who plays out both sides with such dexterous ease.

"How are you Old Fellow?" he said in his usual manner. "How are you? Don't you worry, old fellow. It will come off alright. What has happened is only for a time. When a fierce wind blows, you must bow your head, as the Chinese proverb goes, and the wind will pass away. And you will rise again."

"What has happened?" I asked. "I had long



given up all hopes of getting into the Cabinet and had taken no interest in the Cabinet game."

"What has happened?" said my friend, "What has happened is all according to plan. Did I not tell you old fellow, that if they get together they will never keep together. Why! they have broken one another's heads. It was all done according to plan. They are all smashed up. .

It was a famous victory!"





*In Meditation*



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### In Meditation

With this facile observation in his best style, Depita-Kāttuwa opened a cupboard and took out his favourite brew. He poured two fulls of Consolation and as we drank he lit one of his shiny black cigars, having first soaked it in his mouth. It was my old friend all over again. The world may be smashed into pieces and the pieces strike him but my friend would walk along unperturbed.

I thought that it was time to leave and as I rose I noticed a knob over the bolt of the door of his room. It appeared to move a sliding panel. "What is that?" I asked pointing to the knob.

"Oh! that is what I move when I do not want to be disturbed. When I move the knob the words "In Meditation" appear on the outer side of the panel. My acolyte can always show the words to unwelcome visitors and they leave at once.

"You know, old fellow, there is nothing like Meditation. It takes your mind away from any



sin you have had to commit. It reconciles you to the ups and downs of life.”

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භාවාය විභවාය ව,  
තථත්තානං නිවේසෙය්‍ය  
යථා භූරි පවඨිසති.

*Yogā ve jāyati bhūri,  
Ayogā bhuri sankhaya,  
Etaṃ dvedhā pathaṃ ñatvā  
Bhavāya vibhavāya ca,  
Tathattānaṃ niveseyya,  
Yathā bhūri pavaddhati.*

*From meditation arises wisdom,  
And without meditation wisdom wanes,  
Knowing the two-fold path  
Of progress and decline,  
Let one conduct himself in such a way  
That his wisdom increases.*

recited my friend again in his best style. “I have always believed in Meditation, except when I enter this room as an escape from my present holy life. It is refreshing to be here and in the world again.”



“And what do politicians do when they are in Meditation?”

“They keep looking at the Clock, my dear fellow. They keep looking at the dial of the clock, hoping and praying that the glorious hour will chime.”



## CHAPTER NINE

### The Emotional Issue

“**Y**ou have done well, my friend, to get out of the fetid atmosphere of that unholy city, its fever and its fret. Here there is rest and peace; there the concentration is on the pockets and the guts,” continued my inimitable friend responsive, as it were, to the atmosphere of his Ashram and assuming the attitude of meditation.

The word “guts” gave me an uneasy sensation. My thoughts flashed to Kadisara Hamine who would by this time be awaiting my return and pondering on what she was to give me for my morning breakfast. “Should I give him kiribath or should it be pittu or hoppers? String-hoppers is what he likes. And what about the taste? Should it be a pol-sambol or a lunu-mirisa? Or better still, seeni-sambol, sweet and hot.”

Meat, fish and eggs — even unfertile eggs were taboo on a pilgrimage. Our morning menu never ran to bacon and eggs or porridge or milk and corn-flakes. That grub was for the ‘quality people.



The only snag was that the lady of quality had begun to complain that the bacon had lost his savour — the bacon cured from home bred pigs fed on garbage could not compare with foreign pigs fattened on a piggie's diet. That was a table delicacy.

“What are you thinking about?” shot out Depita-Kāttuwa who had again caught me in a reverie. I collected myself.

“I was thinking that your observation was most unfair. The concentration is not on the pockets and the guts. What about culture? The press reports are full of the observations of important persons on culture.”

“It is the old game of the emotional approach. It is part of political strategy. Culture is one of the wings on which the politician flies to the cabinet.”

“And should we not be proud of our culture, our language, our edifices, our tanks, our sculpture and our paintings. Even a Mona Lisa will forget her smile and gaze in wonder at a Sigiri painting. We were a cultured race when the other fellows were bārbarians.”



“Exactly so, my dear fellow. We were and now the time has come to talk of many things, other than of our past alone. Even the rice we eat is imported and we are unable to pay the bill. But we subsidise the fellows who do not grow the paddy.

We have wonderful beaches in our own country but our Beauty Queens of to-day, unlike the ladies in the Sigiri paintings, are unhappy unless they can fly abroad and get their sun tan on an American beach.

We are living on garrulity, frivolity and the printing press. Is it not time that we sat down to a job of work in lieu of raising emotional issues?”

“What happens when emotional issues are raised?”

“When emotional issues are raised the people break up into sections and lose their mental equilibrium.”

“You are again confounding me with big words. What is mental equilibrium?”

“It is easier to explain the word by a description of what is done when mental equilibrium is lost.”



“What happens?”

The people break up into sections and begin to shout and hit one another on the head. The strategist enjoys the fun which is all according to plan, while a civil commotion flares up. It has happened in history.

“Don’t talk to me in parables. What happened in history?”



## CHAPTER TEN

### The Little Knight's Tale

It is the little Knight's Tale. Once upon a time in a little country like ours designing people who wanted to stage a rebellion raised emotional issues and divided the people into sections which began to shout and hit one another on the head.

It was clear to me that my friend had not changed his style in his Ashram. He was about to take me out again for a garden walk with an Arabian Knight's Entertainment. I decided to put him in a tight corner.

"This is a story you have heard. It has never been put down in writing."

"Nothing of the kind, my dear fellow. It has been all put down in verse. The clergy also joined the fray.

*"When civil dudgeon first grew high,  
And men fell out they knew not why;  
When hard words, jealousies and fears  
Set folk together by their ears."*



“Stop it!” I shouted. “You are extemporising a verse about Modern Ceylon and telling me that it is an Old tale.”

*“And made them fight like mad or drunk  
For Dame Religion, as for punk.”*

continued Depita-Kāttuwa.

“Who is Punk?” I inquired. My curiosity had got the better of me.

“You had better leave Punk alone. Otherwise you will get into trouble with Kadisara Hamine. Punk was like the little lady whom Old Justinian made into an Empress.”

“And was that the end of the poem?”

“It was only the beginning. The faction mongers began to assume the praying posture in public; they wound up the clergy; the clergy took sides and began to preach from the pulpit and rouse the people,

*When gospel-trumpeteer, surrounded  
With long eared rout, to battle founded;  
And pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,  
Was beat with fist, instead of a stick.”*



“Good Gracious,” I ejaculated. “I do not understand a word of your recitation. They are like the words in Reports of Commissions which make confusion worse confounded. In simple words, what did the poet say?”

He said that the clergy were so wound up that they began to beat the pulpit with their fists as though they were beating a drum with a stick. Civil Commotion ran so high that a Knight made up his mind to set things right.

*“Then did Sir. Knight abandon dwelling  
And out he rode a Colonelling.”*

He must have been a great Knight to ride out when the country was in such disorder?

“No! He was a little Knight with a big paunch which protruded in front to balance a pair of big buttocks which protruded behind.”

“And he set things right?”

“On the contrary, he gave battle to a woman who thrashed him with a broomstick. His sword fell to the ground and he himself toppled over. He left his horse and Squire and took to his heels.”



“Oh for a Corporation for the manufacture of Women’s Broom-sticks! A new era will dawn in Modern Ceylon when every woman has heard the Little Knight’s Tale and has armed herself with a broomstick. The age of the Honeyed-Word and the Praying Posture will go out of fashion.” said Depita-Kāttuwa breaking into his smile as I rose to leave him to his Ashram and his Meditation.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### A Holy Man

As I rose, again my friend changed into his old style. "Don't you worry, old fellow! I shall put you into the Cabinet. This time it will be a short wait." Once more he stood the now empty bottle of Consolation on its neck. His hand had not lost its cunning.

I walked back to our quarters with uneasy steps. The prospect of my wife confronting me with a new broomstick from the Corporation for the manufacture of Women's Broomsticks was not pleasant. It would cramp my style and no longer would I be able to say it loud in our conversations.

My wife was asleep. The pilgrimage had already done her good and the Cabinet Dream had vanished from her vision. But my own mind was in a whirl at the thought of my friend's transformation and his double life even at the Ashram. I got into bed and fell into an uneasy sleep.



“Who was that holy man that we saw last evening?” said my wife, placing a delicious dish of string hoppers before me with the sweet hot seeni-sambol as a flavour. “He was in deep meditation. He must have had a saintly face.” Fortunately she had not seen Depita-Kāttuwa’s face.

