

# ORIENTALIA IN THE UNIVERSITY

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This brief and by no means an exhaustive survey of Oriental Studies and matters of relevant interest in the University established in 1942 and the Ceylon University College (1921-1942), which it replaced, is considered an appropriate contribution to the Jubilee Commemoration Volume of the Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities.

The question of provision to be made for Oriental Studies in the University College received the early attention of the authorities concerned with its establishment. Writing on the subject in 1914, Sir Robert Chalmers, Governor of Ceylon (1913-1916), later Lord Chalmers, himself an orientalist with an Oxford education, editor and translator of Pali canonical texts, one of which was dedicated to a scholar monk of Ceylon as a western tribute to eastern scholarship,<sup>1</sup> readily agreed that adequate facilities should be given for such studies and recommended the immediate appointment of a Professor of Sanskrit and Pali, so as to provide from the outset of the life of the College courses in these two classical languages. These courses, however, were to be recognized as alternatives available for those wishing to adopt them, without interfering with the courses of western study, which were to form the main part of the work of the institution.<sup>2</sup> Chalmers' recommendation for a chair of Sanskrit and Pali was an addition to the chairs proposed in an earlier communication by Sir Henry McCallum, Governor of Ceylon (1907-1913), in whose view the staff of the College was to consist of the Principal and seven Professors of Greek and Latin, English Language and Literature, Modern History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and Biology. The Principal and the Professors were to be paid in sterling. In addition to these so-called Sterling Appointments, Sir Henry recommended the appointment of lecturers for Special Courses

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<sup>1</sup> Chalmers' publications include the following: *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. Translated from the Pali by various hands under the editorship of E.B.Cowell. Vol.I. Cambridge University Press. 1895. Robert Chalmers. B.A. of Oriel College, Oxford; *Majjhima-Nikaya* Vol.II ed. London (1896-98) reprinted 1951, 1977 dedicated to Trenckner with the inscription *Manibus Gulielmi Trenckneri*; *Majjhima-Nikaya* Vol. III. ed. London (1899-1902). Reprinted 1951, 1960 dedicated: "To Vajiranana. A Western Tribute to Eastern Scholarship." The reference should be to Palane Vajiranana (1878-1955), a short account about whom is given in: Dharmabandhu, T.S. (1973): *Simhala Veerayo*. Colombo. M.D.Gunasena and Co. pp. 500-503; *Further Dialogues of the Buddha (Majjhima-Nikaya)*. Vol.I.Lord Chalmers. London 1926; Vol.II.Lord Chalmers. London 1927. For the years of rule and information about Chalmers and other governors, see: Hulugalle, H.A.J.(1963): *British Governors of Ceylon* Colombo, The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> *Ceylon Sessional Papers* XVI-1915. Despatches relating to the Establishment of a University College in Ceylon. Colombo 1915. No.I Governor Sir Robert Chalmers K.C.B. to the Right Hon.L.Harcourt M.P. January 20, 1914. p.1; Compare also: *Ceylon University College.Prospectus* 1935-36. Colombo, Ceylon Government Press. 1935. p.2.

to be paid in rupees. These included among others lecturers in Classics, Ancient History, Oriental History and Archaeology, Sanskrit and Pali, Higher Sinhalese and Higher Tamil.<sup>3</sup> Chalmers suggested that the appointment of the salaried lecturers recommended by Sir Henry be postponed.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the branches of study at the University College, Chalmers' view was that after the intermediate course there should be a more specialized course in Arts, Science or Oriental Studies of a standard approximately equal to the London B.A. or B.Sc. The suggested curriculum for the Oriental Final Pass was i) any two of the languages Sanskrit, Pali and Arabic (ii) one of the languages Sinhalese or Tamil and (iii) History of Ceylon upto 1500 A.D. with Archaeology and Epigraphy, while that for the Oriental Final Honours was (i) Sanskrit and Pali with either Sinhalese or Tamil and (ii) History of Ceylon upto 1500 A.D. with Archaeology and Epigraphy.<sup>5</sup>

Chalmers left the island long before the inauguration of the University College, a matter of regret for him, it was believed, and for others who worked with him.<sup>6</sup> The Chair he proposed for Sanskrit and Pali was also left out in subsequent recommendations. The Professorial appointments recommended by a sub-committee of a committee appointed at a meeting called by E.B.Denham, the Director of Education, in 1920, to draft recommendations for the courses to be taken at the University College were in English Language and Literature, Classics (which at that point of time referred only to the mediterranean languages) and Philosophy, Modern History and Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Agricultural Science. Denham, writing on the subject to the Colonial Secretary in April 1920, drew attention to the fact that the question of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ceylon Sessional Papers XXVI-1913*. System of Education in Ceylon. Despatches relating to the proposed Reorganization of the System of Education in Ceylon. (In continuation of Sessional Papers XIX and XX of 1912) Colombo 1913. No.I Governor Sir H.E.McCallum to the Right Hon.L.Harcourt M.P.December 24, 1912. p.6

<sup>4</sup> *Ceylon Sessional Papers XVI-1915* op.cit.p.2

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* pp.2,5. Compare also: *Ceylon Sessional Papers XIV-1916*. Report of the Conference summoned by H.E.Sir Robert Chalmers on the subject of the Proposed Ceylon University College. Colombo 1916. p.2. This conference was held at Queen's House on November 22 and 23, 1915.

<sup>6</sup> *Ceylon Sessional Papers XIV-1916* op.cit. p.4

recruitment of staff on whose efficiency, ability and adaptability the success of the University College depended was the most important the College had to face and proposed that the Professors be recruited in England, with the exception of the Professor of Mathematics who could be obtained in India or locally. He further suggested that the Professors recruited in England should be graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. In addition to the Professors, provision was to be made for seven lecturers, which included three lecturers for subjects falling within the range of Oriental Studies, viz. one for Sanskrit and Pali, and one each for Sinhalese and Tamil. A specific proposal was made in the case of Sanskrit and Pali, namely that the Venerable Suriyagoda Sumangala who was then studying on a two years' scholarship at Manchester College, Oxford should, if found competent, be appointed lecturer in these two languages on his return to Ceylon.<sup>7</sup>

Provision was also requested in this correspondence for special courses in Sanskrit and Pali, Tamil, Sinhalese, Oriental History and Archaeology besides such courses as Agricultural Science and Astronomy.<sup>8</sup> Of the fifteen Entrance Scholarships recommended, each of the value of Rs.480 per annum deemed sufficient to provide for the student's board and lodging and enable him to meet the cost of books etc., two were for Sinhalese, including a knowledge of Sinhalese History and Archaeology; two for Tamil, including a knowledge of the History of South India, of the Tamils in Ceylon and Tamil Literature; and one for Sanskrit and Pali with the proviso that the candidate would be required to show that he has a sufficient knowledge of English to attend lectures in English; one for History, the requirement stipulated being "The modern history of the world 1789; the History of Ceylon"; and one scholarship for Western Classics (Latin and Greek)<sup>9</sup>. An enclosure sent along with Denham's correspondence recommended that the Oriental Studies Society's examinations which "have undoubtedly greatly encouraged the study of oriental languages, and scholarship and research, for which the *pirivenas* afford great scope" should be stimulated by the provision of scholarships.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ceylon Sessional Papers* 1920-IX Colombo 1920. Correspondence relating to the Establishment of the University College in Ceylon. The director of Education to the Hon.Colonial Secretary. April 17, 1920. pp. 3-5.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* pp. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* pp. 6,7

