

It has long been the practice to look for or aim to belong, to the 'Rich and the Famous' in the world. This tendency or the supreme objective now has apparently been replaced by a more honorable and pious aim in one's life.

Those familiar with the writing of once respected Sri Lankan journalist and author D. R. Jayawardana would still be thinking of him and his wonderful social commentary published in the fifties under the title 'Samaja Sandarshanaya', a collection of essays on a number of current topics of the time. I would like to render that title into English as 'Social Spectacle' or at least as 'Reflections on Society'.

I am a proud owner of a copy of this rare document. I do now and then take it out and relive the memories of that age which was the time I spent as an undergraduate. One essay in particular is becoming more and more valid and relevant in the modern context of our motherland. This becomes a very relaxing and hilarious exercise if one has the patience to compare and contrast what happened then and what happens right now. If one

wants to entertain oneself, one must necessarily guard against being emotionally involved or carried away by what one notices. This social analysis comprises a contrast between two Colombo suburbs

brings the two extremes together in a rather funny operation.

It offers the reader an authentic description of people suddenly graduating to the level of becoming citizens of the exclusive suburb of Cinnamon Gardens by the dint of hard work and accumulated wealth. While becoming part of the rich inhabitants of Cinnamon Gardens they find that they lack something essential to be truly one of this exclusive club, i. e. an acceptable social standing of belonging to one of the respected clans of the land. They have once again to turn to the poor suburb they abandoned, not for settling down, but for expert advice and assistance. It is in this poor suburb that the scholars who once upon a time wore yellow robes and gained the knowledge now valued by the new rich of Cinnamon Gardens. It is these scholars who can furnish whatever documents or references required by these men and women in order to gain admission to the very exclusive club of the famous of their new suburb. These men who have mastered the Languages of Sanskrit and Pali in addition to Sinhala, would either discover or invent the required document or even a stone inscription if that is what proves the very valid and vital connection that the said party or the family has apparently had with the nobility of a bygone age.

How on earth do they do it? Would be the question uninitiated novice comes up with. They forget one important fact, i. e. that con-

ters are rare nowadays and one cannot get away with that type of silly jokes.

The kings and rulers of ancient times had a different type of employees around their courts specially entrusted with the job of pleasing the boss particularly before he begins his day's routine of attending to complaints and requests made by his subjects. The idea was to enable him to start the day in a good mood, or in other words, for the purpose of getting making his day a healthy and fruitful one for everyone. However, persons assigned this responsibility gradually turned out to be self-seeking individuals eager to fatten their purses at the expense of the boss. The best way to achieve this was to try and make the boss feel that he is a super being with super qualities, able to do anything he wants. That was how the earlier court jester of the caliber of legendary Andare was replaced by a generation of royal minstrels or



bards who did their best to invent all the epithets imaginable to describe the boss. Thus the king of the tiny island of Sri Lanka was painted as the ruler of the whole universe. This is what the royal minstrel of the Kandyan Court did in singing the verses that have come down to us as Prasasthi Gayana.



RICH AND FAMOUS AND THE SACRED? Twists and Turns of a Reputed Artis

representing the two extremes of society of the Sri Lankan capital, i. e. Kurunduwatta or Cinnamon Gardens and the suburb of the down-trodden Panchikawata. In a way it differs from the normal comparison of suburbs, for our writer goes for something special that

nections with ancient nobility would very often be recorded in a scroll or an ola leaf book for the information of future generations. Our respected scholars assisting the new rich are equipped with this knowledge as well as the technique to produce evidence such a document at the drop of a hat. One question remains though. It costs money, and the amounts are staggering. Our new rich aspirants for nobility are also equipped with resources to meet that demand.

In the curt of the king of Kandy apart from the usual wandinbhattayas, or the eulogists, there had been an interesting character called the court jester, who enjoyed the unusual luxury of being allowed to make fun of the king and even of the queen. This character has gone down in history by his name, i.e. Andare the Court Jester. He was another of the paid servants of His Majesty just like the bards. However, those singing the praise of the king always were the favored lot.

These royal bards and their songs are now consigned to forgotten history. However, there are a much more clever and erudite band of bards making their appearance now and then. They are not going to reveal their hand in conducting their play of words or in their eulogies either. It is left to the listener or the reader to make out the message and interpret the words to get the desired effect. More important is the fact that these bards are not doing this for money or as part of their assigned duty, but is done on their own volition with no apparent ulterior motive. In other words they are after bigger gains both financial and prestigious.

It is in this context that one of Sri Lanka's most talented and versatile artists, actor, filmmaker, TV presenter, writer, singer and historian, made his mark at a historical occasion. Occasion was the finals of Ranaviru Super Star competition at which the awards were made to the winners. Present on the occasion were the most privileged of the land, i.e. His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapakse. That apparently prompted the great artist to make his erudition known to the President as well as to the rest of the population.

He was offered the most advantageous position to operate from by the appearance of ten warriors representing the Ten Famous Giants of the Great King Dutugemunu carrying a message from the King to the current ruler of the country, i.e. the President. That was the inauguration of the event. Our artist was given the first oration describing the significance of it.

That is how a golden scroll or some hidden document appears al of a sudden taking the citizens of Cinnamon Gardens by surprise. However rich and powerful they are, they can raise an objection to the new discovery or the invention. The newly promoted super citizens cannot be more pleased, and would invariably part with a much larger amount that originally agreed.

That completes the operation of bringing into life a new creature well and truly belonging to Cinnamon Gardens.

No one will think of the person responsible for this transformation or the metamorphosis ever after that. Nor does that person want to share the lime light with his creation.

It is quite a different story when it comes to the discovery of a much more elevated and utterly rare connection with the holy and the sacred. One who makes the discovery and gets sufficient courage to make the announcement, on the other hand, will not bat an eye lid before coming out with at a moment when the desired individual is around to enjoy the glory and the sanctity of the noble connection. It is not merely a case of tasting the flavor and feeling elated for the newly anointed noble. He would waste no time in rewarding the wise and dignified.

It was with such intentions that the proverbial Emperor's Clothes came into being. The ministers or the followers of this foolish Emperor found it easy to gain favors and profit by the simplest of tricks played on their boss. It was an innocent boy that spoiled their chances by speaking out, just telling the truth as he saw. Such emperors and minis-

GATEWAY LAWYERS

- ▶ Advice on Legal Matters
- ▶ Business & Commercial Law
- ▶ Sale of Business
- ▶ Conveyancing
- ▶ Powers of Attorney
- ▶ Wills & Estate Planning
- ▶ Migration Law

Senanie Kurukularatne LL.B Barrister & Solicitor

Attorney-at-Law Sri Lanka
Registered Migration Agent
MARN 0854193



T 03 8786 9682
F 03 8786 9681
M 0414 660 513

gateway5@bigpond.net.au
DX 30463 Berwick VIC 3806
PO Box 730 Berwick VIC 3806

17 Glenview Rise Berwick VIC 3806 Australia