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NEWS LETTER OF NEW ZEALAND SRI LANKA FOUNDATION INCORPORATED

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## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT MOHAMED NALAR**

**Kumar Sangakkara in the 2011 MCC Spirit of Cricket Colin Cowdrey Lecture proudly spoke as follows;**

"In our cricket we display a unique spirit, a spirit enriched by lessons learned from a history spanning over two-and-a-half millennia. In our cricket you see the character of our people, our history, culture and tradition, our laughter, our joy, our tears and regrets. It is rich in emotion and talent. My responsibility as a Sri Lankan cricketer is to further enrich this beautiful sport, to add to it and enhance it and to leave a richer legacy for other cricketers to follow.

I will do that keeping paramount in my mind my Sri Lankan identity: play the game hard and fair and be a voice with which Sri Lanka can speak proudly and positively to the world. My loyalty will be to the ordinary Sri Lankan fan, their 20 million hearts beating collectively as one to our island rhythm and filled with an undying and ever-loyal love for this our game. Fans, of different races, castes, ethnicities and religions who; together celebrate their diversity by uniting for a common national cause. They are my foundation, they are my family. I will play my cricket for them. Their spirit is the true spirit of cricket. With me are all my people. I am Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim and Burgher. I am a Buddhist, a Hindu, a follower of Islam and Christianity. I am today, and always, proudly Sri Lankan. "

**-Kumar Sangakkara-**

There are a countless number of messages in the above words spoken by one of the finest Cricketers the world has ever seen. It embodies the essence of being truly Sri Lankan, of a unique people who have endured years of war and turmoil but who's indomitable spirit has kept them afloat lighting the way over the embers of a smoldering war that cost the nation the lives of its many sons and daughters.

In the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation we display a unique spirit enriched by the ethnic diversity of our people. Within the Foundation are all Sri Lankans; we are Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Christian, children of one proud nation sharing a history that spans over 2500 years. We work together in the true spirit

of unity in diversity, spreading this vision together in this beautiful land that we've adopted as our home. Through the bonds of this unity we promote our culture and heritage amongst our members and the broader Sri Lankan community, keeping alive our traditions, the only true legacy we can leave behind for our Children.

Our uniqueness is our biggest strength. Our combined spirit is the true spirit of Sri Lankans. Unity in diversity is our motto and we come together as children of one big family, enjoying each other's company and reminiscing those good old days of our Childhood and Early adulthood. It is this true spirit that sees the involvement of all members, past presidents and past committee members who come together every year committed to making a difference and uniting together to produce some outstanding events and community programmes Sri Lankans in New Zealand have ever seen. **We are the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation!**

As I come to the end of my tenure as president of the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation, I'd like to sincerely thank my committee, the past presidents and the wider NZSLF membership for their support and help in making this year another successful year in living the vision of the Foundation.

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**Events:**

**July 30th<sup>n</sup> – AGM St. Mary's Church hall Ellerslie**

## COMPARISON OF NEW ZEALAND WITH SRI LANKA

The objective of this article is to give some statistics to compare New Zealand with Sri Lanka, without much comment. The statistics differ according to the source. The interpretation of the statistics is left to the reader.

The UNDP is, where Helen Clark, the former prime minister of New Zealand publishes an International Human Development Index (HDI) annually. Starting from 1980, these indicator measures do not just measure Income levels or income growth rate but they measure Health, Education and Income.

In the 2010 index, New Zealand ranks third out of 169 countries with comparable data, just below Norway and Australia. There has been a steady improvement of the New Zealand ranking from 1980, which now places it above the average for OECD countries.

Sri Lanka ranked 91, behind Tonga and Fiji. However Sri Lanka ranks above South Asia's regional average. In Sri Lanka, Life expectancy at birth is 74.4 years, where as in New Zealand it is 80.6 years. Mean years of

schooling is 8.2 for Sri Lanka where as in New Zealand it is 12.5 years. It is stated that 40% of the population lives on an income less than US\$2.00 a day in Sri Lanka. No comparable statistics are available for New Zealand.

The population in Sri Lanka is estimated at 20.5 million whereas in New Zealand it is 4.4million. Land area in Sri Lanka is 65610sq.kms where as in New Zealand it is 268,021sq.kms.

In Sri Lanka the Gross Domestic Product per person is almost US\$5000 where as in New Zealand it is US\$27510, which is more than five times over.

Gini Coefficient measures the equality or income distribution and New Zealand ranks 20<sup>th</sup> on this measure whereas Sri Lanka ranks 102<sup>nd</sup>.

Now let us look at some other set of statistics. Sri Lanka's divorce rate is 0.15 per thousand people, which is one of the lowest in the world, whereas in New Zealand it is more than 15 times at 2.63.(Source: NationMaster.com).