“He was always on his knees and on the ground! How well he recited the gathas and how many he knows! Is he a man of our country or has he come from Dambadiva? He looked so much like an Arahāt.”

Fortunately neither my wife nor I had ever been to Dambadiva nor had we ever seen an Arahāt. That was my only chance. I took it. “Yes,” I replied, “he had a saintly face. I do not think that either of us will ever meet the like of him in this birth.”

“Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu” said my wife bringing the palms of her hands together and raising them high above her head. “It is because of our good deeds in our former births that we have been blessed with the sight of such a holy man.”

And she recited a stanza often repeated at the end of a pilgrimage.



*Ettāvatā ca amhehi  
Sambhatam Puñña sampadam  
Sabbe sattā anumodantu  
Sabba sampatti siddhiyā*

“May all beings too enjoy whatever merits we have accumulated, so that success and happiness may come to them.”

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සම්භතං පුඤ්ඤ සම්පදං  
සබ්බෙ සත්තා අනුමොදන්තු  
සබ්බ සම්පත්ති සිද්ධියා.



# SALACIOUS THE FILM COMMISSAR

*“Nationalize the land if you will; nationalize our industries if you must; nationalize education, housing, science, art, the theatre, the opera, even the cinema; but spare our women.”*

**Bernard Shaw, *On the Rocks*.**







# SALACIOUS

## THE FILM COMMISSAR

### Introduction

Peggy is puzzled. Daddy had come home in the evening in a bad mood and not given Mummy his usual kiss. He had not kept his hand on Peggy's head. When Mummy gave him his Cup of Tea, he had not smiled. He had slumped into his chair and begun to read the Evening Paper.

What was more, she had seen at school the bigger girls standing in a circle and talking in whispers. She had heard Betty, the Head-Girl, say, that "The Film Commissar was wonderful." He is Salacious. He has a powerful..... fist" and then she had giggled. The big girls were planning to get him to give each his autograph.

Peggy is anxious to know what "Salacious" means. And puts Mum a poser. "Why is Daddy like Salacious to-night?" Mum is horrified. Mum thinks it is a dirty word and that Peggy has got



it from the Film Commission Report. She tells Daddy that he was never like Salacious to her even on the first night "Were you Daddy?"

Peggy is jubilant. Even Mummy who had studied upto the General Certificate Examination, (Advanced Level) does not know the meaning. She puts the poser to Daddy who tries to evade the answer. Daddy had dodged the Junior School Certificate Examination. But he cannot dodge Peggy.

"Salacious was an old type Salamander," says Daddy, he lived in the time of Salome, Peggy has her doubts. She decides to find out Salacious, the Film Commissar himself, and get his autograph. And sings a song:

*"The Wonderful Man  
With the powerful fist,  
With him we can  
Do the Twist....."*

Peggy sets out on a morning to find Salacious herself. She inquires from passers-by and a tramp. But she has no luck. Then she meets a lad selling newspapers who undertakes to lead her. She is taken to Morality Square.



In Morality Square, she sees the Statues of the new Film Magnates. She is taken aback by the appearance of the Film Commissar in the statue. She wishes to turn back but her guide who is expecting to get two fivers from her takes her through Purity Lane to the National Culture Park.

By the Park stands a huge edifice partly constructed, with a flag flying. It is the National Culture Palace. Peggy wonders how many lakhs the edifice will cost. She enters and her guide waits at the step. Two Boards tell her that all the Vacancies for Men have been filled and that there are Vacancies only for Women. She is led to a Reception room by a lady in uniform and told that she will be taken next to the Weighing Room to check her weight and measurements.

Peggy is puzzled, and would like to get back home but she has now no chance. After a wait of half an hour the lady comes in and asks her to come with her to the Weighing Room which adjoins the Film Commissar's Room. Peggy is now feeling sick and helpless. She wanted only an autograph and not a job but she dare not speak a word.

As she is about to enter the Weighing Room



she sees Betty dashing out of the Film Commissar's Room, her hair dishevelled and in great excitement. Betty whispers to her as she passes, "For God's Sake, Get out of here" Both run and reach the entrance where her faithful guide circumvents their pursuers and leads them to the high road.

The Newspaper lad senses that there has been trouble and says that he is the Chandiya of the Street and will give the Bloke a Gundu. The lad gives his name as Bunga. "Both father and mother dead when I born," says the lad "I no other name. Friends call me Bunga." Both Betty and Peggy are amazed and realise how different Bunga of Slum Street is from the august personality in the Palace of National Culture.

She reassures Betty that she will keep silent and Betty who has not spoken a word and was in tears gives a faint smile, drops a fiver in Bunga's hand and goes home. So does Peggy who tells her mother that she now knows that Salacious is a dirty word and asks her forgiveness which is given.



## CHAPTER ONE

### It will be Wonderful

Daddy had returned home later than usual. He did not give Mummy a kiss as he does every evening. He did not even keep his hand on my head and ask me whether I had been a naughty girl. He was seldom so anti-social and today he was both anti-social and glum. Even after Mummy had given him a nice warm cup of tea he did not smile. He slumped into his chair and began to read the evening paper.

It was all so puzzling. In the morning when I was at school, I had been listening to the upper form girls all standing in a tight circle and talking in whispers. I crept near them and listened but I could only catch a word or two at a time.

“How nice it would be,” said Betty. “It will be wonderful! Wonderful!” and her eyes got into a trance.

“What is wonderful” asked Jane. “What has happened to you? You were never like that before. You are bewitched.”



“Wonderful!” repeated Betty. “He is so wonderful, the Film Commissar. He is Salacious. We can all get at him, one at a time, and make him give each of us his autograph. He has such a powerful.....fist,” said Betty, with a knowing smile and began to giggle.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Salacious

The word "S a l a c i o u s" caught my ear. "Salacious." What did it mean? I opened my little dictionary and looked for it but the word was not there. It must be a very nice word, a new word. The best thing that I could do was to try it on Mum and Dad and get at the meaning.

"Mummy Darling," I said, "Why is Daddy like Salacious tonight?" and with a look of triumph in my eyes I turned to Mum.

"Good gracious! Peggy," retorted Mum. "Where did you learn that dirty word. You have been reading the Report of the Film Commission. Fancy calling Daddy Salacious!"

Fortunately Daddy was still lost in the newspaper and had not heard our conversation. I could not understand why Betty had used a dirty word. Betty was the Head Girl of the School and had not yet lost her reputation. Had her boy-friend Tom, who took her out every evening, corrupted her. I was in a dilemma.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Mummy's Question

To my horror Mummy turned to Daddy and said "Daddy dear, our little Peggy is using dirty words. Some vile fellow is corrupting her. You must take her in hand before it is too late. "Daddy dropped the paper and took his pair of spectacles off his nose. That was an awful sign. It was the sign of a coming storm.

"Mummy Darling," said Dad, "What did you say? Our Peggy is a nice little girl. She does not use bad words."

"Daddy dear" said Mummy, "little Peggy said that you were like Salacious. What does it mean? You were never like Salacious with me, not even on our first night. Were you Daddy?"

I was one up. Even Mummy who had passed the General School Leaving Certificate Examination (Advanced Level) was not sure of the word. If it was a bad word how could I be blamed. The best thing I could do was to ask Daddy to forgive me. I went up to him."



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Daddy's Dilemma

“Daddy darling,” I said, “please forgive me Dad, for using the word “Salacious.” I do not know who he is. I heard our Betty saying that the Film Commissar was Salacious and that all the teenagers were going to have a wonderful time, Oh! So wonderful!”

Daddy bent down and gave me a kiss. “Don’t worry Peggy dear. Betty has been reading the Film Commission Report. I do not think she knows the meaning of the word. In these Sinhala days no one worries about Salacious.”

“Please tell me who he is?” I begged of Daddy. I wanted to find out who he was and show off to Betty the next day.

Daddy had in his school days gone up to the Junior School Certificate Class but had not passed the examination. He had got ill and got into bed. Granny had tried her best to consult a Specialist but her frantic calls to the Official numbers had been intercepted by the songs of Radio Ceylon.



So the family doctor had been called in without a Specialist and he had said that Daddy had been infected by a virus which in lay language was called examination funk. By the time Grandpa used the cane, the examination was over.

That adventure had made a deep impression on Daddy's mind. He had formed the view that the family doctor, aided and abetted by Granny, had given him away.

He had decided to leave school and thereby teach both Granny and the family doctor a lesson; and thereafter his education had been confined to what he was able to learn from the daily newspapers.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### An Old Type Salamander

“Oh!” said Daddy, thinking hard. “Salacious was an old type Salamander. He is now extinct like the ugly Dinosaurs that you see in the films. He lived in the time of Salome. Do not worry about poor old Salacious.”

