

# GLEANINGS

A Lankan's Views as a Columnist



**K.S.SIVAKUMARAN**



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**A Lankan's Views as a Columnist**

**BY**

**K.S.SIVAKUMARAN**

**(Writer- Critic -Translator-Journalist)**



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by K.S.SIVAKUMARAN**

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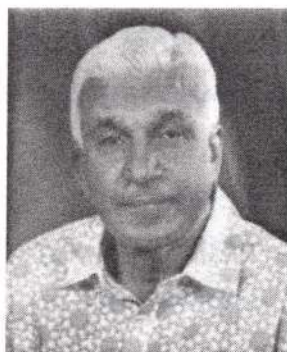
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## **A brief introduction about Writer and Reviewer K.S.Sivakumaran**



A well known veteran writer of Sri Lanka, the author K.S.Sivakumaran has been making significant contributions to the Lankan Literary Circle and the field of journalism both as a writer and columnist since 1953. He writes both in English and Tamil and his writings give us a picturesque view of Sri Lankan life – social as well as psychological.

He has six books in English and more than 30 books in Tamil to his credit. He is also interested in films and he has written books on films too.

Now 82 years of age this gentleman has been a translator, radio broadcaster, radio news editor,

news reader, apart from being an English teacher in High Schools in the Maldives, Oman, the US and Lanka. He has worked in two English Language newspapers and two Tamil language newspapers.

He has obtained BA from Peradeniya University (Lanka) and M.A.English from Madras University (India).

The essays in this book are on different books of poems. Several writers of merit speak for his scholarship and readership.



## Publisher's Note

With a lot of zest and fervour an author pens a book – fiction or non-fiction, and it is followed by the strenuous search for a prospective publisher. After all the related travails and traumas, when at last the book gets published the writer feels immensely relieved and elated. But, then starts the eternal wait for someone to write a review – if not elaborate, at least a brief one, on his/her work. This 'someone' should be one who cares enough to not only read but introduce the volume to other prospective readers, giving glimpses of the work's merits and demerits, critically evaluating the work. If this someone happens to be very subjective and prejudiced –that's all.

Thankfully, the articles of the author of this book are written in a gentle and unbiased manner, highlighting the salient features of the books introduced by him. He does mention the lapses and shortcomings in the works concerned and also of the general climate prevailing in Sri Lanka and other parts of the world in Literary Writing in English and in the field of Translation, but he does it in a composed and objective manner.

As one who writes in Tamil also, I wish his critical writings in Tamil on Tamil Literary Scene too get published(maybe, they are already there!).

I thank Mr.K.S.Sivakumaran, the author of this book for giving me the opportunity of publishing the second edition of this prestigious volume through my small but sincere initiative called Anaamikaa Alphabets.

Regards

**Latha Ramakrishnan**  
(ANAAMIKAA ALPHABETS)

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# 1

## ILLUMINATI INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

**As we know, in India English translations of major works in various Indian languages are available in no time. In Lanka, literature is available in the three languages – Sinhala, Tamil and English. But not many are translated into either Tamil or English. While a lot of translations are available in Sinhala from other languages, only a handful of Tamil works are translated into Sinhala and vice versa.**

The,8<sup>th</sup> Volume (2017-2018) of a reputed Indian journal published in Kanpur in Uthar Pradesh, edited by Dr. Neeru Tandon, ILLUMINATI, has come our way. Running to 130 + pages with front and back pages in colour, this journal carries very valuable and well researched articles that would satisfy the needs of those readers wanting to know details of literature in English published in our neighbouring country. Proclaimed as a “Transnational Journal of Literature, Language and Culture Studies”, their horizons are indeed wide and encompass a variety of writing.

The first seven volumes were on Culture and Literature, Social issues, Indian Drama in English, The Second Coming of Indian Fiction in English, Feminisms in India: Theoretical Formulations, Literature of New Millennium and Short Story in Theory and Practice.

Dr. Neeru Tandon had written an excellent essay on translation and its methods which is very useful to translators of creative writing from one language to the other.

As we know, in India English translations of major works in various Indian languages are available in no time. In Lanka, literature is available in the three languages – Sinhala, Tamil and English. But not many are translated into either Tamil or English. While a lot of translations are available in Sinhala from other languages, only a handful of Tamil works are translated into Sinhala and vice versa. Since 'Sinhala only' was introduced in mid-1950s, the learning and study of English in Lanka has declined. So translations into English from Sinhala and Tamil works is almost nil. Similarly, writing in English by writers in Lanka are seldom known to Sinhala and Tamil readers. They all are remaining in watertight compartments.

Literature is one way of understanding the cultures of the 'Other.' It minimizes ethnic prejudices.

This journal has three components. Translation, Poems and Book Review. I found in each of these sections interesting information and illumination.

The articles I like best are on *Google translation, Machine translation, translating the Translator, Satirical De-Constructions, Genesis of Indian Cinematic Adaptation, and the Poems*. Almost all contributions are an exhaustive study.

May I add that an English translation by me of a Tamil Short story written by Kalaivathy Kaleel is also included in this issue? Much effort has gone into making this issue which is a valuable resource publication.

Valuable notes on contributors are also added. Call for Research Paper on Feminism is solicited for the next issue.



## CONNECTING THROUGH TRANSLATIONS

The blood is the same. The lungs are the same (as one Army Officer in a Bosnian film says). So it is our attitudes that matter.

Our mindset should be made flexible. Rigidity, conservatism, tradition, individuality, extremism – these have been subject to changes in almost all parts of the world over a period of time and that was for the better. Nations, States, Governments, Electors, people at large –all become dynamic. What is important is the concern for Humanity.

In a multi-language, multi-ethnic, multi-religious country like ours, if we were to have a common identity as Sri Lankans, it is absolutely essential that all of us feel that way without any fear of one dominating the other and that all are equals as citizens. But this has not been so, for more than five decades plus.

This was due to partly ignorance of the other, partly communal policies devoid of national interests, partly resting purely on the glories of the

past, partly fear of the other, partly distance, partly not knowing thoroughly the language of the other.

Rapid and ultra-nationalism, insurrections, suppression by Armed Forces, militancy, and now belated realisation of reality had been the pattern. If things go well, a lot of thinking and execution of the right ideals should be hastened.

One of the ways a rapprochement could be achieved is understanding each of us. Despite commonality even in the languages we speak, there seems to be an alienation of each other. If language and religion are the basics of culture in a broader sense, then we could modify our definitions to accommodate the 'other'. That's not difficult. It is possible, because the humans are the same anywhere.

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Governments, Electors, people at large –all become dynamic. What is important is the concern for Humanity.

Having let out my steam, may I now focus on translations. In the absence of direct communication between and among people of different entities, an attempt to connect with each other could be made through translations.

To do this we need trained translators of different subjects and specialist in the particular fields. We don't have sufficient number of people proficient in all languages like Sinhala, Tamil, English, Arabic and so on.

We have a few bilingual translators (English / Sinhala, Sinhala / English, English / Tamil, Tamil / English, Sinhala / Tamil, Tamil / Sinhala, Arabic / Tamil, Tamil / Arabic, Arabic / Sinhala, Sinhala / Arabic – and a few of other foreign languages).

Most of these translators are not professionals but who have been working in Government Institutions. I started my career as a Tamil translator for the then Department of Local Government Service Commission, and later for the News Room of the then Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation.



But such translators perform only official translations. There is no creativity involved. However, a few people were engaged in translations of creative works too. But this was far and far between.

Creative writing like fiction, poetry, drama and even nonfictional writing in one language could be made available to the other in that language they understand. Writing is universal. Writers as sensitive people speak the same language of the human condition as understood by the common people. If literature is the mirror of life in any quarter of the world, then translations of such writing could be a communicating link.

### **Gratiaen Trust**

It is in this context, a matter of great relief, has drawn my attention. May I speak about this a little? We learn that the Gratiaen Trust instituted by Lanka born Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje launched the H.A.I. Goonethileke Prize for Translation. This coincided with the first anniversary of the death of the great librarian and intellectual, Ian Goonethileke.

There are three features that should be

recorded. The first, the publication of "A Lankan Mosaic" by the Three-Wheeler Press of the Gratiaen Trust – a volume of translations of Sinhala and Tamil short stories edited by Ashley Halpe, M.A. Nuhman and Ranjini Obeysekere, the second on Translations and the third on Ian Gonnetileke.

In her foreword to this volume referred to above, Ranjini Obeysekere makes fine observations on the art of translation.

Some excerpts:

*"These stories which reflect the lives and emotions, the daily realities of each of those worlds are in a small way an attempt to build connections between those desperate groups many of whom neither know nor can understand the other.*

*I believe that literary works, more than sociological documents sensitize us to the lives thoughts and emotions of others – in an intensely personal way..."*

She adds:

*"Translation may be a very different activity from creative writing but I believe that to do a good translation requires both a sound knowledge of two languages and a certain kind of creativity. It is*

*perhaps even more difficult because one has to transfer or recreate the nuances of another's text.*

*One interesting usage now is transcreation".*

Ranjini informs that, Robert Lowell called translation an act of 'transcreation' i.e. both a 'transference' and a 'creation' which it is." And she also rightly adds that, "Today, on our world of expanding global communications, translations have become the currency of exchange in the transference of knowledge'.

The volume of translated short stories of Lankan Sinhala and Tamilian writers has excellent introductions. One, by a respected scholar in English, who is also a creative writer, translator and dramatist among other notable achievements – Ashley Halpe'.

The critic Halpe' is as informed as any other scholar in Sinhala (K.N.O.Dharmadasa for instance) when he discerns the characteristics of the Sinhala story writers. The other introduction is by a sensitive poet, translator and literary historian in Tamil, M.A.Nuhman.

He briefly traces the trends in Tamil short story writing in Sri Lanka in almost an acceptable

way. However, I do not know why he allowed wrong spelling in English of the Tamil titles of some short stories translated into English.

Examples: Mannoodu Pooy (Mannoadu Poey), Muunru (Moontru), Koolarupathikam (Koalaru Pathikam), Vadikkal (Vadihal), Ja du Thoodai (Kaaduth Thoada), Neeyam (Neayam).

And why did he conveniently ignore a note on one of the Tamil translators, whose two translations appear in such an important collection? I do not know why.

Writers of importance in contemporary Lankan literature have done a good job in translating some of the difficult stories into English. I particularly appreciated the translation by Ranjini Obeysekere, Carmen Wickramagamage, Gamini Haththotuwegama, Kumari Goonesekere, A.T.Dharmapriya, A.J.Canagaratna, S.Pathamanathan and S.Sivasegeram.

## **Creative Translations**

As one of the three panel members of the H.A.I.Goonetilleke prize for translation 2003, the academic from the University of Peradeniya, Carmen Wickramagamage made a pertinent speech

in her address at the function on May 8.

She said “translation is not just about opening the proverbial window to worlds unlike our own, but also about expanding the boundaries of socio-cultural universes that we ourselves inhabit because we learn of, and even learn from people, who may be unlike us in the way they think, feel, and have their being”.

Wickramagamage pointed out that the maintenance of the operative word equivalence (as stated by Roman Jakobson in his dictum: translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes) – namely – equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem for all translators.

Perfect literal translation is not possible, she said. Bringing in the idiomatic flavour that is characteristic to the original should be rendered and not mere word to word and she gave examples. The judges were looking at the translation as an exercise in comparative creativity.

According to the speaker, in the translation of creative works for an educated adult readership, the translator is freer to experiment because he is not catering to the needs of a special audience.

She explained the criteria for judgement:

(1) The translator should have a good idea about the extent to which the writer of the original work deployed the resources of the source language and culture.

(2) The translator should demonstrate his competence in locating equivalent resources in the target language. (She added that in other words, we wanted to see if the translator had created the best possible home for the source text in the target: language and culture).

(3) The degree to which the translators were able to balance the demands and requirements of the source text and target language.

(4) A good test for translator competence was the way the translators tackled fixed expressions, idioms and proverbs.

(5) A translator's feel for the texture of the language must include an understanding of the way language works – where an expression has lost its purely referential function and has taken on figurative dimensions the speaker also referred to creative translation.

(6) The function of the translator is to minimise loss in translation. (I am reminded of a popular film title *Lost in Translation*).

Carmen's underlying point was that "The home that the translator creates for the source text in the host language should not be identical to the other homes of the host culture, but, instead, stand out to some extent. But on the other hand, it should not be so faithful to the original or source text, that it could only be understood through reference to the original".

She reminded that a translation, especially into a language like English, puts the text into circulation among a culturally diverse community of readers dispersed, globally and united only on the basis of their competence in English.

