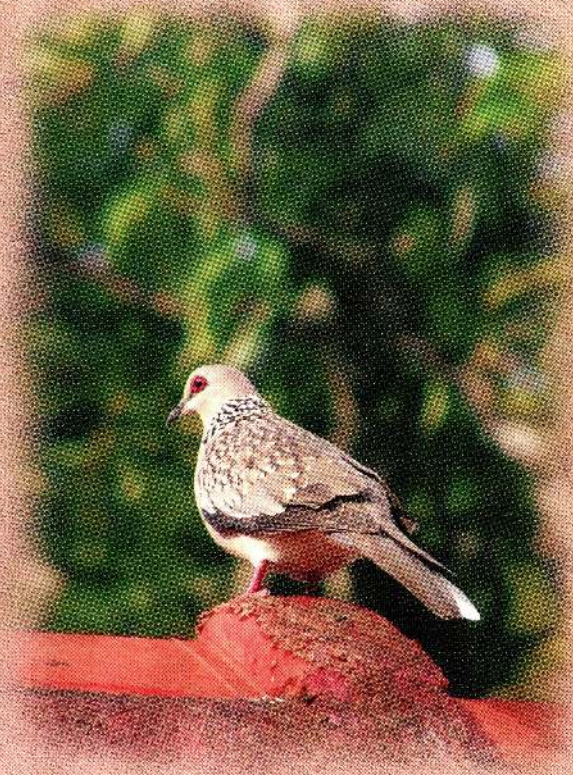


Angoda

through my lens

the photographs



Dr. S.Sivathas

Angoda

through my lens



The Photographs
Dr. S. Sivathas

Angoda through my lens

The photographs

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Dr. S. Sivathas

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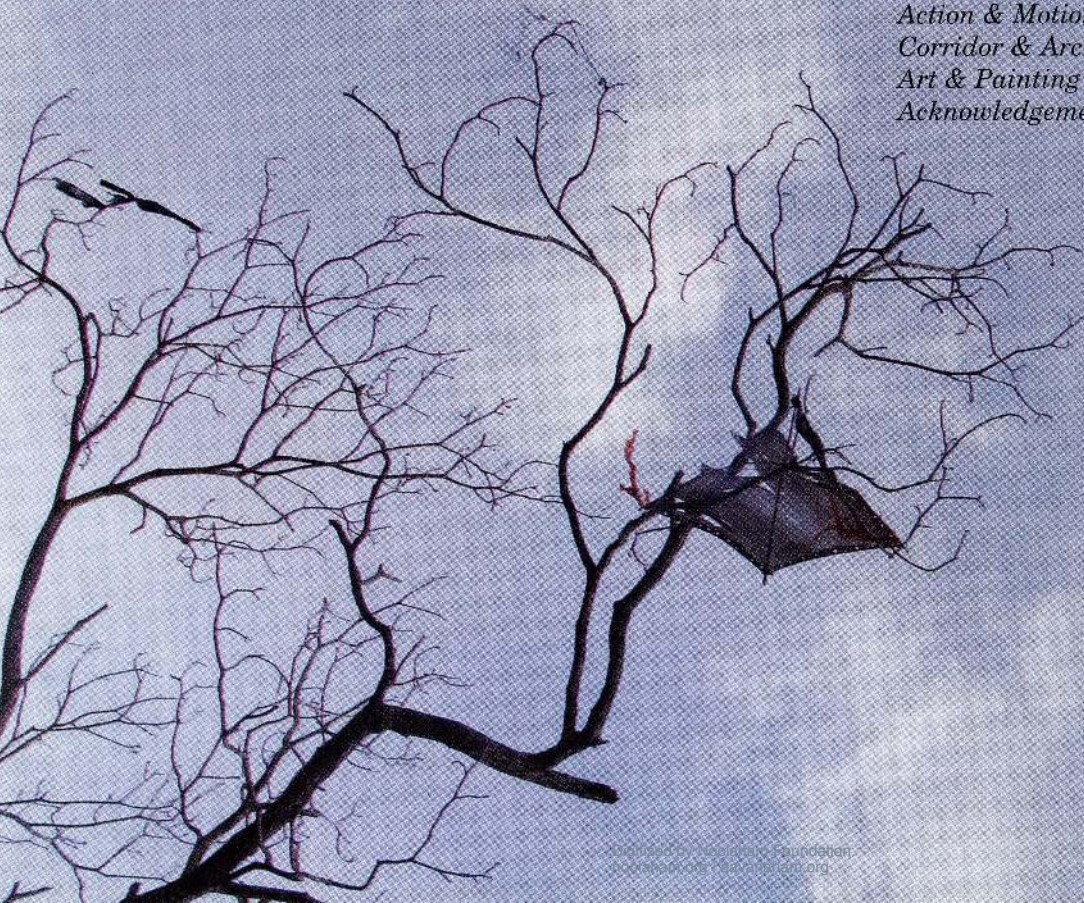
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Contents

<i>Forward</i>	5
<i>Preface</i>	6
<i>Author's Note</i>	7
<i>Animals & Birds</i>	9
<i>Flowers & Leafs</i>	23
<i>Treatment & Care</i>	39
<i>Expression & Emotion</i>	51
<i>Action & Motion</i>	63
<i>Corridor & Architecture</i>	77
<i>Art & Painting</i>	91
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	107





Dedication

*Prof. Diyanath Samarasinghe
&
Prof. Daya Somasundaram*

*Two Sri Lankan Psychiatrists
who inspired me in my profession
and influenced greatly in my life,
attitude, thoughts and behaviour.*

Forward

*"If you want to keep a man in the ditch,
you have to stay down there with him"*

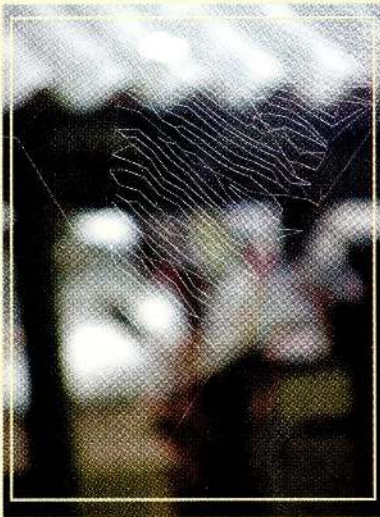
The person who said this conveys tellingly that when we oppress others we drag ourselves down. It applies to oppression of any kind - of a 'minority', or of those who are poorer than the rest or people dubbed inferior for being different. To subscribe at any level to putting a group of people down drags us down. Pathetic is the man who thinks himself grand because he presumes another inferior.

Total institutions characteristically put down those who are incarcerated in them, whether prison, asylum or 'homes' for various kinds of 'disabilities'. The mental hospital is not really different from, say, a 'correction home' for girls who are said to have misbehaved, in the way that it treats the people who are forced to stay there. Powerlessness too leads to stigma, just as being different does. People with unusual or 'different' behaviour aren't quite so readily ridiculed if they are rich or powerful.

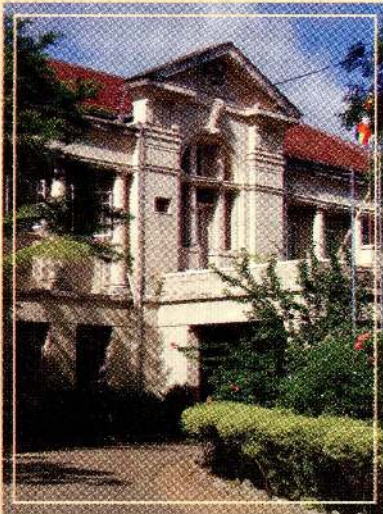
So what is Dr. Sivathas trying to do with his camera? Is he trying to combat the labeling that is associated with being considered different - in the sense of being called mentally ill? Or is he trying to counter the powerlessness of the many in this particular hospital? Or is he presenting to us images that contrast with the imagined picture that many of us have of this particular hospital? Whatever his strategy or motive, there is no denying that good photographs are captivating. And I guess photographs sometimes reveal not just the subject but the photographer as well.

I am so glad that Dr. Sivathas has painstakingly collected these remarkable images for us to look at. They certainly challenge our stereotyped picture of unattractive drabness of this kind of hospital, at the same time as they please the eye.

Prof. Diyanath Samarasinghe
University of Colombo



Preface



'Angoda through my lens' photography against Stigma is a challenging slogan that has been chosen by the photographer. Painting and photographic exhibition - 'FEELINGS' organized by our hospital to mark the Mental Health Day this year at National Art Gallery. This has been the first time in the 80 years old history of Mental Hospital, Angoda organized an event of this nature. About 80 paintings created by 40 inmates of the hospital and 80 photographs taken by Dr. Sivathas were displayed. Inmates were coached by the art therapist Mr.Chandra Wanasundara over two months and guided by the hospital occupational therapists.

We have been so fortunate to have Dr. S. Sivathas at this time at Angoda completing in his post MD Psychiatry training. During the time at Angoda not only he concentrated to improve his knowledge base in psychiatry but also has been spending some time in and around the hospital to see the natural beauty of the environment, that was discribed as a gloomy by most. I know that germination of these ideas had taken place in his mind while he was working at Angoda as a registrar two years ago.

The events and activities such as these promote partnership and co-operation among people and agencies in the community which will definitely act positively in the fight against stigma.

I hope Dr. Sivathas's endeavor will be a success, in all ways.

Dr. Jayan Mendis

Director

Institute of Psychiatry

Angoda

Author's Note

"Mental health is a process of dedication to reality at all cost" said by Dr. Scott Peck, Psychiatrist.

"Mankind cannot bear very much reality" said by a poet T.S. Eliot.

The dilemma of life swings in between.

I wonder my venture could be a defense against the reality.

My task was not to portray Angoda as a health resort or to attract every body towards Angoda.