Was Dad right? Or was he himself trying to show off. The best thing I could do was to find Salacious, the Film Commissar himself — the wonderful man with the powerful fist. I could then get his autograph first and show it to Betty.

Impromptu a song which Betty and all of us could sing together came to my lips.

*The wonderful man  
With the powerful fist,  
With us he can  
Do the twist.*

*The wonderful man  
With the powerful fist,  
With him we can  
Do the twist.*



*Refrain.*

*All Hail!  
The Gracious  
Salacious!*

But..... would he want anything of  
me before he gave me his autograph.....?

And why did Betty giggle?



## CHAPTER SIX

### I Find The Way

I tried to find out the whereabouts of Salacious but I had no luck. It was dangerous to put the direct question to Daddy and far more dangerous to put it to Mummy. She had been trained in the old school when shock treatment was not confined to the Specialist in the Mental Home.

Mummy still believed in the curative value of an occasional slap as the best way of Bringing up Children. I tried the latest Directories but, like my little pocket Dictionary, they failed me.

Salacious, I thought, would not be found in the old lists as he was a new entrant to the tournament. It struck me that the quickest and easiest way was to "go it" myself.

I put on my Tennis Shoes to add to speed, and set out with anxiety and hope as my companions. I questioned one or two passers by on the road but they were of no assistance. At last I saw a Tramp in baggy trousers and a baggy



coat, from the pockets of which all kinds of knicknacs protruded.

Was I at last in luck? I put the question.

“Sal – a – cious – Sala – cious” said the Tramp. “Your Lad’ship, never saw the animal. Was it Fe – ro – cious Mam? Did it have a chain?”

It had been a bad shot.

I passed on but no one appeared to know the Wonderful Man, with the powerful.....Fist. At last I met a Newspaper Boy, shouting in the Morning the news of the previous Evening. He would, perhaps, know. I went up to him and kept a twenty-five cent coin on his palm.

“Can you tell me the office of the Film Commissar-Salacious,” I asked.

“The Film-Musser — Mis-Sar? Moment, Miss. I have heard of him. He Sal-ass-ass? Miss.”

“Yes” said I, and as it was evident that to try on him the methods of my Elocution teacher would only puzzle the lad, I repeated, “Yes, he is Sal-ass-ass.” Was I at last in luck’s way?

“Come, Miss” said the lad, “Show you, but before start, how much? Long way.”



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Morality Square

It was time to check up how much the young man knew. I did not want to miss both my pocket money and my quest. "Do you know the road?" I enquired.

"Yes, Miss, go straight — Morality Square and from there....." I interrupted him.

"Morality Square?" I had never heard of Morality Square in our town. "Are you sure?" I asked.

"Quite Shur," said the lad, "Shur as I alive" Luvly trees cut down, Figures put up. Big Men. Drive Big Cars. Boards every where, words "Morality Square."

"And from there my lad," I asked him, "Where do we go. Is it a long way?"

"Yes, Miss — very long, narrow path — You go round and round — we call "Purity Lane."



Morality Square! Purity Lane! We have to go in a circuit. I was young and the sun was hot. We were doing "The Lay of the Last Minstrel in Class and my guide's words recalled the journey of the Old Minstrel.

*"The way was long, the wind was cold  
The Minstrel was infirm and old."*

But the die was cast. It was too late to go back. I had to go forward. The lad appeared to know his stuff. "Alright lad", I said, I'll give you a fiver."

"And another fiver, Miss, when bring you back?" said the enterprising youth.

I never dreamed at the moment that the second fiver was to be my salvation.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Film Commissar

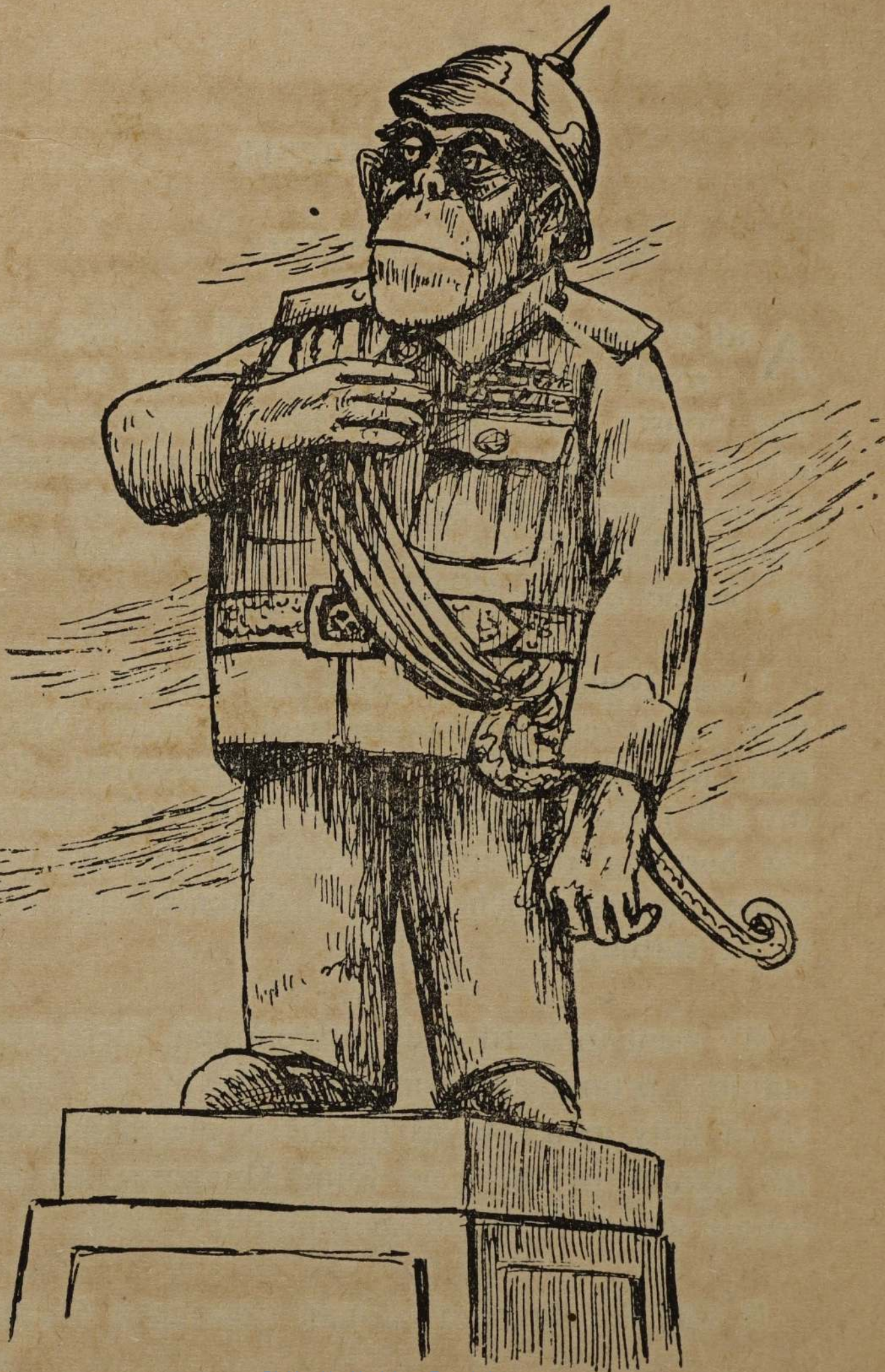
**A**nd so we went, my guide and I, along the road which was new and strange to me. The houses were few and far between and it was evident that the road had been only recently traced. There were big trees on either side with heavy foliage and now and then I could hear the music of the birds.

I was beginning to doubt the wisdom of my trip when my companion said, "There, Miss, that Morality Square." I was reassured. On my left I saw an expanse of ground newly cleared for building and in the middle of the clearing, some figures which from a distance appeared to be statues.

We went forward and, sure enough, there were statues, prominently erected, not of the dead or of holy men, but as the brass plates showed, the figures of the new Film Magnates. In the centre was a figure in semi-military attire.

It was the figure of a man wearing a Helmet







from the top of which a spike protruded. He wore on his breast a number of Ribbons, professing to show, I thought, awards of merit. There was a gilt-edged Belt round his waist and a Sash across his breast. A short gilt Sword dangled from his waist.

But what struck me most were his arms and face. His arms were long, more than average, and his fingers almost prehensile. One arm was placed on his chest, which he appeared to be drumming. His head was more flat than round; his eyes were almost sunk in the bony framework of his face on which was a snub nose.

