



# New Zealand Lanka

## Newsletter of the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation Incorporated

Volume 40 Winter 2008

### From the President ....

We are just completing our 9th year with a sense of satisfaction and approaching our tenth year milestone with pride. The year gone by was another busy and successful year for the Foundation.

The most historical and significant event of the year was the visit of the Sri Lankan High Commissioner HE Mr. K Balapatabendi to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day of Sri Lanka. This is the first time ever the Sri Lanka High Commissioner participated in an official community event in Auckland. The opportunity was taken to welcome our newly appointed Honorary Consul in New Zealand, Mr. Aruna Abeygunasekera. The highlight of the event was the joining of all ethnicities and people from all walks of life in celebrating what our forefathers achieved 60 years ago as united Sri Lankans.

The other significant achievement of the year is the completion of the Ice Plant Project at Valipathanwella in Hambanthota district, Sri Lanka in collaboration with MJF Foundation for Tsunami victims. The Ice Plant was opened by Mary Taylor and was handed over to the villagers. We appreciate the initiative taken by Jayasiri Basnayake and Lionel de Silva together with Mary Taylor in identifying this project, and all our past presidents and committee members in making it a reality. As I promised in my inaugural speech we have worked hard to achieve common goals for our fellow Sri Lankans whether they are here or back at home and this achievement is a case in example of our collaborative approach. We appreciate the support extended by Mr. Merrill J Fernando, the founder of the much popular tea Dilmah and his team, making this project a reality. It is with a huge satisfaction we see the pictures of the fishermen with their everlasting smiles on the day their most valuable asset was handed over to them.

During the year we also built bridges with other communities in Auckland and the Twenty20 cricket match played with West Indies was an opportunity for all of us to get to know new friends and have an insight into other cultures.

All our committee members, their families, and large numbers of well wishers worked very hard to make the past year a successful year. I like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of you who supported and contributed in many ways during the past year and I hope you all will continue to support the cause of the Foundation in the future. A big thank you to my Committee, their families for all your time and effort which I know cannot come without a sacrifice of some form. I am sure the Sri Lankan community and their well wishers appreciate your contributions.

I also take the opportunity to invite the rest of you to join us in the next year. Together we can make a huge difference to our community and our mother land and to its people. The smile on the fisherman's face tells the story of our success. Let us get together and put more smiles on our own peoples' faces.

Manjula Sanis Walgampola



### The Committee

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**Vice President:**

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**Secretary:**

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**Treasurer:**

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S. Puvanakumar (09) 527 1633

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Midori Hara (09) 442 5968

**Auditor:**

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### Next Event:

#### 'Annual General Meeting'

Tenth Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation will be held on Saturday 26 July 2008 from 4.00pm at St. Pauls Methodist Church, Lounge Hall, 12, St Vincent Ave, Remuera.

Please bring a plate to share with friends of the foundation. We strongly encourage all life members to be present. Life Membership badges will be available to be purchased at \$5.00 each.

### Calendar of Events:

**Saturday 26 July 2008 - Annual General Meeting (AGM) 4.00pm at St. Pauls Methodist Church, Lounge Hall, 12, St Vincent Ave, Remuera.**

**September 2008 – Gypsies**

## Sri Lankans in New Zealand doing well- 2006 Census...

According to the data published by Statistics New Zealand on 2006 Census, most Sri Lankans in New Zealand are doing quite well. Their average income is better than the average Asian and there are more professionals than the other Asians groups.

There were 8427 Sri Lankans in 2006. There were 792 who said they are Sinhalese and 540 Sri Lankan Tamils. More importantly there were 7038 Sri Lankans who did not define themselves any further.

### Personal Income

16% of New Zealanders said that their personal income is over \$50,000. Nevertheless 19% Sri Lankans had an income over that level. A further 6% Sri Lankans refused to state their income. In contrast only 9% of Asians had an income at that level. In the \$30,000- 50,000 income bracket 19% Sri Lankans compared well with average of 20% for all New Zealanders. The only other Asian group above this level was Indians at 24%.

### Income Sources

51% of Asians had one of their sources of income as wages & salary. This compares well with 48% of Sri Lankans who fall into this category. 20% of Koreans and 13% of Indians and Chinese were self employed, while only 10% of Sri Lankans were self employed. Another 16% of Sri Lankans also had income from Interest & dividends etc. It is disturbing to note that 22% of Sri Lankans said that they have no source of income which is the highest among all Asians.

### Employment

Unemployment among Sri Lankans at 6% compares with 5% among all Asians. 49% of Sri Lankans were employed full time. Highest in full time employment among Asians were Indians at 55%. Among the females 37% of Sri Lankans were fully employed. Among the Asian women Filipinos were the highest in full employment at 53% while Koreans were the lowest at 22%. Overall 65% of Sri Lankans were either in full or part time employment. It is noted that 29% of Sri Lankans were not in the labour force. They were either over 65 or less than 15 years.