<sup>10</sup> Enclosure 3. *ibid.* p.15

The University College opened or was "rushed into existence" <sup>11</sup> in College House, formerly called "Regina Walauwa", in 1921, *sans* a Professor of Sanskrit and Pali and also with no provision to teach Oriental languages at its first full session of July 21 1921 - June 22 1922. Measures, though inadequate, were taken to remedy this lapse, when the teaching staff, which already consisted of a Professor of English, a Professor of Classics and Philosophy, and a Professor of Modern History among other Professors and Lecturers, was "strengthened", as the first Principal of the College, Mr. Robert Marrs (M.A.Oxon) reported in 1931, " by the appointment of a Lecturer in Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese and a Visiting Lecturer in Tamil, who was replaced by the appointment of a permanent Lecturer in 1924". Fed on by what one might call crumbs falling from the academic table, classes were opened in Pali, Sinhalese and Tamil during the year 1922-23. An additional lecturer in Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese was appointed in 1927, and an Honours Class in Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit and Pali) was opened in July that year.<sup>12</sup>

The lecturer in Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese appointed in 1922 was Reverend Suriyagoda Sumangala who had by then earned the research degree of Bachelor of Letters at the University of Oxford.<sup>13</sup> He had other scholarly attainments besides, such as the publication of a new edition of the Pali text, the *Dhammapada*, in 1914, which Viggo Fausboll published for the first time in 1885 with a literal translation in Latin. In the foreword to his edition of the text, written at the *Parama Dhamma Cetiya* Oriental College, Ratmalana, Ceylon, Venerable Sumangala stated that he collated his manuscript with Sinhalese, Siamese and Burmese editions and the second Fausboll edition published in 1890. Sumangala Thera's edition of the *Dhammapada*, undertaken at the request of the President of the Pali Text Society, was published by this Society in London. The President of the Pali Text Society at the time was T.W.Rhys Davids. His wife, Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids D.Litt., who succeeded him as President of the Society, writing a Prefatory Note to Rev. Sumangala's edition of the *Dhammapada* said: "We were

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<sup>11</sup> As stated by the Principal of the College in a speech at an Inaugural Dinner reported in *The Ceylon University College Magazine*, published by the Ceylon University College Union Society, Colombo. (*University College Magazine* hereafter), Vol. I. No.3. [1926]p.22.

<sup>12</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports*. 1931 Part IV University College Department. Report of the Principal, University College, for the Academic Year July 1930 to June 1931. B 14; Compare also: *Ceylon University College Prospectus (Prospectus hereafter)* for 1936-37, Colombo 1936. pp. 3-5.

<sup>13</sup> *University College Magazine*, Vol. I.No.1 [1924] p.17.

fortunate to secure for this work, a well-known Pali-ist of Ceylon, who combines with erudition a familiarity with every word of the venerable stanzas". The title page of the edition describes Sumangala Thera as the "author of a *Graduated Pali Course*, *The Lakkhanasataka*, *Samyuttagathasanna* etc."<sup>14</sup>

The University College Magazine published by the Union Society records that Revd. Sumangala delivered a public lecture on the History of Sinhalese Literature at the College during the Academic Year 1923-24<sup>15</sup>, extended his patronage as President to the Sinhalese Society founded on the 25th of January 1923 and addressed the Society on the study of the Sinhalese Language and on Sinhalese Poetry at two of its meetings.<sup>16</sup> Venerable Sumangala's resignation during the Academic Year 1925-26 is recorded summarily in a subsequent issue of the Magazine,<sup>17</sup> an abrupt end to what could have been a prestigious career, considering his academic background and his previous scholarly activity.

The appointment of Gunapala Piyasena Malalasekera (1899-1973) as Lecturer in Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese in the year 1927 was a momentous event in the history of Oriental Studies at the University College. A great teacher, in the words of O.H.de A Wijesekera,<sup>18</sup> one of his earliest pupils, an assessment endorsed by generations of students who sat at his impromptu lectures, a prolific researcher as evidenced by his numerous publications which won for him a distinguished place in international scholarship, a silver-tongued orator who could recall an anecdote or indeed invent one to suit occasion and audience, a dynamic figure who flung himself with vigour and enthusiasm into whatever he set out to do, whether it be the promotion of Buddhism, fostering of indigenous culture, nurture of the arts, or arousing patriotic feelings,

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<sup>14</sup> *The Dhammapada*. New Edition by Suriyagoda Sumangala Thera. London, Pali Text Society, (PTS) [1914] T.W.Rhys Davids was the President PTS from 1881-1992 and Mrs. C.A.F.Rhys Davids was the President from 1922-42. *Vide Issues of the Pali Text Society* 1982 p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *University College Magazine* Vol.1 No.1 [1924] p.18.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p. 35; also Vol. 1 No.3 [1926] p.41.

<sup>17</sup> *University College Magazine*, Vol. II No.I [1927] p.3.

<sup>18</sup> *Malalasekera Commemoration Volume*, edited by O.H.de A.Wijesekera, Colombo 1976 Editor's note.

Malalasekera certainly made his presence felt in the University College. Besides being an outstanding teacher judging by the excellent results of his pupils who followed the Indo-Aryan course, he actively participated in their extra-curricular activities, giving them help and advice, and extending his patronage in the organisation of their literary, cultural and social events, which assistance has been recorded by the students in their College Magazine,<sup>19</sup> and more recently by Vinnie Vitarana in a commemorative lecture entitled Malalasekera and our cultural experience.<sup>20</sup> Malalasekera expressed his satisfaction when his students passed their examinations and recorded with pride the achievements of his brighter pupils in the Annual Reports he submitted to the Principal of the College. Reporting that Joseph Vincent Fonseka was placed in the First Class in Indo-Aryan in 1930-31, he noted that it was the first time a candidate had obtained a first in the London University examination offering Pali as a subject.<sup>21</sup> Fonseka won the Government University Scholarship for Oriental languages that year,<sup>22</sup> the previous winners of this prestigious award being E.W. Adikaram in 1929, and K. Kanapathipillai, another First Class graduate, in 1930.<sup>23</sup> In 1932, the Oriental Languages Department was congratulated by the Principal of the College on the achievement of Oliver Hector De Alwis Wijesekera, the only First Class in an Honours degree during the year, who won the coveted Government University Scholarship as well.<sup>24</sup> While these scholars and subsequent winners of the award such as N.D. de S. Wijesekera (1933) and P.B.F. Wijeratna (1934)<sup>25</sup> remained in the academic field engaged in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, L. Piyasena, who obtained First Class Honours in Indo-

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<sup>19</sup> *University College Magazine*, Vol. I No. I Academic Year 1927-28 p.47.

<sup>20</sup> *Professor G.P. Malalasekera, 90th Birth Anniversary Commemorative Lecture*, delivered on 19th November 1989 by Professor V. Vitharana. Published by the Malalasekera Institute of Buddhist Education and Culture, 380a, Buddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports*, 1931 Part IV B 6; *Prospectus* 1932-33. p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Prospectus* 1932-33 p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> *Prospectus* 1931-32 pp. 15, 48. Adikaram was placed in the Second Class (Upper Division) at the final examination.