Large ears he had and a cavernous mouth. Strength he displayed but culture for film entertainment was extinct. It was a most unprepossessing but not an unfamiliar face. I had seen such a face before; but I could not recall where. Was it in a book or in a film or was it at the zoo? A tablet under the figure had the words "Film Commissar."

I shuddered. Was this Salacious who according to Betty was a Wonderful Man and whose autograph I had come to take? But my companion took my mind away from my unpleasant reverie. "Look, Look, Miss, there many more."



To the North, East, South and West of the central figure were four other statues, also in semi-military attire with their designations written under them, all Sub-Commanders of the Commissar. And dotting the centre of the square were the figures of women, also in semi-military uniform. Under the figures but above their designations were the words "Women's Department." I was now getting a picture of the new set up.



## CHAPTER NINE

### National Culture Park

It was a stifling atmosphere and I was about to turn back when my companion, who was determined not to lose his second fiver said, "Now Close, Miss. We go." That remark was the opposite of his previous assessment of the distance.

I was propelled by him through Purity Lane which was a narrow thorny path to a new surprise. Before us stood the "National Culture Park." It was also a new clearing with only pegs inserted on the ground, suggestive of new statues or new buildings.

A little further off, I caught the glimpse of a huge edifice in the course of construction. As we came nearer, its outline became more and more distinct. One section was partly ready and the frame work of the other sections had been fitted.

On the top of the building, a flag was hoisted, flying, high and broad. I could not decipher



the colour or the emblem as I was only a tiny speck below this colossal structure.

I was never good at multiplication but my knowledge of addition made me think in lakhs as to the cost of the edifice. Why had it been built?

“That” said my guide, “Palace of National Culture.”

“Who is in the Palace?” I inquired.

“House-Full,” said my guide. “No Work. Big Pay. I more Work. Sell Papers,” he continued giving me the street view of the doings in the Palace of National Culture. The Palace, half-built, was already fully staffed.

“Film Mis-sar, Sal-ass-ass up there. I wait. Take you back. One Rupee, more Miss. for I wait” added my ingenious friend.



## CHAPTER TEN

### National Culture Palace

My guide was right. On big letters at the entrance were the words "Palace of National Culture," I entered with hesitant steps.

There was a corridor leading into the inner chambers. On the wall on either side of the entrance to the corridor was a Panel. On the panel on the right were the words, Men's Department, "No Vacancies" and on the left was the "Women's Department, Vacancies."

There was then a chance. But under the Women's Panel were the words "Adults Only." By age, I was a teenager. So was Betty. And I was of Betty's height and she had behaved as if she had met the Commissar.

A lady in uniform came up and ushered me to a reception room. Were the words, "Adults Only" just a stunt. There she came, close to me and stood, side by side. It was evident that she was testing my height but my legs were long and I was shorter only by a couple of inches.



I was next asked to stand in front of her. She looked hard at me. I guessed at once the purpose of the second test.

I pushed my buttocks back, drew in my stomach and put my bosom forward. I then inhaled a long breath until my lungs were full to bursting point. What a lucky girl Betty was, I thought, She had never needed brassières, while I was almost flat.

I could hardly hold on any longer when the inspectress said, "Bare Pass." I exhaled but it was my good fortune that she did a right about turn at the same time. I could now enter the august chamber of the Film Commissar.

"Come with me," the lady said, and we walked along from Corridor to Corridor, passing a number of rooms on either side. Above the door leading to each room there was a Panel and each panel related to a section of film production.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Lady Artistes in Training

I could catch only a glimpse of the names of some sections. On the panels were the words "No Vacancies", such as Art Director, Decor, Script Writer, Continuity, Music. It looked as though all the posts had been filled before the building was complete.

Suddenly I noticed a Panel with the words "Vacancies" and above it were the words, "Lady Artistes in Training." I was in luck's way, if only I could get Mum's and Dad's permission.

I was then led to a room on the door of which were the words "Inner Reception." "You will have to wait," said my guide, "Until the weighing Room" is free, when your weight and measurements will be taken."

I was taken aback. Why was I to be weighed and my measurements taken? What would I have to do before my weight and measurements were taken? How was I going to be weighed? And what were the measurements?



I had come merely to get an autograph and be one up on the next day when I met my school mates. I was quite puzzled. I began to feel sick and would have preferred to get back home. But in these barracks I had no chance.

Half an hour later the lady returned. "Come with me to the Weighing Room and from there you can see the Commissar whose room adjoins."

I was on the point of asking her whether she was referring to Salacious but she was so abrupt that my courage failed me. Nor had I the strength even to stammer out that I merely wanted an autograph and had not come for a job; that my weight and measurements were unnecessary.

I followed the virago tamely, again through winding corridors until we came to a room with the words "Weighing Room" written on the Panel. She entered.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### We Escape

As I was about to enter myself, I noticed that the door of the adjoining room was dashed open. On its panel were the words "Film Commissar" and out rushed Betty, her hair dishevelled and her face flushed.

She appeared to be in a terrible state of excitement and as she ran past me she whispered, "For God's sake. Get out of here."

Both of us began to run as fast as our feet could carry us. Fortunately, the winding corridors hid us from possible pursuers and by some good fortune we found our way to the entrance where my Newspaper guide was sitting on a step.

As soon as he saw us, he guessed, that there was some trouble. "Here Miss. here," he said, "follow." And the lad turned into a path leading into a shrub cover, just as behind us came the thud of heavy feet.

But our guide was superb and in a twenty



minutes race through the shrub, he had circumvented Purity Lane and put Morality Square behind us. We were again breathing the fresh air of the Queen's Highway.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### Bunga of Slum Street

The lad, although young in years, had been educated in the hard school of life and had guessed that we had escaped from some untoward happening. He kept looking hard at me and hard at Betty. Occasionally from Betty's eyes a tear drop fell but she did not speak. I too sensed that Betty had fought her way out.

"Missy", said our guide, "who the Bloke? Me, Chandiya of Slum Street, and if he come out I give him Gundu." We did not know what a gundu was and where it would alight but it was clear that it would have been a hard hit.

His words released our tension. I turned to our protector and asked "What is your name, my friend, and where do you live?"

"Missy" my name, "Bunga. I live in Slum Street," said our protector.

"But you must be having a name. Bunga is not a name" I replied.



“Yes, Miss, My name, Bunga. I, no other name. Friends call Bunga. Both father, mother dead when I born. Never see them” was the reply.

We were amazed. Here was a champion from the slums, an orphan, gutter born and street bred., protecting the chastity of two girls in Morality Square and Purity Lane from the august personality who was its commander. It was an education in the hard life of the wicked world which we could never get in school and which we would carry with us to our graves



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### Home, Sweet Home

Betty would not speak. She was the Head Girl of the school and she would have felt that she had let her school and friends down by her indiscretion. We had always been proud of her and it was time for me to relieve her mind.

“Don’t worry, Betty,” I said, “don’t worry. I shall never tell and Tom will never know.”

At last a faint smile came over Betty’s pale face. We had reached her home and mine and as she turned the gate, she dropped a fiver in Bunga’s hand.

So did I. And I added the extra rupee which, probably, our guide had not expected.

Thanks, Miss. “Much thanks. I give gundu if I catch Bloke” said Bunga of Slum Street as he moved away.

Mother was waiting for me looking out of the window. As I entered I saw the frown darkening



her brows. "Where have you been, Peggy?" she cried, "it is so late."

I had to protect Betty and myself and avoid a scandal. "Mother, the music teacher gave me a long lesson. She says that I shall come first in the examination," I stammered. Music was mummy's strong point.

The frown faded away. Mother brought my lunch from the pantry and began fondling my hair.

"Mum," I said, "Mum, I am very sorry. You were right. The music teacher said that Salacious was a dirty word. Please forgive me, Mum.

I shall never say it again, Mum. Please forgive me," Mum bent my head to hers and gave me a peck.



*The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,  
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.*

*Omar Khayyam.*







## NOTES

### What will it Be

**A Girl with the father's beauty or a Boy with the mother's brains**, a repartee by Bernard Shaw to a pretty lady who had remarked what a lovely child they would have had, if they had married each other.

**Green, Blue, Red**, the colours of the United National Party (U.N.P.), the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (S.L.F.P.) and the Lanka Sama Samaja and Communist Parties (L.S.S.P. and C.P.) respectively.