Even though intellectually I am not in favour of an institutionalized mental health care, my fervent hope is that a tertiary care hospital is need of the day.

Angoda, the word itself carries a stigma. Mental illness is not considered in par with other chronic illnesses due to the social stigma and therefore neglected and ignored.

These experience were registered in my camera within the premises of the mental hospital Angoda. The main aim and the purpose of this endeavor is to neutralize the stigma and to create an insight about mental illness and to enlighten the positive aspect of therapeutic options for these illness.

I am not a professional photographer or has not had in-depth scientific training in photography.

But I am proud enough to claim that my interest on photography goes back to about two decades and I have not compromised my involvement in this artistic venture for the other pressures of life. My field of interest in photography is landscape photographs. I have been successful in deviating from it this time.

It would be an himalayan task to eliminate the stigma on Angoda as it has been well fortified for centuries.

I would be jubilant and accomplished my mission with great success if I could move forward a step in creating an awareness against this stigma.

-Dr. S. Sivathas

Institute of Psychiatry

Angoda

Mulleryawa New Town

email: sivathas@fastmail.fm





I have greatly enjoyed looking at this exhibition. It has an inspiring name - photography against stigma - which tells us much about the values of Angoda hospital. The pictures themselves are beautifully taken and show what a lovely place Angoda must be. Good luck to all involved and especially to Dr. Sivathas

Dominic Chilcott
British High Commissioner



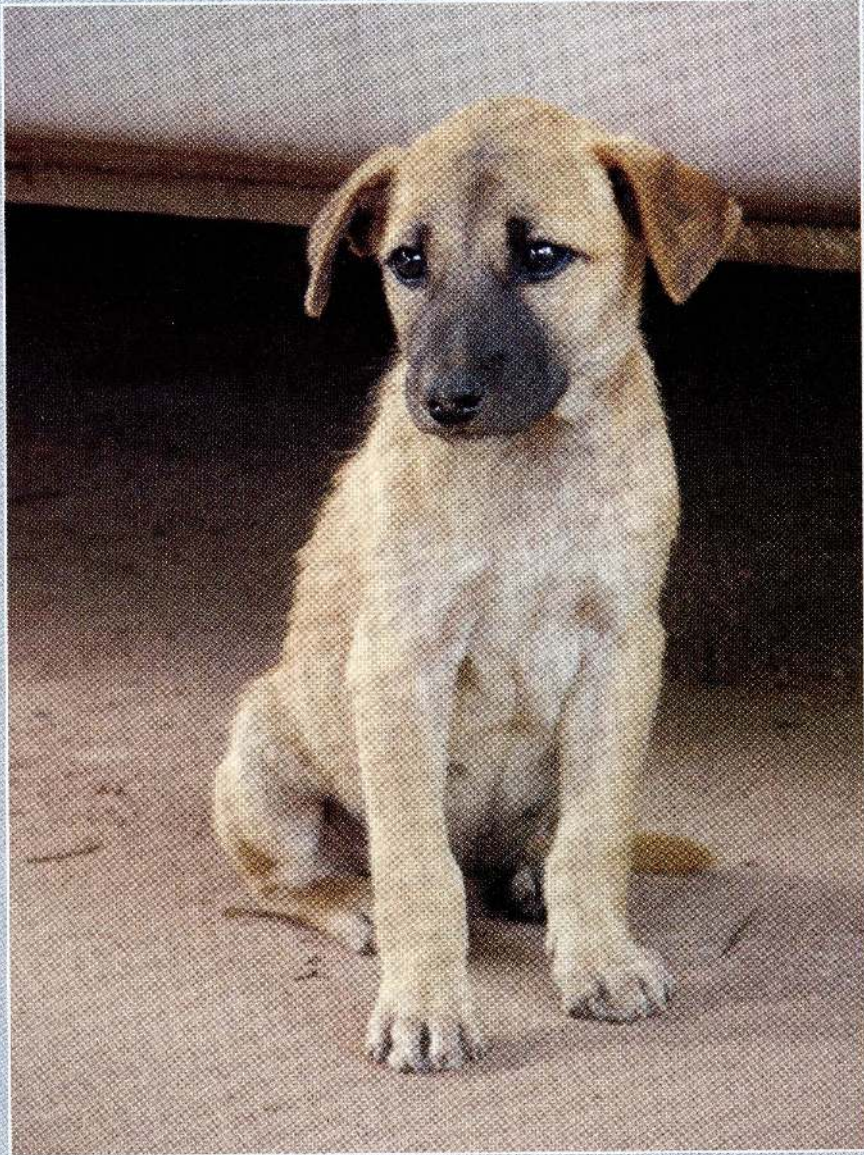
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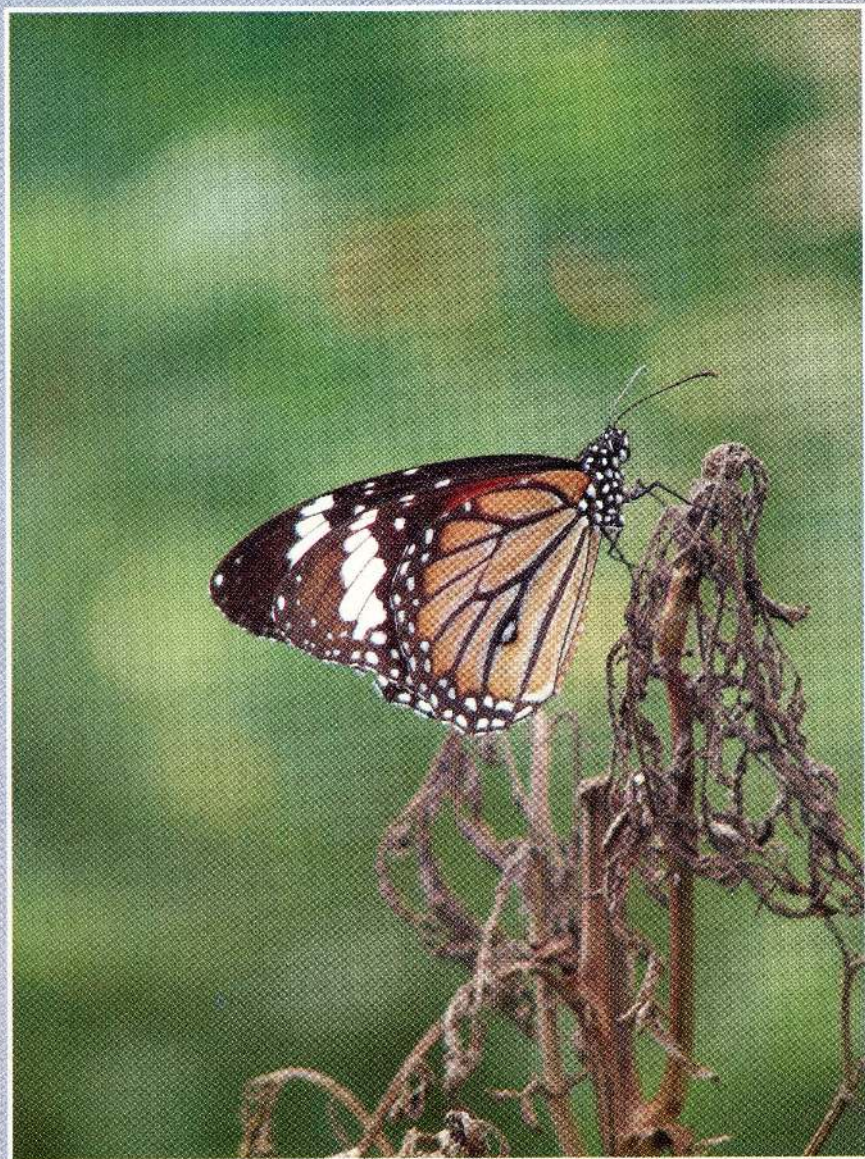
Animals &
Birds