### Occupation

35% of Sri Lankans were professionals. This compares well with average of 19% for Asians. In Management level there were only 10% Sri Lankans in comparison to 29% among Indians. There were 7% of us in the labourer category which is lower than 10% average for Asians.

### Qualification

Sri Lankans were the highest qualified among the Asians. There were 201 Sri Lankans who had a doctorate and 552 who had master's degree as the highest qualification. These Sri Lankans constitute 11% of total in contrast to only 6% of Asians. 24% of Sri Lankans were graduates (Highest qualification). Only Filipinos were above this level at 34%.

### Religion

41% Sri Lankans were Buddhist, 23% were Hindus. There were another 28% Christians & 3% Muslims. Among Cambodians there were 76% Buddhists and among Indians there were 11% Muslims.

### Age

49% of Sri Lankans were in 30-64 age category, which is higher than the average of 43% for Asians. In contrast there were only 24% of Sri Lankans in 15-29 years, which is lower than the average of 31%. There were 7% above 65 years,

which is the highest among all Asians. Compare this with 1% for Koreans & Japanese.

### Region

There were 4977 Sri Lankans constituting 60% living in Auckland region. 21% were living in Wellington. This is more than the average of 10% for Asians. In contrast there were only 5% Sri Lankans living in Canterbury, while there were 8% of Asians living there.

### Smoking

84% of the Sri Lankans were non smokers. This is the highest among all Asians. 76% of Asians were non smokers. Only 4% Sri Lankans were regular smokers. Thai were the highest smokers at 13%. There were 10% of Indians, who were regular smokers.

### Conclusion

Sri Lankans in general are having a higher income levels than the Asians. They are mostly professional and few are self employed. They are better qualified with tertiary qualifications. Their average age is a little over the other Asians. Most of them live in Auckland, but surprisingly, few live in Christchurch in comparison to other Asians.

Jayasena Widanagamage

## From Tide to Table a tsunami fishing recovery project Welipatanvila - Sri Lanka

Boxing Day 2004 dawned very much as any other Boxing Day. No one could have imagined the devastation that was soon to occur on the beautiful shores of Sri Lanka. A tsunami, generated thousands of miles away, crashed on the beach, and in places pounded up to 5km inland, annihilating everything in its path.



The fishermen were particularly impacted by the waves, as most of their fishing boats or oru were broken apart or completely destroyed. Their livelihood depended on being able to fish. A desire to help in a practical way resulted in setting up 'Project Oru 100' a fundraising effort to repair or build 100 oru, the number required by the isolated fisher community of

Welipatanvila. With the help of Merrill Fernando of Dilmah and Asanka Abayakoon, a project manager seconded from The World Conservation Union, the project progressed smoothly with all funds raised in New Zealand being used without deduction and all work carried out with consideration for the environment and sustainability.

Fundraising in New Zealand was mainly through private functions of Sri Lankan dinner parties. I love Sri Lankan food so it was a great way for me to enjoy the cuisine, especially egg hoppers, whilst talking about the project. Chef Rohan Samarasinghe catered admirably for these functions. With the addition of a High Tea Fundraiser at The Carlton Hotel and individual responses to media coverage the project was completed in 18 months and the fishermen were happy to all be back at sea, fishing for those wonderful sardine-like mackerel and indeed, fishing for their livelihood.

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Whilst repairing and building the oru allowed the fishermen to return to sea it was suggested that an opportunity might exist to not just return the fishermen to the situation they were in before the tsunami; but to use further support to give them an unprecedented opportunity for an improved life, Provision of ice and insulated transport would mean the fishermen could command a fair price for the fish and the customer would be assured of a better eating experience. Hence Project Ice was initiated, followed by Project Wheels.

The New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation Incorporated agreed to contribute a large proportion of the funds required to build an Ice Plant and the Morgan Charitable Foundation funded the refrigerated motorbikes. In December 2006 Manjula Walgampola laid the Foundation stone for the building and in May of this year I was delighted to officially open the Ice Plant- 'Kiwi House'.

I was particularly delighted on three counts; firstly I was able to eat again, those delicious small mackerel sardine-like fish for breakfast, secondly I was able to see that the New Zealand funds had 'got through' and thirdly I was assured that an opportunity had been given to the fishermen for a better life. From adversity, from a dreadful disaster had come something positive.

It was a great project to be a part of and I am very grateful for the support given to me by the Foundation; it made the overall project 'Tide to Table' possible. And does it end there? - one day when peace returns to Sri Lanka and tourists return, I would like to fund the final stage of a 'Tide to Table' project- a small restaurant on the beach of Welipatanvila where I can be assured of eating the freshest, most delicious local fish for breakfast.

Mary Taylor

### Nanda Gunawardena – Newly Appointed Justice of Peace...

As Sri Lankans, it is a very proud moment for all of us to hear the great news of Mrs. Nanda Gunawardena's proud achievement of being sworn in as a Justice of Peace in New Zealand.