**The Purple Brigade**. A phrase used in newspapers of the time and said to refer to certain society ladies.

**We love our enemies**. See *St. Matthew* 5.44.

**The Honey Bee**. (*Ron Aragena malini*) — This verse is from the *Kavyasekara*, Canto viii. Verse 14, a poem by Sri Rahula, a Sinhala Poet of the fifteenth century. He was a Buddhist Priest and his temple (Vijaya-Bahu Pirivena) was at Totagamuwa (South Ceylon). He



enjoys the highest reputation as a Scholar and his works show profound learning. He also wrote the *Paravi Sandesa* and the *Salalihini Sandesa*. A Sandesa is a descriptive poem in which through the medium of a bird carrying a message the poet ranges from earth to heaven. "The *Salalihini Sandesa* and the *Kavyasekara* rank very high among the poetical works in Sinhala.

### I Break My Boss

**Mottaputtha** (මොට්ට පුතා) blunt, silly son.

**Sukuruthan** is a Sinhala word implying a man who is a "strategist", more literally a man who removes bolts and springs and such like and creates difficulties in the way of smooth operation.

**Medical.** Medical certificate. The term "medical" is in common use among wage-earners.

**Pothsena**, a name derived from the Sinhala word *Pota* "පොත" a book. A man who can cite chapter and verse for a statement and works according to his book knowledge only without a practical turn of mind.



**This Other Eden.** These lines are adapted from Shakespeare, *King Richard ii* Act 11. 142.

### I Get Into the Cabinet

**Dhammapada** is a record of the sayings of the Buddha. It has laid down in Pali verse a series of Buddhist Precepts. It is often resorted to both by Buddhist priests and laymen in order to elucidate the Buddhist Scriptures.

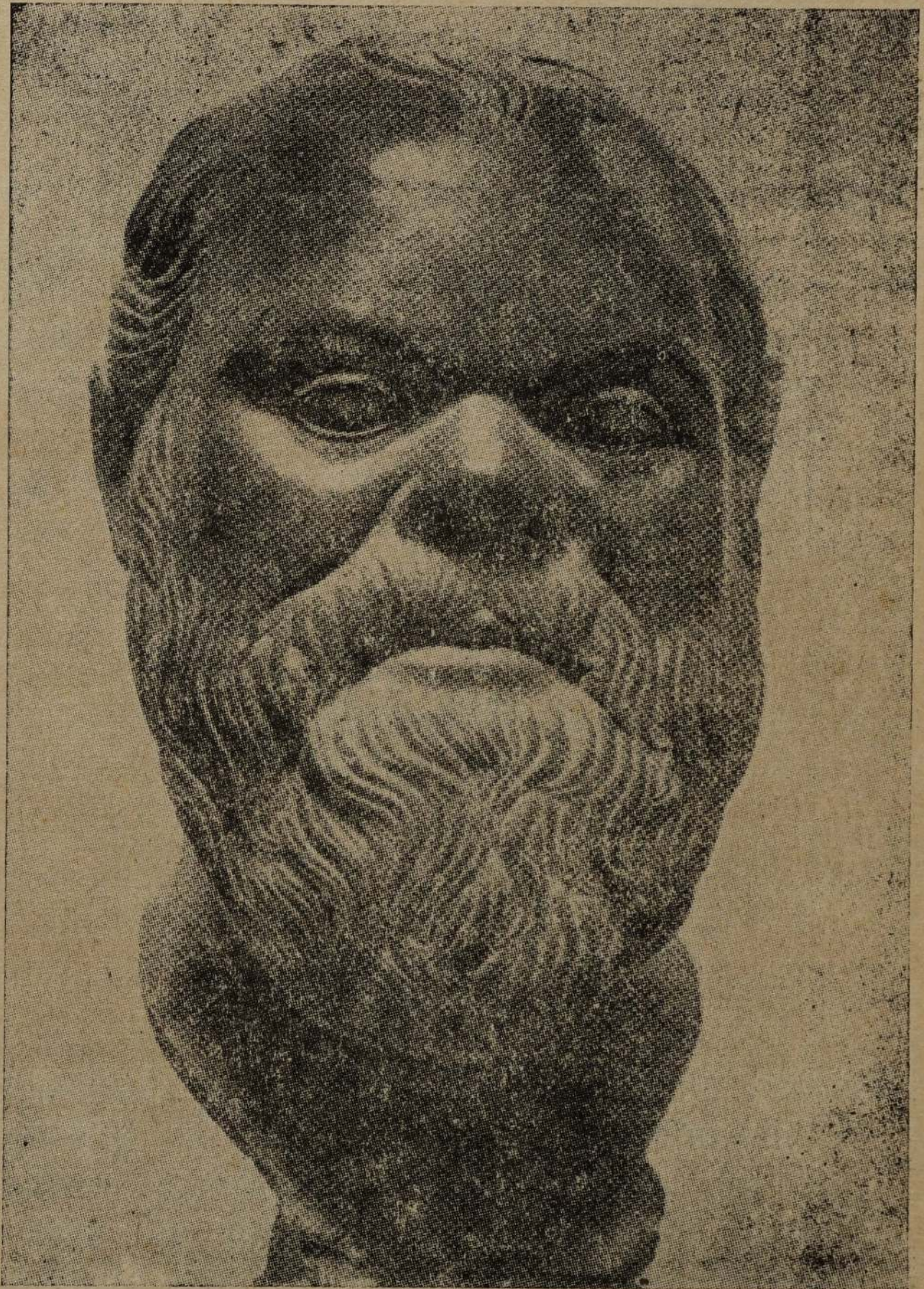
The Pali Text of the verse on the page 85 is as follows.

යො බාලො මඤ්ඤති බාලං  
පණ්ඩිතො වාපි තෙන සො  
බාලො ච පණ්ඩිත මානී  
සචෙ බාලො ති වුච්චති

*Yo bālo maññati bālyam  
Paṇḍito vā pi tena so  
Bālo ca paṇḍita mānī  
Sa ve Bālo ti vuccati*

**Socrates.** (469—399 B.C.) was a great Athenian philosopher. “A man unique in history, at all times needed, and seldom needed more than now” were once the words said of him. He was a man of great physical





*Socrates*



strength and in features he is represented as grotesquely ugly. Healthy and robust in constitution, he was capable of bearing fatigue and hardship in an extraordinary degree. In winter he could walk with his bare feet on the ice in his ordinary dress; he could both out march and out drink his contemporaries.

He has been admired for his originality and has been recognised as one of the greatest creative thinkers. His incisive dissection of the views held by the politicians of the time and the dialectical skill with which he disproved their theories brought him into disfavour with the men in power. He was impeached before the judges; the chief charges against him were that he corrupted the youth by his doctrines and despised the tutelary deities of the state and put in their place other new divinities. He was condemned by a majority of six votes and said he should be maintained at the public cost and would pay only a fine of sixty minae. The judges then incensed at his remarks, condemned him to death and he drank the hemlock.

“He is one of the greatest creative thinkers of the world, but he is also one of its prophets and martyrs, and he stands out as one of the



few men who have united intellectual to moral genius." (Livingstone)

His discourses have been immortalised by Plato and Xenophon in their many books. Plato ends the story of his life with the words "of all men of the time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best" (*Phaedo*) The illustration is from "*The Pageant of Greece* (Livingstone).

**Mr. Nikan.** It is not uncommon in Ceylon for a person who calls on a mission, when he is asked the purpose of his visit to say that he has come "නිකන්," (Nikan, just), come on a courtesy call. The request is made after a long interval of time has elapsed.

**Pilate** — Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judaea when Jesus was crucified.

**Gurunnanse,** (ගුරුන්කාන්සේ) a teacher, often used to denote an astrologer.

**Kadisara** (කඩිසර) quick, active; *Hamine* (හාමිනේ) lady.

**Kapurala** (කපුරාල) the designation given to a person who officiates at a Devale (See page 327).



**O'happy man.** These and the later verses are from *The Knights*, a Play (B.C. 424) by the Greek Comedian Aristophanes. The translation is from a publication by the Edinburgh Press.

**Achilles heel.** Achilles was one of the great Greek warriors depicted in the *Iliad*, an epic poem attributed to Homer. He was the son of a Sea-nymph, Thetis, who according to Greek mythology plunged him wholly into the waters of the river Styx which made him invulnerable except the one heel by which she held him.

He was also clothed in invulnerable armour, forged by Vulcan, the master-craftsman of the Olympian Gods. In the Trojan war he was a terror to the Trojans and was invincible but was killed in the flower of his youth by an arrow which pierced his vulnerable heel.

**Just for a handful of silver.** The passage is from Robert Browning's *Lost Leader*. It was a reference to a politician who changed over from one party to another.

**V. I. P.** A Very Important Person. The term



includes members of the Diplomatic Services and high Ceylonese Officials.

