

**SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES
ON THE STUDENTS
OF A RESIDENTIAL
UNIVERSITY IN SRI LANKA.**

(A collection of three research communications)

Compiled and edited by:

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SATYA PUBLICATION - I.

COLOMBO - 4

JULY 1981.

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கொழும்பில்

யாழ்ப்பாணப் பொது நூலக வாரம்

1982 மே 15 - 21

நூல் அன்பளிப்பு

அன்பளிப்பு: 17673

ஒப்பெயர்:

முகவரி:

திகதி:

ஒப்பம்:

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DEDICATED TO

My first batch of students who
entered the University of Para-
deniya in 1978 and who taught
me how to teach.

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Published by:

S. S. Sri kantha for SATYA PUBLICATIONS,
10, L-Block, Ground Floor, Govt. Flats,
Colombo - 4, Sri Lanka,
and printed by S. Kannan at Kalapattanam Press
Main Street, Point Pedro.

PREFACE

A glance at the two bibliographies titled "Peradeniya Research" (1952—1974 period, compiled by C. R. De Silva and Daya De Silva; 1975—1980 period, compiled by Daya De Silva and Nirmalie Jayasuriya) reveals that, apart from a single research publication by Jayadeva Hettiarachy (one of my senior colleagues), no other sociological literature is available on the undergraduates of the University of Peradeniya. Therefore, I had compiled together in a book form, three research communications relating to the sociological studies on these university students. Two of the communications were presented at the Annual Sessions of Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science in 1978 and one on ragging was presented at the Ceylon Studies Seminar in 1980.

The social atmosphere in the University of Peradeniya had fascinated me a great deal; hence I developed an interest to study the behaviour of students who reside in this University. Since the central theme of two of the papers revolve around sex at this juncture, I wish to associate with the views of Alex Comfort. To quote him,

"The ease, popularity and emotive tone of the literature of sex and behaviour are sufficient warnings to anyone who is invited to add to it, and I have done so reluctantly. While it is true that full public discussion and information is essential in this field, it is also true that the task of deflating the emotional currency of sex is equally important..."

(Introduction, in SEX IN SOCIETY; Penguin Bks. Ltd. 1966)

These sociological studies were the result of research and reading done during my leisure time, when I could consider myself somewhat relieved of the teaching and research in Biochemistry. However crude the methods adopted in these studies may be, and however tentative and controversial the inferences drawn as findings may be, I humbly feel that these research communications may form the nucleus for the other researchers to build up their investigations.

During my four year stay (1977-1981) in Peradeniya, though I had mixed with hundreds of individuals the names of Dr. Navam Hettiarachchy, Dr. J. Madava Hettiarachchy, Dr. S. Gunasingam, Dr. K. Sivakanesan, S. Surendrakumar, K. Kandiah, P. Vivekanandan, V. Mathavan, P. Pushparaj, B G. Padmabandu, S. Sugumar and N. Shanmugalingam ring in my heart forever. I wish to inscribe these names as a token of my remembrance for their many acts of guidance and friendship, during this four year period.

Finally I owe my thanks to the fellow research workers and the students who gave so much of their precious time to contribute to these studies.

Sachi. Sri Kantha

Dept. of Biochemistry,
Faculty of Medicine,
University of Peradeniya.
8th May 1981.



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE
1978 MEDICAL ENTRANTS (TAMIL MEDIUM)
OF UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA *

S. Sri kantha

(Dept. of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine,
University of Peradeniya.)

INTRODUCTION:

Since students are the product of their socio-cultural experiences, these factors need to be understood, if appropriate decisions are to be made, with regards to the developmental plans of this country. This is particularly so with the university students. There is great competition for entry into the Medical Faculty of our Universities. So far, the selection procedures have been largely based on the academic performance at the GCE Adv. Level examination.

The present study was undertaken to evaluate the socio-economic and academic background of the Tamil Medical students (University of Peradeniya); in addition the study was directed to find out the interests, views and opinion of these students on basic problems affecting the future; their own future and the future of the society at large.

Studies of this nature had been reported for Canadian women students by Nelson-Jones & Fish (1970) for Malaysian students by Wagner (1970) and for Finnish students by Moilanen & Ihalainen (1974). It is envisaged that such a study could be of great value, not only as a contribution to the understanding of present day youth, but also as a pointer to the future and a contribution to the problem of the expanding universities.

* Presented at the 35th Annual Sessions of Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science; Section F; on 18-12-1979

Hypotheses to be tested:

1. Majority of the entrants come from upper middle class and upper class elite families.
2. Majority of the entrants have their secondary education at the prestigious urban-based Govt. schools or colleges of Christian background.
3. One of their parents have a university degree in majority of the cases.

Study Population and Methods of Study:

A questionnaire containing 50 questions, was administered to those Tamil speaking students of Medicine at University of Peradeniya, who enrolled for the first time in Aug. 1978. It consisted of 4 parts: (i) personal background - 20, (ii) college background - 8, (iii) preparation for a university career - 14 (iv) residential life in Peradeniya - 8. Allowances were made in some questions to cross check the validity of others.

In addition, personal interviews were held with the students in a natural conversational manner. Interviews lasted upto 30 mins. apiece. This was supplemented with qualitative observations made by the author personally and also with information provided by those who are in day-to-day contact with the students. The study is thus based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative observations.

Medical Faculty Entrants - 1978 by media:

<u>Media</u>	<u>Number</u>
Sinhala (Peradeniya & Galle)	106
Tamil	34

The questionnaires were returned by 33 students (97%). Of the 33 in the population, 16 were boys and 17 were girls.

respondents	—	33
Non-respondents	—	01
percentage response	—	97

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS:

Table 1 (District background)

<u>district</u>	<u>Number (%)</u>
Jaffna	54
Colombo	50
Upcountry	12
Batticaloa	3

Place of residence for last 10 years.	Native place of origin		Contacts with the place of origin	
	No (%)	No (%)	present No (%)	absent No (%)
Colombo	27	Jaffna 27	27	—
Colombo	3	Batticaloa 3	—	3
Batticaloa	3	Jaffna 3	3	—
Kandy	3	Jaffna 3	8	—

District background: Table 1 illustrates that 54% of the population came from Jaffna, and 30 from Colombo. The rest is shared by Upcountry and Batticaloa districts. It is significant to note that no students had come from districts like Mannar, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Amparai and Kalmunai.

Table 2 (Social background)

A) Occupation of the father

Occupation	number (%)
Professional	54
Proprietor / Manager	12
Retired Pensioner	18
Clerical	9
Unemployed	3
Information not given	3

(B) Approximate family income/month

Social strata	income	number (%)
working class	Rs 500 & below	6
Lower middle class	Rs.501-1000	24
Upper middle class	Rs.1001-1500	30
Upper class	Rs.1501-2000	24
Upper class	Rs 2000 & above	15

Social Background: Table 2 (A) gives the distribution by father's occupations. 54% are children of Professionals, while 12% of the population had fathers at proprietorial / managerial levels.

The approximate family income / month, were categorised in table 2(B). The lower middle class and working class students together form 30% of the population. The majority (69%) came from the upper middle class and the upper class.

Hence, Peradeniya Tamil Medical entrants who constitute the 1978 population are, products of a middle class cum upper class culture, and in turn they foster middle class attitudes with an upper-class slant.

Table. 3: Family background:

3 (A) Parents' education		
educational grade	Father (%)	Mother
Upto 8th grade or less	3	9
SSC	12	42
HSC	30	30
University degree	39	15
Post Graduate degree	15	3

Family Background: The majority of the students came from well educated families (vide table 3A). 54% had one of their parents (father) with university degrees, while 18% had both parents with university education in Sri Lanka (table 3B).

3(B) University education of the elders in the family:

<u>type</u>	<u>Number (%)</u>
Subject - eldest in the family	36
Subject - having elders with univ. education in Sri Lanka	42
Subject - having elders, without univ. education in Sri Lanka	21

In order to know their home background they were asked about their family size and home life. (vide table 3C and 3D). The population is equally divided in the family size, with 30% coming from small families, as well as 30% coming from large families. 39% falls in the intermediate category. 51% described their home life as "happy and prosperous", and for 42% it is "all right."

3 (C) Number of children in the family:

<u>category</u>	<u>number (%)</u>
3 and below	30
4 - 5	39
6 - 8	30

3 (D) Home life:

<u>category</u>	<u>number(%)</u>
happy and prosperous	51
all right	42
happy, but uncertain	6

Table 4: Academic Background:

4(A) Colleges in which they studied for Adv. Level:

<u>District</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>Number(%)</u>
Jaffna	Vembadi G.H.S.	18
	St. Johns College	9
	J / Hindu College	6
	J / Central College, Jaffna College, Hartley College, Mahajana College, Skandavarodaya College, J / Hindu Ladies College and Holy Family Convent)	21

Table 4 (A) cont.

Colombo	Royal College	9
	St. Bridgets Convent	6
	Methodist College	6
	(Holy family Convent & Good Shepherd Convent)	6
Kandy	St. Anthonys College, St. Sylvesters College	9
	Akurana Al Ahsa MMV	3
Batticaloa	Govt. College	6
Bandarawela	B / St. Josephs	3

4 (B) District from which they entered the University

district	Number (%)
Jaffna	54
Colombo	27
Kandy	9
Batticaloa	6
Badulla	3

4 (C) Number of attempts in GCE/AL. at which they entered:

attempt	number (%)
1st	24
2nd	66
3rd	9

4 (D) Interpretation of the A/L Performances:

Adv. Level grades were scored on the students' performance for the entry into the university. The scores were based upon a system which takes the grades of their Adv. Level performance. Thus,

A grade — 4 points; B grade — 3 points;

C grade — 2 points S grade — 1 point.

