



EDITORIAL

Volume 42 (nos. 1 and 2) of *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* carries five articles in total: three research articles, one review article, and one book review. While the articles in the issue fall within the fields of history and literary studies, they all have a clear Sri Lanka focus.

Chandra R. De Silva explores the *piriven* education system in Sri Lanka from a historical point of view. He discusses how the Buddhist education institutions evolved over time and how, as part of this evolution, gradually moved away from their initial goal of training Buddhist monks in the Buddhist doctrine to more worldly goals. An important part of his paper is the discussion on how certain structural changes that took place in the *piriven* system in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries resulted in converting these education institutions into centres that propagated the Sinhala Buddhist ideology. Through an analysis of the History textbooks used in the *piriven*, De Silva points out how the curriculum itself facilitates the inculcation of certain Sinhala Buddhist supremacist ideas in the students. He also discusses how some of the curriculum changes introduced in the *piriven* system in the recent past indicate a move in the direction of a more inclusive Sri Lanka.

Sumathy Sivamohan engages with the idea of who a Sri Lankan English writer is. She traces the trajectory of the Sri Lankan English writer in the postcolonial context, identifying the trends that defined Sri

Lankan English writing at different times. The transformation that English writing underwent within the context of the ethnic conflict is a key focus of her discussion. What sets her discussion apart from the rest of the articles in the collection is the way she makes herself part of what she talks about. She weaves her story as a postcolonial subject with a certain ethnic and gender identity into the larger narrative, thus giving the discussion a personal touch.

Liyanage Amarakeerthi engages with Martin Wickramasinghe's *Virāgaya*, which is widely considered a modern Sinhala classic. He takes this much talked about novel and gives it a new interpretation. He challenges the mainstream reading that the novel is one that primarily engages with the psychological and that it has nothing much to say about the social and the political. Based on a close reading of the novel, Amarakeerthi argues that what comes across as a preoccupation with the psychological is clearly entrenched in the social and the political. He goes to the extent of arguing that the idea of desirelessness represented by the central character Aravinda, which is commonly understood within a framework defined by Buddhist principles, is a state of existence enabled by the postcolonial condition that defines his time.

In her review of Harshana Rambukwella's *The Politics and Poetics of Authenticity*, Carmen S. Wickramagamage engages with the idea of authenticity. Following a brief discussion of the key argument that Rambukwella makes, she foregrounds a lacuna in Rambukwella's groundbreaking work—the absence of an engagement with the position of women in the discussion of authenticity among the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist thinkers that Rambukwella writes about. Based on an analysis of a number of recent incidents from the Sri Lankan context, Wickramagamage points out how the dominant discourse of (Sinhala Buddhist) cultural authenticity is to a large extent centred on the idea of a pure and authentic (Sinhala Buddhist) woman.

Alexander McKinley's review of Gananath Obeyesekere's pioneering work *The Doomed King: A Requiem for Śri Vikrama Rājasinha* presents the key arguments presented in the book. He discusses how those arguments lead to a novel understanding of colonial sources, local Sinhala sources, and Sri Lankan nationalist myths.

Towards the end of the review, McKinley presents two pieces of unstudied Sinhala poetry about the Śri Vikrama Rājasinha, which he hopes would supplement the book in question.

The Co-editors wish to stress that the views expressed in this Journal are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions held by the Co-editors or the SLJH Editorial Committee.

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