**Shower of Gold...Danae.** Jupiter, the king of the Gods, according to classical mythology, changed himself into a Shower of Gold and visited Danae, the beautiful daughter of the King of Argos (in Greece). An oracle had predicted that death would come to him from his daughter's son. She was locked up in a brazen tower and the king forbade anyone to visit her. Jupiter saw her in all her loneliness and came to her and a son was born to them.

That son was the hero, Perseus, whose many adventures are told in several fascinating tales. One of them is the story of Medusa, the Gorgon, herself a beautiful maiden, whose lovely curls had been turned into coils of horrid, writhing snakes by the Goddess Athene whom she had offended. She still retained a touching and attractive beauty but anyone who gazed at her face was immediately turned into stone.

*"Fatal Beauty' thou didst seem  
The Phantom of some fearful dream,  
As, rapt and spell bound, we survey*





*Medusa*



*The horrid coils which round thee play  
Formed to attract all eyes to thee  
And yet their withering blight to be"*

Perseus was sent on a mission to bring her head. The Gods who watched over him came to his aid. Pluto lent him a magic helmet which made him invisible, Mercury gave him his own winged sandals, Hermes a sharp sword shaped like a sickle, Athene her mirror-like shield. Without looking at Medusa's face, he cut off her head which was reflected in the shield. On his return, he rescued the beautiful Andromeda from a sea-monster and won her as his bride and, as a mark of gratitude, presented the Gorgon's head to Athene who placed it in the middle of her shield, awesome to behold. (The verses are by Mrs. St. John, *The Myths of Greece and Rome*, Guerber).

**Pandu.** A game played with a ball (பந்தம்) and a piece of wood fashioned like a bat.

**In My Youth.** This passage is from "*Through the Looking Glass.*"

**"And as long as You live"** These lines are from Aristophanes, *The Birds*.



**You are Old.** This passage is from "*Through the Looking Glass*."

**Queen's House** is the name given to the residence of the Governor-General of Ceylon. The name comes down from the time of Queen Victoria.

**Depita-Kāttuwa's Holiday.** The North Coast of Ceylon is well known as an area used for the entry of illegal immigrants from India to Ceylon and for the smuggling of goods from Ceylon to India and India to Ceylon. One of the towns in North Ceylon is Val-Vettitturai.

**O' the gallant Fisher's Life.** The passage is from Isaac Walton's *Compleat Angler*, one of the most delightful books in the English language. It is written in prose with occasional verses intervening.

*Tamā himi situ lesa*

තමා හිමි සිතු ලෙස, The verse is from the *Kavyasekara* Canto 10, Verse 31.

**Caldron and Cabinet Brew.** vide Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc. 1.

**Wonder-put.** The Prefix *Vander* is common in



names of the Burgher Community, for instance Vander-wall, Vander-Straaten.

**Moda Singho** (මෝඩ සිඤ්ඤෝ) means in Sinhala, dull, silly.

**Hitha Sanasana Pura** (හිත සනසන පුර) City that comforts the mind.

**Devil dancing, Bali ceremony, Hunian, Manthras.**

These rituals are associated with the supposed cult of evil spirits and are methods adopted to eliminate their malefic influence. Reference is made to them in *The Sinhalese Folk Play*, (Sarathchandra). Their real object was to cure diseases or afflictions through mind manipulation. Some of the processes adopted were to wear grotesque masks and figures. Rhythmic incantation is a characteristic feature. These methods as well as Lemon Cutting play on the mind with intensity through sound and sight, a factor which is not fully appreciated.

**Devil dancing.** A dance ritual performed to ward off evil spirits. (See the *Sinhalese Folk Play*, Sarathchandra)

**Bali ceremony.** Another form of dance ritual where the performers have the figures of



gods and demons painted and modelled with clay. (See Ibid)

**Hunian.** A malefic influence said to be brought about by incantations, softly uttered and generally described as charms.

**Manthras.** Certain incantations used to ward off evil spirits.

**Lemon cutting.** (දෙහි කැපීම) Lemon fruit is held with a local pincer with a sharp blade against various parts of the body of the afflicted person and with the repetition of each Manthra is cut into two.

**Manthri Rawatana** (මන්ත්‍රී රචන) means deceiving members of Parliament.

**A Devale** is a building associated with the Hindu Pantheon in which vows are often made. In some Devales, a person male or female is permitted to give oracular responses.

**Delphic Oracle.** A very ancient seat of prophecy at Delphi in Greece. It has been associated with several Greek Gods, Apollo (Light) Gaia (Earth) Poseidon (Sea). The prophetess was called Pythia. Its reputation in early ancient times stood high. The God was



consulted on all important occasions, colonisations, legislation, religious ordinances. Later its influence declined. It was abolished in the 4th century A.D. Its replies were often capable of two interpretations.

**The Architect's Song.** See Shakespeare, *Macbeth* Act iv. Sc. 1.

**She plucked. She ate.** Milton, a stern Puritan, often called the poet of religion, in his great epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (1667), one of the greatest in the English language, describes the Temptation and the Fall of Adam and Eve. (*Genesis* Ch. 3). Satan in the form of a Serpent deceives Eve and refers to the Tree of Knowledge as the mother of science.

*He ended; and his words, replete with guile,  
Into her heart too easy entrance won:  
Fixed on the fruit she gazed, which to behold  
Might tempt alone; and in her ears the sound  
Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd  
With reason, to her seeming, and with truth:  
Meanwhile the hour of noon drew on, and waked  
An eager appetite, raised by the smell  
So savoury of that fruit, which, with desire,  
Inclinable now grown to touch or taste.  
Solicited her longing eye.*

.....



*So saying, her a rash hand in evil hour  
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate!*

.....  
..... *While Adam took no thought,  
Eating his fill: ..... that now,  
As with new wine, intoxicated both,  
They swim in mirth,*

*Paradise Lost,  
Bk. IX*

And according to Vergil, so was the God  
Vulcan electrified when Venus put her lovely arms  
around him.

*“Her words were spoken, and her snowy arms  
Flung round him either way with soft embrace,  
The goddess woos him hesitating still.  
He in an instant caught the wonted flame,  
The well-known warmth within his vitals passed,  
And coursed throughout the melting of his bones—  
Not otherwise than ofttimes, bursting forth  
From peal of thunder, a bright rift of flame  
Runs with its brilliant flash among the clouds.”*

*Vergil, Aeneid, Bk. VIII, 388—394, Delabrière—  
May's translation.*

**Kavun** (කැවුම), **Asmy** (අසමි), **Kalu-Dodol** (කළු  
දොදොල්) are popular sweets of Ceylon. *Kavun*  
is made of flour and sugar or treacle and  
fried into a knoblike shape.



**Asmy** is made mainly of flour, half-moon in shape and fried with honey or sugar sprayed across.

**Kalu-Dodol** is made of flour, sugar and treacle and cut into pieces. It is black in colour; hence the prefix Kalu, meaning black.

**Ambul-Thial** (අඹුල් තියල්) is fish prepared with condiments in an earthen-ware pot on low live coal and covered with another earthen-ware pot with live coal.

**Galle** was at one time the main port of Ceylon and is the main city of the Southern Province.

**Matara** is in the Southern province and is also a town on the sea-coast.

**Colour Material, Textile, Looms.** The political picture of the period (first half of 1964) was confused. On the one hand, pressure came on the Government from the Opposition of all political parties; on the other hand, the prevalence of strikes and go-slow tactics, in particular, in the Port of Colombo, embarrassed the Government and the economy of the country. Negotiations for a



Coalition were daily reported in the Press, but the party which would ultimately join the Government was in doubt. Nor was it clear who would be given Port-folios in the Cabinet.

The situation was aggravated by the conditions in the Port, the labourers of which were controlled by Unions affiliated to different political parties. The loading and unloading of cargo was delayed and the Government incurred heavy demurrage payments. The Coalition Government was ultimately formed in June, 1964.

**The Cloth and Banian Front.** The members of the new Cabinet formed in 1956 (April), except one, appeared in a photograph wearing a Cloth and Banian. The colour of their Scarf was Blue.

**Prophet, said I —** The verses are adapted from Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*.

**Lanka —** a name for Ceylon.

**And I am still so young.** Goethe, *Faust*, Part I Scene xxv.



**Through a Looking Glass.** The well-known. book, *Through the Looking Glass*, by Lewis Carroll, the pseudonym of Charles Ludwige Dodgson. He also wrote the equally famous book *Alice in Wonderland*.