(Ideal) Maximum obtainable score: 16

Minimum obtainable score: 4

4 (D)i. Performances of the entire population in

Apr. 1977 exam:

Adv. scores	number (%)
11 (the highest)	6 (grades obtained 3B & 1C)
10	9
9	21
8	54
7	6
5 (the lowest)	3 (grades obtained 1C & 3S)

<u>Ord. Level scores</u>	<u>number (%)</u>
21 (the highest)	3 (grades obtained 6D, 1C, 1S)
20	3
17-18	36
15-16	30
13-14	24
12 (the lowest)	3 (grades obtained 5C, 2S)

75% qualified the Ord. Level in their first attempt itself. (Dec. 1973, Dec. 1974)

Academic background: Table 4A shows the colleges in which the students had studied for Adv. Level. Almost all have had their secondary education at the prestigious urban - based govt. schools or colleges of Christian background, 54% had entered from Jaffna district, while Colombo district contributed for 27%. The majority (66%) had entered in their 2nd CCE Adv. level attempt, while 24% had gained entry in their first A/Level attempt itself.

The best grades of the population (3B and 1C) were obtained by 2 boys, one from Jaffna and another from Kandy. The lowest grade 1C and 3S was also obtained by a boy, who entered from Bandarawela. Two girls, one from Jaffna and another from Batticaloa, had 3C and 1S, as the lowest grades from these districts. Of the 9 students who entered from Colombo, all except one had B, 2C, S as their Adv. Level grades. The other one had received 2B, C, S.

93% had received some sort of private tuition, when preparing for the Adv. Level examination (table 4D). Of these 66% attributed that, if they were not provided with this additional help, they couldn't have proceeded further.

"As there was high competition to enter, a further knowledge than only school teaching seemed important, though teaching facilities were adequate in school!"

is one of the commonly cited reason, for receiving private tuition. 27%, though they had received private tuition, felt that it was not of great significance for them. The following remark made by a student is typical of this category.

"There is no need for private tuition if the teachers are very keen and good. As there was no teacher in our school for botany for a short time, I had tuition only for botany. It did no good. I only got a pass for it."

The conflict experienced by some, between school teachers and private tuition was pointed out by one student as follows:

"Teachers wanted us to do well, without going for tuitions which is impossible and they hated people going for tuition."

Impact of Secondary Education: At least one half of the population, had only praise for their colleges. For example,

1. "The teachers encouraged us to study. Importance was given to the practical classes, by assessments being given continuously "

2. "Since ours is a private school teachers don't get transferred. Except for a few, others were interested in the educational standard of the school. Good facilities were made available and our school has one of the best laboratories in Jaffna."

are some of the typical comments, made in this regard. Of the remaining half, a quarter, though praising their colleges, also saw some drawbacks in the college atmosphere. These drawbacks were described or hinted at in the following terms.

1. "Facilities were very good. Teachers were very kind, helpful and good disciplinarians, but the teaching wasn't upto the standard required for a competitive exam, to enter the university. But the school as such was lovely."

2. "We had all the facilities we needed. Our teachers were very nice and took a personal interest in us. But then teaching was useless; I mean not sufficient for the high standards expected. We played the fool at practical classes."

There were also a few extremely critical assessments of the colleges in which they had studied. They took the form of remarks such as,

1. "Teachers showed interest in their private tuition and neglected college work. Practicals were neglected."

2. "Actually I went to tuition classes, because at that time we didn't have teachers for Tamil medium in the school. All had been transferred; for more than 1½ years, I was in the school without teachers for 3 subjects out of 4. We didn't do the practicals well. We finished only about 50% of the A/L work. But I didn't depend entirely on tuition. My results were also due to my own hard work"

Career Intentions:

When asked to indicate where they expected to be 5 years from now only, 30% indicated that they hoped to be working in Govt. Service (table 5)

Table 5: Career Intentions:

<u>intention</u>	<u>Total No. (%)</u>	<u>Boys (%)</u>	<u>Girls (%)</u>
i. to work in govt. services	30	15	15
ii. self employment (private practice)	3	—	3
iii. to teach in university or work in a research organization	18	12	6
iv. like to go abroad, as early as possible	12	9	3
v. cannot decide now & my decision depends on exist- ing circumstances.	36	12	24

while 18% preferred to teach in university or work in a research organisation. 12% indicated that they like to go abroad as early as possible.

It is significant to note that 36% are in the "undecided group", and chose the response, "cannot decide now and my decision depends on existing circumstances". The majority (24%) of this lot are girls. It is not possible at this time, to say whether the girls in the "undecided" group remain so because, the possibility of immediate marriage impedes a more definite occupational choice. It can be noted without exception, that girls are expected to marry. At the most westernized and professionalized levels of our society, girls with any aptitude are encouraged to go through the university and prepare themselves for a profession. Fathers often express a preference for medicine and teaching. The reasons given are that these professions may be practised wherever their husbands may be posted.

Hence, the likely increase in the proportion of girls entering medicine in the near future, indicates that the career perspectives of girl students in current medical school programmes should be given more specific attention by administrators as well as researchers.

Reading outside their subject:

Many students confessed that they do not read enough. Nearly a quarter in the population stated that they had "no time now" or were, "too busy, working routine academic work". There were few who read for relaxation only and didn't go beyond novels, detective stories and science-fiction. Most of those who read magazines mentioned, "Time", "Readers Digest", "Mirror", "Illustrated Weekly of India" and Tamil weekly pulp magazines as their favourites. The boys had specific interests in particular fields of science; one is interested in Astronomy and another in Wild-Life.

When considering the newspaper reading, many students (at least one quarter of the population) read more than one paper a day; on the other hand, about 10% hardly ever read daily papers, although many said that they had occasion to glance through the papers during weekends. The popular daily newspapers are Daily News and Virakesari. Among Sunday newspapers, the Observer is read by the majority of the students. It seems that girl students were not very assiduous readers of newspapers.

Religious Beliefs:

In the population, we had 24 Hindus, 8 Christians and 1 Muslim. These figures refer to the students' normal religious affiliations and were generally those of the childhood background. Without dividing according to religious background, another classification adopted, showed that the population consisted of (a) believers — 26 (b) agnostics — 4 (c) atheists — 3.

"I really can't say anything about it" is the typical comment of Agnostics. Atheists or agnostic atheists gave their views in more strongly worded negative terms, being definitely 'anti'. For e. g.:

- 1 "Religious beliefs has no effect on me."
- 2 "It made me a slave, especially mentally; it made me to believe all sorts of conservative ideas, habits which cannot suit for the modern world. It showed that there is atheism in which one can help and love a humanly manner".

All the agnostics and atheists were boys, and all the girls came into the category of believers.

Though believers constituted the majority, not all the believers seemed to be equally firm in their faith. Only about half of this category, actively practised their religion in one way or the other; the rest are believers in a wider sense.

Two students who claimed to have had mystical or semi-mystical experiences described them in terms such as,

- 1 "Till the age of 16 though I was a Christian, I didn't know God in a real way. Then one day, I gave my life to Christ, taking him as my Lord, Saviour asking forgiveness for my sins. From then, its what GOD WANTS, that mostly predominates my life."
- 2 "Since the day that I realised that Jesus died for my sin so that I may have a relationship with Him,, my whole life has changed.... God has made this change in my life."

A few are believers who had developed a sort of personal religion with very strong doubts about dogma, which verged on agnosticism. These would say,

- 1 "Religion is very important to everyone. It plays a fair amount of part in my life. I don't believe in going to temples and exhibit my religious feeling."
- 2 "I don't like to obey one religion; all the religions preach the same virtues."
- 3 "I believe in the existence of God - that is all"

It was evident that all the Christians are practising believers, while athiests and agnostics are present only among the Hindus; i. e. the Christian students of this population showed a greater belief in, and dependency on their religion than did the Hindu students.

The lack of religious interest in some of the Hindus may be explained as follows: Hinduism had been transmitted from generation to generation through the family and through stories, dramas and rituals performed both in the home and in the temple. Now, there are no formal ways of initiating children into the religious rituals and there

is no particular functionary whose special mission is to train them. Nor are there such institutions as Sunday schools. In contrast, the Christian students belong to a more highly organised religion than do the Hindus. Regular church attendance, participation in the church's activities, and family prayers at home are all essential duties for those belonging to this faith.

Political Interests and Views:

In considering the political interests and views of the students, we have to take into account, the influence of home background and political interests of the parents. Most students came from upper or upper middle class families and had a conservative background.

Table 6: Political Interest:

6 (A) Level of interest	Total No. (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
i. a neutral observer	24	9	15
ii. interested in the ideals of one party	36	21	15
iii. least interested in what is happening	24	9	15
iv. no comments	15	9	6

6. (B) Distribution according to the districts of
residence:

	Jaffna	Colombo	upcountry	Batticaloa
i. neutral observer	12	6	3	3
ii. interested in the ideals of one...	33	3	—	—
iii. least interested...	6	18	—	—
iv. no comments	3	3	9	—

Table 6 shows that 60% were deeply interested in the ideals of one party, and remaining 24% categorised themselves as "neutral observers". Another 24% were "least interested in what is happening"; and 15% preferred not to comment. There

was certain amount of political apathy among the girl students. This was particularly so in those who came from Colombo & Upcountry districts.

It is inferred that political views bore some relation to the district origin of the students. Those who came from Jaffna, were more interested in politics, while majority of those who are from Colombo were least interested. This may be correlated with their family background as well. Upcountry students preferred to carry the tag, "no comments"

When it came to party affiliations, 11 of the students were pro-TULF in their views, and CP had one sympathiser, in the population. Those with definite pro-TULF views were asked whether there is any other system which is acceptable to them and can be implemented over here easily. That made them think hard and after a while, in most cases, came the answer: "No. I can't think of any such system." A few said "Perhaps, this can be done easily if both sides make clear understanding of each other, and still there's time left."