Finally she wrapped her address indicating that the decision – making role of the translator was not limited to the text, and that he also has to decide to what extent one must retain the foreignness of the foreign (Andre Berman) when it comes to translation and to what extent one must let go of the alien and foreign in the interest of producing a readable text.

## **Tissa's tribute to Ian**

Academic, critic and fine prose writer, Tissa Jayatillaka focused on H.A.I.Goonetilleke's standing in Lankan intellectual climate in his speech at the inauguration of the Prize for Translation in honour of Ian Gonetilleke under the aegis of the Gratiaen Trust.

The prize, however, was not granted for 2003. I wish to highlight some aspects of Ian through the perspective of Tissa. Before I do that may I recall a pleasant moment I enjoyed sometimes in 1975.

This was in regard to my meeting Ian for the first time. In 1974 published a little booklet titled Tamil Writing in Sri Lanka, a collection of critical comments on Lankan writing in Tamil with a foreword by the late Mervyn de Silva and the late K.Kailasapathy.

Both encouraged my writing and most of the articles in the book were originally published in the Daily News, when he was the editor in the 1970s. I was not sure whether that little book could find a place in Peradeniya's great library.

So, one day, I walked into Ian's portals, introduced myself and smiled. He sprang from his



seat and reached for the bibliography, showed me the entry on my book and then greeted me formally. He was so knowledgeable even on small contributions is an understatement.

The following is a collection of bullet points from Tissa Jayatileke's address: "Ian Goonetilleke (1922-2003) was one of the finest 20<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lankan intellectuals and one of the most productive members of the academic community. Moral courage independent judgement and single-minded pursuit of the ideal were his human and humane qualities that exemplified his personality.

He was a fine cricketer and graduated in early 1940s. A.C.G.Abeyardene and Herbert Keuneman influenced him deeply. E.F.C.(Lyn) Ludowyk had a significant impact on him. Ian held that both Keuneman and Ludowym drank deep of the 'Sinhala - Buddhist' culture and tradition in the best manner available. Thoreau's Walden, Scott and Helen Nearings 'The Good Life' were also a seminal influence.

Between 1953 and 1966 he worked in the University of Peradeniya's Library and obtained his FLA. He published five volumes of Bibliography of Ceylon... Ian was a very close personal friend of

the '43 Group.. Portrait of Ian by foremost living painter Stanley Kirinde hangs in the Library of Peradeniya.. Thanks to Ian's labours, the Peradeniya Library yet remains intact as the premier repository of knowledge and distilled wisdom in our island. Ian was invited in 1982 to help rebuild the Jaffna Public Library..

He resigned prematurely in July 1979 from his post of Librarian.. On His 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1997, Ian formerly bequeathed to Peradeniya his priceless 60 years collection of books, journals, pamphlets, off prints and other documents of an academic nature, painting and other art objects such as metal and wood and as well as some replicas in plaster... and his personal letters.. He was disillusioned with the then University administration.. "It was his conquest of himself, to me his finest hour," concluded Tissa Jayatileke in his fine speech.

To me, bibliographies, translations, creative writing all have connections with each other to connect with the 'other'.

One actually recreates a new text in the process of translation. A good translator reads between the lines to ascertain a new meaning and deals with the Questions like:

Who can translate and for whom? Which text or genre to translate? Who is the reader? How are the readers going to accept it? How should one translate? How to deal with a text in translation? And finally, - Is unlearning obligatory?

Answers to these questions must take care of a larger question- Whether we translate to construct a national, literary and cultural landscape or to patronize, appropriate, marginalize or destroy the culture and beauty of the source language.

On the business of translation, let's take some more excerpts from the same source. Here is one on Machine Translation:

Shubhangi Tandon writes: "Machine Translation, quite literally means that a machine does translation from one language to another for you. If you're netizen of the cyber world, chances are you have used a product of Machine Translation one time or the other".

Let me say about my own experience in using the machine for translations. I am not familiar with the, Tamil key-board and neither I can type in Tamil. Even in English, I type slowly. It's a one finger exercise. When my F B friends chat with me in

Tamil only, I reply using the English letters to substitute the Tamil letters. But this was not satisfactory. So, I sought the assistance of Google Tamil Transliteration. But that was not suitable for me, because it had a split window screen which was confusing me. So, I looked for a more convenient apparatus in Kandupidi. I use this to translate my ideas in English into Tamil using English letters which turn into Tamil letters and form words. Since I am well versed in my mother tongue and English, the communications just right to suit different structures.



### 3

## PROFESSIONAL EDITING OF BOOKS

### BY AUTHORS

I do not think that we have in Sri Lanka a band of professional editors of books. Most reputed publishing houses abroad do have such a band of professionals that does a good job in presenting a copy for publication. We come to know that there is in fact a company that does this job creditably. It's known as "The Guardian Angels".

In recent times we have seen a few outstanding publishers in this country bringing out a number of books in English by Lankan writers. They are professionally printed and produced. The printer's devil and faulty construction and punctuation creep in unwarrantedly at times.

I do not think that we have in Sri Lanka a band of professional editors of books. Most reputed publishing houses abroad do have such a band of professionals that does a good job in presenting a copy for publication. We come to know that there is in fact a company that does this job creditably. It's known as "The Guardian Angels".

The members of this company, we are told, has its members who are highly experienced. *"They are themselves award-winning authors. Their business is to advise authors on a range of matters relating to writing and getting their work published. They will look after the omission of misprints or other irritating errors – that its punctuation is perfect and there is a flow in their writing. They assure writers that effective writing is brought about. The writers would be protected from poor expression, faulty syntax, trite vocabulary, inconsistent –development"*.

I gathered this information from a distinguished academic and critic who had been away from Sri Lanka for some time. She is Emeritus Professor Yasmine Gooneratne. She taught English, Humanities at the Macquire University in Australia. She is an author of many internationally recognized critical works. She has in addition a doctorate from Cambridge University.

Yasmine Gooneratne was associated with "Commonwealth Literature" for a long time compiling a bibliography on Sri Lankan writing in the journal's annual editions. She has many other achievements to her credit. She visits Sri Lanka

three times a year, we are told. She has written three novels so far.

Dr.Yasmine Gooneratne is not only an academic but also a creative writer. I must admit that I have not read any of her fiction so far. The Mellen Press has published what may be called a 'definitive edition' of Leonard Woolf's novel "The Village in the Jungle" which she completed last year.

It was published last December to coincide with the Woolf centenary. Dr.Yasmine Gooneratne has reasons to pinpoint that she "finds it very sad to see how steeply standards have fallen in English Language publishing, in newspapers as well as books. From what I hear, teaching in the schools too is not what it was". Her husband, Dr.Brendon Gooneratne, a well known sportsman and author runs the Pemberly House in the hill country. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the Gooneratne remember me.

I happened to review a book in English by Dr.Brendon Gooneratne under the headline "Understanding the Sinhala Mind' for the then Sunday Island edited by Gamini Weerakoon.

I was gratified to receive an e-mail from

Yasmine recently wherein she says:

*"It's nice to read the papers every time I come back to Sri Lanka, and find you keeping up your dedicated task of educating our English educated readers about the existence of Tamilian literature!"*.

But may I add that I sometimes cover activities pertaining to Lankan English and Sinhala cultural activities too.

So I am not exclusively Tamil obsessed only, please. She adds:

*"It's a long time since I edited a piece of yours (Ilankeeran's Novel (Thentralum Puyalum) for Dick Hensman's "Community" in the 1960s, but you must have broken a record by now for sheer tenacity and devotion to a cause"*.

I am so happy that people who matter read this columnist's writing even though (K. S. Sivakumaran) my pieces are not studied academic writing. I write mainly for the uninitiated average readers. Thank you, Dr. Yasmine Gooneratne for your encouraging words. May I suggest that



committed writers who wish to improve their writing and publishing standards contact "The Guardian Angels Editing Service". You may reach them by e-mail: [yasmine\\_writer@yahoo.com](mailto:yasmine_writer@yahoo.com).



## GROWTH PROCESS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Leave alone 'correct' English. How about Standard English? The 'Standard' English is described as a term used to denote the sort of English that is supposedly accepted by a consensus of opinion among educated people. It is sometimes referred to as BBC English and is spoken with 'received' pronunciation. Double negative is not 'Standard' English although it is understood to have been used and accepted in Shakespeare's day.

All languages undergo changes to suit the usage of the times and thus gain the distinction of being a living language. Among the modern languages, English is flexible in that sense. One reason why the English language is a popular and international tongue is primarily due to the fact that it goes on changing 'accommodating new words and usages borrowed from all sources and quarters.

In this context, one might ask, what happens to the correct English if it goes on changing like that; but the question is, *'is there a correct English? and if so, what are its rules?'*

If the language itself is in a constant state of flux and that usage changes, the rules also should change. The rules change because many words have changes their meanings by usage.

Leave alone 'correct' English. How about Standard English? The 'Standard' English is described as a term used to denote the sort of English that is supposedly accepted by a consensus of opinion among educated people. It is sometimes referred to as BBC English and is spoken with 'received' pronunciation.

Double negative is not 'Standard' English although it is understood to have been used and accepted in Shakespeare's day.

"But the modern approach to correctness is very much a matter of conforming to a convention, and there is different convention for every language situation say Ronald Ridout, Clifford Witting and Anthony Hern, who are specialists in the field. They rightly say that there are many kinds of appropriate language rather than just one correct one".

The function of the language as we all know is to adapt itself to a wide variety of purposes as explained by the specialists in linguistics.

Language may have to be informative factual, emotive or formal, technical, ceremonial, casual, intimate, social commercial, political, etc. Every language situation has its appropriate type of language or register.

### **Colloquialisms:**

How strange, slangs become colloquialism and colloquialism becomes acceptable in at least certain type of writing. For instance, in journalism, the term 'to stage a comeback' is now a quite acceptable.

Usage Talking of journalism we journalists are sometimes sensitive to the derogatory term 'journalese'. At the same time, pretentious and verbose writing may be aptly described as journalese. Long words, circumlocutions pompous turns of phrases, stale gances, and clichés are certainly bad features of journalistic writing. Using more words than are needed and words for words' sake are clear signs of verbose journalistic writing.

But discriminating readers would admit that newspaper writing in most quality press is now simpler, crisp and to the point. In fact most of the language conscious journalists avoid clichés and

hackneyed expressions, although they may be accused of bringing in jargons associated with different fields of study. Stock similes, stock idiomatic expressions and pompous, phrases serve as ready tools of immediate communication. But a clever writer avoids these and tries to use fresh expressions to communicate. Such writers are rally word builders.

### **Ceylonisms:**

The inevitability of Ceylonism or Lankanism creeping into local writing too should be noted in a way such expressions are slangs, because they are spoken in particular contexts. Dr.Johnson has called slang as low words. But such words have now gained respectability. The word slang came to be used only after 1756. Before that, it was called 'cant' and meant the secret language of the underworld thieves and rogues. In this business of writing English, there is also the problem of what is known as Pleonasm. It means the use of unnecessary words. This term should not be confused with the term Redundancy. The use of more words than we need to express our meaning is redundancy. Pleonasm however, is superfluous addition.

Then there is tautology which can be avoided. Saying the same thing twice in different ways is tautology. But tautological terms have become part and parcel of our every day speech. 'Cool and collected', 'kith and kin' are two examples of such terms.

Sometimes ambiguities also prevent clear communications of ideas. Something that can be taken in two ways is ambiguity. But in obvious circumstances shortening of a sentence by the omission of a word or words that may be readily understood from the context general knowledge, is allowed. This, as we know, ellipsis. But deliberate ambiguity is a form of fallacy. Anything that is intentionally vague or ambiguous is called equivocation.

It is interesting to note that almost half a century ago, an international language called 'Basic English' was devised by C.K.Oden and I.A.Richards. But it was pointed out that this system had shortcomings. The Basic English has a vocabulary of 850 words (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs and structural words). Since there was scarcity of words, very often the usage of such words led to circumlocution.

It has equally understandable that any roundabout method of expression sometime lead to dignity and therefore circumlocution is permissible in a limited way.

It has been pointed out that the English spelling is etymological rather than phonetic.

The words are spelt according to their historical form rather than their present sound,

We must also take note of the pronunciation of English words. It though in earlier times spelling was much more phonetic than it is today. Hence there is a growing concern among many educated people particularly among Americans to reform the spelling in English to suit the pronunciation.

Also, to help the non English speaking people to find their way through the labyrinth of English pronunciation, a system has been introduced. By this system, the 44 sounds that make up the English language have been given international phonetic symbols.

It is the responsibility of those who teach English, to teach correct pronunciation of the language. Those accustomed to careless way of speech or with the injudicious accents, sometimes

mistake correct pronunciation as speech with accent. But they do not realize that received pronunciation not necessarily speech with an accent.