**Great historian.** The historian is Gibbon. The reference is to his book. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

**Baila** (බයිලා) is a Portuguese dance introduced into Ceylon.

**Kapirinje.** (කපිරිඤ්ඤා) A dance form similar to *Baila*.

**As through land at eve we went** are lines from Tennyson. *The Princess*, Part ii.

*Nābiya Nodakwā*

**Show not Your Navel** (නාබිය නොදක්වා) This verse is from the *Kavyasekara*, Canto 10, verse 19. It is one of a series of precepts given by a father to his daughter at the moment of her departure from home as the young and newly wedded wife of an aged Brahmin. In twenty-one verses the poet, Totagamuwe Sri Rahula (fifteenth century) describes how a good wife should conduct



herself in the management of her house-hold and in her relations with her husband. Both the teenager and the married woman of today would, perhaps, consider the precepts as antiques. But are they really so?

පැමිණෙන කල යහ	න
සුදු තුනි සිනිඳු සළුවෙ	න
ගිව්කන් අබරණ	න
මලින් සුවඳින් සැදෙව රිසිව	න

හිමි උවද උර	ණා
නොකියා තෙපුල් දරු	ණා
වඩව සිත කරු	ණා
වැළිත් නොසිතව දෙතැන සර	ණා

හිමි වෙතට යන ක	ල
අබරණ සුවඳ මනක	ල
පට පිළියෙන් උදු	ල
යන්න සැරසි ලෙසින් සිරික	ල

*Pāminena kala yahana*  
*Sudu tuni sinidu saluvena*  
*Giv kan abaranina*  
*Malin suvandin sadeva risivana*

*Himi uvada uranā*  
*Nokiyā tepul darunā*  
*Vaḍava sita karunā*  
*Vālit nositava detāna saranā*



*Himi vetata yana kala  
Abarana suvanda manakala  
Paṭa piliyen uudula  
Yanna sārasi lesin sirikala*

When you go to bed wear  
A white, fine, soft garment with ornaments  
In your neck and ear, with flowers  
And perfumes pleasing to the mind.

Even when your husband is in anger,  
Speak not to him in harsh words,  
Let kindness (to him) grow in your heart.  
Further more let not your mind  
Turn to another wedlock.

When you go to your husband,  
Adorn yourself with ornaments,  
Perfumes and lovely silks, and go to him  
Like unto the dazzling Sri Kantha.

(Goddess of Fortune)

**Anuradhapura.** This city which is in the North Central Province of the island was the capital of Ceylon from 2nd Century B. C. to 9th Century A. D.

**Mona Lisa,** a famous portrait of a faintly smiling woman, by Leonardo da Vinci: also called La Gioconda.



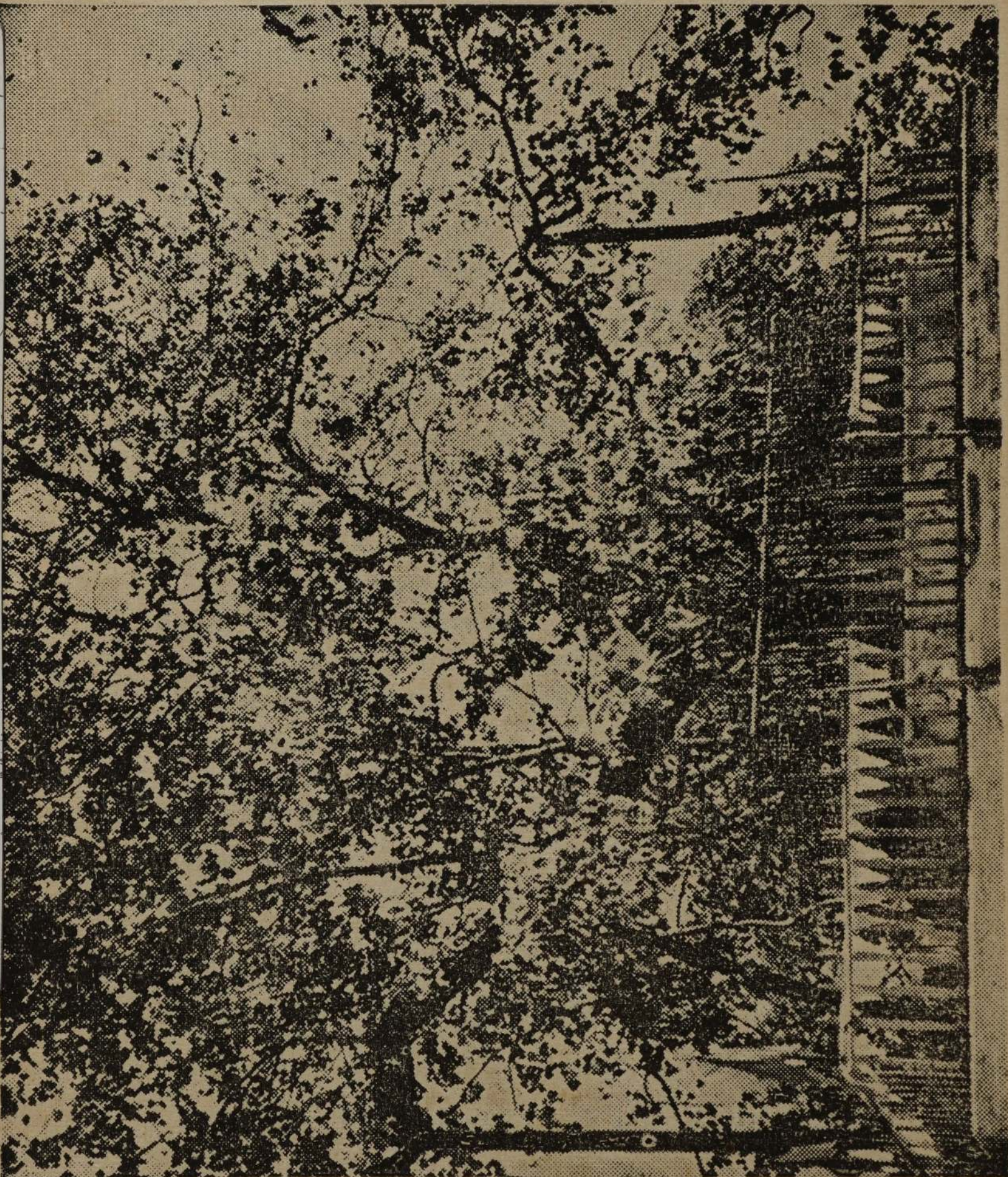
**Sri Maha Bodhin Vahanse.** The Receiving of the Great Bodhi-Tree by King Devanampiyatissa (245 B.C.; circa) is told in the *Mahavamsa*, the Great Chronicle of Ceylon.

“In the bright half of the month Assayuja on the fifteenth uposatha-day he received the great Bodhi-tree; two weeks after in the dark half of the month Assayuja on the fourteenth-uposatha day the lord of chariots brought the great Bodhi-tree, having placed it on a beautiful car on the same day, amid offerings, to his capital ; and when he had built a beautiful hall (for it) adorned in manifold ways, and there on the first day of the bright half of the month Kattika had caused the great Bodhi-tree to be placed on the east side of the foot of a beautiful and great sāla-tree, he allotted to it day by day many offerings. But on the seventeenth day after the receiving (of the tree) new shoots appeared on it all at once; therefore, rejoicing, the lord of men once more worshipped the great Bodhi-tree by bestowing kingship upon it. When the great ruler had consecrated the great Bodhi-tree unto kingship he appointed a festival of offerings in divers forms for the great Bodhi-tree.”

*The Mahawamsa,*

Chapter XVIII (61-68) Geiger's Translation.





*The Sacred Bo-Tree*



**Dāgaba** is a Sinhalese word applied to a Stūpa, from the Sanskrit 'dhātu', a 'relic' 'element' and 'garbha' a 'womb' 'receptacle' or 'shrine'. Dhātu garbha is thus the relic receptacle or inner shrine, and is strictly applicable only to the dome of the stūpa.

**Ruvanvelisaya Dāgaba.** One of the biggest and most famous dagabas in Ceylon built by King Dutugemunu after his victory over Elara. It is at Anuradhapura and was for many years in disrepair. It was restored in recent years at great cost and is a popular place of worship of the Buddhists. It is one of the most picturesque sights in Ceylon.

**Ashram.** A place selected by a teacher to establish a school of wisdom (Hindu). Persons resort to it for higher education and the practice of spiritual exercise and austere discipline.

**From Meditation arises Wisdom.** (*Yogā ve jāyati bhūri*) These verses are from the Dhammapada Verse 282. Meditation plays a major part in the observance of Buddhism.