<sup>24</sup> *Ceylon Administrative Reports*, 1932 Part IV B 8, *Prospectus* 1935-36 p.54.

<sup>25</sup> *Prospectus* 1935-36. p. 57.

Aryan in 1934, joined the Income Tax Department as a Probationer<sup>26</sup> and later became its Commissioner, thus proving that the training he had in Oriental Studies at the University College equipped him to distinguish himself in a totally unrelated field.

Though the few who joined the Oriental Department of the University College did well or excelled in the field, not many opted to read these subjects. Reporting that no candidates offered Pali or Sinhalese or Sanskrit for the Entrance Scholarship Examination during the Academic Year 1930-31, Malalasekera said: "This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the vast majority of the secondary schools of this island make no adequate provision for the study of these subjects in the higher classes. Even where an elementary knowledge of Sinhalese is given to satisfy the requirements of the Code, the work in the majority of cases is done so half-heartedly and so obviously without the blessings of the school authorities that the subject loses prestige in the eyes of the students. While the Mediterranean culture enjoys all its present privileges in the various departments of life in Ceylon, it is futile to expect any great change of heart on the part of students or their parents."<sup>27</sup> Stating that attempts to have Pali included in the Civil Service Examination had until then been unsuccessful, Malalasekera added that every bright student harboured, in secret at least, a hope of being able to try for the Civil Service.<sup>28</sup> No female, however bright, could aspire to join this service at the time. Curiously, there was an increase of women reading Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese around this time," a very healthy sign of the growth of interest in Orientalia" according to Malalasekera, who hoped that these women would play a very important part in the "renaissance of Sinhalese culture" which he felt was inevitable.<sup>29</sup> The report for the year 1935-36 states that Pali and Sanskrit had been included in the Civil Service examination, a matter of great gratification for the teachers, kindling the hope that this might produce a "change of heart" among parents, and principals of schools regarding the desirability of introducing these subjects into school syllabuses.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1931 Part IV B 6.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1933. Part IV B 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports*, 1936 Part IV B 6.

The opening of the portals of the prestigious Ceylon Civil Service to students reading for the Indo-Aryan degree had the desired effect. Graduates of the Indo-Aryan department, who joined the service in open competition, served with distinction in executive positions and proved to be equals of graduates of other departments. The success of these students and their outstanding ability as administrators, being equipped with a better background knowledge of the problems facing the public than the students who had a training in European oriented disciplines, helped increase the number of students enrolling in the department.<sup>31</sup>

One of the first orientalists to become a Civil Servant was M.J.Perera, University Scholar in Oriental languages (1936),<sup>32</sup> referred to in a recent talk as "an honest man and a fine administrator" who "was more sensitive to the cultural ambience of the country than his predecessors and contemporaries."<sup>33</sup> M.J.Perera was closely associated with the University of Ceylon in the sixties. Then Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, he was appointed by the Council of the University to be a member of its Senate in 1965.<sup>34</sup> Appointed Vice-Chancellor in 1968, he assumed office on the first of July and served the University in this capacity until he resigned his post on February 7, 1969, apparently under circumstances where he had no alternative but to resign. It is reported that in his short period of service Mr.Perera fully lived up to the reputation which he had built up for himself earlier as a public servant who was in every sense a servant of the public. The Board of Regents of the University passed a special resolution expressing its appreciation of the courage and competence displayed by Mr.Perera in handling the extremely difficult situation that prevailed in the campus shortly before his resignation. The Board Committee that inquired into the unfortunate event that led to Mr.Perera's resignation, namely a clash between army men and students in the campus, also expressed its admiration for the way in which he

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<sup>31</sup> Mutukumara, Nemsiri (1981): *Tribute to Malalasekera*. A collection of messages, appreciations and pen portraits. Compiled by Nemsiri Mutukumara. Colombo. Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. Lake House. p.20. Observation of N.A.Jayawickrema.

<sup>32</sup> *Prospectus* 1941-42 p.51.

<sup>33</sup> Abeysekara, Tissa (1991): An English version of a talk given in Sinhala on the 10th Sunil Shanta Commemoration held on April 27, 1991 printed in the Sri Lankan daily newspaper, *Daily News* Wednesday May 15, 1991.

<sup>34</sup> *Annual Report* 1965 p.3.



conducted himself once the situation had become tense and added that he showed a rare degree of courage and a high sense of duty.<sup>35</sup> The comment of a don that the report quotes: " the manner of his resignation sets a standard of conduct for persons in high office" is worth reiterating.

A fine example of a public servant whose training in Oriental studies equipped him for the positions he held is W.J.Fernando, who will perhaps be best remembered as the first Commissioner of Ayurveda in Sri Lanka. Born into a family of native physicians at Wadduwa, Fernando had his early education at a monastic institution, the *Pravacanodaya Pirivena* at Molligoda and at Nalanda Vidyalaya. He read Sanskrit, Sinhala and English for his bachelor's degree at the University of Ceylon, where he was a contemporary and friend of Venerable Dr.Walpola Rahula. On joining the public service in 1946, Fernando was placed in charge of local government in the Badulla district. He accepted this post, travelled widely in the Uva province and submitted a report containing proposals for its development. Appointed Special Commissioner of Anuradhapura in 1949, he was a pioneer in reconstructing the city. Fernando was appointed the first Secretary of the Sri Lankan embassy in Moscow in 1956 with Malalasekera as ambassador, but was recalled by the then Prime Minister, S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike, to head the newly created department of Ayurveda, which position he held until 1965. The enactment of the Ayurveda Act, the establishment of the Ayurveda Research Institute and an Ayurvedic (pharmaceutical) drugs corporation took place during Fernando's tenure of office as Commissioner of Ayurveda. When he was the Government Agent of Kandy, Fernando sought to improve the aesthetic aspects of the annual pageant, the Kandy Perahera. Even after retirement, Fernando remained active. Attracted to journalism through his association with D.B.Dhanapala, he campaigned for press freedom. That Fernando's interest in Sanskrit was kept alive is attested by his audio library full with stanzas from the Vedas. At the time of his death on June 28, 1991, Fernando was the Chairman of the National Film Corporation.<sup>36</sup>

An orientalist who has successfully combined scholarship with administration is Ananda Guruge, now (1992) Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United States. An illustrious

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<sup>35</sup> *Annual Report* 1968-69 pp 1, 32-33

<sup>36</sup> Newsreport in the *Daily News*, Monday July 01, 1991 entitled: Death of W.J.Fernando a loss to country; Article by Dr.Upali Pilapitiya, Secretary, Ministry of Indigenous Medicine on W.J.Fernando in the Sinhala daily newspaper *Divayina* of July, 01. 1991; Article on W.J.Fernando by Bertie Galahitiyawa in the *Daily News* of July 22, 1991.

pupil of Betty Heimann and O.H.de A.Wijesekera, Guruge read for a Sanskrit Honours degree with Indian History as a subsidiary subject at the University. He passed with first class honours in 1950 winning the Government University scholarship in Oriental Studies tenable in the United Kingdom which however he did not make use of. He joined the Civil Service in 1952, but pursued his academic interests as well and was conferred a doctorate in 1953 for a study of the society of the epic poem, the *Ramayana*. Awarded the national honour of *Kalakirti* in the year 1987 in recognition of his eminence in humanities, Guruge was felicitated by his colleagues, friends and well-wishers in December 1990 with a collection of papers on Buddhism and Indology.<sup>37</sup> This volume contains a biographical sketch of Guruge, an assessment of his achievements and a bibliography of his published writings in Sinhala and English. The national honour of *Deshamanya*, was conferred on Guruge on the National Heroes Day, May 22, 1992.