*Act decidedly and take the consequences
No good is ever done by hesitation*







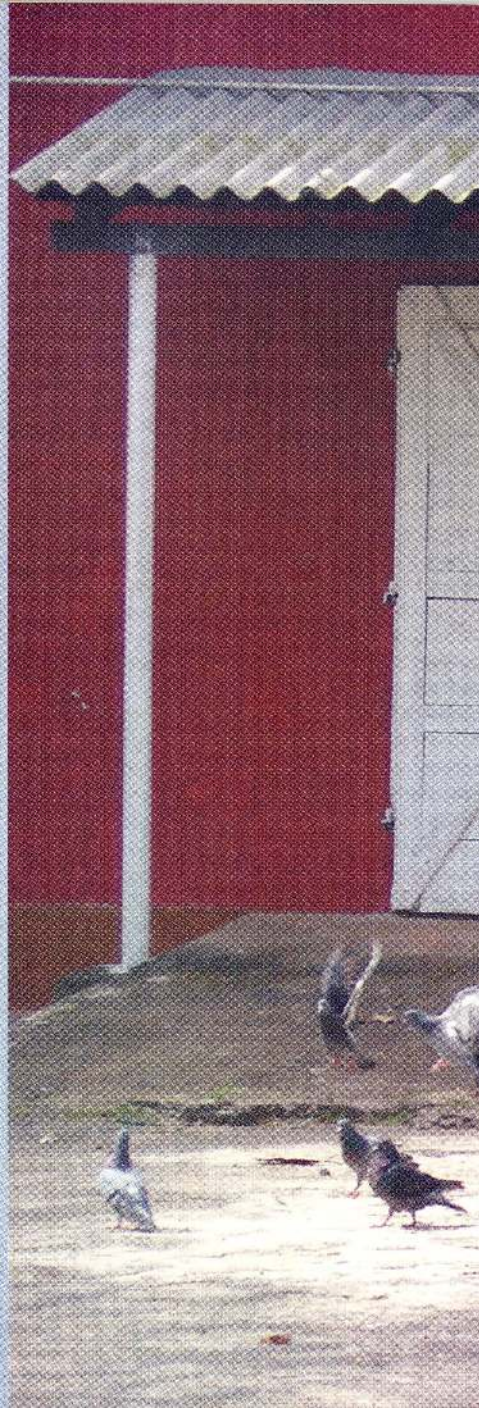






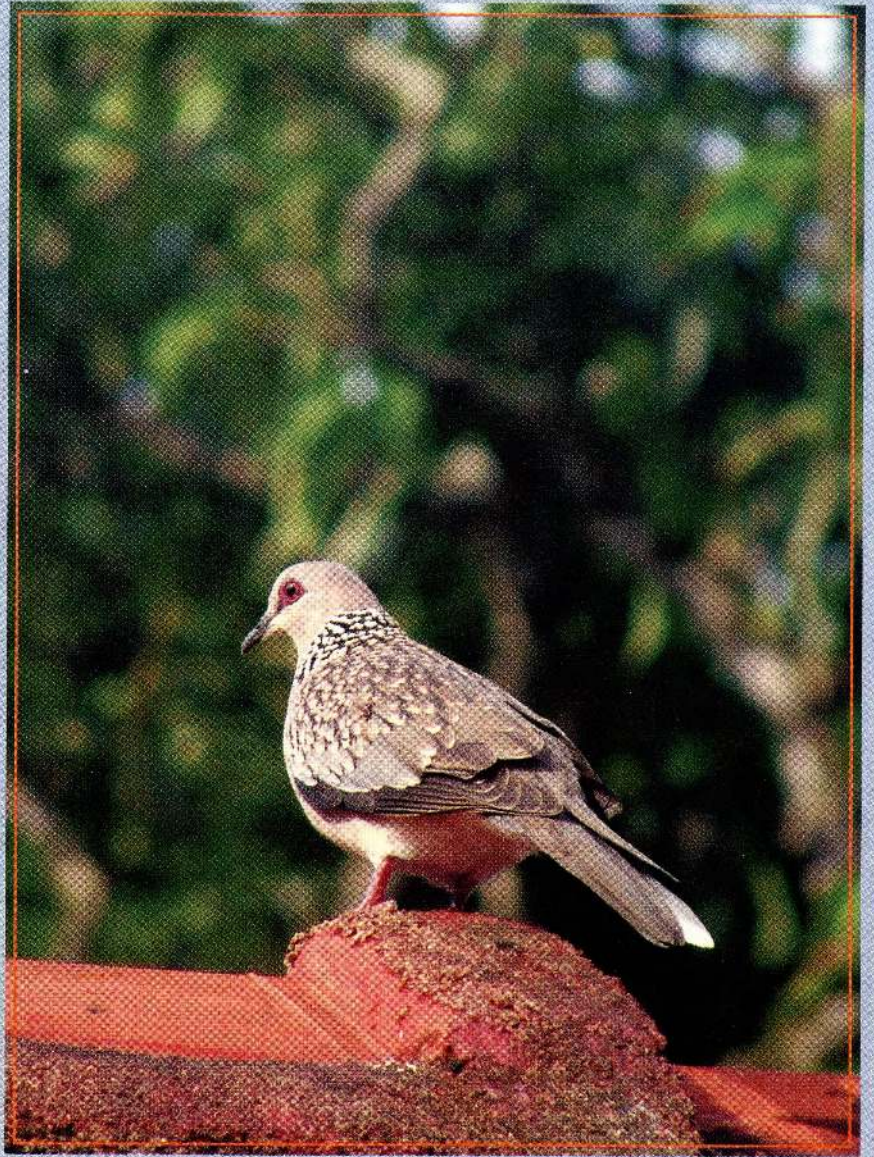














It may be been easier to write or sculpture your thoughts but this time Sivathas has captured his thoughts through the eyes of his camera. Amazingly every photo has life and deep meaning within it. In fact Sivathas has won our hearts and minds not only as a doctor but as a photographer who could capture reality through his camera.

We all congratulate Sivathas for undertaking this venture amidst his busy schedule and looking forward for further such missions.

A.L.H.M.Ibrahim

Consultant

Counseling & Psychosocial Work

South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

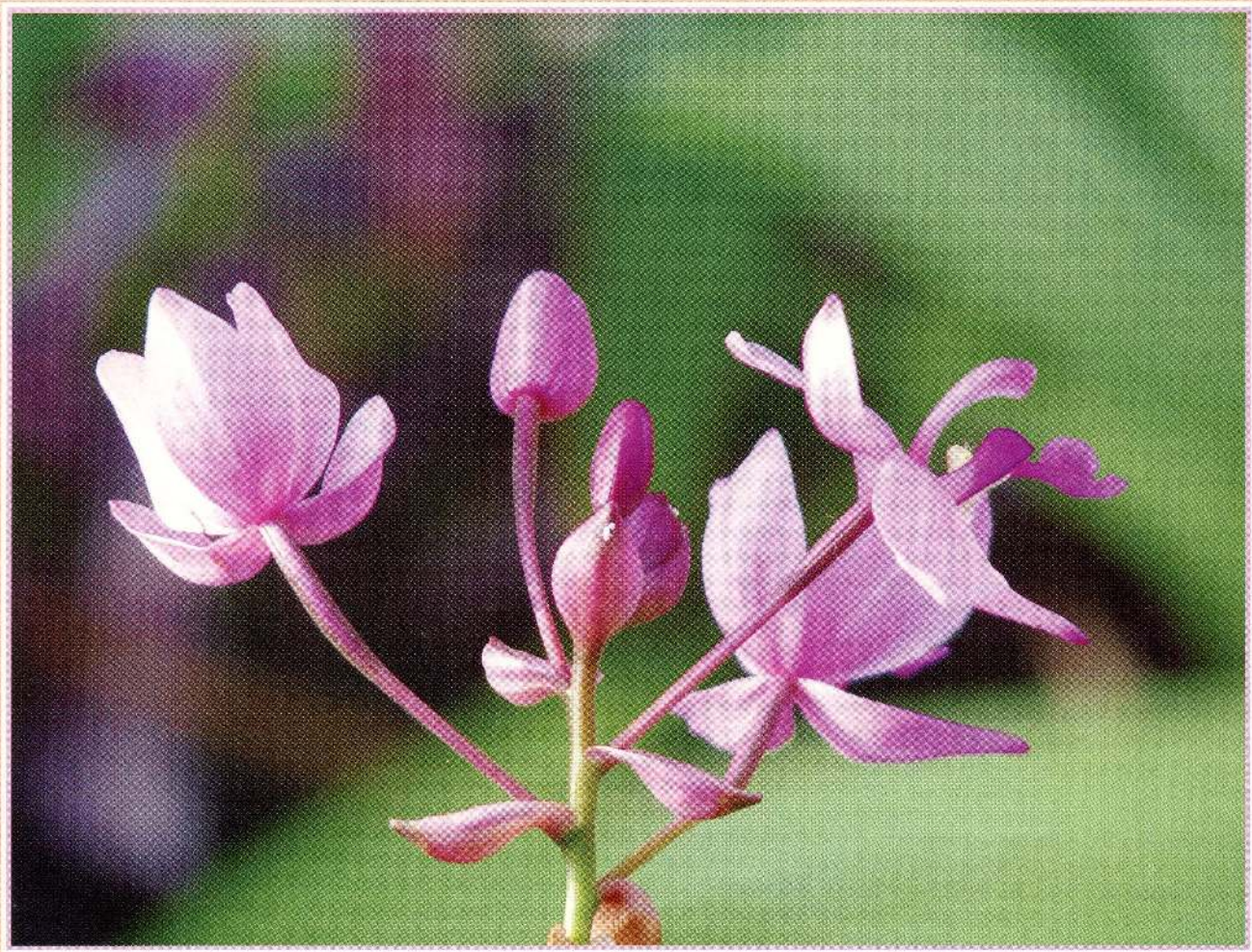


2

Flowers & Leafs

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity
Optimist sees the oppotunity in every difficulty