According to UNICEF statistics estimated number of people with HIV in

New Zealand in 2009 was 2500, where as in Sri Lanka it was 2800. When you look at it as a proportion of the total population, Sri Lanka is almost five times better in this aspect.

The National Child Protection Authority ([www.childprotection.gov.lk](http://www.childprotection.gov.lk)) of Sri Lanka states 20% of boys and 10% of girls are sexually abused in Sri Lanka.

In New Zealand, the Child abuse rate is 7.4 per thousand according to Ministry of Social Development.

New Zealand, being a 'Rich' country has an obesity problem. Here one in four adults are obese where as surprisingly, it is the same in four provinces in Sri Lanka. In Colombo it is slightly worse as one in three is obese. Among the children in New Zealand one in twelve are obese. Again in Colombo the situation is worse having one in six children being in the obese category.

### Jayasena Widanagamage

## WHAT? IS IT A FREE RIDE?

Can you ever imagine a society being short of highly-skilled scientists, medical experts and other professionals? Poorly skilled professionals perform key tasks and compete with the top ones in the outside world. According to some analysts, that is clearly what is happening in both Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

There are many reasons for "Brain drain", but commonly it includes two aspects which respectively come from the society and the individual. As a society, the reasons for the brain drain may be the social environment in the country. As for some of the individual reasons, overseas friends and family, personal preference and ambition for an improved career can be stated.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 464,465 people born in New Zealand were living in

26 other OECD countries as per the last censuses in 2000 and 2001. The actual numbers of Kiwi expatriates are even higher than the figures indicate, because it takes into account only OECD countries. In brief a quarter of New Zealand's most highly skilled people have left the country - the biggest exodus of skilled workers from any developed nation.

Back in Sri Lanka, intellectuals started to leave the country from as early as the 1950's in search of employment abroad due to inadequate salaries. Recent research shows that intellectuals working abroad earn about US\$50,000 more than they could earn in NZ. The educated youth are the power house of the country's wealth creation. When they leave the shores of their birth country to work in other countries, the birth country loses their talents thus limiting its ability to create further wealth. Hence, instead of the country that took trouble to breed and nourish them, other countries that did nothing about it become beneficiaries or 'free riding agents'. When highly-skilled people go offshore, the people left

behind are viewed as the top performers, making key decisions and trying to compete with the outside world. This sounds familiar to many of us, doesn't it? Eventually the young professionals are forced to scale themselves against those less skilled performers. How frustrating is it? The Short answer is speedy migration. You left the country with all your skills and now a less skilled performer is doing your job at home. When you enter this new land with lots of hope a less skilled performer here does not offer you the job, because you are over qualified. Where is that free ride?

While a medical expert is collecting blood samples in the back of a

laboratory for a living, a patient is in the waiting list for weeks to see a doctor. In this horticultural country, you drive a taxi for living with a horticulture PhD. At home, those who are not even able to drive a tractor are making decisions for the industry. How do you feel?

**Dr. Sydney Fernando**

## SRI LANKAN AUTHORS

Sri Lankans are a talented bunch of clever cookies melted in a pot of extreme intelligence. We have amongst us many literary geniuses from different ethnic backgrounds who have made tremendous contributions to literature. Sadly there is deep unawareness of the talents of these authors and the many books they have published, amongst Sri Lankans living in other parts of the world.

As in many situations there are commonalities or a set of experiences that Sri Lankans anywhere can relate to. There's Cricket and Rugby when it comes to sports. Then there's Kiribath and String hoppers, Thosai and Wade, Buryani and Wat-talappam when it comes to food. And there are the other commonalities such as our accents and our manner of speaking ending every sentence with "men" as in "How are you men?" "What can you do men" etc.

Then there's the ethnic conflict which has coloured and shaped our thinking and cast our life experience into another kind of pot. It is this experience that our contemporary authors seem to draw on in their books, a common thread that runs through their story lines. The bitter sweet experience of the war is etched in our memories and will remain with us during our life time and some of these books have captured these memories and written them in the sands of time.

Michael Ondaatje is a classic example of a maestro story teller whose acclaimed novels have won many prizes over the years. His Novel "Anil's Ghost" explores aspects of the ethnic conflict in an intricately woven plot that blazes a trail of suspense.

His Novel "Running in the family" is an exploration of his own roots when in the late 1970s Ondaatje returned to Sri Lanka. As he records his journey through the drug-like heat and intoxicating fragrances of that "pendant off the ear of India," Ondaatje simultaneously retraces the baroque mythology of his Dutch-Ceylonese ancestry.

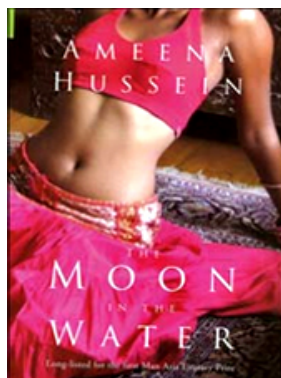
More recently we have the likes of Ameena Hussein who very cleverly portrays the ethnic conflict from a Cultural perspective in her Novel "Moon in the Water".