Accept is the stronger tone of voice given to particular syllable of a word. In correct pronunciation, one also becomes familiar with where the stress or accent falls. The stress will fall on a particular syllable as words are broken into syllables.

Language, after all, is only a vehicle of communication. If intelligibility is achieved in communication, then perhaps, flexibility in the use of language in speech and writing is permissible.





## LANKAN WRITING IN ENGLISH FLOURISH

*“While providing a storehouse and quality test for the novice and amateur, ‘Channels’ has also become a forum for the two sorts of Sri Lankan expatriate, both local and foreign. We believe that this kind of mix would not only generate interaction between the local and international community in Sri Lanka but also provide a variety of cultural sampling to the reader”.*

Channels Vol 1, No. 2 – Edited by Kamala Wijeratne, published by English Writers Cooperative of Sri Lanka, c/o. The British Council, 49, Alfred House Gardens, Colombo 3. Editorial Board: Nirmali Hettiarachchi, Anne Ranasinghe, Maureen Sneviratne, rajiva Wije’sinhast.

Kamala Wijeratne, who has edited this issue is one of the foremost poets writing in English today in our country. There are a dozen poems in the number. They are all interestingly written and crisp in language and style. I liked Punyakante’s poems very much for their simplicity and subdued tone. Usually regarded as a fiction, writer she had not written much poetry. But whatever she had written

as poems are certainly controlled emotions and thoughts. Take for instance, her poem titled 'Death drifts down a river'.

*Death/Drifts down a river/ Swollen by a monsoon rain/ Death/ naked, unidentified/ A warning/ to the living watching from the bridge.*

*Big back crows/ perched like vultures/Look, down unblinking/ As death drifts down the river/ On Sunday afternoon.*

While one welcomes naturalised Lankan citizen W.R.McAlpine's attempt eulogising Gajaman Nona, one really appreciates his other poem in this number called Separation. I liked the expression 'Sometime a witchery of mountain rose between us'.

Parvathi Arasanayagam's biting satire in 'Saturnalia' comes out well as she contrasts the inside feast with impending disaster with the outside poisoned death of the crows.

Wipul Jayawickrama recaptures the almost everyday experiences of most of us in a tense, sucked atmosphere of terror all around.

Newcomers Chonira Aturupane and K.Ravindra Fernando show promise with their

measured use of words to convey two different experiences, R.A.Baker, the former British Council Head in Colombo has two poems in this number, philosophical outpourings which I find a little difficult to comprehend at first' reading.

Jean Arasanayagam's 'Migrations' is a splendid and balanced portrayal of two kinds of migrations: from Sri Lanka to Australia and vice versa. While the second half of this long poem is readily intelligible, the first is unwarrantedly indirect, and as such, contrived at least to this reviewer. However, I liked very much the sardonic tone and the desirability of disowning the past Burgher image.

Having sampled the kind of poetry found in this journal, let's note a few points which the editor makes:

*"The tradition of the cooperative movement and the guilds of craft have been maintained in the initiation of and the launching of new writers. In the process their talent has been recognized and the handiwork scrutinized by the masters of the craft. They, we hope, while using this badge of achievement will*

*venture out in new modes and new designs”.*

*“While providing a storehouse and quality test for the novice and amateur, ‘Channels’ has also become a forum for the two sorts of Sri Lankan expatriate, both local and foreign. We believe that this kind of mix would not only generate interaction between the local and international community in Sri Lanka but also provide a variety of cultural sampling to the reader”:*

Maureen Seneviratne, who edited the first number of ‘Channels’, has written some aspects of her own origin as a Burgher. As the editor has said the end of Maureen’s journey by mind finds her revelling in her identity as well as reconciling herself to the reality of the present.

Young Maadhubashini Dissanayake’s ‘The Old Order’, a short story, tries to bring before the reader an old order, but it is the mystery of Nissanka, the main Character that baffles the reader till the end. A fairly good attempt at short story writing and one hopes she learns to write like a poet with economy of words.

Alfreda de Silva's story is an ideal short story of near-perfect craftsmanship, but there again an element of mystery adds suspense. However, I would have preferred a straight realistic story in full as most part of the story is.

Finally, let's see what Chitra Fernando's story 'The Road to Rome' says. Well it's about the holidaying of some people in Italy. None of them are Sri Lankans, except perhaps the narrator. The writer clearly takes us with her journey, and we enjoy the trip; but one feels that the Sri Lankan experience is missing. It's like reading a foreign story in English. However, Chitra Fernando's language is chaste.

We would have liked brief notes on the contributors as well, in this number so that readers can be kept updated of 'writers and writing'. Let's have No 3 of "Channels" soon.



## LANKAN ENGLISH DRAMA IN ENGLISH

Have Sri Lankan dramatists shown they can express in English a wide range of emotions as the dramatist whose mother tongue is English or has Sri Lankan Drama succeeded only within a narrow range, such as the humorous or the satirical?

One of the perceptive literary critics in present day is Tisska Jayatilake.

He has written on many subjects including English Theatre in Lanka.

In one of his articles of local newspapers he mentions some trends in early theatrical productions.

For the benefit of younger readers who may not be familiar with the early theatrical activities, which they should know of the historical development, I gleaned some of his views and present in this column.

### Quotations:

Poetry and Fiction written in English by Sri

Lankan Creative writers have received much critical attention. But not so Sri Lankan Drama in English. One reason perhaps is that drama, speaking less profuse than poetry or fiction in English.

- Have Sri Lankan Dramatists shown they can write as well as any of their counterparts whose mother tongue is English?
- Have Sri Lankan dramatists shown they can express in English a wide range of emotions as the dramatist whose mother tongue is English or has Sri Lankan Drama succeeded only within a narrow range, such as the humorous or the satirical?
- How would Sri Lankan drama in English fare when compared to the general body of English drama produced by the playwrights whose mother tongue is English?
- Should Sri Lankan drama in English be assessed according to those criteria by which English drama is assessed or should there be a separate set of criteria for this purpose?
- If we look at the theatre groups in the country that have been and are involved in the production of plays we find that they too consist

of members (if this class (urban elite) ace. The Drama Soc, Stage and set, The International Theatre Group, The Ceylon Amateur Dramatic Group, etc.

- We note, therefore, that English Drama in Sri Lanka is largely the creation of the western oriented intelligentsia of the country.
- Dr.C.H.Gunasekera's The Blind Eye which appeared in 1933 gives us an idea of what Ceylonese social life was in the 1930s.. It is an amalgam of sentimental social drama and comic farce. The intention of the dramatist appears to have been to merely smile at some feudal foibles and not to make a serious criticism of these.
- Sri Nissanka's Our Lanka, published in 1939 is a 'historical' play. It attempts to re-capture in dramatic terms the life and reign of one of the better-known figures to have ruled ancient Ceylon DuttuGemunu.
- The plays of C N de Lanerolle have been performed frequently all over the island. The predominant attitude in the plays of De Lanerolle seems to be to be one of snobbery.



The snobbish middle class values are held up as positive.

- I suggest that the same criticism is valid for certain other Sri Lankan play wrights such as Ernest Macintyre, Johann Lembruggen Land Khalida Lebbe.
- In Gamini Gunawardena's only published play the ideal epic forms of Rama and Sita are re-examined with the sensibility of the modern mind.

I have quoted above only the names of the early plays written in the past as mentioned by Tissa Jayatilake and avoided his critical observations of the plays discussed. Readers may seek to find the original essay by him to fully understand his views on Lankan Drama in English. After Macintyre there are many play wrights that have shown their presence in fostering Lankan theatre in English. The latest to shine is Jehan Aloysius.



## LANKAN ENGLISH : MANIQUE GOONASEKERA'S VIEWS

*"The book attempts to document the main characteristics of Standard Sri Lankan English as it is used today. The divide between the English speaking and non-English speaking classes has led to the emergence of different varieties of Sri Lankan English. The prestigious variety is the elitist variety, considered to be Standard Sri Lankan English, and is based on Sinhalese"*

An Affable academic in the country is Prof. Manique Gunasekera who is a down to earth and respected researcher on 'varieties of English'. She heads the Department of English and the English Language Teaching Unit of the University of Kelaniya. She is also the President of the Sri Lanka English language Teachers' Association. She is also interested in post colonial literature.

I had the pleasure of following a few lectures at the Kelaniya University as a student of English for my basic degree as an external candidate. And I sat with her in the lecture halls and benefited

from the conversations I had with her. She is now one of the important linguistic dons in the country.

Reading through her pace-setting book (as far as Sri Lankan English is concerned), the *Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English*, I was in for a shock. She is iconoclastic in damaging the image I had of Lankan English. Please read this to glean what I am trying to say here:

“For a language which has been part of culture and identity of a country for nearly 210 years, English occupies a peculiar position in Sri Lankan society. It is only now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that at least some users of English are prepared to say they speak or use Sri Lankan English. For generations, people have believed and declared that they speak British English or the Queen’s English; and these terms are used interchangeably. In keeping with this belief, some Sri Lankans still look to the BBC as the arbiter of correct usage of English for Sri Lanka. In a post colonial society such as ours, this is supreme example of linguistic servitude”.

“First, we do not acknowledge that we have a language which we can call Sri Lankan English. Second, we delude ourselves that our language is

really a slight variation of British English. Third, this myth is based on the fond belief that by saying we speak British English we mean Received Pronunciation of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and no other variety of British English. In a sense time stands still, or is perceived to do so, in the minds of most fluent speakers of English in Sri Lanka". (p. 11-12)

As a person who presents continuity programmes in English over SLBC and a teacher of English in a college that prepares students to sit for the London GCE examinations, I myself imagined that I spoke in the RP. After reading the author's book, I now realize that I was in a delusion, as she would say.

Her fascinating book is a treat to all of us who handles English as a journalist or a teacher or a public official or anybody.

How does Manique try to define "Sri Lankan English", if that exists?

"..It is Sri Lankan English, with its borrowings and influences from Sinhalese and Tamil, as used in Sri Lanka. The variety has evolved, including the vocabulary for local religions, kinship systems, etc. now considered part of the language..".

What is the purpose of writing this book, we might ask the author. She would reply thus:

*"The book attempts to document the main characteristics of Standard Sri Lankan English as it is used today. The divide between the English speaking and non-English speaking classes has led to the emergence of different varieties of Sri Lankan English. The prestigious variety is the elitist variety, considered to be Standard Sri Lankan English, and is based on Sinhalese".*

It is this variety that is described in this book. Other varieties of Sri Lankan English are Tamil English and Burgher English.

Manique Gunasekera's book has the following subjects which would explain the form that had evolved out of her research:

*Sri Lankan English, Elitist English, Mixing Languages, Language of Governance, Phonology of Sri Lankan English, Sri Lankan English syntax, Morphology Processes, Morphology of Sri Lankan English (glossary).*

The ISBN of the book is 955 – 1115 – 00 – 7 and published by Katha Publishers in Colombo with

a number of colour and black and white photographs. The photographer is Lakshman Nadarajah; and the book is designed by Nelun Harasgama Nadarajah.

Among the photographs is one of the late Sita Parakrama, a broadcaster and journalist and an actress in Sinhala cinema of yesteryear.

The price of the book is not marked. The book may be available in all leading book stalls.

This columnist feels that this is seminal work on the subject and it's worth possessing a copy for the simple reason that those of us who belong to an earlier generation would be able to update ourselves in the field of language studies.



## REGI SIRIWARDENE: ON HYBRIDITY

One might ask, whether all these caning Creative? Make up a creative work? Why not, if it can entertain you and assemble facts with imaginative interpretation and thus present an interesting story. Again what is creative in an assemblage of several thread bears. Doesn't clever structuring Creative?

What a fascinating work has Regi Siriwardena produced. He calls it a tale and all conventional fiction is basically a tale.

And what is a tale?

"It is a narrative or story, especially fictitious and imaginatively treated" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English- 1990).

A tale can be written in different forms. We have Jonson's 'A Tale of Tale of a Tub (Comedy) and the same title is given to a satire in prose by Swift G, Meredith's short novel.

The Tale of Chloe the Japanese Novel Tale of Genji by Lady Murasaki, Dickens novel, A Tale of

Two Cities, Crabbe's collection of poems, Tales in Verse, and also Tales of the Hall, Scott's novels, tales of My Landlord (The Black Dwarf, Old Mortality, The Heart of Midlothian, The Bride of Lammermoor, A Legend of entrose, Count Robert of Paris, Castle Dangerous), again Scot Tales of the Crusaders (The Betrothed, The Talisman), Chatgce Tale of Melibeus, The Tale of Sir Thopas, Beatrix Potter's The Tale of Peter Rabbit, F.Scott's eralds, Tales of the Jazz Age and of course Edgar Alan Poe's numerous tales, as examples in this genre.