Malalasekera did not confine his efforts to the promotion of Oriental languages in the University alone. He expressed in strong terms his dissatisfaction about the languages of the country not being given their due share in the curriculum of studies in secondary schools, stating that Sinhalese and Tamil and their classics were treated very much as poor relations who must be accommodated at the educational table. Blaming not only the government and school authorities but also the public who were content with a "bread and butter education", Malalasekera argued that the problem of combining English learning with the absorption of indigenous culture was not one that defied solution but one that demanded courage and earnestness.<sup>38</sup>

Reviewing a volume that "commemorates Malalasekera, the Orientalist and Buddhist scholar", Ananda Guruge points out that "his equally illustrious contributions to the educational development of the country, the organization and guidance of the Buddhist movement, the promotion of arts and crafts and study of Sinhala culture and the pioneering efforts in evolving a national way of life" could have been appropriately taken note of in a reasonably detailed essay on him.<sup>39</sup> The diversity of Malalasekera's interests

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<sup>37</sup> Karunadasa, Y. (1990) edited: *Ananda*. Papers on Buddhism and Indology. A Felicitation Volume presented to Ananda Weihena Palliya Guruge. Colombo. Printed at the State Printing Corporation for the Felicitation Volume Editorial Committee.

<sup>38</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1935. Part IV B 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Malalasekera Commemoration Volume*. op.cit. Review by Ananda W.P.Guruge printed in the Sri Lankan daily newspaper *Sun* on Thursday September 29, 1977.

and "the gamut of his involvement in the very fabric of Lankan life" were considered at a recent lecture delivered by G.L.Peiris, Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Law of the University of Colombo.<sup>40</sup> A collection of articles in Sinhala drawing attention to Malalasekera's diverse concerns was published three months after his death which took place on April 23, 1973, at the age of seventy-three.<sup>41</sup> Another publication entitled: *Tribute to Malalasekera*, which in the words of its compiler, Nemsiri Mutukumara, was "an earnest endeavour to collect and compile the tributes paid by people of various walks of life and from organisations and institutions from far and near" appeared in 1981.<sup>42</sup> Mutukumara had earlier published a collection of a hundred short speeches made by Malalasekera in Sinhala.<sup>43</sup> This volume contains a short introductory essay on Malalasekera, written by Edwin Ariyadasa.

A learned monk who assisted Malalasekera at the University College in inculcating in his pupils a love for the indigenous literature and culture of the land was Venerable Rambukwelle Siddhartha Mahathera, M.A.Calcutta, Lecturer in the Department of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese of which Malalasekera was the head.<sup>44</sup> Ven. Siddhartha's interest in Pali and Sanskrit grammar is reflected in his publications: *Origin and development of the Pali language with special reference to Sanskrit grammar*,<sup>45</sup> and

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<sup>40</sup> *Malalasekera Memorial Lecture*. His contribution to Lanka's intellectual, religious, cultural life. Printed in the *Daily News* Thursday, November 14, 1991.

<sup>41</sup> *Malalasekera Anusmarana Samgrahaya* (1973): Editors: L.G.Hewage, Bogoda Premaratne, Hewage Jayasena, Sirisena Malalasekera. Publisher: All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. Colombo. M.D.Gunasena and Co.

<sup>42</sup> Mutukumara, Nemsiri (1981) op.cit.

<sup>43</sup> Mutukumara, Nemsiri (1975): *Malalasekera Mataka Satakaya*. Colombo. Samkha Publishers.

<sup>44</sup> Tilakasiri, J. (1970): edited. *Anjali. Papers on Indology and Buddhism. O.H.de A.Wijesekera Felicitation Volume*. Colombo 1970. p.ix.

<sup>45</sup> Published in: *Buddhistic Studies*. Edited Bimala Churn Law, Calcutta 1931. Vide *Ceylon. Administration Reports*. 1932. Part IV B 14.

*The apparent irregularity in the declension of the Sanskrit pronouns Asmat and Yusmat.*<sup>46</sup> Ven.Siddhartha spent part of his leave during the academic year 1932-33 in Europe visiting libraries and museums and brought back with him copies of several documents of importance connected with Ceylon and its history and literature. These were to be submitted in the first instance to the Historical Manuscripts Commission of which he was a member. Visiting lecturers were enlisted to carry on Revd.Siddhartha's work in his absence, Revd.Polwatte Buddhadatta, another scholar monk being one of them.<sup>47</sup> The availability of competent persons to replace teachers on leave appears to have been a great boon at the time (C.E.Godakumbure was visiting lecturer in the year 1937-38), for two permanent lecturers had to teach three separate subjects, which resulted in their not being able to give the Honours students an adequate foundation for higher research work. The students in the Indo-Aryan Department at the time included a Chinese scholar of repute from China, a German student from Berlin, and a Muslim, a native of Ceylon.<sup>48</sup> The Principal of the College was sympathetic and agreed that in a well-established institution, Sanskrit and Pali alone would each have its Professor and assistants. Reporting that proposals for filling the gaps were being placed before the authorities, he said that the needs were indisputable but the resources of the state were meagre.<sup>49</sup>

The report of the Sinhalese Society for the first term of the Academic Year 1931-32 makes reference to an interesting lecture by Revd.Siddhartha on the Recitation of Sinhalese Prose and Poetry and his association with Dr.Malalasekera in starting some Sinhalese classes for students of the College who were not members of the Indo-Aryan department.<sup>50</sup> The interest aroused in the study of Sinhala had the desired impact, for the Secretary of the Society in his report for the subsequent year states that the hope expressed by his predecessor that the Sinhalese Society should not be looked upon as the

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<sup>46</sup> Published in the Literary and Historical Supplement of the Sinhalese weekly newspaper, the *Silumina*. Vide *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1932. Part IV B. 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1933 Part IV B 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1933. Part IV B 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1933 Part IV B 15.