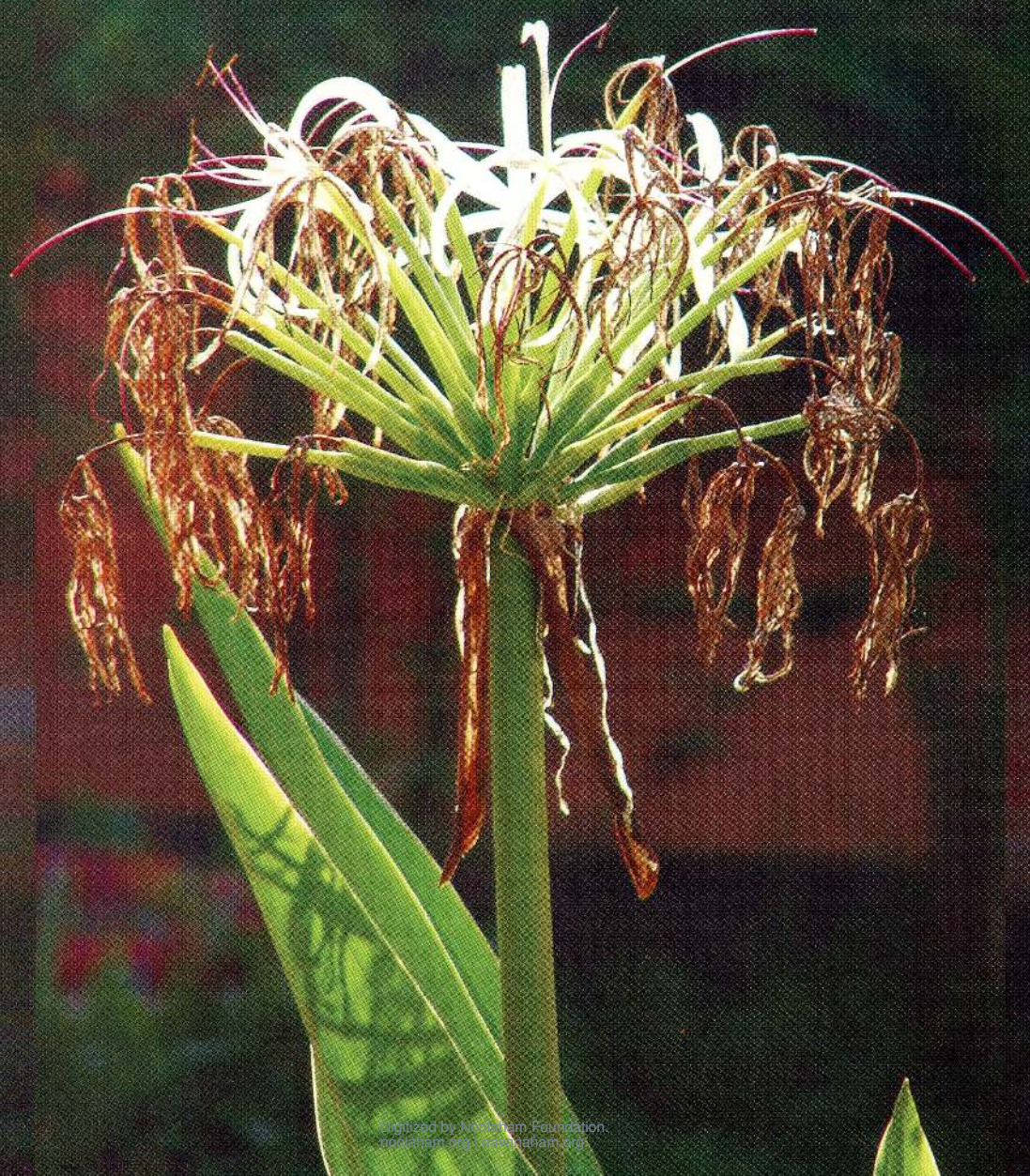










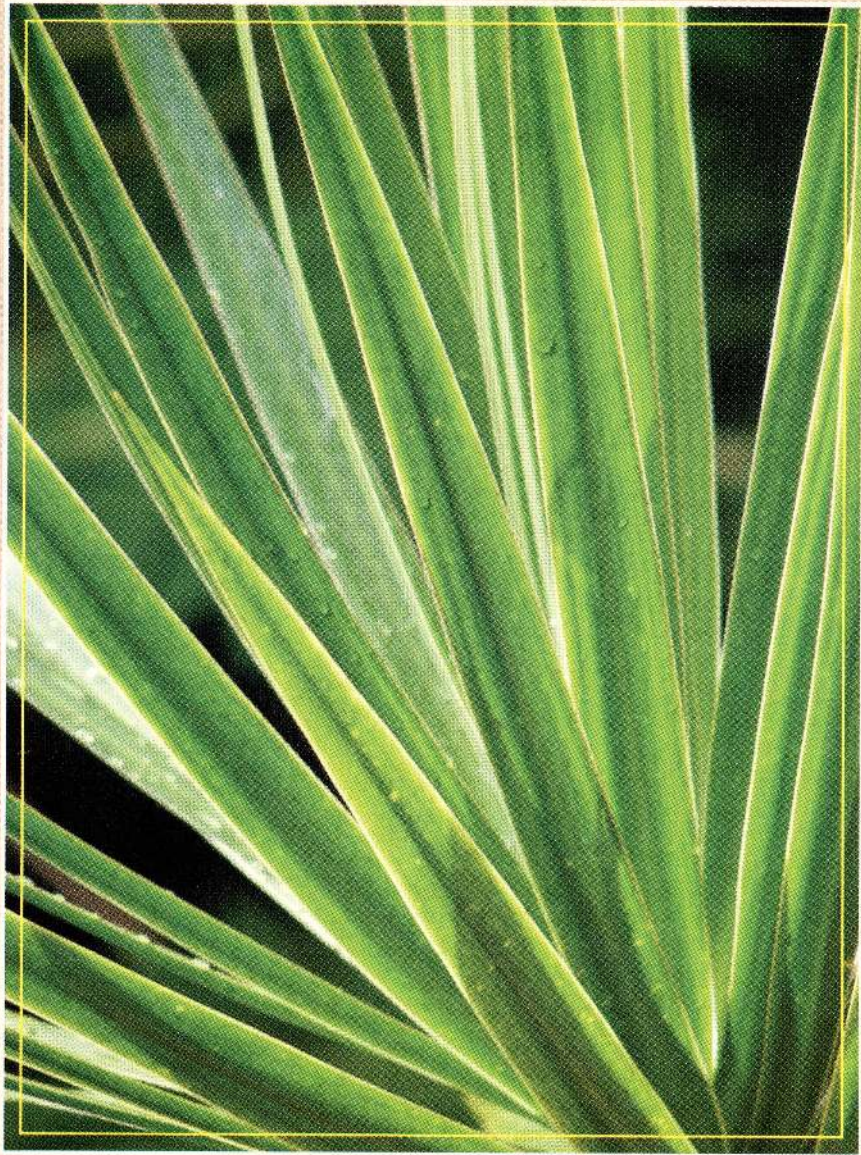




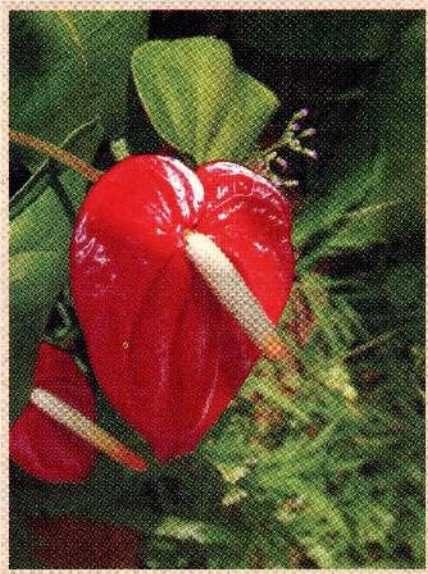
















Stigma and discrimination is one of the issues faced by person having a mental illness. Mental hospitals too contribute to the stigma.

I have to congratulate Dr. S.Sivathas senior registrar in Psychiatry for presenting a different and a more human perspective of caring for mentally ill patients inside a mental hospital.

People out side rarely get an opportunity to witness the many human and caring services rendered to mentally ill patients at mental hospital Angoda.

I hope this photography exhibition would serve as an eye opener to the public and contribute to the de-stigmatization of mental illness.

Dr. Neil Fernando

Consultant Psychiatrist

Institute of Psychiatry, Angoda.



3

Treatment & Care

*Life is the art of drawing
Without an eraser*









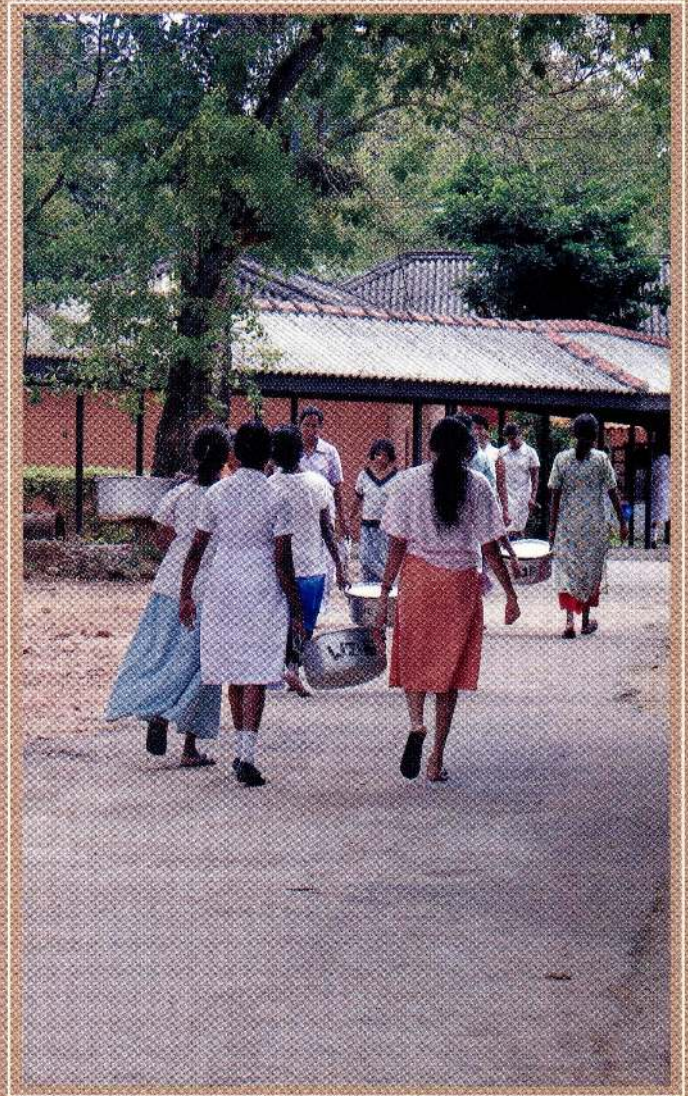














It is not easy to photograph people without making them feel naked and exposed while keeping their dignity intact. It is a "tight rope walk" between telling a true story to satisfy curiosity on one hand and exhibitionism on the other. In my opinion Dr. Sivathas is successful in finding the right equilibrium by adequately exposing the subject in an authentic way.

Passing moments of beautiful minds, the environment they are in had been captured thoughtfully and poetically. Images seemed to have inspired by years of experience and overflowing compassion for the subjects.

What's the limit between mentally "ill" and "healthy"? I do not think it's such an easy thing to define. But I know that we can learn a lot from these beautiful minds and it permits us to look in a different way on our own lives...