Extra - curricular activities:

Commonly identified extra-curricular activities for the students in their college days are given in table 7.

Table 7: Extra curricular activities:

Q: Did you participate in the extra-curricular activities in college?

<u>response</u>	<u>Total(%)</u>	<u>Boys(%)</u>	<u>Girls(%)</u>
yes	85	33	51
no	15	15	—

Q: Do you hope to continue (or initiate) these activities in the university?

responses	Total(%)	Boys(%)	Girls(%)
i. 'Yes' in college-'Yes' in varsity	36	24	12
ii. 'Yes' in college-'No' in varsity	48	9	37
iii. 'No' in college-'Yes' in varsity	6	6	—
iv. 'No' in college-'No' in varsity	9	9	—

Commonly identified extra-curricular activities:

- for boys in college: leadership in social, religious activities, chess, swimming, basketball, art (drawing, decoration, drama, music) hockey, soccer, cricket & athletics.
- for girls in college: drama, sports (swimming, athletics, netball), girl guide, literary activities like debates, ballets, music, participation in societies (Tamil / English / Science / Christian) and quiz contests.
- for boys in varsity: tennis, badminton, table tennis, swimming, art, hockey & soccer.
- for girls in varsity: Christian society, drama, music (classical).

It is evident that 84% of the population had participated in extra-curricular activities of one form or other. It is interesting to note that, all the girls in the population (51%) had taken part in indoor as well as out-door activities, during their college days.

When asked, whether they hope to continue these activities in the varsity, 48% of the population answered in the negative. This was particularly so in the girls (39%). Almost all, except 3, felt that they are hardly pressed for time to take part in these. One, who had actively taken part in a wide range of activities during her college days, mentioned

"Since I'm a female, it is impossible to do athletics, netball, ballets etc. in the university."

Those who felt that they could still afford time to participate, preferred to limit the activities to the indoor circles.

Of the boys, 24% preferred to continue their extra-curricular activities even in the varsity, and 9% felt that they cannot do this, because they are unable to cope with time. It is also notable that 6% of the boys who haven't taken part in any of the activities in college days, liked to initiate in some sort of activities, during their varsity career. Another % opted to continue their sedate existence even in varsity, without contributing anything or developing some new interests.

High degree of extra-curricular participation among the study population during their college days can be correlated with their urban, elitist college background. High percentage drop of extra-curricular participation after entering the university which is prominent among the girl students, may be due to the following reasons: (i) lack of time (ii) change in attitude, that their medical discipline is a tough one and 100% concentration is needed for it. (iii) lack of adequate facilities in the varsity environment to continue their extra-curricular interests.

Impact of Residential Life:

Almost all the students lived in the halls of residence. The boys were in Hilda Obeyesekere Hall, and the girls were in Ramanathan Hall. Most of them seemed to have enjoyed their stay at the halls, and showed their appreciation in remarks such as

- 1 "I've made many friends from other faculties as well."
- 2 "We are always talking endlessly; and conversations last to the small hours in somebody's room."

There were also some criticisms, but these were mostly fairly mild. For example.

1. "There is social mixing among the students, but not with the staff."

2 "Hall life was interesting at first, but gets boring with time."

3 "Hall meals are horrible."

Some objected to clique-forming tendencies, and segregation by races. Their observation, with regard to some other relevant features of residential life, are shown in table 8.

Table 8: Residential life in Peradeniya:

<u>statements</u>	<u>agree disagree no com-</u>		
	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>ments(%)</u>
i. I feel lonely and homesick at least during certain periods of stress.	63	30	6
ii. I managed to make many friends of the opposite sex, after I came to Peradeniya.	69	24	6.
iii. I feel nervous, when introduced to a stranger, belonging to opposite sex.	18	69	12
iv. It is disturbing for me, to see courting on public, in the campus vicinity.	18	60	21
v. There should be censorship, at least for undergrads on sexual ground of plays, and films.	39	39	21
vi. I feel getting 'hitched' before graduation does distract the studies.	15	63	24

- (1) 63% agreed that they feel lonely and homesick, at least during certain periods of stress.
- (2) 69% agreed that they managed to make many friends of the opposite sex, after they came to Peradeniya.
- (3) 63% disagreed with the statement that "getting hitched" before graduation does distract the studies.
- (4) Only 39% were opinion that "there should be censorship, at least for undergrads on sexual grounds of plays and films."

Conclusion:

From this study on the 1978 Medical entrants (Tamils), it can be inferred that those who entered the University of Peradeniya for this particular discipline of study had the following features in common.

- (1) 69% of the population came from the socially elevated group - i. e. upper middle class and upper class families.
- (2) Almost all had their secondary education at the prestigious urban-based Govt. schools or colleges of Christian background.
- (3) 93% had received some sort of private tuition when preparing for the Adv. Level examination.
- (4) Majority (66%) had entered in their second attempt of GCE Adv. Level
- (5) 54% had one of their parents (mainly father) with university degrees. In addition, 42% have elders, with university education in Sri Lanka.

It was also evident that religion, politics and arts are the 3 main fields in which extra-curricular interests were shown by the study population. Though the majority are not active participants in all 3 fields, many of them have an active interest in one of them at least. A student with very active

interests in one field tended not to be interested in the others. However, deep interests in religion and the arts often went together, but deep interests in religion and politics rarely did so.

In conclusion, the author likes to stress that there is ample scope for further, full-scale research into our university student's life and work, of which we know practically nothing at present.

Acknowledgement:

Throughout the study I enjoyed the ready help and cooperation of the 33 students who so kindly gave me their time, their trust and confidence, so making this study possible. Hence, I'm grateful to all of them—namely Berti, Elanko, Ganesh, G Mohan Jeya, Lalith, Mano, Murali, R. Raj, R Mohan, Saseen, Sasi, Shiva, Sri, Thiru, Wijay, Ananthi, Amirtha, Chris, Chandri, Deva, Dharini, Geetha, Gowrie, Kamalini, Manju, Pooma, Rahma, Raji, Rathi, Shanti, Vasanthi & Vasuki.

Appendix

All the figures expressed are in percentages.

Ethnic and Religious background:

Ethnic group	Number(%)	Religious group	Number(%)
Tamils	96	Hindus	72
Moor	3	Christians	24
		Muslim	3

Age Composition of the population:

born in	Age on 1978	number(%)
1955	23	3
1956	22	9
1957	21	12
1958	20	39
1959	19	30
19 0	18	3
information not given	—	3

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Preliminary Random Observations On
The Courting Behaviour Of Under Graduates
In a Residential University In Sri Lanka.*

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Introduction:

Investigation of sexual habits and practices is a relatively recent development in science. Scientific observations and studies in this interesting field are few, especially in this country. The pioneers in this field of study are, Kinsey **et al** (1948, 1953), Schofield (1965) and Masters & Johnson (1966). Kinsey relied much on verbal evidence: he talked endlessly to the men and women who came forward (or were induced in some way) to tell all. Two criticisms of this approach were: (1) Were the people interviewed a reasonably random sample of the population? (2) Do they tell the truth? On both points much scepticism has been expressed (for e.g.: Maslow & Skoda, 1955) and no doubt such scepticism is right and proper. Later, Masters & Johnson had the courage to go a step further. They were permitted to observe people making love and in this way were given an opportunity of checking not only what they said they did, but also whether they described matters correctly. Their study material consisted of approximately 700 people of whom a couple of hundreds or so were married couples.

Studies on sexual habits among the College and University students of America had been reported by Robinson **et al** (1968), Davis (1969), Keats & Davis (1970) and Bell & Chaskes (1970). As far as Peradeniya undergrads are concerned, their sexual behaviour pattern have yet to be studied in detail. An attempt is made here, just to note some relevant features of the residential undergrads' courting behaviour.

* Presented at the 35th Annual Sessions of Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science on 18th Dec. 1979; Section F—Social Sciences.

Study Population and Methods:

Study Population: Undergraduates of the university of Peradeniya. Almost all of them stay in the halls of residence.

Method: Mosser & Kalton (1971) had classified the methods of obtaining data about a group of people as follows: (a) documentary sources (personal documents like diaries, letters and autobiographies) (b) direct observation (c) questionnaire (d) interviewing. Of these, it was felt by the author that for a study of this nature, observation method can only be adopted, when taking into consideration all the conservative tendencies of a typical Sri Lankan society.

(Note: One like to express at this juncture that facts and data alone do not make a science, especially in a virgin field like this. We also need theories, postulates, unification and generalisations.)

Time of observation: mainly in the afternoon, evening, twilight hours to late in the night.

Places of observation: vicinity of the Girls' Halls of Residence, corridors of lecture blocks, library and the surroundings, corners, Gymnasium building and the adjacent locations, canteens, sports pavilion, riverbank, roads leading to the places of worship, Arts theatre (especially when films are shown), Open air blocks-summer houses.

Observation and Comments:

1. Con-sessions: A con-session is a conversation between two or more undergrads (can be with same sex or with opposite sex) which takes place in a relatively stationary situation. It should be

noted that the topic of a con-session need not be serious or weighty in nature. Episodes of humorous exchange, logical argument or the exchange of personal experiences may also properly constitute con-sessions.

Many con-sessions come about as a result of the attempts of individual participants to enhance their prestige rather than any deeply felt commitment that they have about a specific issue. It is these con-sessions which boosts the image of partners, who are "getting hitched", or "going steady" etc. Though dating may occupy only a small segment of a student's time, talk about dating is of immense importance for many undergrads, especially girls.

2. Partner selection: When it comes to choice of a mate, the 'choice' is not of course, a deliberate one at all, but is conditioned by circumstances about which, we don't know much enough to be entirely specific but which include the interplay of so many factors. Anyway, I'll try to generalise them in the following manner.

