

This is a reply to the long article "MAKING SENSE" "MORE OUT THAN IN" on page 4 of your July Edition, by Mr Shaymon Jayasinghe. (Mr J.)

Mr J. points out many faults in the book "A JOURNEY OF SRI LANKANS IN VICTORIA" published by the Sinhala Cultural and Community Services Foundation." which was launched this year.

It had an Editorial Board representing Sinhalese, Tamils, Burghers and Muslims I am writing this reply to the "long review that Mr J has written about the book"

Error 1. He says "the purpose of the Book has not been spelt out anywhere".

Three distinguished contributors to the book have spelt out the purpose of the Book. The Governor of Victoria, Dr David De Kretser wrote, "This book traces the diverse experiences of Sri Lankans who have migrated to Victoria. It provides documentation through biological sketches of approximately 150 families. While there are many professionals who made significant contributions, this book traces the history of people of all walks of life, including those who are living and dead..... The editorial Board has included families from all ethnic groups...."

Premier Steve Bracks writes, "The book celebrates not only the diverse experiences of Sri Lankan Burghers, Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims in their journeys to Australia but also the wealth of culture and traditions which they bring.....Compiling the hundreds of stories in this publication by the dedicated members of the Sinhala Cultural and Community Services Foundation has taken an immense time and effort"

Mr George Lekakis the Chairman of the Victorian Multicultural Commission wrote, "It is my great pleasure to congratulate the Sinhala Cultural and Community Services Foundation for producing this historical profile of the many migrants who came from Sri Lanka to Victoria since the 19th Century....."

My Commission is particularly pleased to have been able to provide support for the publication of this book After several years of extensive and no doubt exhausting research and the participation of the entire spectrum of Victoria's Sri Lankan community, including Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers, it is personally gratifying to see this valuable community project reach fruition..... Our future is determined by our past and present actions and experiences; learning from and respecting the past such as through this compilation of stories, will help to build a better future for Victoria"

Obviously these distinguished and intellectual personalities understood the purpose of the book and appreciated the value of the contributions recorded with a lot of effort by the Editorial Board, though sadly Mr J. has not understood it. It is up to Mr J to get his IQ corrected to improve his understanding of the contributions made by about 200 families.

Error 2: Mr J says "this book should have covered an adequate number of Sri Lankans in Victoria.....". What is his definition of adequate.? According to his estimate there are 50,000 Sri Lankans domiciled in Victoria. By adequate did he expect 50,000 or 10,000 or even 500 stories, which would have produced a massive book, where we would have had to restrict each family to 3 or 4 lines!

But he is already whinging that some had only 3 or 4 lines printed about them. That is not my fault. If someone wants to write only two lines, who am I to insist that they write more. The Governor states "this book traces the history of people of all walks of life, including those who are living and the dead."

Premier Bracks says "Compiling the hundreds of stories in this publication by the dedicated members of the Sinhala Cultural Foundation, has taken immense time and effort."

What is wrong with Mr J, that only he cannot understand the situation?.

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have sent us their stories, which we have very thankfully printed.

He says we have omitted articles by Mr Tissa Amarasekera and Mr Vajira and Mrs Sonia Fernando. That is an untruth. Please look on pages 13 and 47 for these articles.

He says there are 160 Associations in the community but "only 15 are named." Please Mr J can you not understand that we were not expected to go to each and every Association or family, and beg for their articles? We had to print only what was sent to us. Besides, if an Association like SCATS can write about their Association, which shows they knew about the book, why did their members not write about themselves?

MR J is really talking absolute nonsense. He says "so many are the names of well-known community leaders.... who have been omitted". If someone does not write about themselves does it mean that we have omitted that person's article, which had not been sent to us! That is strange!! Something is really, really wrong with anyone who makes such stupid comments... How did he expect us to get the information about these people, which he says we have omitted, if they did not

in Victoria, starting Dancing classes for our children, besides doing Community work, and being involved in many, many charities for our country etc. He also says that some people have been given only 3 or 4 lines!

I just cannot believe anyone can make such foolish comments! What does he expect us to do if someone sends only 1 or 2 lines? Can our Committee force anyone to write more, if they did not want to, or did Mr J expect us to add something to those articles?.. What is really, really wrong with this, Mr J's, thinking?

Error 6. Mr J cites the example of our Sri Lankan MP Jude Perera, who has a record of being the only Sri Lankan to sit in the lower house of any Australian Parliament. We are thankful to Mr Perera for showing his community spirit and showing solidarity with other Sri Lankan contributors, and sending us details about himself and his family.