In my experience, they are very pleased if others are interested in their lives. They all need little love and compassion just like rest of us. I feel this is what Dr. Sivathas is also trying to tell us with his "photography against stigma".

Sujeewa de Silva
Photographer

4

Expression & Emotion



*Life is a comedy for those who think
And a tragedy for those who feel.*























Technology is so advance with all different lenses but wonders will never result without a creative mind.

There I found in that evening on 10th October 2007 at Mental Health Day exhibition, a set of wonders made through a lens by one such creative mind, a Doctor, posing the habitat, where the sick minds are healed.

May the triple gems be with him to do more wonders through his lense and of course with the stethoscope.

Dr. Sirimal Galbada Arachige

Head

Herbal Technology Division

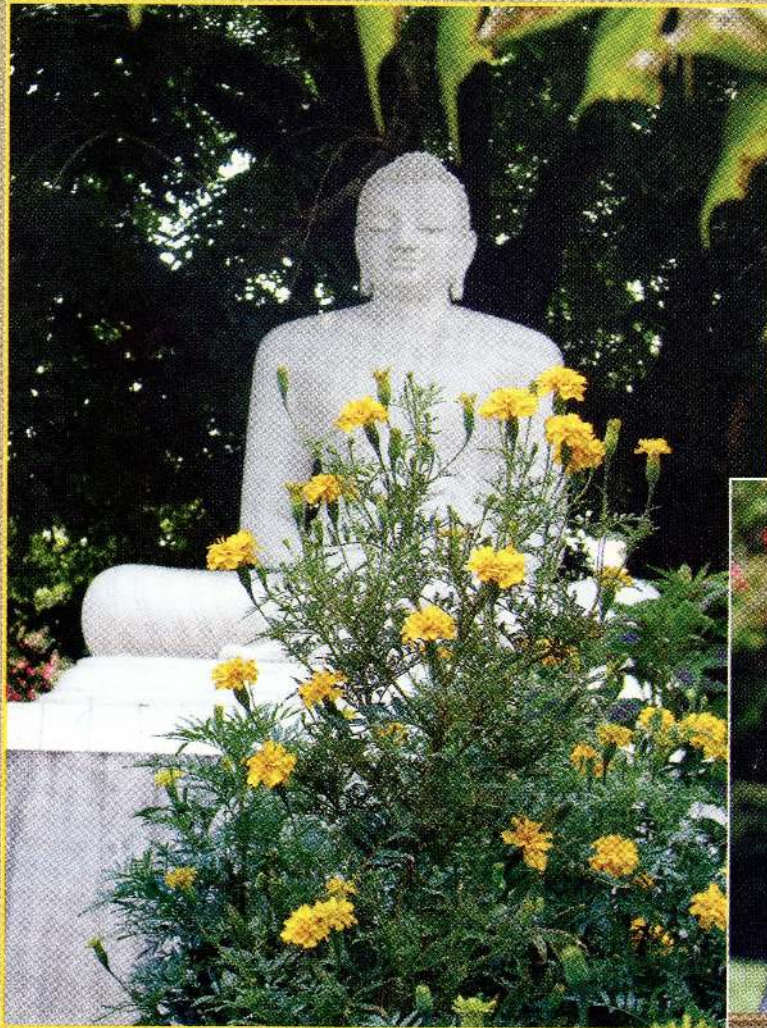
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Action & Motion



*The mind in its own place and in itself
can make heaven of hell and a hell of heaven*





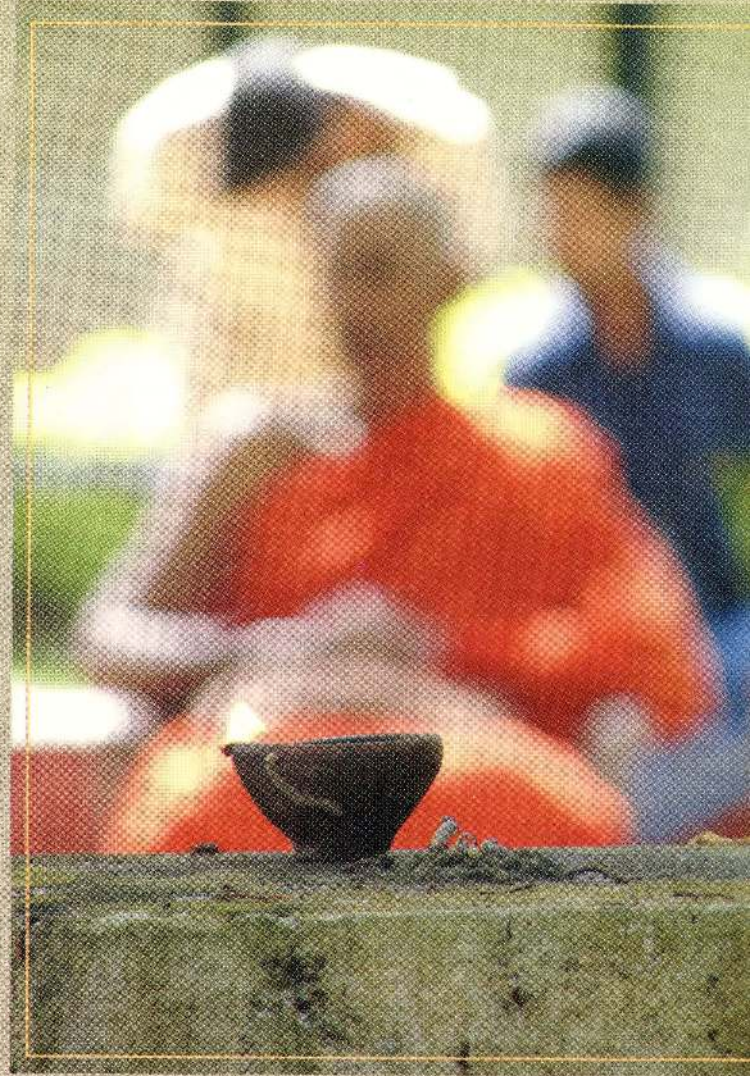
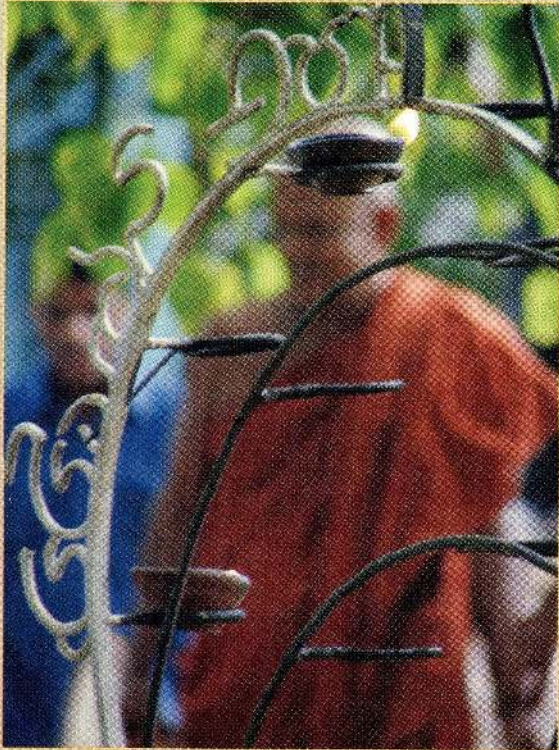




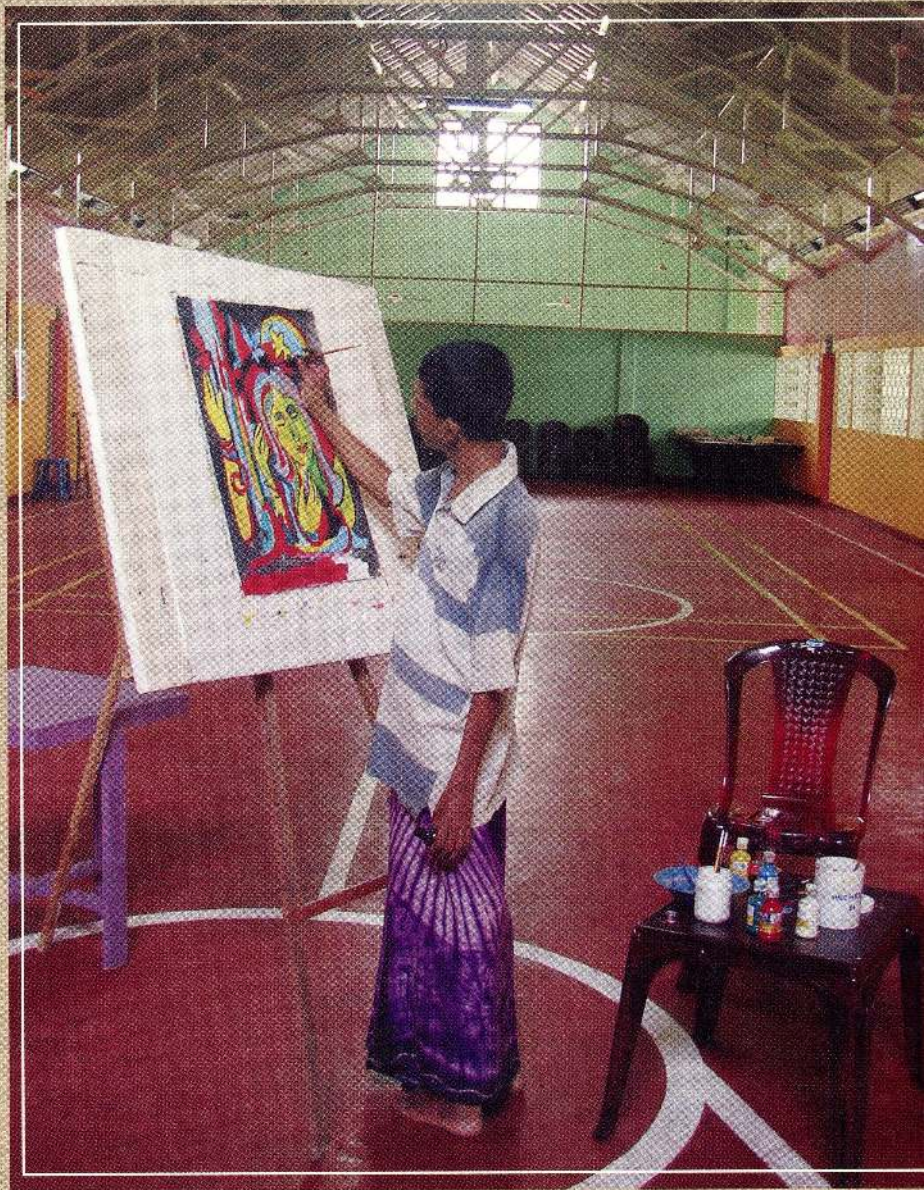


















I wrote this note with mixed feelings and emotions. Your photos are not only great but they clearly illustrates your sharp perspective and a wonderful empathy towards your "subjects".