The Lost Lenore is the first venture in narrative fiction of a writer who is already known as playwright, poet and critic 'says the blurb in the back cover of this 100 page cleverly constructed detective fiction, which is also a sardonic commentary on us Sri Lankans, who are beings borne out of hybridity.

Post-structuralist critics, we understand, do not like the word works and would call them texts". But being an orthodox student of literature, I prefer to call the writings of Mr.Regis Siriwardena works. And they include The End of Gold String (1989), Addressing the Otter (1992) Poems and Selected Translations (1993), Octet: Collected Plays (1995).



To my mind, Regi Siriwardena is a competent creative Writer in this country writing in English. He appeals to me instantaneously that any other creative Writer in English, in our little Island. This is because, the existence of freshness and joy of being elevated and elated with new ideas and experiences, a restrained and controlled mix of emotion and rationality and a meticulous craftsmanship, and above all clear and translucent simple style in all his writing.

The Lost Lenore satisfies me at several levels as a student of English Literature and ethnicity. The writer gives valuable information on literary figures, particularly the Romantic Poet, Lord Byron, on literary criticism, on origin of words used in Sri Lanka, the hybrid formation of the different ethnic groups, the changing attitudes of present day young people towards matters of physical and intellectual relationship with the opposite sex, the academic circles, the party circles, etc.

One might ask, whether all these caning Creative? Make up a creative work? Why not, if it can entertain you and assemble facts with imaginative interpretation and thus present an interesting story. Again what is creative in an

assemblage of several thread bears. Doesn't clever structuring Creative?

Of course, a thriller, a mystery novel or detective fiction may not get the approval of literary critics as respectable literary work, because of the limited range of experience or values inculcated in such works. But skill, with literary values no more in vogue, due to the influx of the internet and other technological devices here is a possibility of such lesser genre as a tale being recognized as a 'text' even if the author is ignored.

And those who would like to study what *The Lost Lenore* has and what it has not will find it stimulating to register their own textual impressions.

What is the story about?

Peter Spencer teaches English at Cambridge and he specialises in Romantic Poetry. One of his books is 'Poetry in an age of Revolution'. His father was born in Sri Lanka. That colonial captain of English Upper Class has had a physical relationship with a Sri Lankan maid. A child was born out of this illegitimate physical relationship. This child is at the centre of the story.

The Captain's legitimate son Peter Spencer unravels the mystery about the dead Lenore. Regi Siriwardena in his preface writes:

*"Since the book defends hybridity, it is, appropriately, itself hybrid, being at the same time a mystery story, a love story, a tribute to Byron, and as I have already said, a defence of hybridity.*

This book should be used as a text for the GCE (A) English Literature paper, because it will help students understand English Literature in proper perspectives in higher education. Though the book is slim its educative value is immense. Outmoded prejudices among the various linguistic groups can also vanish little by little.

And perhaps the realisation that we are all of the same ethnic stock will dawn in rather belatedly. And that would be the right time to think that we are all one nation.



## POETIC MIND OF AN INTELLECTUAL

"The arrogance of scholarly knowledge and the rashness of the youth would have to give way to humility, which is the essence of nature of a true artist. "

Reggie Siriwardena has written poems in addition to the two plays he has already published. He has also translated a few poems into, English. All these activities are creative, but his critical writing is yet to be published in book form. As an acknowledged scholar and critic in the English language in this country, Reggie Siriwardena has demanded respect from all quarters.

His second collection of poems (original and translations) called '*Waiting for the Soldier*' was out in mid-1989. There are 10 original poems and 10 translated poems from the Russian.

We enjoyed the poem 'Report from the Front' for its sheer humour and the apparent sardonic commentary the poet subtly presents. He calls the termites as 'subversives' which destroy partly his Steiner and Mark Twain (anti-capitalist though), but the poet adds:

*The war goes on. No negotiations are possible. Of course, I'd like to howl' from the housetops, "Culture, civilization threatened! Anarchy! Murder most foul.*

The poem's real delight and the wisdom it imparts come in the last stanza;

*But the small voice of a termite whispers: "Comrades, there's a bloated capitalist who keeps shelves full of food for himself, while we starve. Come, let's get it while he, sleeps!"*

Does it also mean that the elites in their ivory towers are not productive enough to be non-exclusive?

Another lovely and pleasantly concentrated poem is called 'Elegy for Serena'.

*It's not your wasted face I want to remember, nor your hands and arms, pared down by death to the bone, but the light of life in your eyes; in them the Spirit resisting the invader to the end, unafraid, alone.*

An ardent lover of Russian literature, Mr.Siriwardena is also an enthusiastic admirer of the glasnost in contemporary Soviet Union. In a tribute to Pushkin, he calls the Russian master

'the supreme master of everyday speech raised to a higher power by subtle inflections of rhythm and word order'.

In his 'green, youth' (a lively expression) he had liked Donne, Blake, Baudelaire, Coleridge, Yeats, Byron and Auden. But why he likes Pushkin most is in the poet's words, "*You took, like Anna Akhmatov and Pasternak your portion of toadies' insults and calumnies*" 7 'f'

But what is most Striking in Reggie's poem is his last stanza: "Now a liberal tsar reigns in the Kremlin, and the fair Raisa dispenses both charm and the Cultural Fund's bounties. Pray with us that glasnost may come to no harm". It is the wish of this columnist too.

The maturity the subject enjoys meeting a woman after 'long time passing' ridicules the victim, but yet he is sceptical. And that raises the richness of the poem to a high level, instead of bring clever (assuming that the subject is a male and if he is one, a male chauvinist indeed!). But let's see how the poem is composed:

*"At twenty, he thought what a marvellous woman she was. At twenty-five, she left him.*

*In despair, he wanted to die. At forty, she came back into his life. After one evening, How uninteresting she is!' he said to himself with a sigh. Yet to be honest, he had to admit she looked very much the same; walked with the same shy demeanour that enchanted him once; thought the same; was the same person, really is that, he wondered, 'why?'*

"The arrogance of scholarly knowledge and the rashness of the youth would have to give way to humility, which is the essence of nature of a true artist. The self quest the poet indulges in makes him say this:

*"Is this the fruit of experience? Declining years? Maturity? Wisdom? Or blood run cold? Who is to say? Not me".*

Reggie Siriwardena's 'Colonial Cameo' is also a wonderfully chiselled out self criticism. He calls his schoolmates in the "colonial era" 'the snobbish little bastards'. But he doesn't want to blame them for it. He was deeply ashamed of his mother speaking in Sinhala. Now, 'Whenever I remember am ashamed of shame' says the narrator in Reggie's poem.

This columnist must admit that he does not particularly like any of the poems translated by Mr.Siriwardena. There are four poems by Aleskandr Pushkin, two by Alesksandr Blok, two by Marina Tsvetaeva and two by Anna Akhmatova.

However, we liked a few lines or metaphors in some of the translated poems like.

"And longest lasting, the majestic Word" (Anna Akhmatova) "its milky temptation" (Marina Tsvetaeva) "a chattering wave washes from the rock of my tears" (Aleksandr Blok), "But from that bitter severing kiss you tore away your lips" (Pushkin), 'Like a wilful comet among the counted stars' (Pushkin).

Reggie Siriwardena who presently works for the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, edits their magazine "The Thatched Patio". He has so far published seven books. He is now planning a play on the subject of Anton Chekov in Ceylon, to be titled "The Temptations of Paradise" and to be brought out in 1990, the centenary year of Chekhov's visit to Ceylon.





## MCALPINES POEMS BY A HUMANIST

*"For the river sound of French in conversation, for the Silver Sound of English in poetry, for beautiful Women even when silent. For Jorge Luis Borges, the apogee of poetic visor of my ageing years. For gifts unsung in this poem whose number unravel to eternity."*

Death of the Beloved and Other Poems by W.R.McAlpine. Published by Lake House Investments Ltd., 41, W.A.D. Ramanayake Mawatha, Colombo 2. (1991). Price: Rs. 175/-

Among the distinguished foreigners who chose their home in Sri Lanka were the McAlpines. Bill McAlpine is a former British Council Representative in Colombo. He is a man of literary turn of mind and has authored a number of books. Poetry is his forte, His works include: A Vesak Oratorio, Fragments of a Faith, Birds Beasts and Beings. But his best contribution to the body of Sri Lankan literature is his translation of the Sinhala epic, Kavisilumina, in collaboration with Prof. M.B. Ariyapala, titled The Crest Gem of Poetry.

W.R.McAlpine has also produced a monograph in collaboration with David Robson called Ratigala –A Monastic Mountain. His wife, Helen, who died recently also collaborated with him in writing Japanese Tales and Legends. Essays on Contemporary English Literature is yet another book by McAlpine.

The present volume is an anthology of poems written by him to Lankan academic little magazines like Navasilu, New Lankan Review and Channels.

As the title of the book suggests, the poems, are divided into two main categories there are 10 stanzas under the title, Death of the Beloved. Other Poems include poems on people like Gajaman Nona, Sarath Muttetuwagama, Pablo Neruda, Edward Lear, Karen Breckendridge and on an Ageing Dancer. There are 24 more poems, thus providing lines of poetry for pleasure and from communicating shared felt experiences.

One of the poems I like is titled "A Poem of Gifts'. He begins his poem in a humble fashion:

*I offer my gratitude.To the vast impersonal forces for the endless variety of phenomena I am heir to..."*

What Mr.McAlpine considers as gifts he has received are in fact the choice of a refined soul: Shakespeare, Buddha, Shiva, Solomon, Yeats, Beethoven Indian architecture, Euclid, Chaplin, Mythology, Mozart, Vesak, Borges, etc. Some of his expressions are strikingly poetic and original. Here are some samples:

*For silence, the only music to quell the pollution of noise.*

*For eccentrics, who shatter the dreaminess of Conventions.*

For the river sound of French in conversation, For the Silver Sound of English in poetry, For beautiful Women even when silent, For Jorge Luis Borges, the apogee of poetic visor of my ageing years, For gifts unsung in this poem whose number unravel to eternity.

Read aloud, McApine's lines evoke not only apt images but also rhythmic sounds. Every single poem is a piece of considered thought drawn at random.

The graceful language of her laughter (8). And coral seas pounding like a lover's heart every ear (22). Mercy was anaesthetized/Magic of

destruction fabled his speech (33). He rode silent as a prayer (35), granaries of mind (39), Mortality defied in immortality kiss (77).

There is this line which caught my fancy. It comes in the composition titled, In Kanatte Cemetery:

*"Sivalingam, Fernando, Van Langenberg, Edwards. Each a paradigm of ancestral descent of those. Wombed on Dravidian Swords of India. On rapiers and the cross of Portuguese. On cannonball and cannon law of Protestant Dutch and British".*

This collection of poems is structurally, emotionally and cerebrally acceptable and draws attention of any reader who cares for the right use of the right word at the right place.



## JEAN ARIYANAYAGAM'S TALENTS

## NOT POETRY ALONE

*“ No, the true poet is never the victor, never seeks the cheers of vociferous voices or the applause surging crowds owning the voice of spontaneous utterance. The life of the poet is made up of fragments that create a mosaic patterning of words on the walls of temples, sanctuaries, cathedrals filled with the symbolic language that only the initiate can decipher, a second map that guides the searcher on the journey through passage after passage, the tortuous mazes and labyrinths of history.”*

Gratiaen Prize winner Jean Arasanayagam is not merely a fantastic poet but also a social critic and a great teacher. Everybody who is interested in English literature knows her both here and elsewhere. There is no point in making hosannas about her or her writing. Her prize-winning poetry book 'The Life of The Poet' comprising 46 poems, short and long are found within 122 pages in the book published by Sarasvati Publishers.

I am not wrong if I suppose her writing is

elitist and would be greatly understood and appreciated by scholars and serious lovers of literature. Academic critics will have something positive in their evaluations.

In an email interview Jean Arasanayagam, my dear friend, had given to Anshita Deval of the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, India, the readers can read the poet's mind and vision and her style of expression. Please read her lengthy replies given to only five questions. They are awe-inspiring and perceptive.

We must first understand what the author wants to say in her or his work before we pass judgement on the work. This helps us why we appreciate or dislike a work and do justice to the writer. It is easy to criticize a work but difficult to create or write. So, I leave it to your judgement.

What I can do is to select at random some of her lines which I find pregnant with deeper meaning and exquisite presentation.