The "seniors" spend the least amount of time with their own sex, while the freshers have the most such time. It is difficult to tell, the undergrads of which faculty, have ample time, to spend in the company of the opposite sex, because their courses of study and the time taken for it varies. But generally, the students in the Arts-based courses, spend more time in the company of the opposite sex than any other category of undergrads. This is because they have to attend only a handful hours of lectures per week. Barring this short period of occupation, they've to "kill" the time in a satisfying manner; and they do so by partner-selection and getting hitched.

Those undergrads following a Science based discipline (Medicine, Dentistry, Agriculture, Veterinary Science, and Pure Science) have to attend

practicals, dissections, field work etc. in addition to following the lectures. And it is not wrong to say that, boys get to know more about girls, and about their behaviour during these practical sessions. These sessions provide flexible opportunity in that boys can attend to their work and at the same time they can roam around the laboratory or field doing a bit of eve-teasing, and of course the girls retaliate with 'adam teasing', if it can be called like that.

It is probably traditional in the campus, for the undergrads (boys) to select their partners, from among the fellow students of the batch, in the second year. Fresher girls are the chief objects of attention of the 'senior' boys (mainly 2nd years). In the guise of ragging, a senior attaches himself to his beloved 'selection', and get to know all the details about the girl, her background, education, family status, etc. (very personal details also, are not spared). And it is very common to see the 'senior' boys in Peradeniya chaperoning the fresher girls' to their halls of residence in the first two weeks of the academic year, which is the normal duration of the ragging period. The tradition had come down, that during ragging period, freshers should appear in white-and-white; so, any senior can have a try at a fresher, who have to nod her head, or answer in positive, to all the teasing questions. At the end of this 'ordeal' (I mean for ignorant fresher girl students), a certain proportion of the boys become successful in getting 'hitched'

'Senior' girls initiating a partnership with 'junior' boys are relatively uncommon, in almost all the disciplines of study. There may occur a few exceptional cases.

Initiation of Pairing: In accordance with the normal trends, the initiation stimulus is usually provided by the boy. The hints and messages are taken and passed on to the girl concerned, by her

close friends and/or by room-mates. For some boys the search for a mate is a highly self-conscious one. For others, it follows so effortlessly from the fun of dating that no conscious decisions are made at all.

Mutual lending and borrowing is a sign of close friendship; hence, books and notes may also serve the purpose of initiation of pairing. Offering practical assistance, one way or another, may also little by little, lead to initiation of pairing. A batch trip, an active interest in one particular extra-curricular activity (for e. g. sports drama, societies) and even ragging also serve as catalysts for the actual initiation to occur.

4 Campus 'dates': Two major kinds of campus 'dates' can be recognized. One is the formal party or dinner type date, often on a large group followed by dancing, much good fun, and a return to the hall in the small hours of the morning. The batch-dinner, hall 'socials', faculty 'nights', going down dances, farewell parties, 'hitch parties' or even birthday parties provide occasion for this sort of date. This kind of date is supposed to characterise the community life of residential university students.

The second kind of 'date' is the soulful date of the single couple, perhaps starting with evening stroll in the park or roadway, or even in the library but having its core in moonlit romance, placed in a nook or corner. The couple, though seated in a common place, like a canteen, library, theatre or grounds, remain unattached with the rest of the population. Their dating episode doesn't directly involve other people. The hour or two, they spend together, is filled mostly on satisfying personal and physical emotions. In a corner they sit under a hidden triangle, thereby evading direct exposure to a third person's eye. For about an hour or two they spend on talking, necking and petting. It is presumed that the only topic of discussion, revolve mainly

around private and personal affairs between them. This sort of conversation is only an accompaniment of erotic play.

5 Erotic play: The erotic play varies in intensity from pulling, pressing, hugging and kissing and also petting to extreme. As usual, the male partner dominates the scene, with the fair-partner responding passively. The male partner surveys the female anatomy in four stages of petting sequences: outside above the waist, outside below the waist, inside above the waist and inside below the waist. Of course, the last two stages are carried out in strict privacy in connivance with the darkness and around the pillars of the Arts theatre, Gymnasium and the corridors of lecture halls. These enormous numbers of building corners serve to explore freely the intimacies of sex, away from the prying eyes of batch-mates, and security controls. Even when the security officers happen to arrive at the scene, they tend to turn a blind eye!

6 Inter-racial and Inter-religious pairing: The family life in Sri Lanka, strongly disapproves of mixed pairing. This is particularly so, in inter-racial bonding than in inter-religious bonding. The final sanction upon a boy or a girl, who enters into a mixed affair, is 'outcasting'. Therefore it is not surprising that most undergrads conform to the norm of avoiding mixed affairs. Nevertheless, 'mixed affairs' do occur even if rarely.

Who are the deviants? The majority of these, are with Tamil boys and Sinhala girls; and if lesser number with Sinhala boys and Tamil girls. (Muslims who speak Tamil mainly, are included in the Tamil category, for the sake of convenience). It is common inference that, the majority who are involved in mixed affairs, have a knowledge of English; Any sustained relationship with another racial link, is

impossible for the partners, otherwise. Although there is hostility to inter-racial affairs in a typical Sri Lankan society, when it comes to the residential campus background, it is tolerated since it can more easily be broken off, after the partners had received their quota of sexual satisfaction.

The process of the initiation of an inter-racial affair is gradual, and in majority of the cases, it blooms only around the 2nd year or 3rd year, of the couples' residential life. It occurs mainly among the batch-mates, or body mates or group-mates and so on. A couple who carry on an inter-racial love affair have to accept drastic cultural changes. Of the two, one can no longer move closely with his/her friends, as often as he (she) used to. One of the two, can integrate only through an acceptance of the other's culture, in personal behaviour and so on. He (she) must also establish new inter-personal relationships with other undergrads.

Compared to inter-racial pairing, an inter-religious pairing is more tolerated in our society, if the partners belong to the same race; hence, the frequency of the occurrence of inter-religious pairing is more (Hindu - Christian and Buddhist - Christian) than that of an inter-racial pairing.

7 Reasons for Pairing at the Campus: The following can be cited as the main reasons, for the occurrence of pairing.

- i) Bandwagon effect: Pairing (or 'getting hitched') has become 'the thing to do'. Not only have this pairing become quite acceptable to the majority of the residential student population but the junior students are often directly or indirectly encouraged by the hitched seniors. Pairing of a friend or a room-mate or a batch-mate, encourages and contributes to another

another and soon the feeling spreads that, 'everybody is doing it, so why not try?'

- ii) The two-some nature of campus life: Not only is there a casual bandwagon effect, but there are subtle 'pressures' working to make paired life appear more comfortable and practical. The social life in a residential university, is a two-some experience. Generally speaking, such affairs as parties, dinners, socials, dances, art-festivals and film shows are considered as two some experiences.
- iii) Insecurity of our time: The general insecurity of our time is often thought by some as encouraging campus pairing. Anxieties concerning possible impending national disasters and closure of campus (for trivial reasons, during the major part of this decade) generate in undergrads a need to develop deep attachments with someone in order to achieve sexual satisfaction. For many undergrads who are free from the vigilant, prying eyes of their parents or guardians, the ideal time for experiencing sexual relief is the three-year period they spend in the campus. Hitching, they trust, is the type of relationship that will give them, some sort of excitement (or 'go') in the basic human instinct.
- iv) Stimulation of sexual attitudes: We are living in a period of 'sex age'. The mass media (cinema and the pulp magazines, novels in our island) must be held responsible for titillating and enticing an undergrad's sexual fantasies. The emphasis on sex appeal and the intense physical expression of love makes it difficult for undergrads to handle sexual arousals. This results in the unwillingness to defer sexual gratification until after marriage.

"Wherever we look and wherever we go there's something about sex. And it makes us look foolish not to find out about it ourselves", is an explanation given regarding the background of predicament, by a few 'hitched' undergrads. Another opinion is, "There aren't really many places to go around in Peradeniya; only a park and a few theatres in Kandy. After you've seen all the movies (and in most of the theatres, the released Sinhala films run for more than two months) we simply don't know how to kill time; and this especially so in the weekends, and poya days. So, the ideal pastime is to get hitched." And, "if you are in love with opposite sex you know—that's it".

- v) Economic buffer: There is also one extremely good reason (especially in the case of girls) for getting hitched, but under normal circumstances it is not divulged to anybody even to the partner. For a girl coming from a rural village, there wouldn't be much cash in her hand-bag, to spend for pocket expenses. Hence an ideal alternative to cover the embarrassment is to 'get hitched' to a boy, who will look after her in his pocket money. The expenses incurred for snacks, short eats, stationery, travelling, cosmetics etc. are paid out from the partner's purse.
- vi) Escapism: So many complexes arise for a newly arrived undergrad, in Peradeniya set-up. Urban-rural complex, high caste-low caste complex, wealthy-poor complex, 'fluent english-bad english' complex, and racial complex, are a few which can be identified here. In order to escape from the existing realities, the poor souls search for some sort of compassion and they obtain this by "getting hitched", I suppose.

Discussion:

In a typical rural village of Sri Lanka, whether at work or at leisure, whether inside the house or outside it, boy (girl) finds himself (herself) somehow surrounded by other elders. This ensures not only the lack of privacy but also a constant supervision by a group of elders. Here, in Peradeniya, this constant vigilance factor is hardly present. And when left in a surrounding with a host of opportunity and time, the arrows of cupid easily penetrates the undergrad's heart.

The curiosity, excitement and the ever-present liberty from the prying eyes of guardians and society elders, climaxes in the profuse pairing at Peradeniya University. A lot of rural girls get caught into the whirl of free-love, when they enter Peradeniya. I personally don't think that many girls in the campus, feel that being stroked by a boy is bad or dirty anymore.

