

GREEKA HA ROMA LEKHENA: A TRANSLATION INTO SINHALA OF SELECTED PASSAGES FROM GREEK AND ROMAN AUTHORS

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The intention with which this work was undertaken is to give the Sinhala reader, ignorant of English, not to mention Greek and Latin, some idea of the diversity and quality of the classical literatures of Greece and Rome. These excerpts are not overlong, taking 10 to 15 minutes each for reading and spread over a period of seven centuries - from 5th century BC to the 2nd century AD.

Among the authors selected for this presentation are historians, pleaders, dramatists, philosophers and sages. Among the subjects they deal with are accounts of travels, treatises on health, character studies, myths, fantastic happenings and legal disputes involving adultery, murder and assault and battery. Notable among these are Herodotus' descriptions of the pyramids and the practice of mummification, Thucydides on the plague of Athens, the Hippocratic oath, three character studies of Theophrastus and Pliny's accounts of ghosts and the eruption of the Vesuvius in which his uncle, the elder Pliny died, Aristophanes on the nature of Love, Tacitus on the murder of Agrippina and Suetonius on the murder of Julius Caesar.

The translations were done from the original Greek and Latin of the authors by me into English (then published with assistance from a research grant from this University) and hereafter, now, into Sinhala by me with assistance from D.R.Ponnampereuma. The Sinhala translations also keep very close to the original Greek and Latin and may be cited without apprehension by those who resort to them. Difficulties encountered in the main were with the rendering of proper names, of many of which nobody can be sure of the original pronunciation.

This work is a good display of the facility of translating classical works into the Sinhala language. It also is an enticement to the Sri Lankan readership to undertake more and more reading in Classical works for the wide range of literature and information of the ancient world which they hold out to both scholars and the lay readership.

The author hopes to bring out other and similar works from the Classics from time to time and thank the University of Peradeniya for the help he has received by way of generous research grants for this and earlier projects which have resulted in the dissemination of knowledge, so valuable a function of an University such as ours.