**Kiribath** (කිරිබත්), **Pittu** (පිටු), **Hoppers** (ආපප), **String-Hoppers** (ඉඳිආපප) are served for breakfast .



**Kiribath** (කිරිබත්) is a preparation of rice with Coconut milk for the morning meal.

**Pittu** (පිට්ටු), **Hoppers** (ආපේප) **String Hoppers** (ඉඳිආපේප) are prepared from rice flour for the morning meal.

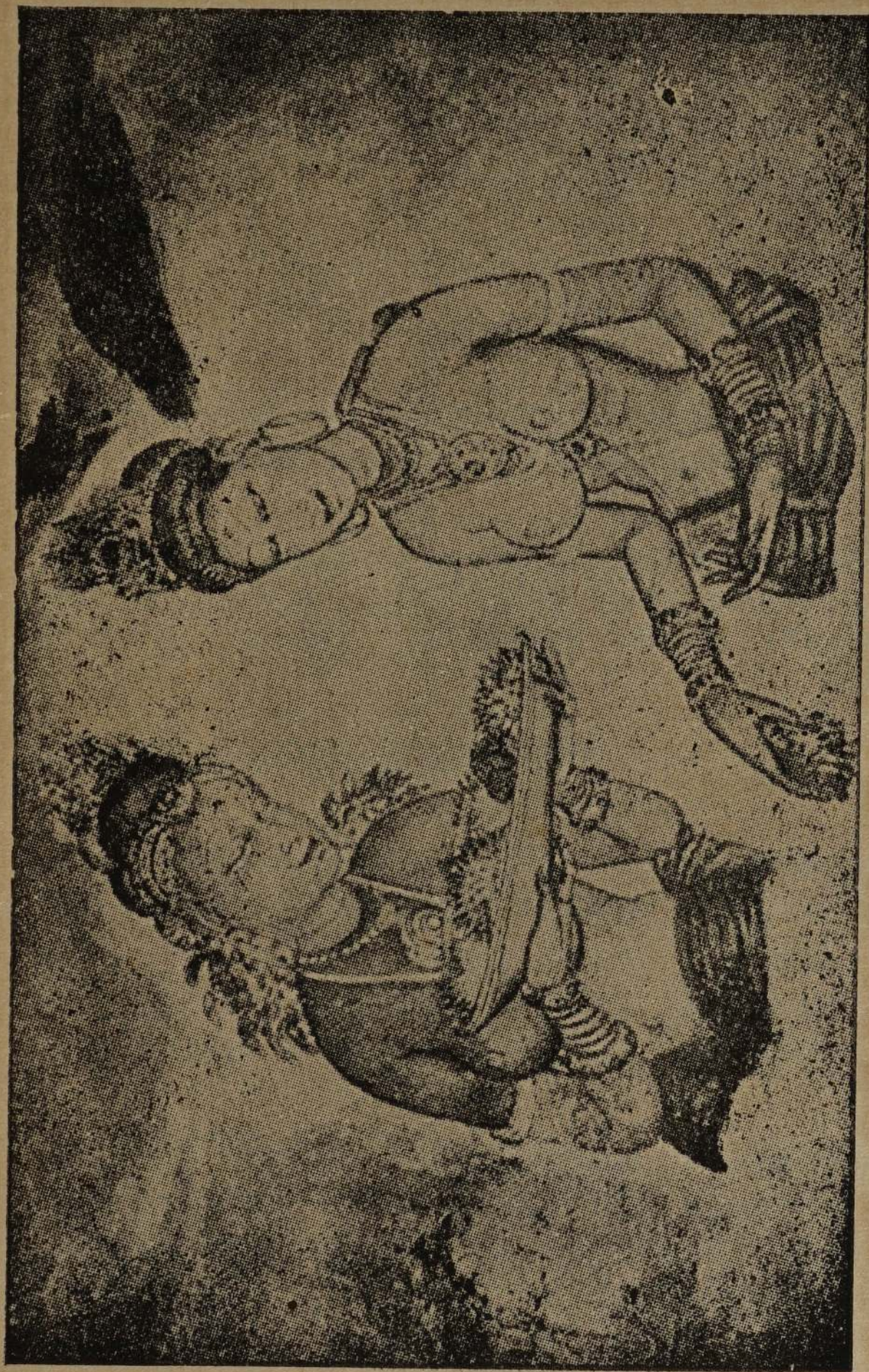
**Pol Sambol** (පොල් සම්බල්) is a preparation from coconut with chillies added.

**Seeni-Sambol** (සීනි සම්බල්) Preparation with fried onion and curry leaves with chilli and a little sugar added.

**Lunu Miris** (ලුණු මිරිස්), Preparation from ground chilli and onions with lime and salt added.

**Sigiri Painting.** On the impregnable rock fortress of Sigiri, King Kassappa (470 — 497 A.D.) built a city and a palace and hundreds of figures of damsels were painted on the Western face of the rock. Twenty-one figures still remain in a rock pocket. The figures are cut off below the waist by clouds. "Coronets, tiaras, aigrettes crown the head; flowers and ribbons adorn the hair and ears; neck, breast, arms and wrists carry jewels." The colour varies from yellow, brick-red and green. Their slender waists and rounded breasts





*A Sigiri Painting*



are characteristic of what at the time was the ideal of beauty. In the *Salalihini Sandesa*, although written at a later period, the poet when he paints in words the beauty of the women of Kotte sings,

සිසි වන උවන ඉහ සුහ ගත හැකි මිටි      න  
නිසි පුඵලුකුල රිය සක යුරු තිසර ත      න

*Sisi vana uvana inga sunga gata häki miṭina*  
*Nisi pululukula riya sakayuru tisara tana*

*With faces like unto the moon in beauty and slender waists that a hand could span, with broad hips like unto chariot wheels and breasts like unto swans.*

(*Salalihini Sandesaya*: Verse 13)

**When civil dudgeon**—The verses are from *Hudibras*, immortal satire of Butler (1612 - 1680) which described the amusing adventures of Sir Hudibras. It was a time of civil commotion which led into the rebellion of 1642.

**Dambadiva.** A term for India. To the Buddhists of Ceylon the term connotes the association with Buddhism as the Buddha attained Enlightenment at Buddha-Gaya in India.



**Arahat.** One who has reached the end of the Four-Fold way and has attained Nirvana, which is the goal of Buddhism. The Four-fold way or the Four Noble Truths are (1) the omnipresence of Dukkha (Sorrow or Suffering) (2) its Cause being desire (3) its End and (4) the Elimination of desire by treading the Noble Eight-Fold Path, (1) Right Understanding, (2) Right Thoughts or Motives (3) Right Speech (4) Right Action (5) Right Means of Livelihood (6) Right Effort (7) Right Concentration and (8) Right Meditation.

### Salacious

**Salacious — The Film Commissar.** Newspaper reports of the time stated that a film Commission had recommended that some of the films exhibited were “salacious” or anti-social; and that a National Film Corporation and a Commissioner for the Development of the Film Industry (Film Commissar was the term used in the Newspaper) should be appointed. Salacious is not a term in common use. Its meaning given in the Oxford Dictionary is lustful, lecherous. It is derived from the Latin word *salax*, *salire*,



to leap, palpitate (eg. Latin, cor salit). It reflects an appeal to the senses.

**Morality Square, Purity Lane, National Culture, National Culture Palace.** The writers and speakers of this period strongly condemned as wicked and denationalised the ways of the people of Ceylon and gave expression to moral platitudes in regard to their importance in the life of the nation.

Morality, Purity and National Culture, in themselves admirable and much to be desired, were often overplayed. This overplay put the sincerity of their advocates in issue and created a suspicion that they were being exploited for political ends.

This method of approach has been the subject of ridicule in Butler's Satire, *Hudibras*.

**Assayuja, Kattika, Uposatha Day (p. 335)**

**Assayuja** The Sinhalese Month 'Vap' (වප්) — October.

**Kattika** The Sinhalese Month 'Il' (ඉල්) — November.

**Uposatha Day.** The full moon day. Uposatha is the day of religious significance calculated by lunar halves.



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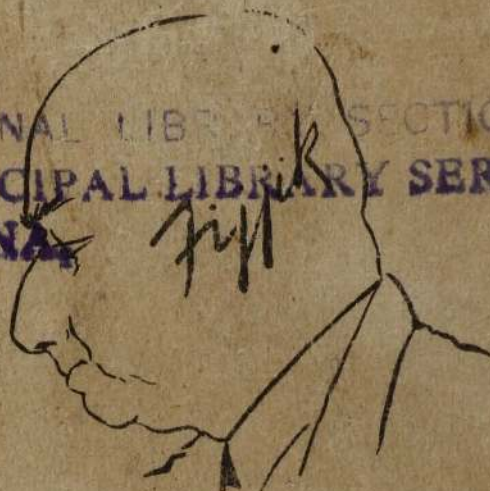
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