

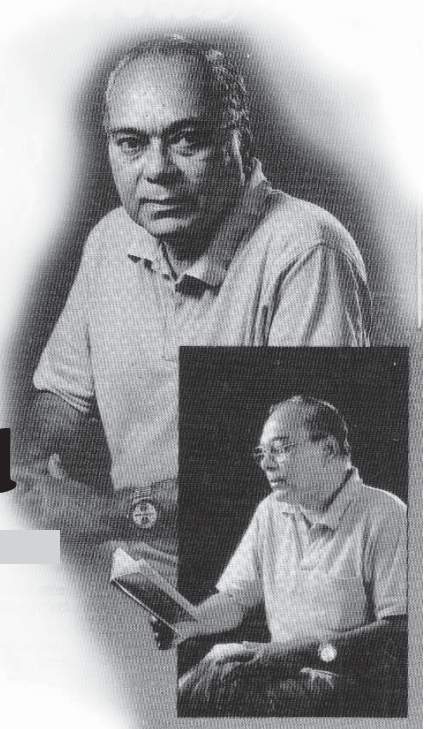
By - Sunil Thenabadu

11th November 2010 marks the first death anniversary of legendary Dramatist, renowned Actor, lyricist, Translator and Author Henry Jayasena. Late Henry Jayasena was a firm believer of Shakespear's memorable phrase "All that live must die/passing through nature to eternity". Decease had already taken its toll on him. He was actually aware that as we learnt in school, "To every man upon the earth/death cometh soon or late". He initially stood tall on the modest unsophisticated Lumbini Theatre in the early 1960's. He had confessed many times as a much adored artiste that his heart lies in theatre. Henry Jayasena could be easily and definitely classified as one, alongside amongst the elite of eminent literary figures in the

leading a normal life during which time he revived his famous drama 'Hunuwataye Kathawa' an adoption of Bertolt Brecht's 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' by deploying experienced and talented new actors along with a few who were involved earlier in the likes of Nimal Jayasinghe and Chula Kariyawasm. The role of judge 'Azdak's superbly portrayed by Nalin Pradeep Uduwela while that of 'Grusha' by Ruwini Manamperi.

Henry Jayasena was born on 6th July 1931 in a village called Bendiyamulla in Gampaha. He was the youngest in a family of six children, four elder brothers and a solitary sister. His father was Albert Rodrigo Jayasena who was once the private secretary to Sir Solamon Dias Bandaranaike, was a well versed person. He grew up in the rural hamlet of Bendiyamulla, was ini-

initially ventured into stage acting by producing the drama 'Janaki' in the same year while he was a teacher. As he wanted to pursue a career in the Government service, he got through the General Clerical Service Examination and secured a job at the Public Works Department (PWD). While working in the PWD with his immense innate creative ability he was able to produce a number of new plays The first of which was 'Manamalayo' in the year 1953, then 'Vedagathkama' in 1954 and 'Paukarayo' in 1959.



# Henry - The Legend

Henry Jayasena remembered on his first death anniversary

annals of theatre in Sri Lanka, like Professor Ediriweera Sarathchandra, Sugathapala De Silva, Dayananda Gunawardena, Premasiri Khemadasa etc.

His numerous contributions to the theatre and cinema spanned for almost 4 decades. He retired from his acting career in the year 1999 while he was under treatment for the acquired dreaded colon cancer. The entire treatment process took around one and a half years. On his personal experience and suffering he had written in detail a book titled "Balha Gilano - the story of a cancer patient" purely to educate the masses.

However he lived for a further 10 years

tially educated at the Gampaha branch of Lorenz College exposing him to both catholic and Buddhist cultures taking an active part in both church and temple activities, subsequently at Nalanda College, Colombo. It was late Dr Gunapala Malalasekera an eminent Civil Servant who first predicted a great future for him in the field of acting after the famous educationalist observed the talents of little Henry Jayasena while acting in a school concert at Nalanda College.

Since leaving school he opted for a career as an Assistant Teacher of English at the Dehiye Government Primary School in Padiyapellela in the Nuwara Eliya District in the year 1950 at the tender age of 19. He

Then the vastly improved Dramatist created 'Janelaya' and the famous 'Kuweni' in 1962. Subsequently he produced 'Thavath Udesanak', 'Manaranjana Wedawarjana', 'Ahas Maliga', 'Hunuwataye Kathawa', 'Apata Putha Magak Nethe', 'Diriya Mava Saha Ege Daruwo', 'Makara', (The Dragon) 'Sarana Siyath Se Puthuni Habha Yana' in the years 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1972, 1973, 1975 respectively. With these creations Henry Jayasena became a household name in Sri Lanka owing to the massive revolution he made in the field of creative arts.

As a gesture of appreciation for his contribution towards literature, theatre and music, Henry Jayasena was honoured by the OBA of his 'Alma Mater Nalanda College' by conferring on him the title of 'Nalanda Keerthi Shri' on 27th September 2003 which was given for the first time was a timely gesture towards honouring one of Sri Lanka's prod-

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