There is accelerating evidence that pre-marital courting has become almost as accepted among campus girls, as with campus boys. Perhaps one of the most important factor that prevents Sri Lankan girls from making friendships, when they are with parents, is the fact that the majority in them still find most of their companionship of their homes. They therefore may not feel the need for the friendship of their peers. However, when they move into a new residential campus environment, they are often separated from their families and relatives. The girls discover that they must find new friends who can share their problems and guide them through novel experiences; this security, they may find among peers who are going through the same period of transition. The intimacy of the campus environment keeps the undergrads together for nearly three years or more, which is a long enough period for them to build up close relationships.

The established value of Oriental culture, that pre-marital courting is wrong, is crumbling. But there seems to be conflict of opinion for a significant number of campus girls, who come from conservative background. These girls have to decide how far they can lean. If they are not permissive they lose an ideal opportunity of mixing with opposite sex; yet, if they are too permissive, the news may leak to home sources and the consequences may upset the balance. But, even the campus girls from conservative background are much more open and free now, than their parents, with regard to the sexual attitudes.

Conclusion:

Living conditions at the University of Peradeniya are often far from easy living and give rise to strain & stresses which contribute to the undergrad's heavy mood, resulting in his urge towards sexual fantasy. Anxiety, worry, social, educational and family pressures, and the emotional imbalance of sexually immatured (but physically matured) students produce various sorts of sexual behaviour, which need attention and study.

The campus student of today is too hurried, too badly housed with too little recreational facilities and working, under too strenuous conditions. He/she needs psychological counseling, at least during certain periods of stress.

On general, the mental climate of the University of Peradeniya is ill-suited to relieving sexual tensions which often reach breaking point. When steps are taken to bring in more students from poor homes, this problem may increase in scope and intensity



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A Social Interaction based on Derision:
A CASE STUDY OF RAGGING IN A
RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITY.

by

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Presented in Ceylon Studies Seminar 1980 Series
No. 5, Serial No. 89, on 22nd July 1980

Introduction:

The term 'ragging'⁽¹⁾ is commonly used in Sri Lankan educational institutions to denote a particular type of inter-personal and inter-group relationship between the 'senior' and the 'fresh' students. The time during which such a relationship would last is popularly known as the 'ragging period' and is usually the beginning of an academic year when the new entrants (freshmen) arrive at such institutions. The origin of the practice of ragging in our universities may perhaps be traced back to the time when University education was begun in this country. A similar custom practised in English schools during the 18th century, was known as 'fagging', whereby students in lower class had to run errands and serve as unpaid servants for those in the upper classes. In the American universities, a method of initiating and disciplining freshmen, known as 'hazing' was prevalent during the same century.⁽²⁾

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Though it originated in our country as an imported Western custom, ragging, seems to have flourished in the local soil, drawing from a cultural trait of our society, in that inter-personal relationship is placed mainly on derision; thereby non-members are initiated to the 'in-group' through a very intimate relationship prior to which all differences between the group and the individual should be removed. This relationship does not permit respect or privacy of the individual, and hence based on joking, ridiculing, teasing and harassing the 'intruder'.

With the expansion of university education, ragging too seems to have developed in Sri Lanka. Judging by the cumulative evidence of the newspaper articles and news reports⁽³⁾, ragging appears to have taken such proportions as to become a vexing problem to the University authorities as well as to the general public; it seems to have also served as a topical subject of the journalist at the beginning of every academic year of the University⁽⁴⁾. The only published document which is of interest to the researcher on ragging was brought forth by the Kularatne Commission in 1975.⁽⁵⁾

This paper presents the findings of an investigation conducted in a residential university, during the ragging period of an academic year.

Scope of the study:

A random sample of first year students, both males and females admitted to this residential university, during that academic year and accommodated in four halls of residence, was selected for the study,

- a) to find out the extent to which 'ragging' is currently practised.
- b) to determine the nature of the social phenomenon popularly known as 'ragging'.

c) to find the possible causes leading to the practice and perpetuation of ragging.

Methods:

Since 'ragging' is a punishable offence in the University, the method of collecting data for the survey had to be planned with caution in order to achieve the goal of the study. For obvious reasons it was not possible to obtain data from a sample of the 'raggers' (senior students). The subject of this study were the first year students ('freshers') who were at the receiving end of ragging, and who were therefore, in a position to furnish first hand information regarding their experiences.

Population of Entrants and our Sample number

Halls of Residence	Sinhala		Tamil		Muslim	
	pop ¹	sam ²	pop ¹	sam ²	pop ¹	sam ²
Hall 1	162	52	49	16	13	4
Hall 2	116	37	86	38	13	3
Hall 3	72	24	46	16	3	1
Hall 4	75	25	24	8	4	2

1=Population 2=Sample

Population and sample	Number		
	Males	Females	Total
Grand total entered	439	224	663
Our estimated sample number	150	76	226
No. responding to preliminary questionnaire	108	56	164
No. responding to the second questionnaire	70	43	113

The following methods of study was adopted throughout a period of two weeks, which usually was the duration of the ragging period in the university.

- 1) A preliminary questionnaire was administered to the participants before they came into any form of 'ragging contact' with the senior students (This was possible due to the fact that new entrants are admitted to the university, two weeks before, the senior students come into residence)
- 2) The sample of students were treated as participant-observers of the ragging behaviour. Detailed instructions were given to record their personal experience in an objective way.
- 3) Unstructured interviews were held with the participants in their apartments, throughout the study period.
- 4) A questionnaire formulated on the basis of various interviews held with the participant observers, as well as our own observations, was administered at the end of the study.

The following hypotheses were tested in the study.

- 1) Ragging takes place in the university, despite that it is a punishable offence.
- 2) More males, compared to females, indulge in ragging.
- 3) Males, as well as females undergo similar ragging experience
- 4) Freshers who undergo ragging suffer from anxiety.
- 5) Ragging repeats as an experience handed down from one batch to another
- 6) Ragging serves as a friendship mechanism.

Results and Discussion:

The finding of second-questionnaire, administered at the end of rag-period, indicated that 94% of the sample was subjected to ragging, as shown in the following table 1.

Table 1

Question	Response	
	yes	no
Were you subjected to ragging?	106 (94%)	7 (6%)

This proves beyond doubt that ragging has taken place in this residential university, at the time when the study was conducted.

Table 2 shows that, while 100% of the males were ragged by the same sex, 81% of the females admitted that they were ragged by the opposite sex. This clearly indicates that males, compared to females, take an active part in ragging.

Table 2

Q: Were you ragged most by the males or by females?

responses	males	females(%)
ragged by males	100	81
ragged by females	—	5
ragged by males and females	—	7
no response	—	7
	N=70	N=43

In order to quantify and distinguish ragging experienced by males from females, the following aspects of ragging were tested, under the two broad categories, "verbal ragging", and "physical ragging", arranged according to rigour, as shown in table 3.

Q: Were you subjected to the following forms of ragging?

Different forms of rag	males (%)			females (%)		
	yes	no	no resp.	yes	no	no resp.
I Verbal rag:						
1 harsh interrogations	49	41	7	51	43	1
2 scolding in filth	91	9	-	51	48	1
3 having to learn vulgar poems/verses etc	91	9	-	21	79	-
4 to debate on bizarre topics	44	56	-	6	94	-
5 writing an indecent letter to a closely related person	20	80	-	6	94	-
II Physical Rag:						
(a) Low rigour:						
1 saluting	99	1	-	51	49	-
2 asked to wear white clothes	100	-	-	74	26	-
(b) Medium rigour:						
3 eat left over meals of others	13	87	-	-	100	-
4 eat from the plate of another fresher	51	49	-	3	97	-
5 keep the plate on head and eat	9	91	-	-	100	-
(c) High rigour:						
6 do 'dips'	60	33	7	-	100	-
7 'campus toddy'	44	55	1	-	100	-
8 stripped partly/fully	57	43	-	-	100	-
9 perform 'crucifixion'	24	76	-	-	100	-
10 removal of hair, both pubic and other	33	67	-	-	100	-
11 "Scholarship"	60	40	-	-	100	-
12 demonstration of inde- cent behaviour such as copulation of dogs	36	64	-	-	100	-
13 forced to do thinks againstwish. such as smoking	41	59	-	44	56	-
14 do thinks deviating from normal patterns of behaviour.	81	18	1	44	56	-
	N=70			N=43		

This table indicates that there is significant difference between the two sexes with regard to ragging behaviour. A greater percentage of males had been subjected to verbal as well as physical forms of rag. The percentages of females, who had undergone both the types of rag is much less than those with regard to the males. The higher incidence of verbal ragging among females could perhaps be due to members of both sexes, participating in such raggings. This is fully confirmed by the incidents of anecdotes (total number of anecdotes collected during the study being, 55), which describe instances of harsh interrogations and scoldings in filth by males and other instances of enforcement such as memorising vulgar poems, debating on obscene topics, and writing indecent letters, by females. The lesser percentage of physical ragging among females can be explained by the fact that the males were unable to be as free with females, as with their own sex in the campus.

Five questions were asked, two direct and three indirect, in the preliminary questionnaire, to measure the anxiety level among freshmen. The results, as shown in table 4, indicate that only a marginal difference in the anxiety level was seen when two direct questions were asked. On the contrary the three indirect questions highlighted that 82% of the participants had a positive anxiety.

The high degree of anxiety seen among freshmen at the time of the commencement of their university career appears to be generally related to the high incidence (94%) of rag experienced by them.

Table 4

Questions	positive anxiety (%)	negative anxiety (%)
1 Are you worried about ragging?	57	43
2 Do you like to be ragged?		
3 Did you discuss ragging with other freshers?	82	18
4 Have you moved around the campus premises alone?		
5 Do you strongly feel that you should be protected against any form of ragging, by the university authorities and security service?		