In the title poem she writes:

*" No, the true poet is never the victor, never seeks the cheers of vociferous voices or the applause surging crowds owning the voice*

*of spontaneous utterance. The life of the poet is made up of fragments that create a mosaic patterning of words on the walls of temples, sanctuaries, cathedrals filled with the symbolic language that only the initiate can decipher, a second map that guides the searcher on the journey through passage after passage, the tortuous mazes and labyrinths of history."*

Please read the rest of her stanzas to relish on the words she uses to mesmerize our thought process. It reminds me of classical poetry of the Greek dramatists through Shakespeare to Eliot, Yeats and the contemporary poets.

In another poem titled "Maps of Self-Discovery", the poet bemoans with assurance of the present.

*Recalling that past, of what use is it, those people who engendered me have vanished long, long ago. The architecture of their abodes built with nostalgia to resemble the old country, have no longer significance to me, I do not wish to be incarcerated in the past.*

What could be the poet's inner self wants?

Look here:

*My true self cloaked in magical mystical disguise walks freely on the crowded streets of the world..*

*I strive, journey on in that exodus to the Canaan land of milk and honey to reach my own visionary lands of the mind, the imagination.. Here are more captivating phrases and lines in her poetry: Memory, buried in the incinerators of the mind.*

*Hope remains, everlasting, that vanquishers all evil that has escaped from Pandora's mythic box. Wrench birth from the unyielding womb of nature, a poem awakening into light, dispelling darkness. Flowering and fruiting in the private arbours of the mind. It no longer matters that the garment of my skin that clothed my flesh, grows dull and faded. We are all poems we read in each other's faces, I create and read in your faces.*

Jean Aranasanayagam is not merely a creative poet but also a commentator on social issues. Please read her to find out the truth.





## JEAN ARASANAYAGAM'S POEMS : IRRESISTIBLE

**"I am not blameless, I walked blindly into danger zones, I did not baulk at trepidatious confrontation nor dodge my assailants but willingly allowed myself to be captive to forces that curbed my resistless powerless being until I found those secret bypaths that led out of that crushing wilderness inhabited by the assassin and torturers, untangling those snarled up routes, separating their diverse strands like wayward thoughts that wait to be unknotted, straightened out"**

Jean Arasanayagam is irresistible. She continues to publish many volumes of her longish poems which carry her persona and literary embellishments. Right now, she dominates the Lankan poetic scene in English winning prizes one after the other, which is a positive thing indeed.

One of her books is- 'Introspection Poems' published by Sarasavi Publishers in 2016 and is priced Rs.350/-. It has 43 poems within its 138 pages. From some of her titles you would know what her fanciful themes are.

A few titles: *Mindscales, Dreams and Poetry, Metaphysical, The Voice Within, Embryonic Thoughts, Invisible Mirrors, Introspection.*

Let's take 'Introspection'. What does it say? A wanderer through the wilderness continues her journey and reach a mirage-filled horizon searching for through her harsh passage. Right. But what is the outcome?

Look, how she concludes the journey in her last stanza:

*"I am not blameless, I walked blindly into danger zones, I did not baulk at trepidatious confrontation nor dodge my assailants but willingly allowed myself to be captive to forces that curbed my resistless powerless being until I found those secret bypaths that led out of that crushing wilderness inhabited by the assassin and torturers, untangling those snarled up routes, separating their diverse strands like wayward thoughts that wait to be unknotted, straightened out"*

So, it is fantasy experienced through travelling though torturous routes.

What is significant in most of her poetry is

her mastery of the vocabulary. Her unusual coinages are fascinating. Long winded lines may tire the reader, but read aloud, the lines are rhythmic and poetic.

To enjoy her poetry, one must read her poems in full.

Some lines I enjoyed reading aloud:

On Admired, Jean's opening line is as follows—

*"Great Chasms divide us fissured by time and age".*

I wish to give in full her poem titled *"Mindscapes"* for you to enjoy it yourself, even though the first stanza is only one amalgamated sentence.

*"My mind unwinds reel after reel of images, landscapes that are now embedded in each vast unending scape with its recurrent visions, unwind those reels in my dreams and waking hours, reflecting my passage through the convoluted passages of history, merging into the up to date routes of the contemporary times I take, thronged with repetitiousness of everyday life, of birth, of*

*death with familiar landmarks and signposts,  
the totems of ravaged civilizations, bombed  
churches, roofless abodes, mined  
wastelands, jagged crests of withering palm  
friends.*

*Villas, deserted, abandoned, inhabited by  
spectres that roam lost and desolate from  
room to room, tree roots growing into  
cracked walls fissured with windows gaping  
wide, gardens with empty bunkers into which  
reptiles coil and nestle in darkness,  
everything gone to seed, except for rampant  
weeds clinging to the parched earth, door  
less apertures, empty spaces, in uninhibited  
rooms, ruined homes to which there will  
never be a return.*

*My mind unwinds reel after reel..."*

One more poem in full – "Dreams and Poetry"

*"A flash of insight, a piercing light illuminates  
the inner darkness that oppresses the  
sleeping spirit, rouses it to awakening creates  
transient images that ripple and quiver in  
the mind, summoning the hidden visions all  
expectant from their dormant slumber, to  
emerge.,*

*Tantalize the imagination with unfolding  
panorama of representative lives, multiplying  
in gestation after gestation of phenomenal  
beings appearing from the closed inner  
chambers with whom I engage in fleeting  
dialogues,*

*Beings, real or phantasy embodiments,  
encountered on my reincarnatory passages  
through aeons of rebirth, some of them still  
alive in memory but who no longer tread  
this earth,*

*We meet at crossroads or veer off, take  
different routes, I return alone, take a few,  
tentative steps in my halting gait wearied  
after so many ruminative journeys, often  
directionless, step back into a precarious  
reality, my visions growing diffuse, a fast  
vanishing world of dreams with their  
intimations of another lie, another hidden  
existence in those timeless spaces with their  
glimpses of eternity”.*

Personally, I like to write simple sentences that are short but with appropriate right words, but the poets and writers in English are used to write long sentences may be because they want all

what they want to express in one breath.

However, I tried to understand what our poet wants to say in her poems, even when I did not readily understand some of the unfamiliar words.

Students of higher forms can learn a lot by reading such poets and writers in Lanka.



## JEAN ARASANAYAGAM: MIND AND FELICITY

I am always perhaps the protagonist  
 Entering under the skin in that invisible camouflage  
 But my true identity is often concealed in alter egos  
 Personae in the creation of allegorical fictional plots

An internationally known Lankan poet, Jean Solomons born to a Burgher family and married to a dramatist Arasanayagam, (both are prestigious prize winners in literary competitions in English) and having two daughters (one of them is Parvathi, who is also a poet) is an icon in the Lankan English Literary scene.

Author of several books with her elegant mastery of the language she is an immensely talented writer causing envy to many. One of her latest books is *The Voice of the Turtle Dove* published by S Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd. In the back cover, the poet says, 'Yet, the mind is a private universe, a world I keep exploring in my wanderings'. It is this universe we see in this collection of 29 long poems.

It wouldn't be possible for me to read and comment on each and every poem in this collection. Therefore, I will single out just one poem I appreciated more than the rest, of her well written poems.

There is a saying in Tamil that just a morsel in a pot of rice is sufficient to know if it is finely boiled. (*Oru Paanai Chorrukku Oru Soru Patham*). With the same yardstick we can measure the quality of her art by dissecting the following poem on Writing a Novel.

*Writing a Novel* appeals to me very much since I am a student and critic of literature. This is the first stanza in the poem:

*I am always perhaps the protagonist  
Entering under the skin in that invisible  
camouflage  
But my true identity is often concealed in  
alter egos  
Personae in the creation of allegorical fictional  
plots*

In writing fiction, we generally think of the theme, plot, characterization, narration, dialogue and so on.



Here, in this stanza the poet writes in personal pronoun and almost nearly she is the main character or heroine. Her character is not visible. But her 'true identity is often concealed in alter ego'.

Psychologically we know that there are three components in the mind: Id, Ego and Super Ego. But she mentions Alter-Egos. What is that? Alter Egos = A person's aspects of secondary or alternative personality. Her plots are allegorical.

In other words, her novel is not based on naked reality. That's fine. That's the writer's right to imagine as in the "animal Farm" of George Orwell. We now go to the: second stanza:

*I am a strategic manipulator,  
Arrange the backdrop to my personal  
dramas,  
Create landscapes from figments of the  
imagination,  
Arbours, orchards, gardens even the  
explorers  
Wilderness, precarious ravines, streamlets,  
Waterfalls, surging rivers*

It is evident that she doesn't merely depict

things but manipulate them in such a way to suit her needs. She is also a Romantic like Keats, for instance. It is to show that she is in communion with Nature. Her line 'arranging the backdrops to my personal dramas' is creative, true enough.

To enjoy her poem, we must quote the rest of the stanzas.

Here they are:

*Invent with subtle contrivance the innuendo, the careful phrasing of thought in the interchange of words between my fictional characters. Quote myself often, inner thoughts made visible on the page.*

*Learned the basics of story-telling from childhood, Fairy tales, folk tales, fantasy, mystery, a heady concoction from which I had to detach myself, unwind the interweave of stands that bound my imagination, set my imagination free, create my alter egos, metamorphose, Be my own scribe and cover reams and reams, Spinning out my tales pulling out poems, fictions, Dramas like the conjuror's tricks in that never ending flow spirited out of my mind.*

Thus we see the poet is writing with a purpose carefully and meticulously manipulating random things to fit in a concrete construct.

There is yet another poem I enjoyed. That is on 'Re-reading Jane Austen". The first stanza itself is just one statement in 19 lines capturing the entire essence of the great novelist.

*From childhood I immersed myself in different worlds of Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, Emily Bronte turned page after page of their fictions, shared the Lives of their protagonists, of them all, the world of Jane Impinged deeply on my consciousness as I devoured Those regency novels, listened intently to their Mannered, measured words of elegant conventions Heard the music, those strains of violas and harpsichords Echoing in my ears as quadrilles, polkas and waltzes enacted their intimate dramas in those eighteenth Century and nineteenth century ballrooms, Illustrations remain in their pastel hues of those High-waisted gown, those demure ringleted cur. Hairbands and coronet, the turbulence of emotions concealed within the delicate lace, organza*

*and silk, Spent years exploring that way of  
life so lien. To our ears, the romances of nubile  
young women, their quest for gentlemen  
suits from the elite range of Society.*

Please read the rest of the poem and enjoy.

Her subjects of poetry are many and varied,  
which include Constantine da S de Nronha,  
Kastane, Elephants, The Ancient Game of Stones,  
Water, Remembering the Border Village Massacres,  
Squandered Histories, A private Universe, and so  
on.



**KAMALA WIJERATNE'S  
POETIC SENSIBILITIES**

*“For those hundred –buried alive  
Was it a dream or fantasy?  
When the earth opened and dragged  
them in?  
For those left behind homeless  
And properties is reality  
That they are alive  
But have name or place”.*

*“They are a nameless crowd  
Forgotten by both nature and man  
And a grey sky stares them in the face”.*

Author of a dozen books in English and give times winner of prestigious awards for her literary works Kamala Wijeratne is a well-known writer and poet in the country. An educationist and presenter in reading seminar papers, she is highly respected literary person.

Her books include:

*The Smell of Araliya Flowers*  
*A House Divided*  
*The Disinherited*  
*That One Talent*  
*The White Saree & Other Poems*  
*Death by Drowning and Other Stories*  
*Millennium Poems*  
*A Prayer to God Upulavan*  
*Ten Stories*  
*The Other Trojan Woman*  
*My Green Book*  
*The Potted Plant*

And now  
*Impressions*

Published by S Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd,  
this collection of 34 poems is priced at Rs.450/-.  
The Cover Design is by Chamilka Herath.

Dr. Dinali Devendra, Senior lecturer at the  
Open University of Sri Lanka has written the  
Preface, which describes most of the significant  
poems in the collection.

I quote what I liked from her appreciation.

"The first half of the collection, "Home" as  
the name suggests deals with reflections of a

personal nature which are poignant and thought provoking.. Other poems in this section deal with notions of loss and grief”.

“In “*War Heroes*”, the poet exposes the hypocrisies inherent in the manner in which “wins” are celebrated while in “*Nallur*” she expresses her faith in universality of natural justice that transcends ethnic barriers”.

Please read the entire preface to understand the essence of what the poet says in her simple but effectively written poems.

For my part in the review I shall single out some poems which I enjoyed most.

Since I consider myself as Universal Man, I liked the first poem – *The Naming* – in full. There is the origins of ethnic groups and the rationale she points out against in calling names.