I feel sad and pensive to see so much distress and anguish. Hence, I cannot view some of the photos twice.

Congrats and keep up your good and sensitive work.

Cheran

Dept of Sociology and Anthropology

University of Windsor, Ontario

Canada.

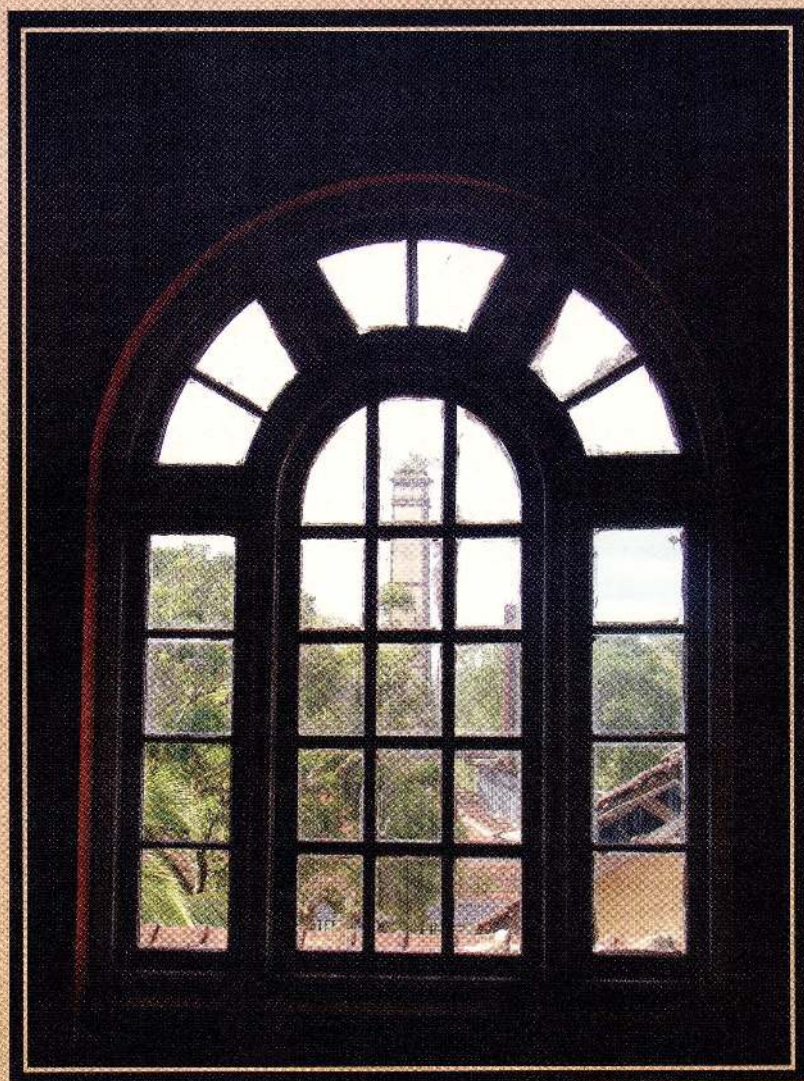


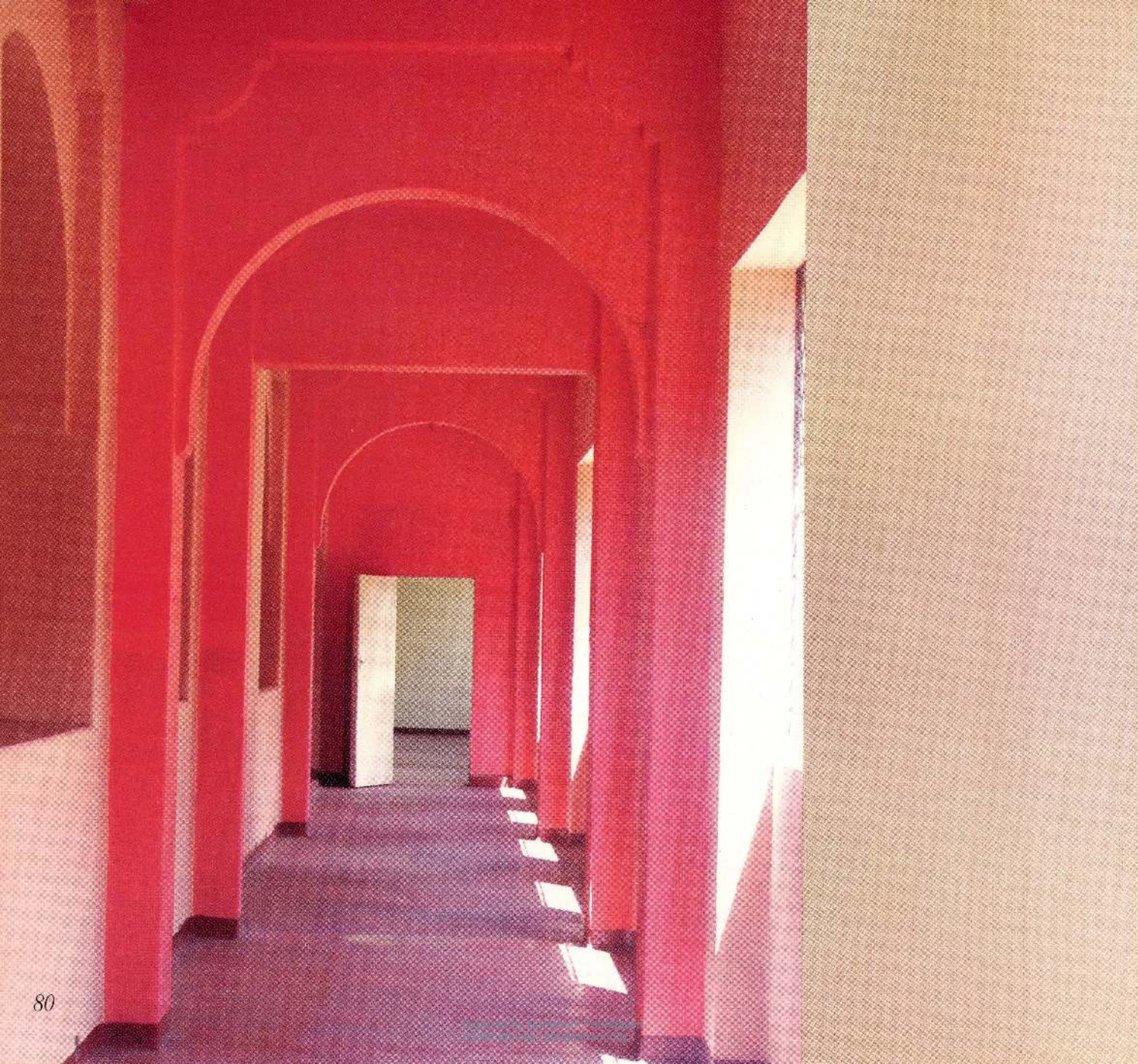
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Corridor & Architecture