The relationship between experience of the rag and its perpetuation is given in table 5.

Table 5

Q: Will you rag freshers next year?

responses	males (%)	females (%)	total (%)
yes	48	5	31
no	41	91	60
no comments	11	4	9

A marked difference is noticed between the responses given by the males and the females, who answered in the affirmative, to the above question 48% against 5% students of both sexes, who wish to engage in ragging, in the following year being 31%. This shows that only a third of the students who had undergone ragging would contribute to the perpetuation of the rag. However, the validity of this observation has to be checked by further research work on the same group of students in

their second year, in view of the fact that the above finding is based on the data collected at the end of the two-weeks rag period.

Table 6 shows the responses of friendship pattern formed due to ragging, as well as without ragging.

Table 6

Questions: About how many senior students have you come to know closely since coming to the campus?
 a) 0-10 b) 11-20 c) 21-30 d) above 30
 How many senior students have you come to know very closely as a result of their ragging you?
 a) 0-10 b) 11-20 c) 21-30 d) above 30

No. of friendship initiated	without ragging (%)	due to ragging (%)
0-10	23	44
11-20	26	16
21-30	17	14
above 30	34	27

Our findings do not give a clear-cut evidence to support that, ragging serves as a "friendship mechanism". However, it is significant to note that a higher percentage (34%) of students has made the largest number of friends (i. e. above 30) without ragging stimulus

The data collected indicate that the following forms of ragging have taken place. For convenience, we may classify them as "verbal" and "physical" forms of ragging. The latter category was again subdivided into "low-physical", "medium-physical", and "high-physical" types according to rigour. It was observed that verbal rag had a higher incidence between both male and female students while the physical rag was more common among the male students. This phenomenon may be explained by

the fact that the physical ragging involves greater risk than the other type, which is relatively easy to practise.

Verbal rag: Verbal ragging characterises harsh interrogations intended to intimidate and subjugate a victim; abuse and scolding in indecent language forms a significant part of this aggression. A quotation from anecdotes, describing such ragging will shed light to its performance.

A group of girls, as described in the anecdote, were walking towards the Medical Faculty, passing Hall 1. A senior male-undergraduate confronts them and asks:

Senior: What is your name?

Fresher: (name said)

S: What is your faculty?

F: Medical Faculty: Veterinary Science.

S: Yakko say kennel of the Meat stall.

F: (same repeated)

S: From which school did you enter?

F: (school mentioned)

S: Yakko say, "hopper-shop"

F: (same repeated)

S: Do you know that a branch of the Bo-tree of your school had fallen on the ground?

F: Yes

S: Do you know why it fell down?

F: (no answer)

S: Yakko, do you know that in your school hoppers are being sold?

F: (no answer)

S: Yakko, it happened due to the wrath of the God!

F: (no answer)

S: Yakko, tell me whether you like me?

F: (no answer)

S: Say, will you!

F: No!

S: Yakko, do you know that I have ignored about 30 girls; and how dare you say that you don't like me?

F: (no answer)

S: Get out, you talk to me nicely!, when you see me again.

It may be observed that the aggressor, by raising the tone of his voice and using insulting words tries to play a dominating role in this scene. The words such as "umbe", "tho", "yakko" are the terms used by members of the higher social class on their inferiors to exhibit social dominance. Similarly, in a ragging session, the senior students denigrate the status of freshers to an inferior position, by emphasising the fact that they had entered the university before the freshmen - hence, the claim for superiority. Though the words such as "umbe", "yakko", "ado", when used during the ragging period, indicate a behaviour of dominance, the same terms may persist in their parlance to express intimate friendship, after the differences between the two groups have been eliminated.

It may also be emphasised that the sexual discontentment of the aggressor is also brought forth during his conversation with a fresher-girl. After disgracing the college, from which she had entered (it being an urban college of repute), as a "hopper-shop" (the connotation being a place of lesbians), the aggressor derives pleasure in asking the fresher whether she likes him. When answered in the negative, the aggressor boasts that he had 'ignored about 30 girls', thereby satisfying his ego.

In some instances of verbal ragging, the recipients had to learn obscene verses, and also debate on bizarre topics, such as, 'whether the genital organ should be located on the palm or

on the fore-head? There were 27 Sinhalese and 25 Tamil verses of this nature among the anecdotes collected. To quote, one printable example:

(Sinhala verse translation)

"The Arts student,
rubs oil and enlarges his ...
by hitting the ... against each other,
prize opens the campus ...

Subjects centred around the positions of male and female organs in human anatomy, mainly formed the topics for debates. Such topics suggested by the seniors had to be debated upon by freshmen. Several anecdotes show that there were instances when freshmen were forced to write obscene letters to their close relatives.

The above-mentioned five categories do not exhaust the verbal patterns of ragging, though they could be identified as the more prominent ones. Apart from reflecting the dominant role of the aggressor, the oral rag also brings forth the closely confined sex desires of the youth of our society. Verbal rag seems to be a medium through which such desires could be partially satisfied.

Physical rag: Seventeen identified forms of physical ragging, were listed in table 3. Of these, two were of low rigour, according to our classification. They are,

1. Saluting: an object / a senior student.
2. Wearing white clothes: This is to help any senior student to easily identify a fresher.

Three were of medium rigour. These are,

1. partaking left-over meals.
2. partaking meals from the plate of another fresher.
3. keeping the plate on the head and eating.

These three types of physical rags were carried out in the dining tables of male students halls. Our

interviews revealed that, most freshers hesitated to have their meals in the dining halls, through fear of the above harassments.

Nine identified forms, were of high rigour. These are

1. performing "dips": - An individual is asked to rest the weight of the body on four limbs, and commended to lower and raise the body continuously, simulating dips in water.
2. "campus toddy": - An individual is asked to imitate the act of drinking toddy, and while doing so, ordered to spin his body continuously.
3. stripping of clothes, partly / fully, in the presence of seniors.
4. perform "crucifixion": - An individual is asked to hang with the hands, holding the window grills and imitate Jesus in crucifixion.
5. removal of hair: - Forcible removal of hair of a fresher, both pubic and other.
6. "Scholarship": - As indicated by the name, this is a difficult task to achieve. A fresher is shown where a "scholarship" can be found and various impediments are put in his path - for example, a fresher has to crawl naked under a bed, simulate swimming across the ocean, jump on the knees, in order to qualify himself to obtain the "scholarship".
7. demonstration of indecent behaviour: - Two or many freshers were forced to imitate copulation of dogs, and/or human beings. Freshers were asked to expose genital organs and also demonstrate normal/abnormal sex acts.
8. demonstration of bizarre behaviour: For example, sitting on an 'imaginary chair', playing a game of football/netball without a ball, 'acting as a radio' and delivering a news-broadcast consisting of

humour, wit and obscene items, riding an 'imaginary cycle' seated on a chair, imitating a politician on a platform or a lecturer in a lecture hall, and taking 'campus oath' that consists of derogatory remarks against the Establishment.

- 9 Forced to do things against a person's wish: For example a non-smoker is offered a cigarette and asked to smoke; a vegetarian is forced to take meat.

Physical ragging of the high rigour type, mostly centre around sex desires of the aggressors. The aggressor while showing his hatred towards the members of his own sex, appears to derive sexual satisfaction by witnessing various sex acts, performed by the oppressed. It is evident from the available data that, physical raggings of medium rigour and high rigour, as classified by us, had been perpetrated mainly on the male students of our sample. Female students seem to have been more fortunate than their counterparts, for being not at the receiving end of the forms of physical ragging, classified by us. The fact that 44% of the females had responded positively for the last two items of physical rag (high rigour), namely 'forced to do things against wish' and 'do things deviating from normal patterns of behaviour' shows that some sort of physical rag had been perpetrated on the fair sex, by their own members, the details of which we were unable to elucidate during the course of our study.

Many factors contributing towards the practice and the perpetuation of ragging in the university were observed by us, during the course of this survey.

The ragging period in the university is a time when a process of social interaction take place between two groups of University students, viz. students who had already been familiar with the university life (the seniors) and the new entrants, who are mostly total strangers (the freshmen) to the university.

This process ends with the familiarisation of the two groups which thereafter intermingle as one student community. During this period of interaction, the majority senior student group with a sub-culture of its own, dominates the minority 'fresher' group, who in their entirety form a group in one sense only, i. e. being new entrants to the university.

The senior students during the 'ragging period' appear to act together as 'one group' (an in-group) versus the fresher 'out-group' either actively taking part in the ragging of latter group, or choosing to be reticent on what is going on around them. The majority of the freshers, on the other-hand, suffer from an anxiety arising from an impending danger of an imminent rag by the seniors, and are willing to submit themselves to any form of oppression. No fresher student under such circumstances would like to make any complaint against their oppressors, fearing that the consequences of such an act would subsequently prove to be disastrous. A group of 'freshmen' in our interviews revealed that they had been warned by their seniors that the University staff members, including the Deans of the Faculties, are in favour of ragging, and hence any complaint against the seniors would prove to be useless. They had further added, that the seniors will have a chance of becoming members of staff as assistant lecturers, tutors, instructors and demonstrators, and they could "pay off old scorers" if any complaints were made against them on account of ragging. There is a very good chance for the members of the dominant group to resort to acts of aggression under such conditions.

It was observed that single members, too, of the dominant senior students group, indulge in ragging 'freshers' in groups or individually. We notice that such ragging is facilitated by,

- (a) the inability of the freshmen to identify their oppressors,
- (b) the anxiety shown by the freshmen towards ragging.

This type of ragging by individual seniors could provide persons with sadistic mental make-up with an opportunity to satisfy their otherwise dormant desires.