Ashok Ferry is another popular Author who's written many short stories with the underlying theme of the war. He concentrates on Satire and humour in his writings. Shyam Selvadurai another popular Sri Lankan author recounts an almost personal experience of the ethnic conflict in his book "Funny Boy".

Books by these authors have either won or been shortlisted for many literary awards. They have succeeded in skilfully writing stories, of growing up in Sri Lanka amidst the war and the ethnic conflict. These authors have succeeded in bringing to life our own experiences as Sri Lankans and their stories are a compelling read. I urge you to source some of these books and read them and enjoy the experience of getting transported back into your own childhood. The journey I assure you is one that is worthwhile.

**Farhana Nalar**

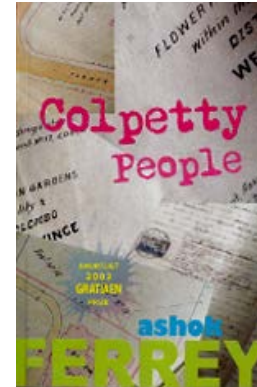
## BOOK REVIEWS



Long-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize.

*The Moon in the Water* is a story of a young woman's search for family. An unexpectedly revealed secret threatens to destroy her very identity, family bonds and unravels complicated threads of love. Khadeeja Rasheed has the perfect life in far away Gene-

va. A loving family, a fulfilling career and an adoring boyfriend. When her father is accidentally killed in a bomb blast, she returns home to Sri Lanka. There she discovers a secret that threatens to destroy family ties.

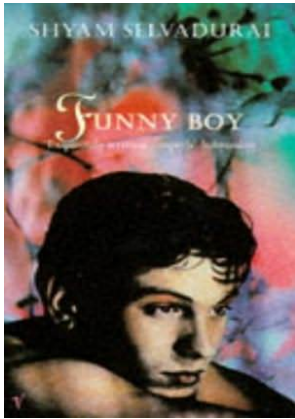


The classic collection of short stories by one of Sri Lanka's best-selling authors.

"Each story is wickedly funny, sometimes touching, but still all decidedly provocative, jostling one's imagination, transporting the reader beyond social barriers."  
Frederica Jansz (Sunday Leader)

Ashok's first book *Colpetty People* was shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize of 2002 in manuscript form, and published to critical acclaim in December 2004. It remains to date the biggest selling book of English fiction by a local author writing in Sri Lanka today. His second book, *The Good Little Ceylonese Girl*, published in 2006, was also shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize of that year. Bittersweet stories of the Lankan life, they are perhaps darker, more personal than the previous ones. His most recent book, the novel *Serendipity*, was published in 2010 and shortlisted for this year's State Literary Prize. Sadly, he never actually won any of these prizes so in his own words, always the bridesmaid never the bride!

## FUNNY BOY BY SHYAM SELVADURAI



In this remarkable debut novel, a boy's bittersweet passage to maturity and sexual awakening is set against escalating political tensions in Sri Lanka, during the seven years leading up to the 1983 riots. Arjie Chelva-

ratnam is a Tamil boy growing up in an extended family in Colombo. It is through his eyes that the story unfolds and we meet a delightful, sometimes eccentric cast of characters. Arjie's journey from the luminous simplicity of childhood days into the more intricately shaded world of adults – with its secrets, its injustices, and its capacity for violence – is a memorable one, as time and time again the true longings of the human heart are held against the way things are.

In *Cinnamon Gardens*, his second novel, Selvadurai goes back in time to the late 1920s, during the waning days of colonialism, when Sri Lanka was still Ceylon. The British government has just set up the Donough-

more Commission, in order to look at the possibility of transferring limited self-rule to the Ceylonese people. The Commission has sparked fierce debates among Colombo's wealthy Tamil families—most of whom live in the well-appointed suburb of Cinnamon Gardens—about what form this self-rule should take and to whom exactly the voting franchise should be extended (limited self-rule was eventually granted in 1931, but it would be another seventeen years before Ceylon/Sri Lanka achieved full independence).

## THE SPIRIT OF THE NZSLF

Flash back of the past year. "Behind the scene" photos of members of the Foundation family in action.



**THANK  
YOU!**





*Views expressed in articles are those of the contributing authors and may not necessarily reflect the views of the NZSLF*

**This newsletter is published quarterly.**

We welcome contributions to this newsletter and apologize for not being able to publish all contributions due to the limitation of the available space. We reserve the right to edit submitted material. Being a not-for-profit-organization, we do not make any payments for articles. Please send your contributions to the Summer Issue by September 2010 to the correspondence address below. Attn: **Editorial Committee** or by email to: [nzslf@nzslfoundation.com](mailto:nzslf@nzslfoundation.com)

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