In the poem “*Samassaras*”, I liked the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Stanzas which read like this:

*"Nature could not and did not  
Have the delicacy  
To distinguish between  
Violator and non-violater  
Between the sinner and saint*

*Or between adult and child  
Nor man and woman"  
"For those hundred –buried alive  
Was it a dream or fantasy?  
When the earth opened and  
dragged them in?  
For those left behind homeless  
And properties is reality  
That they are alive  
But have name or place".  
"They are a nameless crowd  
Forgotten by both nature and man  
And a grey sky stares them in the face."*

On page 22

*"They know no boundaries  
The air has no marked territories"*

On page 24

*"Dear Gods punish all who should be  
punished.  
Whatever his race, creed or caste may be  
A murderer is a murderer  
Whether he kills in offence or defence  
Whether he is labelled freedom fighter  
Or valiant soldier.  
Dear Gods, make love and not*



*Hatred rule the day”.*

Also like the poem on page 36 and 37 on contemporary reality of unnecessary deaths by accidents or foolishness.

On page 38 –

***Justice***

*Once the war was over  
We thought we had peace  
But now we are old  
We have to appease  
Those who made war.  
The defenders are accused  
And served as peace  
offerings  
To the offenders,  
The offenders are labs;  
  
They killed out righteousness  
The defenders are tigers  
Who killed for amusement  
What is this justice but that of  
Kekille?”.*

I liked the poem on page 40 also in full. There is also a moving poem on the lovable great soul the late Prof Ashley Halpe.

The poems on pages 52, 58, and 59. In the poem 'evening' the last lines are compelling truth:

*"A splendid flare that will go  
out soon,  
And I sit, so unsubstantial.  
Fire, water, air and earth  
As the darkness assails me;  
A mere nothing".*

From page 67 to 72, the poet gives notes that will explain the suitability of the not so familiar words to foreigners.

Kamala Wijeratne is one of the outstanding poets in English in recent times in Lanka.

She needs more encouragement for showing the contemporaneity political and social scenes. Her poems on her visit to foreign lands also add beauty to this collection.



**15**  
**PUNYAKANTE'S POEMS**

**Foolish yellow butterfly,  
Chasing your yellow mate and also  
Leaving you to make advances,  
Kissing a yellow ranavara bud  
While she sunbathes  
On a bright green leaf.**

We know that the celebrated Lankan writer in English, Punyakante Wijenaike, writes novels and short stories. But little do we know that she writes poetry as well. In fact, her latest book, *That Deep Silence*, contains both fiction and poetry. There are 14 poems on contemporary themes. I have already written my observations on one of the poems – *Vaaharai* -elsewhere. Here I would like to introduce you to the poems.

In her poem, *Ode to the Waiting, Earth* she is at once philosophical and down to earth. Look at this:

*What makes us move  
Through life*

*Day by day,  
Moment by moment, Thoughts – feeling  
actions  
Changing even as nature  
Turns day into night?  
As the sun sets,  
Birds cry overhead  
Searching for a perch  
In the overcrowded  
Tree-tops,  
While homeless man  
Creeps under those same trees  
Hoping for shelter.  
But nature makes us gravitate  
Towards one final destination  
Which is not home.  
Nor family.  
When death comes  
Where will we go?  
Heaven or hell or somewhere  
Into nothingness?  
Or will nature guide us gently  
Back into the arms  
Of our mother  
The Waiting Earth?*

I liked the twist at the end; her desire to be

born again in her native land.

The next poem is empathetic to the cry of a child on the other side of the war zone. The child weeps:

*I am calling for all your children  
Starving and crying,  
Please Mother Lanka  
Can't you hear us cry?*

This poem is called 'Can you hear me?'

The third poem, A Small Miracle, is quaint in capturing an aspect of nature, one may say, in a fresh mode.

There is another beautiful mocking sort of poem relating to nature almost like the Romantics. It's called Butterfly. I like the Keatsian flavour:

*Foolish yellow butterfly,  
Chasing your yellow mate and also  
Leaving you to make advances,  
Kissing a yellow ranavara bud  
While she sunbathes  
On a bright green leaf.*

The poem Colombo neatly shows what Colombo had been in good old days and how it

was during the 'war days'. I liked her latter part of the poem better and particularly expressions like

*In the concrete sanctuary  
That Colombo is today.*

Girl of twelve is the poet's observation of a young girl who witnessed her parents, sibling and an aunt murdered in Delgoda and was slowly recovering from her shock. But the poet's wish is summed up in these lines:

*It is not enough to walk and talk and eat and  
drink  
Behind a hospital screen,  
Unless you can live like you did before,  
It is better to die  
AND BE REBORN AGAIN...*

So much unsaid and left to the reader to fathom her thoughts. I liked the poet's brevity.

In her poems Punyakante hides her feeling for her country. Take for instance the poem titled Motherland. She rightly says:

*A Motherland belongs to all born  
Within its borders,  
She is no step-mother*

She adds:

*There is no one to care for the starving,  
Or the landless who are refugees  
In their own Motherland.*

Two of the pet themes of the poet besides love of motherland are death and rebirth as we see in her poem titled Rebirth. Here again the echoes of the repercussions of the horrible war that took many lives in our country.

Remembering Nihal is a moving poem where the poet compares her feelings and attitudes with that of a wonderful human being and fellow writer – Nihal de Silva.

The poet ends her poem with a caution:

*You inspired me  
By your commitment  
To writing  
Although such a commitment  
May have led you down a dangerous path.*

More than you can take, is a poem in sympathy with a helpless soldier in the warfront. Fortunately, there is no "war" as such at present.

Where have all our children gone? Is again a plea of a mother under the tyranny of killing in the name of 'war'.

Finally,

Night of Terror ends with a positive yearning -hope - or the end of war while narrating the air raid over Colombo sometime back.

In sum, Punyakante's poems reveal her sensitivity and concern for humanity with an undertone of our beliefs in terms of religion. I liked them.





## VIVIMARIE'S BORROWED DUST

When trapped between the jagged edges of unanswerable questions you can find a way out through the familiar space of signifiers: For example, when asked "So where do you want to go from here?", you could always say "I am searching for directions" or better still 'I would like to stand still, in this place for a while'.

I have known both Lal and Vivamarie since my The Island days. Some decades ago they were budding journalists, now academics.

Vivamarie Vander Poorten's newest book of 88 pages is her poems collected together as borrowed dust published by Sarasavi Publishers at Rs.375 a copy. She is a prize winner and an acknowledged poet.

This slim volume has very short epigrammatical and a fairly little longer poems. Between pages 19 and 21 there is a poem like prose writing included.

*Next, what I like are:*

• *I have words like obsession and infatuation,  
my defence.*

• *I throw them at you –their polysyllabic  
edges hitting the lens of your eye where tears  
linger, Waiting to fall.*

• *I, We go together like a Knife and a Fork.  
A carving knife, a Pitchfork*

• *And when robes ere bring hand out, the  
bird who would be called crow said*

*Give me the black one, so I can forever  
remind the world of the grief stricken and  
the dead*

• *We will truly know that it's folly to say there  
are no winners in war.*

• *You said we would stick together through  
Thick and Thin. Alas! It turned out to be a  
thick wall, a thin line.*

• *Drifting dangerously like a snowflake,  
wavering aimlessly like hope, moving around  
the eye balls of human statues standing still  
in falling snow*

• *You called me yours, "my precious' you said.*

*Ever sensitive to speech broken down into their parts. I said: I like your use of the possessive determiner. You said: My knowledge of grammar and now, after all this time with you no longer possessive non-determined. I think: your knowledge of grammar was fine. It was the usage that was flawed.*

- *I never know and you'll always be the rainbow I found in the grass*
- *When trapped between the jagged edges of unanswerable questions you can find a way out through the familiar space of signifiers: For example, when asked "So where do you want to go from here?", you could always say "I am searching for directions" or better still 'I would like to stand still, in this place for a while'.*
- *I have loved like a chain smoker lighting new flames with the dying embers of burnt down loves even while my heart lay crushed out like a cigarette but still smoking in the tray cage of my ribs.*

*Should I not then feel the withdrawals of*

*an addict with not even the nicotine patch of a mild flirtation in sight, why do I now not follow my usual habit, look for the sweet tobacco of desire in someone's eyes the flash of the flint wheel the butane satisfaction of being inhaled into a heart.*

*Or have I finally quit?*

- *Swaying rat snakes mate. Two dancers creating life on the dying grass.*
- *(I too witnessed the jammed traffic stillness in Kolkatta streets)*
- *And how long will you wait for me my love? Will you wait until the river of my fear shrunk the drought of loneliness? Will you wait until I begin to rescue my canoe-heart from sinking in the cold sea of common sense. Will you wait until despair's last tear has been wept?*
- *You became indispensable like Google. And You Tube, but unlike the search engines or even Wiki, you cannot stay long. So, I guess I better glued to dictionary and Encyclopaedia Britannica. The Yellow Pages to me just have to do.*

- *And I who pride myself on the waves of words that hit the shoreline of the imagination left empty as the beach when the tide is out.*

I enjoyed her poems and was not looking for her content but was fascinated by the fresh coinages that fascinated me.



## DILANTHA GUNAWARDENA'S

## "DRIFTWOOD"

Seemingly words are obsolete,  
 Like a kite-less sky begging for colour,  
 And I'm that little boy  
 Making kites for a living.  
 And those kites are my bread crumbs  
 And all I ask is  
 for you to hold your tongue out  
 Even if you're not famished.

First, from the author's detail from the book itself; "Dr.Dilantha Gunawardana is a molecular biologist, who graduated from the University of Melbourne. He has more than 1,700 poems on his blog. His poems were published in several journals, including the American Journal of Poetry. His first book of poems called Kite Dreams was well received".

Driftwood – an anthology of poems of 166 pages is published by Sarasavi Publishers and priced at Rs.450. There are 90 poems in all. He has a

blog:<https://meandererworld.wordpress.com> where there are more than 1,700 poems we are told.

But we are not told why he writes poetry – is it for private pleasure or to make a point to the public or just steam out his emotions and conjure up images in his fantasy and imagination. To find out which is which, we have to fathom out by ourselves, a tremendous task, indeed. Nevertheless, we shall try to find out what he is saying in his poems. He has written very short poems, as well as fairly lengthy poems.

Let's take a short poem to see what his line of thought is – Flora.

*Garden of roots  
And sky line of fruits  
In between rests  
One of many towers of Babel  
Latinized by Linnaeus.*

I like it for its brevity but unless we understand the classical allusions, most of us will miss the wit and significance of his statement.

Let's take A Sri Lankan Arm-chair Critic for his views. Here is the poem in full:

*We comment on the political front,  
Or how the Sri Lankan cricket team  
Could have used a third spinner.  
After all, we are the wiles of spin  
And the yarns of spin doctors  
As we weave everything on  
What the color box, boxes out,  
Like the perfect design of peace,  
Or a flawless blueprint.  
Of environmental conservation,  
Yet we don't walk out, to vote in an election  
Or to a peace rally, nor do we throw scraps  
of paper  
To a lonely garbage bin.  
We talk the talk but rarely walk the walk,  
When our obese buttocks  
Are perennially stuck to the coward's plank,  
Perfecting the art of lip-diarrhea.  
We are only potty-trained  
To be arm chair critics.*

Here the poet makes an observation and uses a pluralized self-criticism of some of us which is welcome to point out a common weakness in our society.

*Let's look at another poem titled  
There is no audience for poetry*



*There was a lecture on why  
We don't have bread queues anymore  
Seemingly bread is too trivial, too insipid  
For the common man,  
And I still shuffle and conjure words  
For some much-needed green dough.  
And the poet toying with words,  
And applying for tenure,  
As a lecturer, is given a redundancy check.  
And old that the job description,  
Wants a mime artist – a pantomime actor.  
Seemingly words are obsolete,  
Like a kite-less sky begging for colour,  
And I'm that little boy  
Making kites for a living.  
And those kites are my bread crumbs  
And all I ask is  
for you to hold your tongue out  
Even if you're not famished.*

Sometimes poets use paradoxes knowingly for us to beg for the purpose and Metaphysical poets delight us often. Here, poet Dilantha Gunawardana uses the first stanza that confuses me. He says “seemingly bread is too trivial, too insipid for the common man”. But I thought that a lot of common people in the cities depend on bread instead of

eating rice for all three meals. And the second stanza too speaks of three unconnected events. And the third stanza is a moving picture though not connected directly with the above stanzas.