Ragging has also been a long-standing and die-hard practice, the continuity of which in this residential university, appear to have been sustained unbroken throughout its history. This practice now appears to have taken the shape of a custom, hard to be eradicated by punitive regulations. There is a general tendency for those who undergo the experience of being ragged, to inflict the same on others (6)

The ragging period seems to provide a very good opportunity for the student leaders to canvass for their future political supporters. It is a time when, they could experiment various methods of canvassing through ragging. Hence, senior students who are actively involved in party-politics show a keen interest in the new entrants, during this period.

Most verbal as well as physical types of ragging observed and enlisted by us, centre around sexual themes and sex acts. Exposure of genital organs and simulation of sex acts by the victim, while satisfying to the aggressor, seem to provide him with a good opportunity to bring the latter to complete submission. This behaviour no doubt reflect a reaction of the youth to the rigid societal regulations governing social interaction between men and women. The youth brought up under strict parental control and rigid social norms seem to revolt against such restrictions in a collective way in a place where, their life style permits relatively greater independence.

We also noticed a tendency for Sinhalese students to rag the Sinhalese, and Tamil students to rag the Tamils. This would probably be due to,

- (a) lack of competence, in each other's languages or / and the link language,
- (b) fear of communal clashes.

However, we came across some Tamil students who had been made to memorise some Sinhalese poems on vulgar themes. On the contrary, the reverse of this was not observed, which could probably be due to, a fear on the part of the minority community to practise the same on the members of the majority community.

During the ragging season in the university, the Vice-Chancellor, the Deans of the Faculties, the Student Counsellors, the Wardens of the Halls of Residence and the security personnel go through a most difficult period of time: they have to protect every newly admitted student against possible harassment by the seniors, during day and night, while allowing them to take part in the day-to-day activities of the university. This task is however rendered most difficult, if not impossible, by the fact that it is not practicable for the above university authorities to keep close watch on thousands of seniors who could prey on a fresher at any time and any place. Even when such instances are detected, the victims themselves, for fear of possible consequences, do not furnish any information which would lead to the identification of the guilty. While many verbal as well as physical raggings hence pass unnoticed, or interpreted as "friendly discussions", by freshers and the seniors, when detected, only those extreme cases that result in physical harm are taken serious notice of. Even regarding such cases, the tendency is for the victims to withhold any information leading to identification of the guilty. The university authorities are thus

placed in a very awkward position in which they have to encounter the critical public opinion on the one hand and the peculiar inter-relationship between the seniors and the freshers described above, on the other.

Conclusion:

A significant finding is that a 'ragging relationship' had existed between the senior and fresher students at the commencement of the academic year, in which, this study was conducted. This finding highlights the fact that deterrent punishment has a superficial effect, if any, on eradicating the practice and perpetuation of ragging. Ragging is perpetuated as a long-standing and die-hard custom. Male as well as female university undergraduates indulge in the practice of ragging, while the more rigorous physical ragging is inflicted by the male ragers. Multifarious factors (for e.g.: cultural, sociological and psychological) contributing to the practice and perpetuation of this phenomenon can be identified. Research work aimed at understanding these factors, rather than ad hoc punitive measures seems to be the answer to this much vexed problem of the university youth in this country.

Acknowledgement:

The authors acknowledge with thanks the cooperation received from the participants of this study. The assistance provided by the wardens and sub-wardens of the four halls of residence, is also greatly appreciated.

Post-script:

Since the data presented in this research paper may be quoted out of context, the authors, with restraint, refrain from revealing the identity of the University and the academic year in which this study was conducted.

*

References and foot notes:

- (1) Rag has been defined, according to Western conception in the following manner: "Rag at the universities is a piece of organised fooling often on a large scale and not directed at anyone in particular. such rags may be associated with special occasions, such as Guy Fawkes Day, Armistice Day, a Rectorial Election etc. may even be organised with charitable objects, as at some of the provincial universities, or may develop spontaneously. Their chief attraction (to those participating in them) lies in their originality". (in) Morris Marples (1950) University Slang. London, pp. 147-8
- (2) Henry Sheldon (1901) - History and Pedagogy of American Student Societies. pp 97 ff. cited in John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy (1976) - Higher Education in Transition p 47.
- (3) Following abbreviations are used for the news papers.
Ceylon Daily News = CDN; Ceylon Observer Magazine = Cey. Obs. Mag.
Ceylon Observer = Cey. Obs.

News reports on ragging (1975 -- 1979)Year 1975

1. One-man commission probes teacher ragging. Cey. Obs. Mag.: 2.3.75.
2. Ban ragging of any type, says V-C. CDN, 5.5.75.
3. Witness describes 'sadistic ragging' of teachers. CDN, 6.5.75.
4. Terrified teachers hid under beds - lecturer. CDN, 7.5.75.
5. Two teacher witnesses 'slur on profession' Cey. Obs. Mag. 11.5.75.
6. Teacher describes indecent rag. CDN 15.5.75.
7. Ragging Commission summons Editor. CDN, 15.5.75.

8. Girl blindfolded and tied to tree - lecturer. CDN, 16.5.75.
9. University only a mirror of society - Dr. Nath Amarakone. CDN, 17.5.75.
10. Grievances unsolved - Student leaders. CDN, 20.5.75,
11. Ragging at Peradeniya? Five in hospital. CDN, 20.5.75.
12. Poor administration blamed for student indiscipline. CDN, 21.5.75.
13. Economist outlines causes of indiscipline. CDN, 22.5.75.
14. Suspension for 'rag' offenders - Campus chief. CDN. 22.5.75.
15. More maths teachers describe ragging. CDN, 27.5.75.
16. Deterrent punishment only answer to ragging. CDN, 29.5.75.
17. "Staffers not concerned about student welfare". CDN, 30.5.75.
18. Suicide bid by Peradeniya undergrad. Cey. Obs. Mag. 1.6.75.
19. Campus girl's fall from top floor. CDN, 2.6.75.
20. 'Country pays for their tuition and upkeep' Undergrads must realise this: Prof. CDN, 2.6.75.
21. 'Definite evidence of ragging'. CDN, 3.6.75.
22. Parents wonder why sensible suggestion was ignored. Cey. Obs. 4.6.75.
23. 'Undergrad's head bashed against wall'. Cey. Obs. 4.6.75.
24. Another undergrad in hospital, CDN 4.6.75 (with sub titles: Peradeniya Campus - 20 undergrads suspended; Vidyalandara - Three student leaders sacked: Suspended for three years).

25. Peradeniya Campus head replaced. Police to be moved in CDN, 5.6.75 (with sub title: Ragging unbelievably crude, says student)
26. Rag-leaders should be psycho-analysed - Doctor, CDN, 6.6.75.
27. Minister visits Rupa in Kandy Hospital. Cey Obs. Mag. 8.6.75.
28. Deterrent punishment not the answer to ragging - Cey Obs. Mag. CDN, 11.6.75.
29. Kandy - 16 undergrads suspended; Kattubedda - four suspended. CDN, 12.6.75.
30. Eight senior undergrads on bail over ragging. CDN, 20.6.75.
31. I'm ashamed to table ragging report - Minister. CDN, 3.7.75. (with sub title: Vidyalankara - Twelve sacked, 3 suspended).
32. Riggers will be debarred for life. Commission recommends. CDN, 3.7.75.
33. Ragging ban well received - Minister CDN 4.7.75
34. Kularatne report: Govt. to print 10,000 copies. 'Sick symptom of discontent'. Cey. Obs. Mag. 6-7-75
35. Ragging must go or the University: PM. CDN, 7-7-75
36. Treatment abroad for Rupa? CDN, 9-7-75
37. Doctor's comments on Kularatne report. Cey. Obs. Mag. 13-7-75.
38. Campus must be rid of mischief makers. - Dr. Mahmud. CDN, 15-7-75
39. Rag report with certain deletions CDN, 18-7-75
40. Ragging report: Minister to decide form of publication CDN, 19-7-75.
41. British Dons shocked at 'degenerated' rags Cey. obs. Mag. 27-7-75

Year 1976

42. Kularatne report to go up in flames. Honey, 24-30 Dec. 1976

Year 1978

43. Jaffna campus undergrads suspended
CDN, 25.9.78.
44. "No more Ragging in Universities" Sun, 3.10.78
45. Ragging: Six more suspended. CDN, 6.10.78.
46. 51 undergrads suspended for ragging. CDN,
14.10.78
47. Sordid ragging. 'Weekend' makes shocking
discovery. Weekend, 15.10.78.
48. Instant probe on Campus Ragging Sun, 17.10.78.
49. Top police team to probe Ragging. Sun, 18.10.78
50. Only 13 incidents of ragging says Campus
President. Why should the 'sun' set in Univer-
sity affairs? asks Kalpage. Sun, 18.10.78.
51. No serious ragging at Peradeniya Campus.
- Campus President. CDN, 17.10.78.
52. Police to probe reports of ragging at Peradeniya.
CDN, 18.10.78.
53. Rag - story aftermath; Kalpage cautions about
the press. Weekend, 22.10.78.
54. Ministry will act on Police Probe. Weekend,
29.10.78.

Year 1979

55. Sordid ragging at Moratuwa varsity. CDN 15-9-79
(with sub title: I will take stern steps to stop
ragging—Minister)
56. Ragging raises its ugly head again: Sordid
incidents at Moratuwa. Sun 15-9-79
57. No ragging, say Student Councils. CDN, 26.9.79.
58. 14 undergrads suspended CDN, 5-10-79.
Articles on ragging:
59. Confessions of an old Ragger. Cey. Obs. Mag.
15.6.75.
60. Ragging and women. Sunday Times 6.7.75.