<sup>50</sup> *University College Magazine*. Vol. VII. No.1 Oct. 1931. pp. 23, 24.

monopoly of the Indo-Aryan students had been realised to a great extent, and that the responsibilities and duties of the society were shared by all sections of the College.<sup>51</sup> Contributions in Sinhala and Tamil languages also appeared for the first time in the 1932 issue of the College Magazine," a definite step in the history of the magazine" in the words of its editor.<sup>52</sup> Revd.Siddhartha was the President of the Sinhalese Society at the time.<sup>53</sup> Some Sinhala verses composed by Rev.Siddhartha on the Vesak Poya Day, 9th May 1932, which he spent in the city of Munich, Germany were published in the College Magazine.<sup>54</sup> Ediriwira Sarachchandra refers to Revd.Siddhartha's skill as a teacher of Sanskrit and states that this teacher's influence fostered his own love for Oriental literature and the indigenous arts and crafts.<sup>55</sup> Robert Marrs, the Principal of the College, noted the relevance of the activities of the Sinhalese and Tamil Societies for the progress made in Oriental Studies at the time. He described the system of elementary and advanced classes in Sinhala and Tamil initiated by these societies for those connected with the College, both staff and students, as a "labour of love inspired by a recognition of the desirability of extending the accurate and cultured use of the languages of the country to those who have not selected them for their University course."<sup>56</sup>

The position of Tamil studies in the University College was far from satisfactory. Only five out of eleven students in the Intermediate Class were allowed to sit for the public examination in the academic year 1930-31. Of these one failed, this being the first failure within five years. The reason for the failure, it seemed, was the candidate answering his papers in Tamil, instead of in English! However, this year was also marked by a happy event. For the first time in the history of the College, a woman student passed the Intermediate Examination offering Tamil as one of the four subjects required. There were also more students in the Tamil classes than in any previous year. Though Revd.F.Kingsbury (B.A.Madras), Lecturer in Tamil, found this encouraging, he

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<sup>51</sup> *University College Magazine*. Vol. VII No.2 1932. p.33.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* Editorial Notes. p.1.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* p. 34.

<sup>54</sup> *University College Magazine*. Vol. IX. April 1934. No.2. Sinhala section. p.5.

<sup>55</sup> Sarachchandra, Ediriwira (1985): *Pim ati sarasavi varamak denne* (a Sinhala work). Colombo. Dayawamsa Jayakody Saha Samagama. p.63.

<sup>56</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1931 Part IV B 12.

stated most emphatically that one could not rest satisfied till the University of London recognized Tamil as a classical language, which it undoubtedly is, or till the University included Tamil among the subjects for its B.A.Honours.<sup>57</sup> In the year 1932-33, Miss.G.Subramaniam, the first woman candidate in the history of the University of London to pass the B.A.General degree examination offering Tamil as one of the subjects, secured First Class marks in Tamil. She was offered the Arunachalam Scholarship to proceed to Annamalai University for B.A.Honours in Tamil, which was not available at the University College. However, Miss.Subramaniam declined the offer. In the absence of Honours Courses in Tamil some students proficient in Tamil opted to follow honours courses in other subjects. Revd.Kingsbury found it gratifying that one or two of them read for the Indo-Aryan degree with Sanskrit as the principal subject.<sup>58</sup> At the end of the academic year 1934-35, Revd.Kingsbury stated in an apparent attitude of resignation: "I have little or nothing to report about the Tamil department for the year under review. But as years roll on, my conviction grows stronger that until we have a University of our own, there can be very little hope for the revival of Tamil learning in Ceylon."<sup>59</sup> An Honours Diploma course in Tamil was started in 1936-37, which was to continue till the University of London established a B.A. Honours Course in Tamil. K.Kanapathipillai, Lecturer in charge of Tamil studies at the time, hoped that the establishment of the Honours course would be an established fact before long.<sup>60</sup> His hope had not been realised by the end of the decade, for the Principal of the College wrote as follows in June 1939: "One student has been reading for the Honours Diploma in Tamil.... Until Tamil students specialize in Sanskrit in the Secondary Schools and the London University introduces Tamil into its Honours curriculum, there is little prospect of a strong development of interest in Oriental scholarship among our Tamil students."<sup>61</sup> How the Tamil department fared in the early forties under its first Professor Swami Vipulananda B.Sc.(Lond.) Pundit(Madura), member of the Ramakrishna Mission, assisted by K.Kanapathipillai B.A., Ph.D.(Lond.) Vidvan (Annamalai), Government University

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<sup>57</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1931 Part IV B 6.

<sup>58</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1933 Part IV B 7.

<sup>59</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1935 Part IV B 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1938 Part IV B 5,6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports*, 1938 Part IV B 18, 19. The report was signed by the Principal on June 30, 1939.

Scholar (1930) and V.Chelvanayagam B.A.(Lond.), M.A.(Annamalai)<sup>62</sup> and how the revival of Tamil studies Revd.Kingsbury hoped for took place in the subsequent years was outlined by Professor S.Thillainathan, the present Head of the Department of Tamil, University of Peradeniya, at the Jubilee Seminar of its Faculty of Arts, held in December 1991.<sup>63</sup> It might be noted *inter alia* that Kingsbury's concern for Tamil studies is remembered in the form of the Revd.Francis Kingsbury Prize for Tamil.<sup>64</sup>

In the academic year 1931-32, Professor S.A.Pakeman, Head of the Department of History and Economics at the University College, saw the desirability of some students taking Oriental History (Branch 111 of the London Honours course) but noted that the average student entirely lacked the early linguistic training which is essential, particularly in Sanskrit.<sup>65</sup> However, in the formulation of schemes for the extension of studies in the department in 1934-35, it was decided to introduce Branch 111 (Oriental History with special reference to the History of India) into the History Honours course.<sup>66</sup>

This course was begun as envisaged in the following year but Pakeman noted once again that the numbers following the course were not likely to be large until more students came from schools with a knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali which was required for students in this branch. A post-graduate diploma course in Ceylon History was also planned, which it was felt would help remove the stigma that only a handful of Ceylonese take any real and practical interest in the study of their own history.<sup>67</sup> In 1936-37, only

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<sup>62</sup> *Prospectus*, 1944-46, p.7; Compare note 23 above.

<sup>63</sup> Thillainathan, S. (1991): *Some Aspects of the University's Contribution to Tamil Studies in Sri Lanka*. Seminar Paper 6 pages. Published in: MORE OPEN THAN USUAL: edited by R.A.L.H.Gunawardana. Colombo. 1992; see also: M.A.Nuhman, *The University of Peradeniya and the Development of Tamil Literary Criticism in Sri Lanka*. *ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> cf. *Annual Report*, 1958 p. 29; A Kingsbury Fund to support which the Tamil society organized a concert is mentioned in the *Annual Report* 1942 p.10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1932 Part IV B 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1935 Part IV B 6.

<sup>67</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1936 Part IV B 8,9.

three students were studying Oriental History, which in the opinion of Pakeman was a subject more desirable for students attending a University institution situated in Asia. The fact that the course carried little or no advantage for the Civil Service Examination was felt to be the reason for its unpopularity, a point shown further by the fact that no students came to take the newly established post-graduate diploma in Ceylon history, preferring to cram for the Civil Service Examination privately.<sup>68</sup> The following year too, Oriental History failed to attract more than a very few students of the Honours type, and not much interest was taken in the College Historical Society.<sup>69</sup> Anxious to see more students reading Oriental History, Pakeman felt the desirability of bringing the subjects of study in the Branch of Oriental History within the scope of the Civil Service Examination.<sup>70</sup> The introduction of Pali and Sanskrit for this examination in 1935-36 had proved effective in attracting students. The numbers reading these subjects had increased considerably so that rooms previously allocated for classes were found insufficient and a large lecture hall had to be used.<sup>71</sup> Malalasekera was then in the enviable position of being able to say that the teachers had no complaint to make as regards either the keenness or the intelligence of students.<sup>72</sup>

The new regulations introduced at the time of the establishment of the University in 1942 assumed that the Department of History will change the centre of interest from Europe to Asia, while not neglecting the study of European history in general, and of British history in particular. Courses in all three years were to cover the history of India and Ceylon. It was noted that the material available for teaching Oriental history was very scanty and that every course had to be based upon research. It was suggested that there should be a Professor and four lecturers or Assistant lecturers in the department, three of whom were to be specialists in Oriental history and two in Occidental history.<sup>73</sup> In 1943 Dr.H.C.Ray of the Calcutta University was appointed the first Professor of

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<sup>68</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1937 Part IV B 7,8.