But Mr J. thinks we should have done better and blames us for not giving him the guidelines to reveal his journey in the Labour Party.

As stated earlier we left it to each individual to narrate their Victorian experiences the way they liked it, and not on our guide lines, and we produced what they sent.. We do not criticise Mr Jayasingha for not sending in his and his wife's stories, although he admits hearing about it on the Radio etc, and not bothering to send in his or his wife's details to us. He says he heard it on one Radio. But it was given over several programmes- morning and evening and on English program 3SER. But Mr J did what he wanted. Probably he did not want to take a bigger part in this Community project, and we have no qualms about it. Most probably though he heard about it on the Radio, he was waiting without sending articles about himself and his wife, till the book came out, so that he could find fault with me and the book! .

Error 7 Mr J. has omitted the name of Ryle Moldrich who was on the Editorial Board.. Mr J has put on a cap to show what a fashionable young man he is, but it looks as if he has lost his vision and also his mind. Ryle's name was in the list of our Editorial Board, and his photograph, large as life, occupies one half page of the photo pages.

With this list of errors given in this article, I leave it to readers to judge why Mr. Jayasinghe could not make sense of this book, which is appreciated and commended by some distinguished, and best intellectuals of Victoria. Perhaps the remedy is for him to change the cap he is wearing for photos, and put on a thinking cap before he launches into his next unfounded and unsubstantiated personal vendettas..

I may send these comments and this Newspaper article, where Mr J writes "there is something wrong about the way the VMC gets about its work" so that the VMC will take note of what Mr Jayasinghe has written.

Dr Olga Mendis

A JOURNEY OF SRI LANKANS IN VICTORIA

A Reply to Shyamon Jayasinghe

Error 3. Mr J. says "This book contains only 200 families, and the selection has been dictated by arbitrary considerations". Mr J opens himself up for legal action, when he makes such false accusations in public. He also deliberately makes another false accusation that I contacted "a few people of (my) liking to come forward and list themselves." This personal attack on me is slander, and he can be sued for it, because it is malicious and untrue.

The Editorial Board took extreme care not to be charged with such accusations of arbitrary selection...All Sri Lankans were invited to write their own stories in their own words because any errors would cast a slur on the Editorial Board. It was an open invitation to people, through several Radio programs, Advertisements in the Sinhala and Tamil papers, and notices distributed at various functions, for about three years..

Where is the arbitrariness which Mr J talks of? The fact that so many Associations sent details of their Association, shows that many many people were aware of what we were doing. They wrote about their Associations such as A.C.F; Australia Sri Lanka Council, Ceylon Society of Australia, Eighty Club, Sri Lanka German Technical Training Institute O.B A, Buddhist Temples, Sri Lanka Study Centre for the Development of Advanced Technology and Social Welfare.(SCATS), The Committee for Sri Lanka etc. But many of their Committee members such as of SCATS, like Mr Gamini Perera, Dr Senaka Perera, and Mallini Jayasinghe (wife of Mr J) whom Mr J says we have omitted, did not care to write about themselves, though they wrote about their Association.. Who is to blame for that? Certainly not the Editorial Board nor the Cultural Foundation which as Mr Bracks points out "has taken immense time and effort." to get the information. Did Mr J. expect me to come to his house and ask his wife for details about herself?

Error 4: Mr J says, "Omissions in the book are staggeringly vast." But it was not our responsibility to talk to individuals, like the Consul or members of the various Associations who sent in their articles about their own Associations, but did not want to write about themselves. There are many people whom I have not heard of, nor met, nor seen, who

care to send it to us?

Error 5. Mr J. says "there is no uniformity in the space allocated for the different stories" Does he know what he is talking about? How can different stories of different people be "uniform" His objective seems to be to attack me, by criticising me for writing about my family. I wrote what I thought I should put in this book, which is true, and is going to be read by future generations. Those who read the book will find that there are some like His Excellency Justice C.G Weeramanj who's article runs into several pages, but we are very, very thankful to him for giving our people an insight into his distinguished career.

I am not surprised that Mr J should attack me. He has an attitude problem with the Sinhala Cultural Foundation which has a very proud record of servicing the Victorian Community at all levels from the young to the old. For 21 years, starting in Jan.1988 the first Buddhism classes and first Sinhala classes for our children and in 1991 the first Senior Citizens Centre, for our elderly, starting the first Sinhala Radio Program and first Sinhala TV program

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