Nanda and her husband Stanley migrated to NZ in 1997 together with their eldest son Krishantha and his wife Dr Nilu. All of them have been active members of Srilankaramaya temple and the New Zealand Sri Lanka Buddhist Trust from the inception and involved in many other community activities through other Sri Lankan community organisations. Even though Krishantha's departure to Gisborne to take up a career opportunity created a vacuum in Auckland, Nanda filled the gap together with her husband's and Kirshantha support.

Mrs Gunawardena has been a great inspiration for the people who observed sil at the Sri Lankaramaya temple - as she never fails to bring the "KOLA KENDA" as breakfast for everybody who observed sil, and she also made sure that they are always comfortable and looked after. Most of the times she takes responsibility in commuting some of these women to the temple and back to observe sil.

She has been a devoted Trustee for the New Zealand Sri Lanka Buddhist Trust since 2001 up to date. As a mother and a grandmother her tireless services to the Sri Lankan in NZ Buddhist community is highly appreciated.

Apart from religious and cultural activities, she also involved herself in Community activities in the area where she lived. She has won the NZ Telecom yellow pages award under the title "EDUCATION COMES FIRST FOR LIFE" in 2001, she

also participated in variety of art work activities in the Multicultural Society and did the art work for their Banner which is currently named as "The Ethnic Board".

It is with Nanda's initiative and support that New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation organised the first ever Sri Lankan Art and Craft Exhibition in Auckland and the majority of the children's arts for the exhibition were contributed with the assistance of Mrs Gunawardena.

In addition she had an Art and Craft presentation at the Glen Eden Library and did a workshop with the Glen Eden Primary school children teaching them fabric painting. During this session, having observed her skills and dedication the Waitakere City Council Mayor his Worship Bob Harvey requested her to do a mural with the Westies Icons [West Auckland Icons] which she completed and presented to him in year 2002.



We are indeed proud of the beautiful art work done by Nanda for the two Vesak pandols at Srilankaramaya in the years 2004 and 2006.

Mrs Nanda Gunawardena's contribution to Sri Lankan community and the wider society in Auckland is invaluable and we are indeed proud of the recognition of being appointed at a Justice of Peace. New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation takes this opportunity to congratulate her and wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.

### Sinhala Singer Par Excellence

I read with interest the letter of Humaira Harim Kamlanathan on 'Thai Air Hostess par excellence' (Daily New 25 Sep 2007). It is indeed a rare occurrence for a Thai hostess to speak in Sinhala and even assist the less literate in filling forms. The local airline management should commend her for kindness and consideration for others.

Last Saturday, I experienced a similar performance by a young Japanese lady; who occupied the same table with my family, at the dinner dance organised by New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation. We were allocated seats at this table by the Foundation President, who was a schoolmate of my daughter. During the dance, the President came to our table and invited the Japanese lady in Sinhala to sing.

To our complete surprise, she fluently replied in Sinhala for the Band to back her up. Some moments later, the compere announced that a little Japanese lady would sing for us. Although we expected her to sing in her language or in English; she did two very popular Sinhala songs including the famous 'Ganga Addara'; with the gusto of a professional singer.



After the performance, she received an ovation but not a standing ovation, as deserved. Hence, this letter to appreciate the contribution made by Midori Hara, whose name I later gathered from the newsletter brought home to read at leisure.

I regret not being bold enough to congratulate her personally after her splendid performance. Thank you, Midori for being an encouragement to our Sinhala lasses, while making us all happy.

[Appeared on Daily New on 11 Oct 2007)

## POEM CORNER...

**"DON'T LET SOMEONE BECOME A PRIORITY IN YOUR  
LIFE...  
WHEN YOU ARE JUST AN OPTION FOR THEM"**

.....

**"NEVER CRY FOR ANY RELATION IN LIFE  
BECAUSE FOR THE ONE WHOM YOU CRY**

**DOES NOT DESERVE YOUR TEARS  
AND THE ONE WHO DESERVES  
WILL NEVER LET YOU CRY"**

.....

**TREAT EVERYONE WITH POLITENESS  
EVEN THOSE WHO ARE RUDE TO YOU,  
NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT NICE  
BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE NICE**

.....

**NEVER SEARCH YOUR HAPPINESS  
IN OTHERS  
WHICH WILL MAKE YOU  
FEEL ALONE,  
RATHER SEARCH IT IN YOURSELF  
YOU WILL FEEL HAPPY  
EVEN IF YOU ARE LEFT ALONE**

.....

**HAPPINESS ALWAYS LOOKS SMALL  
WHEN WE HOLD IT IN OUR HANDS.  
BUT WHEN WE LEARN TO  
SHARE IT,  
WE REALIZE HOW BIG AND PRECIOUS IT IS!**

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

### **Contributions**

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 agency, we do not make any payments for articles. Please send your contributions to the Spring Issue by August 2008 to the correspondence address below. Attn: Editorial Committee or by email to: [nzslf@nzslfoundation.com](mailto:nzslf@nzslfoundation.com)

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