I like the simile – Like a kite-less sky begging for colour. And the last stanza gives us the poetic justice:

*Perhaps you will only taste stale dough,  
Well past her shelf life, and expiry date.  
And just may be kites will fall from the sky,  
Crashing to your reaching tongue, flakes of  
honey-coated manna.*

Thus, we see the poet writes on a variety of subjects that catches his fancy, and note the sincerity in his expression. Some of his titles are- Mango Lights, Four Vesak Poems, Ungraceful Age, Little Jesus, Constipation, Amaradeva, The Colour Purple, Rosary, Extra Terrestrial, Karapincha Tree, A lesson in Sex-Ed, Refugee Child, and many more.

Relax and enjoy reading the poems.



## RECOLLECTIONS

*In Sri Lanka, we have some outstanding contemporary poets writing in Sinhala, Tamil and English. They all have their visions and scope and interpretation. Some of them have received international acclaim. I enjoy reading poetry and found some of the poems by our Writers refreshing and delightful.*

Spontaneous Overflow of emotion recollected in tranquillity. That's William Wordsworth's apt, definition of poetry. Of course that was an English Romantic poet's summing-up. But there are a host of other felt expressions on poetry by various poets, the world all over. One such saying is by a 20<sup>th</sup> century American Poet, Robert Frost: A poem begins with delight and ends in wisdom. However, the modern and contemporary poets in most languages have more extended definitions to befit the changing style of poetry in world literature.

In Sri Lanka, we have some outstanding contemporary poets writing in Sinhala, Tamil and English. They all have their visions and scope and interpretation. Some of them have received international acclaim. I enjoy reading poetry and

found some of the poems by our Writers refreshing and delightful. Personally, I like some of the poems by Wimai Dissanaikē in Sinhala, Reggie Sriwardene in English and S.Sivasegaram in Tamil. Again there are score of other who elate my senses and thought. And these poets are not mere legislators of feeling alone. They are thinkers too. To me, both thought and feelings go together in good poetry.

This week, I wish to bring to the notice of our reader the arrival of a collection of poems titled Whimsical Recollections published by The International Library of Poetry. This is a part of the Eternal Portraits series by the TILP (The International Library of Poetry) and edited by Claire S.Foshee. Whimsical Recollections is edited by Mathew Conrad. Inquiries regarding this publisher, P.O.Box 704, Owings Mills, MD 21117, USA for interested readers, the library of congress cataloguing in publication data ISBN 0-7951-5158-6. One would agree with that.

Poetry is a very powerful tool by which people can share sometimes confusing, sometimes perfectly clear concepts and feelings with others. This collection carries within its 258 pages nearly 500 short poems from various known and unknown poets around the globe. A poem by yours truly,

titled "A subliminal Assault" is also included. My experiencing the Winter and Snow for the first time in my life was exhilarating. It prompted me to write a poem and submit to The International Society of Poets. And it was entered into a competition. I want to share my feelings and thoughts with your readers. Here it is:

### ***A Subliminal Assault***

*A sheet of white flowers on nature itself Snow  
rains on rooftops, grass, and vehicles  
everywhere.*

*A rare experience never witnessed nor  
endured*

*Came like a chilling assault*

*On my nerves and frame*

*And yet that felt experience was sublime in  
total*

*A Lankan-born Tamilian*

*Assimilating the quintessence of eastern  
culture*

*And the like*

*An entry into the*

*Western hemisphere*

*Was awe-inspiring with Nature, humans,  
machines*

*Different, though yet*

*Transparently universal  
Things fall apart when the centre cannot hold  
true  
But where is the center in a global village  
when the almighty is all-pervading  
Transmitting love  
Love is God, my dear....*

And all mortals in the universal humankind  
K.S.Sivakumaran I hope that it would not be out of  
place to mention here for the benefit of the readers  
in Sri Lanka that the International Society of Poets  
considered this as an outstanding achievement in  
Poetry and awarded me a bowl on August 17, 2003.  
Whimsical Recollections comprise a cavalcade of  
beautiful and enriching poems.

I would like to conclude this week's column  
with a few lines from the Editor's Note: "Change,  
regardless of our desire to control it, will never  
cease to alter our universe and ourselves.

It is a defining element of the human  
condition, and as long as artists undertake the  
challenge of reacting to and portraying their world,  
they will have to try and make sense of what change  
leaves in it wake.



**JAMES GOONEWARDENE'S  
"ONE MAD BID FOR FREEDOM"**

**Whenever this columnist runs into this lovable and excellent conversationalist (James that is) we constantly remember the filmic image of Omar Sherrif (Doctor Zhivago) the macho image. The iconoclastic temperament in James often keeps you in distance. However, one appreciates very much his sincerity, genuiness and crusadic spirit to cleanse the Augean Stables.**

It gives a sense of pride and pleasure that one of our own Lankan creative writers have broken into International notice through a reputed publisher. While we congratulate him on this and express our admiration for his bold posture as a writer of what he considers as truth, we also wish to say what we feel about him and his work.

It is difficult to review straight the new book by James Goonewardene for two reasons: One: it is not a conventional novel and it speaks of Uninteresting topics (as far as this columnist is

concerned) in cynical fashion in a language that is copious, digressive and episodic, Two: this book is overwhelmingly bitter and satirical since this columnist does not enjoy satire and abhors negative attitudes of a writer, he cannot do justice to a work by an important Lankan writer. Hence a formal review is avoided. We chose therefore to think about the writer and his new fiction or is it faction?

Whenever this columnist runs into this lovable and excellent conversationalist (James that is) we constantly remember the filmic image of Omar Sherrif (Doctor Zhivago) the macho image. The iconoclastic temperament in James often keeps you in distance. However, one appreciates very much his sincerity, genuineness and crusadic spirit to cleanse the Augean Stables.

James Goonewardene has written A Quiet Place, Call of the Kirila, Acid Bomb Explosion and Drear Time River, all novels and a collection of short stories called The Awakening of Dr.Kirthi. James is in his late sixties and was born in Matara. He is one of the standing examples of the absorber of western cultural tradition. And yet he favours going back to a romantic age where nature and natural environs dominate and shape the man's spirit. He



has also not concealed his bias towards writers like Kafka and other continental writers who have been reevaluated in recent times and their standing in world literature is not phenomenal as claimed to be by previous generations. It is fashionable to praise the Naipuals, who are bitter and are critical of their own roots.

In the same way James too is attempting to prove a point that a thorough dismissal of his own social factors could elevate him to a universal visionary of sorts.

This columnist does not deny the fact that there are still people who dream and entertain such visions and that there will be a number of readers outside this country who would like and appreciate the writer's overall philosophy.

To be fair by the writer, it is essential to resent a few gleanings from his new book, "One Mad Bid For Freedom, - novel published by Penguin Books (India) Ltd.(1990) Price Rs.55/- (India).

A review giving the essence of the story as well, is published in the Sunday edition of The Island of Sept.2.

## Gleanings:

*People the masses were not counting on what the cultural purifiers wanted the nation. They were not counting on the plans they had for ushering in the new Sri Lanka. Meanwhile there was Milton Mallawar Achchi, Jothipala, Nihal Nelson, Rodrigo, Annesley Nanayakkara and all others singing their patriotic love ditties in Sinhala to the same drum-beats, sax-ophones, trombones, clarinets, trumpets, and electric guitars, on the cassette-players, on the bandstands, and on the radio and television (P 27).*

*They promised a twenty-four hour shift of the power-centre from English to Sinhala. They promised a return to the language of the people, the language of the common man, the backbone of the nation and that poor bastard, the common man was still being sold down the river three generations later (P 34).*

*The men and women, announcers, at the radio stations were going for it in a big way, in a mixture of accents, vowel and consonant sounds and diphthongs and intonation*

*patterns that were half American Half English  
cockney, quarter Bangkok airline hostess. (P  
48)*

*"He spent his hard earned money giving the  
sheets of paper in which to make a note of  
the titles and subjects. They ranged from  
pre-history to modern theories of the origin  
of man. They ranged from philosophies of  
the west of the philosophies Of the East. He  
talked of Socrates of Abelard, of Apollonis of  
Augustine, of Marcus Aureliuz, of Nitzche, of  
Lao Tse, of Chuang Tsu, of Poin Cre, of  
Schopenhauer, even of the modern like  
Santayana, and Russel and Radhakrishna  
and Vivekananda, Ramakrishna and  
Krishnamurti. He discussed literature, he  
talked of Proust, of Kafka, of James Joyce,  
of Eliot, Thomas man and what literature  
meant when it probed into the destiny of  
man.*

*He talked about the pessimism of like.  
George Orwell, Boris Pasrernak, Norman  
Mailer, Albert Camus, and Samuel Beckett.  
He talked of Beckett's characters. Pim and  
Vladimnir and Estragon from his books, Comn*

*ment C'est and Waiting for Godot He talked of Leopold Bloom from James Joyce's Ulyses.*

*He ranged over the modern like Heller and James Gonewardene blasting out proclaiming the "truth" his Catch 22 and Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, They he said, Were all in search of the answer The Ellison's Invisible Man They, he said, were all to the question, Meaning of Man's Existence and his Destiny (P 57).*

The book has a cover illustration by Subrata Chowdhury and the cover designed by Sunil.

Essentially James Goonewardene belongs to the band of writers who consider themselves as outsiders. And it would be interesting to know what the author of "The Outsider" an existentialist with a clinical mind, Colin Wilson would say exotic novel from our own little island.



## LANKA BORN DANISH THAMIL

### JASMIN KENNEDY'S POETRY

*The woman, why are your eyes wet? Aren't you energy itself on this earth? Rise up. Humans evolve within the portals of yours. Pure lass, do not bend any more. Don't bow down, Stand Straight. Don't ask anyone for a solution. Burn the bad. Drive away the unbearable sorrow. Walk up the stairs and go high. Shed away your ignorance.*

I wish to translate a few poems taken from a book called Arraith Thingal written by a Danish Tamil lady. She was originally born in Lanka and now settled in Denmark with her family. Her real name is Jasmine Kennedy and uses her nom-de-plume Nakkeeran Mahal.

The purpose is to show that some of the expatriate writers and poets have not forgotten their mother tongue and write appreciable poems.

This book of 80 pages published by Valary Eluthukkoodamin Maana Mathuras in India in 1916 contains 60 short poems. The publisher himself is

a former Lankan now an Indian citizen, Aruna Sunthararajan. He has written a perceptive introduction to the book while Dr. Bhanumathi has written an analysis of the poems. The poet herself gives some information about herself and her purpose in writing.

### **Social Evils:**

She was born in Potpathy in Vadamarachi Region in Yaalpaanam. The name her parents gave was Siveneswari. She studied in five schools there including Udupididi Girl School and the Parthithurai (Point Pedro) Methodist Girls High School.

Her purpose in writing is to shed away with social evils in her society: oppression, casteism, dowry system, female subjugation and the like. When she emigrated with her husband Robert Kennedy, who encouraged her to continue with her writing, the late Balasubramaniam Sivakolunthu who edited a little magazine called Amuthu in Newboin, Denmark, her contributions were published. Her poems were used in foreign TV channels like TRT, ABC, IBC and TTN.

She worked for some time as a Tamil teacher in Denmark. She wrote plays and poetry for the

children there to improve their mother tongue. She has spent 23 years in a foreign clime. She made use of the social media like the Facebook to give expression to her thoughts and feelings.

### **Poetry Translated:**

Let us see through English what her feelings are as a poet from some lines from her poetry.

- Conscience is the Supreme witness to tell you what is justice coming from your inner heart.
- Don't think that no one will know what the wrong things we do within the four walls, there is one who sees that within you. You have to answer him.
- When our nest was broken, when wings were cut and the hunter killed us, those that looked at us with curiosity say they will give us the nest and the wings to fly high from the crow's nest, some cuckoos too join in the singing.
- Instead of filling the stomach of a lame man like me, they bypass me and are filling the tills in the temple. Is the God handicapped more than I?

- The relationship is like a stick bound by the rope of affection and forms a cage called family.
- The woman, why are your eyes wet? Aren't you energy itself on this earth? Rise up. Humans evolve within the portals of yours. Pure lass, do not bend any more.
- on't bow down, Stand Straight. Don't ask anyone for a solution. Burn the bad. Drive away the unbearable sorrow. Walk up the stairs and go high. Shed away your ignorance.
- When sorrow comes, join hands with the womankind. The world's wealth may ignore you. Create history before those horrible men.
- What colourful dreams while waiting in the pedestal set up for the wedding, while she waits for the consummation, a screen called dowry came and disturbed her dreams. Today the dreams and the sideburns have gone grey. She is not a mature woman but a young maid.
- There wasn't any distinction as low and high,



even God has not created us separately. Some among the ancients to keep some as downtrodden designed the caste differences.

- The pain of the poor searching a morsel of rice from an empty pot is like a pregnant woman's pain in giving birth to an infant, no words to describe.