<sup>69</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1938 Part IV B 6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1939 Part IV B 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1939 Part IV B 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1939 Part IV B 5.

<sup>73</sup> *Annual Report* 1942. Appendix 1 p.19.



History at the University.<sup>74</sup> The department flourished under him and his successors. The scholarly achievement of historians trained by this department of the University is well-known.

Professor K.M.de Silva refers to the period 1942 to 1955 as the heyday of the University of Ceylon during which it had built up a corps of highly competent teachers, a University tradition and very high academic standards at its examinations.<sup>75</sup> The contribution of the members of the Faculty of Oriental Studies leading to such an assessment is considerable and worth documenting. This faculty was noted as that which most obviously required development at the inception of the University in 1942. It was felt desirable that this development should take both of two forms: namely the development of the study of oriental languages through the medium of English and the development of study generally through the medium of Sinhala and Tamil.<sup>76</sup> The re-organization of the Department of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhala into three Departments of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese in 1943 was a momentous event in the history of the Faculty. The titles of the posts held by the teachers of the Department were changed. Dr. G.P.Malalasekera became the Professor of Pali; Dr.O.H.de A.Wijesekera was lecturer in Sanskrit, Mr.D.E.Hettiaratchi lecturer in Sinhalese and Mr.C.E.Godakumbure Assistant lecturer in Sinhalese. Dr.M.D.Ratnasuriya who was appointed the Professor of Sinhalese this year assumed duties in 1944. A graduate from the Ceylon University College, Ratnasuriya had spent nine years at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, several of these years as lecturer, before returning to the University of Ceylon as Professor of Sinhalese. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Oriental studies in 1945 and was re-elected in 1948. Having carried a heavy burden both as scholar and as administrator, he was about to leave for England for a holiday, when he took ill and died suddenly in April 1951.<sup>77</sup> The 1951-52 issue of the magazine of the Sinhalese Society of the University has a photograph of Ratnasuriya.

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<sup>74</sup> *Annual Report* 1943. p.6; 1958. p.2.

<sup>75</sup> De Silva, Kingsley (1990): 'The Sri Lankan Universities from 1977 to 1990: Recovery, Stability and the Descent to Crisis.' *Minerva*. A review of Science, Learning and Policy. Vol. XXVIII. No.2. Summer 1990. p. 157.

<sup>76</sup> *Annual Report* 1942. pp. 15, 16.

<sup>77</sup> *Annual Report* 1951. pp.2,3

The new Chair of Sanskrit that was inaugurated in 1944 was offered to Miss. Betty Heimann Ph.D Halle, a position she accepted on arrival in the island in 1945.<sup>78</sup> Like Ratnasuriya, Heimann also had been a teacher at the University of London. Stella Kramrisch, the famous art historian, refers to Heimann as a "refugee Professor of Sanskrit from Heidelberg" teaching at the School of Oriental and African Studies, with whom she was delighted to renew her friendship. Heimann and Kramrisch had met some years earlier in Calcutta, in the home of German friends Heimann was visiting and based their friendship on mutual interests in Indian philosophy. Heimann was a close friend and colleague of Heinrich Zimmer who had taught at Bonn University.<sup>79</sup>

Heimann's interest in Indian Philosophy is well attested by her writings, early, late and posthumous, in her major works published in Germany and London and also in her numerous essays in Western and Asian periodicals.<sup>80</sup> She was thus a most suitable

<sup>78</sup> *Annual Report* 1945.p.1; 1949 p2; Tilakasiri,J.(1970) op.cit.p.xi.

<sup>79</sup> Stoler Miller,Barbara (1983): *Exploring India's sacred art*. Selected Writings of Stella Kramrisch. Edited with a biographical essay. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania. p.vi. Heimann had been a student at Heidelberg vide Preface page 8 of her publication, *Indian and Western Philosophy. A Study in Contrasts*. London 1937.

<sup>80</sup> These include:  
 (1922) Tr. Ananda Tirtha. *Madhva's Kommentar zur Kathaka Upanisad*; (1930) *Studien zur Eigenart indischen Denkens*. Tubingen. Mehr und Siebeck. vi. 328 pp. ; (1937) *Indian and Western Philosophy. A Study in Contrasts*. London. Allen and Unwin Ltd.; (1945) 'Lila. The Divine Play.' *University of Ceylon Review*. Vol. iii.No.2.pp.29-34; (1946) 'Basic Ideas of India and the West.' *Indian Art and Letters*.; (1946): 'Significance of Negations in Hindu Thought.' *B.C. Law Jubilee Volume*. Calcutta; (1947): 'Kathenotheism and Danastutis or Kathenotheism and istadevatas'. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*. Vol. XXVIII. pp.26-33; 'Why Study Sanskrit?' *ibid*.pp.294-300; (1948): 'Form not "apart" but "a part" of meaning as exemplified in Sanskrit Literaturer'. *University of Ceylon Review*. Vol. VI. pp. 23-28;(1951): 'The Significance of Prefixes in Sanskrit Philosophical Terminology'. *Royal Asiatic Society Monographs*. Vol. XXV. London. Royal Asiatic Society.V.99 pp.; (1957): 'Contrasts in Fundamental Postulates: Monotheism or Henotheism? Miracles or Laws of Nature? History or Mythology?' *Felicitation Volume presented to S.K. Belvalkar* ed. by. S. Radhakrishnan et al. Motilal

person to lead a delegation of staff and students from the University of Ceylon to the Indian Philosophical Congress in 1945. This delegation was organised by the Philosophical Society of the University.<sup>81</sup> Heimann appears to have participated in student activities soon after her assumption of duties. She addressed the Buddhist Brotherhood in 1945<sup>82</sup> and delivered the first anniversary lecture of the *Parishad*, the Sanskrit Society of the University, in March 1949.<sup>83</sup> An article entitled: *Why study Sanskrit?* published in 1947<sup>84</sup> reflects her interest in popularising its study. Heimann concentrated on the general inherent value of the language in her essay as opposed to R.N.Dandekar who dealing predominantly with the wide prevalence of Sanskrit in the India of that day indicated the relation which exists between the various current vernaculars and their parent Sanskrit in a study published around the same time.<sup>85</sup> Heimann noted with pleasure that the two studies made from different angles corroborated each other.<sup>86</sup> That the study of Sanskrit is an essential and a most fruitful task was the conclusion Heimann arrived at in her paper after discussing many aspects of the question and giving reasons for upholding the claim.

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Banarsidass. Banaras. pp. 219-227; (1964) *Facets of Indian Thought*. London. George Allen and Unwin Ltd. (a posthumous publication). According to the Introductory Note by the Executor given on p.7. of this volume, Heimann left another unpublished work: *Hindu Thought in Illustrations* at the time of her death. I have had no access to most of the publications listed above. The information is from secondary sources.

<sup>81</sup> *Annual Report* 1945 pp. 17-23

<sup>82</sup> *ibid* p.17

<sup>83</sup> *vide* Card Catalogue s.v. Heimann, Betty in the library of the University of Peradeniya. The Publication, lost or misplaced, was not available for consultation at the time of writing.