61. Dr. Carlo Fonseka on the rag Cey. Obs. 8.8.75.
62. Don't try to stonewall. Sun 21.10.78.
63. University Ragging - No right to interfere
week end 22-10-78.
64. Varsity ragging - a sign of moral degradation.
Independent 10.11-78.
65. Is it possible to stop ragging? CDN, 27-9-79.

Letters to the Editor:

66. Depraved ragging (by a graduate) CDN, 9-3-73.
 67. B. A. (Hooting) (by Lord Karma) CDN, 12.7.75
 68. Sordid ragging - where? (by Fresher Women
students. Peradeniya Campus) CDN, 21.10.78.
 69. Sordid ragging - (letters by A. G. G. Perera,
Dr. M. S., and A. Seneviratne) Weekend, 22.10.78.
 70. Shame on Ragging (by Andrew Scott) Sun 3.10.79
 71. Peradeniya: A Rag (letters by Dr. G. A. L. Perera,
R. T. Jayatilleke, and Bernard Dharmaratne) Sun
24.10.78.
 72. Sordid ragging - (letters by O. C. de Alwis,
Nihal Wijesingha, J. C. W. Silva, T. N. Nicholas
and K. G. de Abrew) Weekend 5.11.78.
- (4) Newspaper editorials on the subject: Some selected
samples are as follows:
1. Those rags. CDN, 2.3.73
 2. A little light. CDN, 6.3.73.
 3. Campus inquiry. CDN, 26.3.73.
 4. Stop it. CDN, 22-11-73.
 5. Inquire and act. CDN, 3-3-75.
 6. Perverted initiation. CDN, 24.4.75
 7. For considered action CDN, 7-6-75
 8. Ragging, Tribune, 14-6-75
 9. Ragging, Tribune, 21-6-75
 10. Learn or depart. SUN, 17-10-78

- (5) Sessional Paper No. XI-1975 Report of the Commission of Inquiry into "ragging" at Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka, July 1975 (Kularatne Commission Report). Govt Press, Colombo.
- (6) At our regular interview during the course of the ragging period, we noticed the waning of anxiety shown towards ragging by the freshmen in the sample group, some of whom stated that they found ragging as 'fun'. Many others said that the more they experienced ragging the better they enjoyed it. Others felt that ragging had become stale, because it was the same thing repeated on them. Asked whether they would like to rag freshers in the following year, some replied in the affirmative while others had reservations as to what they would be doing a year later. A very few, many of whom girls, confirmed that they will not indulge in ragging others.

* * * * *

APPENDIX I

Ragging — Preliminary Questionnaire

- 1 Are you all worried about ragging? (yes/no)
- 2 If yes, why are you worried about ragging?
Describe it in few sentences.
- 3 How did you arrived at the university?
- 4 (a) Were you accompanied by anyone? If so, who?
(b) Did you arrange with anyone at varsity to help you with your arrival at the hall?
- 5 Did you discuss ragging with other freshers?
- 6 Were you discussing it, individually or collectively?
- 7 Do you like to be ragged?
- 8 Do you approve of ragging of any sort?

- 9 Are you worried that senior (boys/girls) will rag you?
- 10 (a) Have you moved around the campus premises alone?
(b) If not, why?
- 11 Do you strongly feel that, you should be protected against any form of ragging, by the university authorities and security service?
- 12 Comment on the statement:
Any university student who engages himself/herself in ragging should be severely punished.
strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree

APPENDIX II

Ragging - Second questionnaire, at the end of the
"ragging period".

1. Were you subjected to ragging? (yes/no)
2. If yes, were you subjected to ragging,
 - (a) in your room (b) in a senior's room
 - (c) in an unknown place (d) in public places.
3. According to your opinion, how many times were you ragged?
 - (a) 0-5 (b) 6-10 (c) 11-15 (d) above 15
4. Were you subjected to the following forms of ragging? (yes/no)
 - a) harsh interrogations
 - b) scolding in filth
 - c) having to learn vulgar poems / verses / literature.

- d) to debate on indecent topics.
- e) asked to wear white cloth.
- f) perform "dips".
- g) "campus toddy".
- h) stripped fully / partly.
- i) perform "crucifixion".
- j) removal of hair.
- k) eat left over meals of others.
- l) eat from the plate of another fresher.
- m) keep the plate on the head and eat.
- n) "scholarship".
- o) demonstration of indecent behaviour (write).
- p) writing an indecent letter to a closely related person.
- q) manual work for senior students.
- r) any belongings taken by seniors.
- s) forced to do things against your wish, such as smoking etc.
- t) saluting.
- u) do things deviating from the normal patterns of behaviour; e.g.: cycling in a chair; "campus chair"; play games with -out ball)
- v) any others (please specify).

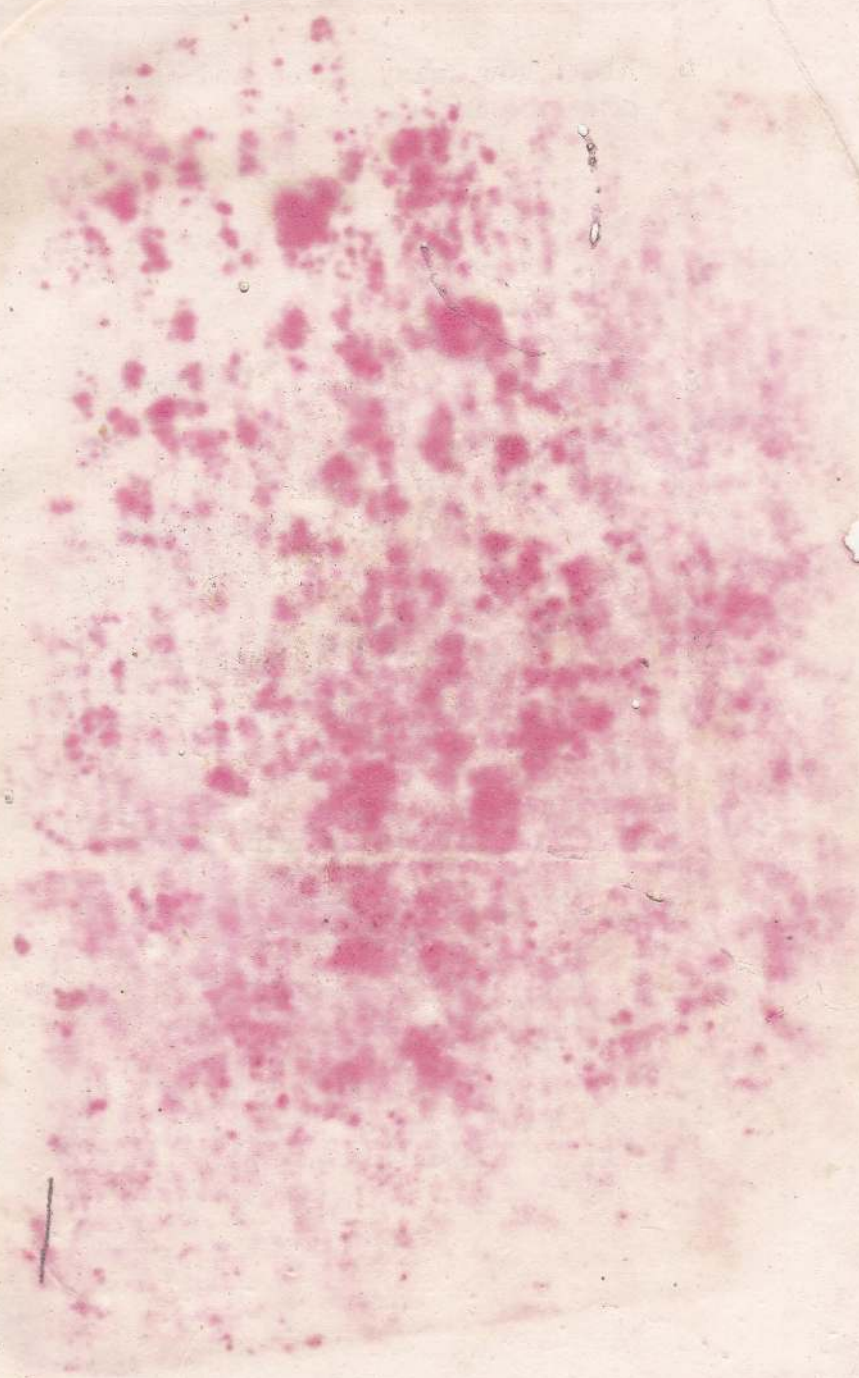
5. How do you feel now about ragging,

- (a) Is it something to be dreaded about?
(yes/no)
- (b) If not, is it just fun?

6. About how many senior students have you come closely since coming to the campus?
a) 0-10 b) 11-20 c) 21-30 d) above 30
7. How many senior students have you come to know very closely as a result of their ragging you?
a) 0-10 b) 11-20 c) 21-30 d) above 30
8. Will you rag freshers next year? (yes/no)
9. Do you have any idea as to the students of which faculty ragged you most? (write - Arts / Science / Engineering / Agriculture / Medical).
10. How many times did you go home after coming to residence?
11. If you have gone, why was it for? (write).



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Being a trained Karnatic flutist, he has written a standard text book on the theory of Karnatic Music in Tamil. Besides scientific publications and communications he has been a writer of essays.

The translated, abridged versions of two of the research papers presented in this volume appeared in the tamil journal 'Virakesari' recently. "Since these had been met with both approval and dissent, by the Tamil-reading public and university students in particular, the need to put in print the original texts of the research papers had become a necessity for me," says Sri Kantha.



CONTENTS

1. A Sociological Study of the 1978 Medical Entrants (Tamil Medium) of University of Peradeniya.
2. Preliminary Random Observations on the Courting behaviour of undergraduates in a Residential University in Sri Lanka.
3. A Social interaction based on derision: A case study of Ragging in a Residential University.