I have tried to recreate what she says in understandable terms only because if I were to translate the poems word to word the essence of what she says will be lost in translation.

Nakeeran Mahal, aka Jasmme Kennedy is a graduate from the University of Denmark.



## LANKA BORN GERMAN THAMIL

### MALINI MAALA'S POETRY

This is a book of unusual kind of poetry full of intense emotions but restrained. The mastery of the use of appropriate vocabulary is amazing. Congratulations to her. On her visit to Lanka, Malini Mala has published two other works too, which need notice. Let's review them sometime later.

Lanka born Malini Mala is a German Tamil writer and poet. Last week she came to Lanka with her three kids to publish and launch three of her latest books. I have read one of them titled "Naan Enum NEE" (meaning YOU are Me) and noticed her immense mastery of poetic Tamil and the highly imaginative nuances in her. Before she left for Germany she presented the three books to me. My appreciation of the book appears in its pages. I thank her for that.

I shall attempt to transcreate some of the shorter love poems I enjoyed.

*1. If you want to see me inside you, close your*

*eyes tight and open your heart, there only me that would have bloomed as you are.*

*2. In some corner in the globe YOU are in opposite direction I might not have a chance to meet and yet to remain not to think about you, it is not possible not to think about you.*

*3. Not to wither away but to feel that I am blossoming. Don't dismantle, it's you that will be shattered.*

*4. Whenever thinking of you, my affection extends to touch you, there spring hands for the wind.*

*5. Not only in person but even in thoughts you mustn't come, I said, but you are even robbing my dreams.*

*6. When my distant dreams and indelible actualities jointly travel and end with tears, every drop of blood my heart bleeds pronounce only your name.*

*7. Rinsing my soul, the lines in my poetry I wrote for you –the moment you used it to tune the heart of another, the YOU in the inside of me remained dead.*

8. *When the mental sharing is compelled to be rejected, reminiscences become empty in actualities, unbearable the bridges of affection are shattered.*

9. *When my breathing is none but you, I don't probe the scent.*

10. *All the sayings I set up against you get defeated by the pleadings of your look.*

11. *I'm breathing even now only because of the sayings you send via the interspaces of the sky prompted by your soul.*

12. *I lost you and you lost me, and I searched you all over the world exhausted and short of breath the soul within me smiled and uttered search in transferred places you will get it all right.*

13. *Realistically you in your own way, I on my path walk in opposite directions. The dream song of yours and mine that cannot be debilitated, sail on the waves of the stream moving dancing and making music.*

14. *I am blossoming all the time and you are at a distance unable to smell.*

*15. It's not the chastity of Sita that was proved by her bathing in the fire, but her burnt out love for Rama.*

*16. Before the end of my withering days of flowers, my heartiest pleading is to see your vision at least once.*

*17. This is the breath of the bamboo forest wind. Do not hand it over to the uninitiated. They may use it to bow the furnace.*

I shall stop here for want of space.

There are several longish and short poems in the 172-page volume attractively printed in a glossy paper by evergreen Printers in Yaalpaanam. The book is priced at Rs.400/- only.

This is a book of unusual kind of poetry full of intense emotions but restrained. The mastery of the use of appropriate vocabulary is amazing. Congratulations to her. On her visit to Lanka, Malini Mala has published two other works too, which need notice. Let's review them sometime later.



**ARUL SUBRAMANIAM'S NOVEL  
IN THAMIL**

Those who scorn at our local Tamil writers that their writing is merely propagandist will have to sit back and review their thoughts, as people like Arul Subramaniam are writing in such a way that structure, and theme are inseparable in the creative writings.

Arul Subramaniam in a note on FB dated June 3, 2016, says:

*Dear K S Siva Anna,*

This morning, when I casually went through my collection of old books; I had the opportunity to go through your book 'Contemporary Tamil Writing in Sri Lanka' published in October 1974 (42 years back). I was amazed when I read your brief review of my first novel published in 1973. Like Dr.Kailasapathy and Dr.Sivathamby, you too commended that novel in a grand manner. Thank you, Anna, for giving me the chance to refresh my memories of those astonishing moments.

I give that writing for you to recollect: Arul Subramaniam's '*Avarkalukku Vayathu Vanthu Vittadhu*' (They have come of age) is a splendidly written novel by a new writer. It gives excellent reading fare as a novel showing the gradual development of characters and their relationships with each other, besides it is also a progressive piece of writing on the theme of national integration.

A Tamil youth, Ariyam from Trincomalee, conditioned by the local political climate there, comes to Colombo only to realize that the Sinhala people are not bad as all that. He develops an attachment – both physical and platonic - towards Monica at whose house he is boarded. He marries the girl eventually but is in a dilemma as to whether he should break the news to his parents, whom he dares to disobey. It is the struggle between conviction and commitment and the attachment and obligations to his parents that worries him. He is not irrational as to take hasty decisions. It is his slow process of both keeping his wife and winning over his conservative, hard-core parents to his side that the novel describes.

I will not be doing justice to the novel by merely telling what the novel is about. Readers

themselves should read it to see in what a grand manner he has written this realistic social piece. Trincomalee has produced an outstanding writer and his first novel is a major contribution to Tamil fiction. As Dr.K.Sivathamby has written in his foreword, this book too should be translated into Sinhala for the benefit of the majority of the readers, especially to show that not all the Tamil people are cast in the same mould. Those who scorn at our local Tamil writers that their writing is merely propagandist will have to sit back and review their thoughts, as people like Arul Subramaniam are writing in such a way that structure, and theme are inseparable in the creative writings.

Arul Subramaniam has the naive, unspoilt freshness in him and this helps him to write his stories without any inhibitions. This is a realistic tone. As a contemporary writer, he sees the inner realism rather than the obvious.

### **Rajakavi Raheel's Poems:**

Raheel is a well-known poet and broadcaster hailing from Nintahavoor in the East of Lanka. He lives both in Lanka and Seychelles. Recently when I visited Pirai F M, a regional broadcasting station



of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, I was invited to be interviewed as a former announcer and writer/critic. Rafik another poet from AK Karaipattu and Gayum from Sainthamaruthu working for the radio station with limited facilities but presenting quality programmes were instrumental in extending the invitation to me.

Raheel was the interviewer. He gave me his own three books and two were anthologies of poems. Colourfully printed in India, these books are attractive. Tamil honours graduate from Peradeniya, Raheel attracts attention with his short and witty poems. The book "Thevathyin Anthapurathil Pattampoochi kudiyruppu" (The occupation of the Butterfly in the harem of the Angel).

Raheel seems to be a lover of his ideal pretty woman. All his poems are on her and her femininity. All his poems are lyrics for film songs.

Let me attempt to render into English some of the lines which lovers may like.

- *Poetry is a flower that blossoms after it has withered away.*

- *The poet is a candlestick, only when he has melted away, what remains as light is the 'poem'.*
- *When you breathed in, the wind must have thanked the God.*
  - *To look at the brightness of your teeth the stars will come down even in daytime.*
- *The parrots worshipped God asking Him the colour of your skin.*
- *The flute is satisfied only when your name is mentioned.*
- *It seems that the swan's last wish is to improve on your walking.*
- *The pride of the cuckoo birds will vanish when they listen to your voice.*
- *Don't chase the ants that believe you are a sugarcane garden.*
- *Those bees are awaiting when you would become a flower.*
- *When you are silent, I could hear footsteps of the ants.*

- *If you show your nails, the butterflies will look for their face on it.*
- *The Spider that looked at your face weaves a silk net in happiness.*
- *When he told me that he hasn't seen a black flower I showed him your lock of hair.*
- *No drying or withering for the flower that you touched. I having seen your nose stud, the poet said in a beautiful day a single star glistens.*
- *My seventh sense is your beauty that told me what is love. You speak in two languages – eyes and voice.*

The book in many colours is full of pictures of beautiful young woman.

Rajakavi Raheel has brought out 12 books of poems and a short story collection. He has written serialized novels for magazines. His first novel was published in 2015. He had earned appellations for his varied talents.



## FLEETING INFINITY

(A Bilingual Volume of Contemporary  
Tamil Poetry published in April, 2019.)

One thing good in this collection is that the original Tamil poems and their English translations are given side by side. Lankan Sinhala readers might be able to read and understand the contemporary Lankan and Indian Tamil poetry by reading this volume.

This is a 330-page volume of contemporary Tamil Poetry rendered in English and compiled by Latha Ramakrishnan, a prominent translator of literary works from Tamil to English and vice versa. She lives in Chennai.

She is in Facebook for the last three years. Most of the poems translated are poems by fellow poets that appeared in their Time-lines of Facebook. They were in Tamil. Around 30 to 35 of them are from Lankan Tamil poets.

One thing good in this collection is that she has published the original Tamil version and her English translation side by side. Although she has

translated about 600 such poems, she has included only 139 poets for volume one.

One should congratulate Latha Ramakrishnan for her genuine interest in translating these Tamil poems into English although in her Foreword she modestly says. *"Of course, they may be imperfect and my translation may not be doing full justice to the original poem. Yet, I dared (and dare) to go on for the sheer joy it gives me and to my Facebook friends"*.

The translator also says that she *"found solace in, admiring their (the poets selected for this volume) style and content."*

What I wanted to do here her version in English of some of the Lankan Tamil poems for the benefit of non-Tamil knowing readers.

She has arranged the names of the poets according to the English alphabets and yet I wouldn't know who among them Lankans are. Therefore, I am selecting only those whom I know well.

Anar Issath Rehana

*Her original poem is titled "Alaiapukal Varatha Cellphone" Here is the English translation:*

## **Cell Phones with no Incoming Calls-**

*There might have been an earthquake  
In the underground hideouts of Earth:  
The signs of landslide are there to see.  
Deep down the Volcano fire  
Begins to emit cinders.  
Upon the Wall of house  
Cracks breaking it into two  
Appearing  
The porcelain vessel  
Which I had dusted and cleaned  
With great care yesterday  
Slipped from my hand so unexpectedly  
And smashed into splinters;  
In the new dress of the child  
The stitching has loosened  
From the number saved  
No call comes to  
My mobile at all.  
Dense Fog  
Stands to block the way  
At a distance is seen that human form;  
Whether coming or going  
Remains blurred.*

*(Anar comes from Kalmunai and I too have translated one of her poems into English.)*

Daniskaran Kandasamy

*(from Pandiruppu) – I have known him too*

### **Avoiding Loneliness**

*All alone a dragonfly was going in circles  
my evening time circled just the dragon*

*I felt it was searching for a blossom  
the flower born in clusters  
swayed in the wind as orphans.*

*The dragonfly intent on chasing away loneliness  
kissed my window-glass  
and returned*

*I search for the dragonfly that drives of my  
loneliness  
in a solitary hour  
nowhere to be seen as yet.*

*Must-have acquired it ate. Or else,  
it must have destroyed itself  
in the figment of the imagination.*

*Confused to the core  
I search for the dragon-fly  
that dives off loneliness  
nowhere to be seen as yet.*

*Going out I search for the dragon-fly*

*that remains all in all in my memories,  
in front of the window also.  
The dragon-fly is nowhere;  
I see myself.*

*Writing down  
the strategy  
for driving away loneliness  
the dragon-fly had darted off*

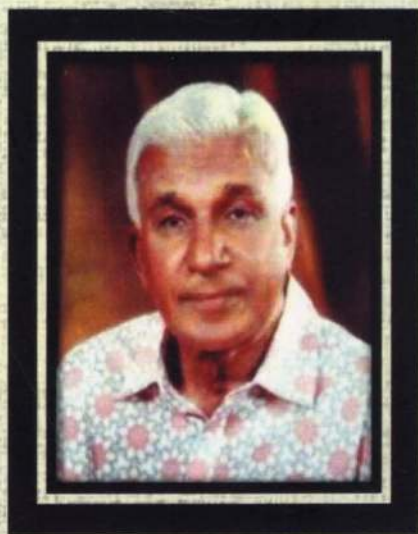
Some of the other poets I know are : *V N Giri tharan Navaratnam, Lareena Abdul Haq, Leena Manimekalai, Mullai Amuthan, A Nasrullah, Rajaji Rajagopalan, M. M.Rishan Shareef , Riyas Qurana, Thamizh Nathi, Thamizh Udaya, Tharmini and Theepachelvan Pratheepan.*

Lankan Sinhala readers might be able to read and understand the contemporary Lankan and Indian Tamil poetry by reading this through English.









## **K.S.Sivakumaran**

**A known veteran writer of Sri Lanka, the author, has been making significant contributions to the Lankan Literary Circle and the field of journalism both as a writer and columnist since 1953.**

**He writes both in English and Tamil and his writings give us a picturesque view of Sri Lankan life – social as well as psychological.**



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