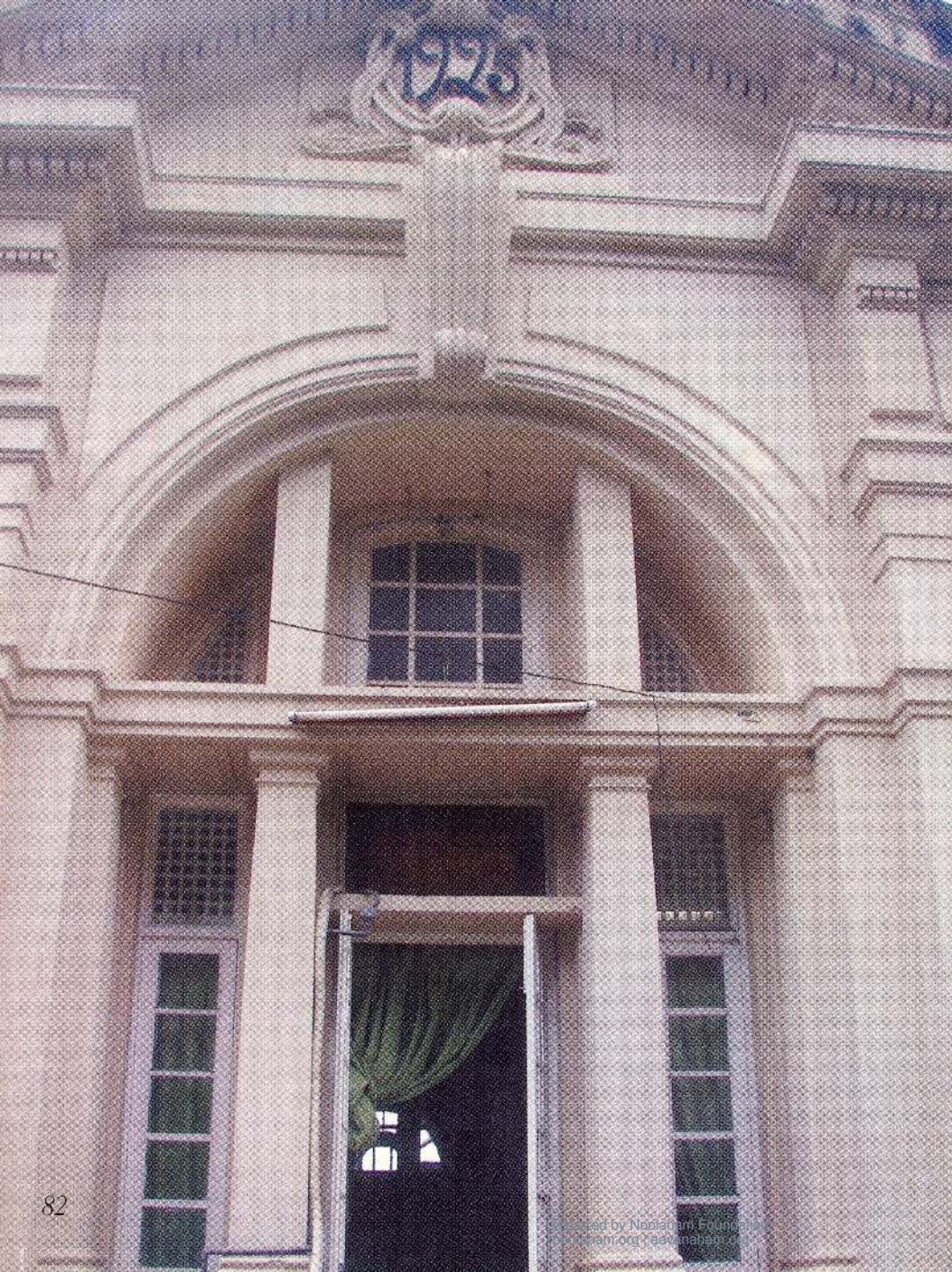
*Success is getting what you want
Happiness is wanting what you get*