<sup>84</sup> Heimann, Betty (1947): *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* Vol. XXVIII pp. 294-300

<sup>85</sup> *ibid* p. 294 .note 1

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

When Betty Heimann retired from the Chair of Sanskrit shortly after reaching the age limit as reported in the *Annual Report* of the Council of 1949, the number of students reading for the Honours Course in Sanskrit had risen to twenty-seven in 1948 from five in 1945. This is attributed to the remarkable energy she showed in the organization of her department despite being comparatively advanced in age at the time of her arrival in the island in 1945. The first Ceylonese to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy stated to have been one of Heimann's pupils<sup>87</sup> is apparently Lucy de Soysa, who submitted a dissertation on the *Development of Yama* for this degree in 1948, a copy of which is available at the University Library. Another woman, Edith Ludowyk-Gyomroi was conferred a Ceylon Ph.D. earlier in 1944, the subject of her dissertation being: *The Role of the Miracle in Early Pali Literature with special reference to the Problem of Faith*. Her supervisor was Malalasekera whose help and that of Revd. Bhikkhu W. Rahula she acknowledges in the introduction to her work, a copy of which is kept in the University library at Peradeniya.

Heimann spent her last years of retirement in London, where she used to welcome visitors from Sri Lanka. During a visit at the beginning of the sixties, when her friends Dr. and Mrs D.J. Wijayaratne introduced me to her as a student of Sanskrit, she remembered with affection her "star" pupils at the University of Ceylon, the names mentioned on the occasion being those of Ananda Salgado Kulasuriya, Pamathy Sivagnanasundaram (later Thanabalasundaram) and Kailasanatha Kurukkal. No volume to felicitate or commemorate Betty Heimann, the first Professor of Sanskrit and the first woman Professor of the University of Ceylon, has been published. I have not seen obituary notices if any appeared in academic journals or elsewhere giving information about her. That her life span covered 1888-1961 has been noted by me.<sup>88</sup> The time of her death right upto which she was in the midst of literary activity is given as May 1961 in a posthumous publication<sup>89</sup> where she is referred to as the late Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy, University of Ceylon. A picture of Betty Heimann which I believe is an enlargement of a photograph that was in the possession of Professor Kailasanatha Kurukkal hangs at present in the room of the Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Peradeniya alongside those of her successors O.H. de A. Wijesekera and J. Tilakasiri.

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<sup>87</sup> *Annual Report* 1949 p.2

<sup>88</sup> Possibly from a card catalogue where her publications were listed.

<sup>89</sup> Heimann ,Betty (1964): *Facets of Indian Thought*. London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. Introductory note by the Executor p.7

O.H.de A. Wijesekera was, as noted earlier, a brilliant student at the University College. He succeeded Heimann, who had been one of his teachers in London, as Professor of Sanskrit, in 1948, a position he held until 1967, when he was appointed Vice-Chancellor at the University of Colombo<sup>90</sup>. Besides a first class Indo-Aryan degree of the University of London obtained in 1932 and a Ph.D. conferred on him by the same University in 1936 for a thesis dealing with a comparative treatment of the morphology and syntax of Pali in relation to Vedic, Sanskrit and Prakrit, Wijesekera was successful in gaining a diploma of the London School of Oriental Studies specialising in Indian and Buddhist Philosophy and a Master of Arts degree for Classical and Philosophical Sanskrit also from London.<sup>91</sup> This academic background is reflected in the views he expressed at his Inaugural Address, delivered on 25th January 1951<sup>92</sup> at King George's Hall of the University of Ceylon then located in Colombo, regarding the methods of teaching and research which he believed should prevail in the Sanskrit Department of a modern University. Here he pointed out the advantages that the Sanskritist may derive by paying due attention to the comparative, critical and historical methods of modern scholarship in preference to the traditional and conventional methods of teaching and studying Sanskrit followed by the traditional scholars, the *Pundits* and the *Shastries*. Analyzing the motives of such scholarship in this address the theme of which was *Sanskrit in the University*, Wijesekera drew attention not only to the linguistic importance of Sanskrit which can be said to live in its derivatives, a host of dialects including Sinhalese, but also to its role as a culture-carrier and its importance in this respect for a study of the civilization permeating the life of nearly everyone in a large part of Asia including the Sinhalese and Tamils of Ceylon. Discussing the place of Sanskrit studies in the academic scheme of a modern University, Wijesekera described the richness and variety and the great cultural and aesthetic value of Sanskrit literature, a teaching of which must immeasurably add to the cultural content of any University education. Drawing attention to the scientific value of the ancient literary documents found in Sanskrit, he stressed the importance of its bearing on the problem of the concept of synthesis in University education and its professed ideal of humanism. Further he discussed the historical significance of the data afforded by the vast Sanskrit literature for a study of the science of language, comparative religion and mythology, pre-history and the history of civilizations and fable literature. He also focussed attention on the abundant literature

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<sup>90</sup> Tilakasiri, J. (1970) *op. cit.* p.xi; also *Annual Report* 1949 p.2.

<sup>91</sup> Tilakasiri, J. (1970) *op. cit.* p.xiii; Ceylon. *Administration Reports* 1938 part IV B 5

<sup>92</sup> Printed in the *University of Ceylon Review* IX/2 April 1951 pp. 81-97

available in Sanskrit on a variety of subjects like politics and economics, law and medicine, grammar, astronomy and mathematics, music, dancing, dramatic art, poetics, architecture, sculpture and philosophy. Finally, Wijesekera emphasised what he thought should be regarded as another valid motive for the development of Sanskrit studies in the University, namely the fact that the enlightenment that must result from such an academic pursuit will be of immense help to the two majority communities of the island in understanding each other.

Wijesekera's activities as a teacher, researcher and a University administrator won for him the admiration of his pupils and colleagues who felicitated him with a volume of papers on Indology and Buddhism on his sixtieth birthday.<sup>93</sup> The special focus of this volume is on his scholarly pursuits. However, the bibliography of his published writings both in Sinhala and English covering the years 1930-70 included in the volume reflects his interest in music and drama. Four plays in Sinhala written and produced by Wijesekera are listed in this volume.<sup>94</sup> One of these, *Kamala* or *Ralahamy's Ambition*, a two-act play, was written and staged by him for the Sinhalese Society when he was an undergraduate at the University College.<sup>95</sup> The Secretary of this Society described it as a maiden attempt which was a success while Robert Marrs, the Principal of the College, noted the significance of the play, referring to it "as a comedy of modern Sinhalese life."<sup>96</sup> A three act play called *Navalamka* which Wijesekera wrote in collaboration with Dr. Nandadeva Wijesekera was published in 1941 under the pseudonym Candradeva coined by combining the first two names of the writers Hemacandra and Nandadeva.<sup>97</sup> Hemacandra was a name adopted by Wijesekera later, his first names as they appear in the early University reports being Oliver Hector De Alwis.<sup>98</sup> Writing on the 81st birth anniversary of Wijesekera, Dr. Ranjan Abeyesinghe gives more information about Wijesekera's first play and lists the names of others, while

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<sup>93</sup> Tilakasiri, J. (1970) *op. cit*