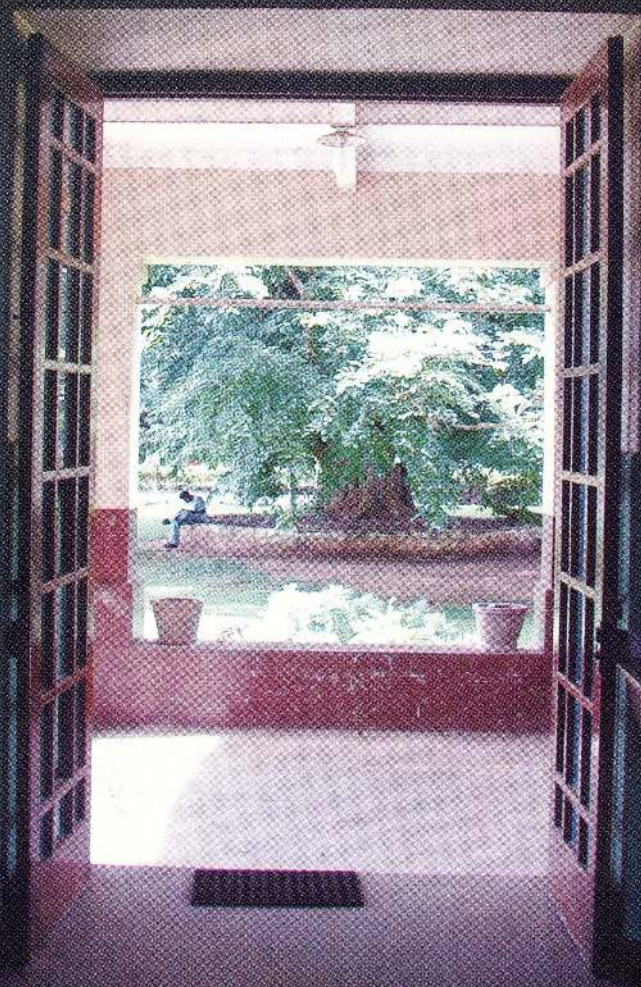


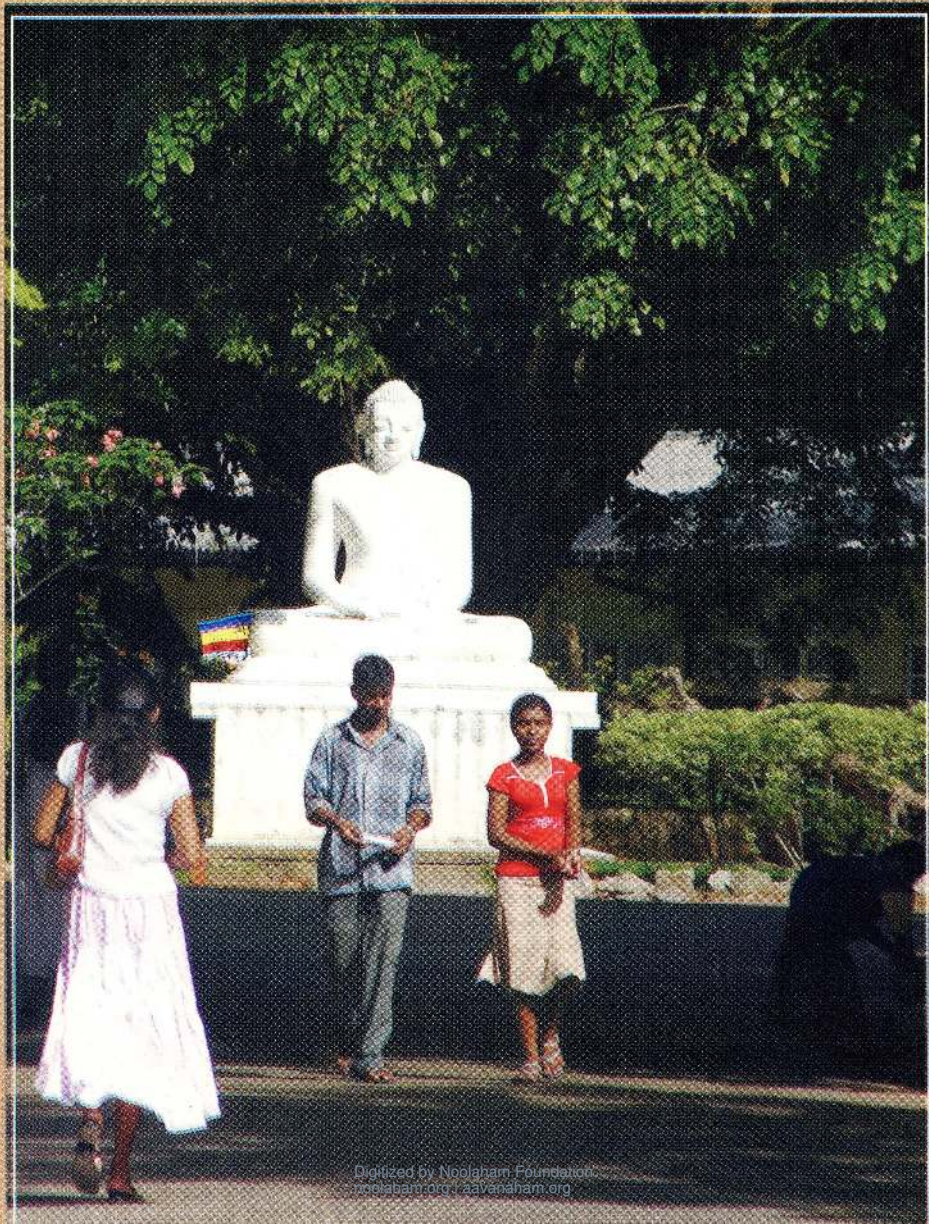






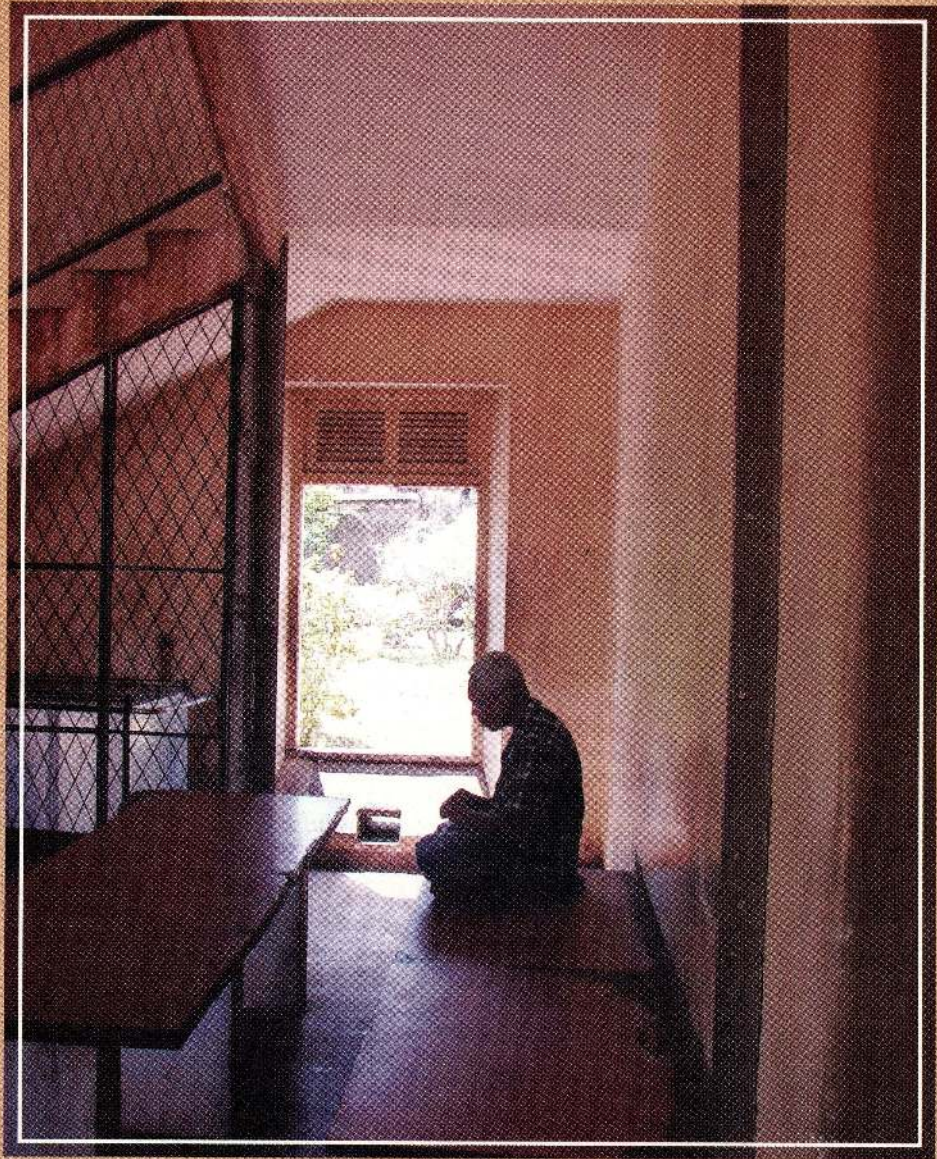
















I had a chance to see his exhibition myself and was very much touched to comprehend that some of the paintings were very artistic and up to the standard for an exhibition. It is not because of sympathy that we enjoyed the paintings but because of their finest quality.

The effort taken to bring all the paintings and photography in the form of a publication is great. Dr. S. Sivathas who is a psychiatrist has done the photography by himself. He is good not only in photography, but in poetry also. He has shown through his camera that there are so many things even in Angoda to enjoy of your mind is healthy. A person who would see the natural beauty in each and every bit of this universe can't end up with a life which is not successful.

Kohila Mahendran

Senior Counselor and writer

7

Art &
Paintings

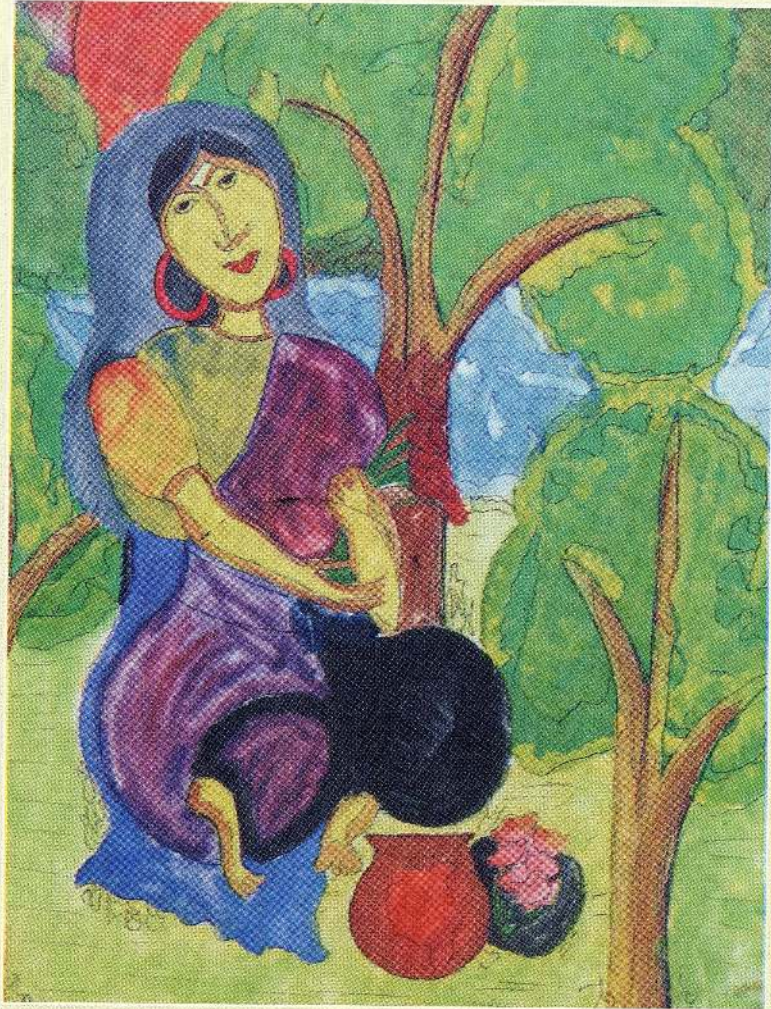


Our life is what our thoughts make it.







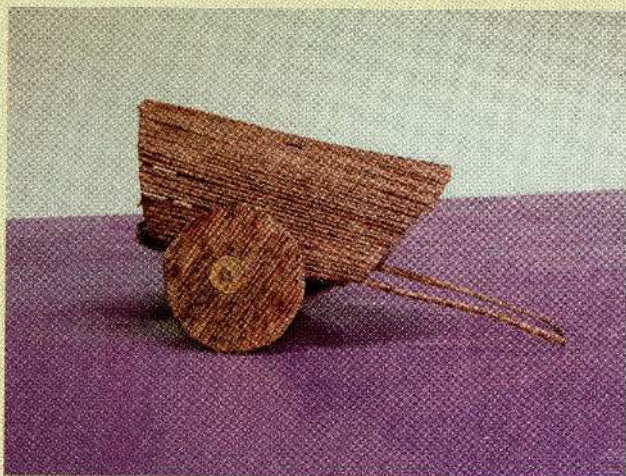


















World Mental Health day 2007

World Mental Health Day has been celebrating annually on 10th October since 1992. Every year a different theme is set by the world federation for world mental health day. The theme for 2007 is Mental health in changing world: the impact of culture and diversity.





ആരീശി 2007 Feelings

(Art against Stigma)

To raise public awareness on mental health issues and remove social stigma, the institute of psychiatry Angoda had an art and photography exhibition, on the title "Feelings" at the National Art Gallery on 10th & 11th of October 2007.

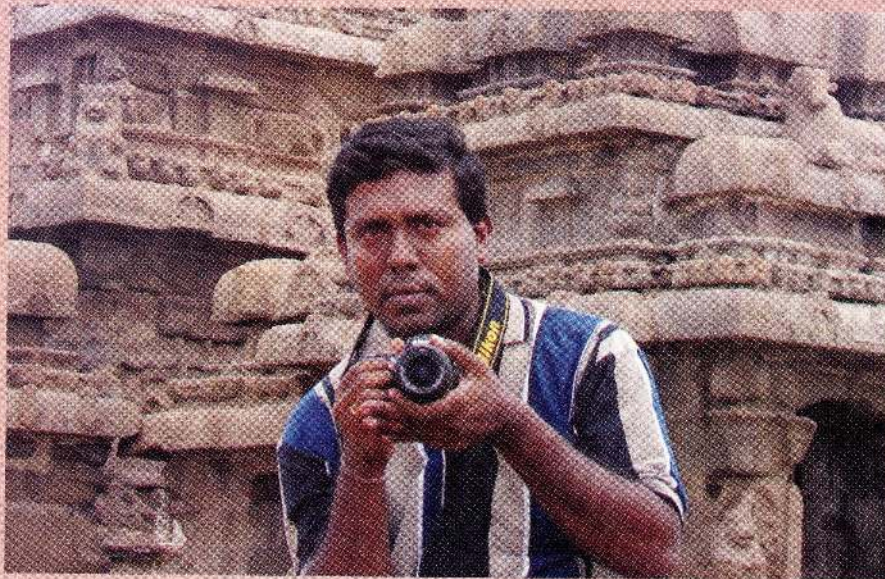




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Acknowledgement

My journey in the field of photography started as an experiment and fun, twenty years back. Gradually I got engulfed into it and developed an intense interest which helped enormously to shape my personality.

I am very much glad that I was successful in conducting a photography exhibition at Art Gallery on the Mental Health Day - 10th & 11th of October 2007

I would be failing in my duty if I don't express my gratitude to those whose contribution made my venture a success.

First of all, I thank the director - Angoda Mental Hospital, other consultants and my colleagues and friends for their encouragement and necessary enlightenment in making this event a breakthrough.

I would also wish to shed my gratitude to the other staff attached to Angoda Mental Hospital without whose support this experiment would not have been a success.

A special thanks to my patients attached to Mental Hospital Angoda, as they are my inspiration for this endeavor.

Last but not the least I would like to thank those who have helped me in various ways in making this task a possible.

Dr. S. Sivathas



The beauty of life of mentally ill is not entirely lost. The mental illness has not destroyed the whole person for ever but only a few facets of life amongst many and temporary. How they see the beauty of the world through their eyes is reflected in arts they create. Understanding those creations is peeking at the world through their eyes.

Siva makes our task easy by bringing it to life through his lens and adding the lost beauty.

Dr. Harischandra Gambheera

President

Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists

Dr. Sivathas is a dedicated and skilled psychiatrist. That is to say he has mastered the art of diagnosing and the managing mental illness as well as having the inherent motivation to help people suffering from psychological distress. But in addition to all this, he has the rare creative sense, the rare ability to look at life from an artistic perspective, to see relationships and patterns to express himself through poetry, art forms and photography. This booklet brings together these unique characteristics against a background of social stigma.

Prof. Daya Somasundram

Head, Dept. of Psychiatry

University of Jaffna