<sup>94</sup> *ibid* p. xv

<sup>95</sup> *University Collage Magazine* VII/2 1932 p.33

<sup>96</sup> *Ceylon. Administration Reports* 1931 Part IV B 12

<sup>97</sup> Tilakasiri, J. (1970) *op. cit.* p. xviii

<sup>98</sup> e.g. *Prospectus* 1935-36 p.54

he deals at greater length with his interest in North Indian classical music.<sup>99</sup>

A society formed to commemorate Professor Wijesekera arranges memorial lectures in his honour. The inaugural lecture in this series was delivered by Professor Emeritus Jayadeva Tilakasiri on September 21, 1990 at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute in Colombo. The theme of his lecture was: *Religion, Language and Politics in the Development of Higher Education in Sri Lanka (1940 - 1990)*. The second lecture delivered at the same venue on September 06, 1991 was by Venerable Professor Dhammavihari, formerly Jotiya Dhirasekera, on the theme: *The Quest for Truth*. Printed copies of the lectures were distributed on the days they were delivered. The third lecture in the series delivered by Professor L.P.N.Perera on September 08, 1992 was on the theme "Philosophical Inputs towards Universalism - The Buddhist Contribution". The Wijesekera commemoration committee has also initiated the publication of two collections of Wijesekera's articles found in different journals. The first of these comprising articles of academic importance, edited by Professor M.H.F.Jayasuriya, is being printed by Motilal Banarsidass Printers in Delhi. The second collection comprising writings of a popular nature is being prepared for publication by Professor L.P.N.Perera while the Post-graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies of the University of Kelaniya plans to publish Professor Wijesekera's doctoral dissertation.<sup>100</sup>

Another outstanding scholar of the University in its early days was D.E.Hettiaratchi who succeeded Ratnasuriya as Professor of Sinhalese in 1951 and was the Head of the Department for nearly seventeen years until he left the University to become the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sri Jayawardhanapura, then known as Vidyodaya.<sup>101</sup> Hettiaratchi entered the University College in 1928 with an Exhibition in Arts, read Indo-Aryan Languages for his degree and graduated in 1931.<sup>102</sup> In 1930 he distinguished himself by winning the Governor's Prize, a prize of hundred rupees awarded annually by His Excellency the Governor, President of the College, for the best

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<sup>99</sup> Article entitled 'O.H.de.A.Wijesekera' in the Sri Lankan daily newspaper *Island* of Thursday 6th September 1990.

<sup>100</sup> Personal communication from Mrs. Mabel Wijesekera, the widow of Professor Wijesekera by letter dated 13.3. 92

<sup>101</sup> *Annual Report* 1951 p.4 *Annual Report* 1968-69 p.103

<sup>102</sup> *Prospectus*. 1934-35 pp.12.51

original verse composition in Sanskrit or Pali on a set subject in a given metre or metres.<sup>103</sup> Not too long after his graduation, Hettiaratchi went to Calcutta and followed a post-graduate course in Sanskrit and Prakrit. This training made him eminently suited to pursue Sinhala Philological Studies.<sup>104</sup> On his return from Calcutta, Hettiaratchi was appointed an Assistant Editor of the Sinhalese Dictionary under the editorship of Julius de Lanerolle. Before going abroad Hettiaratchi had worked in the same capacity for a short period under Sir D.B.Jayatilaka. While making an invaluable contribution to the compilation of the dictionary, Hettiaratchi made use of his time to read the Sinhalese classics and to enrich his knowledge, which made him eminently suited once again to hold a position as a teacher in the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Ceylon at its inception in 1942, where he taught both Sanskrit and Sinhalese.<sup>105</sup> At the University, Hettiaratchi proved to be an excellent teacher, a prolific researcher and a fair-minded administrator. The editors of the Hettiaratchi felicitation volume published in 1983 describe him as a philologist and a language specialist firstly in Sinhala, Pali, Prakrit and Sanskrit and secondly in the Dutch, Portuguese and English Languages which exercised an immense influence on the Sinhala language; as a linguist well-versed in dictionary and encyclopaedial editorial work and an heir to a rich tradition of classical scholarship, which he endeavoured to foster.<sup>106</sup> In this felicitation volume, Ananda Kulasuriya assesses Hettiaratchi's contribution as a teacher, writer, professor and vice-chancellor,<sup>107</sup> while P.B.Meegaskumbura discusses Hettiaratchi's expertise as an editor of exegetical texts and a lexicographer<sup>108</sup> and J.B.Disanayaka evaluates Hettiaratchi's lasting contribution to linguistic studies, focussing attention on his role in bridging the

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<sup>103</sup> *Prospectus* 1931-32 p.17

<sup>104</sup> Mutukumara, Nemsiri (1981)*op. cit.* p.17.

<sup>105</sup> *Samskriti* (1983\_) Cultural Quarterly, vol.. 17 No.4 edited by S.G.Samarasinghe, Amaradasa Gunawardana, Harold Peiris. Colombo. Paginated twice.pp.1-135 Sinhala section;pp.1-104 English. p.66 (English section).

<sup>106</sup> *ibid* Editorial Notes p.2 (English Section)

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.* pp. 13-22 in Sinhala; Resume in English pp. 65-69. Reprinted in the Daily News Nov.21, 1985.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.* pp. 31-41 in Sinhala; Resume in English pp. 73-76



gap between philological studies and modern linguistics.<sup>109</sup> Hettiaratchi's initials stood for Don Elaris in the early days.<sup>110</sup> This part of his name was later changed to Dayananda Ekanatha, which change Disanayaka states is almost symbolic of the historical role he was destined to play: his participation in the transformation of a colonial University into one that reflects the hopes and aspirations of a resurgent independent nation.<sup>111</sup> A bibliography of the published writings of Hettiaratchi covering the years 1933 - 1981 is included in this felicitation volume.<sup>112</sup> Tissa Kariyawasam who prepared this bibliography states that most of the titles had been collected by H.A.I. Goonetilleke. Kariyawasam also refers to a bibliography presented to Hettiaratchi by Jayampati Algama, at a reception, which however, was in the state of preparation and therefore incomplete.<sup>113</sup> A public meeting organized under the auspices of the Sinhalese Writers Association on 9th February 1982 to pay tribute to Hettiaratchi's contribution to society and culture in general and to Sinhalese language and literature in particular is referred to by Kulasuriya.<sup>114</sup>

In 1983, the Senate of the University of Peradeniya recommended the award of an Emeritus Professorship to Hettiaratchi in recognition of his eminence.<sup>115</sup> More recently, on 3rd December 1990, a photograph of Hettiaratchi was unveiled in the Senior Common room of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya and the Lecture Theatre formerly known as the Arts Theatre or room A was renamed as the D.E. Hettiaratchi Memorial Auditorium.<sup>116</sup> A special issue of the *Sri Lanka Journal of*

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.* pp. 115-126 in Sinhala; Resume in English pp. 91-96.

<sup>110</sup> *Prospectus*. 1934-35 p.51

<sup>111</sup> *Sanskriti* (1983) op.cit. p.91 (English Section)

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.* pp. 97-104 in the English section.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.* p. 97.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* p.65 (English Section)

<sup>115</sup> *Annual Report* 1983 p.10.

<sup>116</sup> *D.E. Hettiaratchi anusmarana sravanagaraya*; Annual Report 1990. p.14