*-The year 2020 began as a metaphoric drought where many a source of entertainment and togetherness ran dry in the face of the global pandemic. Megha is a hailstorm of creativity, powerful expression and diverse talent that enables us to enter the post-pandemic era with optimism and confidence. In short, Megha is the aesthetic rain that rejuvenates the mindset of the community.
In a context where everyone was forced into solitude, the sentiments in these literary works became strong yet invisible links that connect disparate emotions, experiences and lived realities of individuals. When compiled together, this book gives visibility to a myriad of experience and
helps to bridge the gaps in communication and interaction imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic. It also reflects a time when each writer could focus on finding an outlet for his/her creativity. As it is a collection of creative writings in Sinhala, Tamil and English by KDU staff and students, Megha invites a wider readership and stands a symbol of a 2. timely and fruitful initiative by the Department of

## Creative Writing Project

 by
# General Sir John Kotelawala Defence 

 University - 2020Expressions of Creative Imagination during COVID-19 Pandemic

## MEGHA

(In)visible lines of creativity in trilingual expression

> General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University Kandawala Road
> Ratmalana 10390
> Sri Lanka
> www.kdu.ac.lk

This book contains creative writings of poetry, short stories, essays and plays by KDU students and staff during the nationwide lockdown in 2020. Responsibility of authenticity is borne by respective authors. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, without prior permission of General Sir John Kotelalwala Defence University, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka.

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## PANEL HEADS AND MEMBERS

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## MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR - GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

It is with great pleasure that I write this congratulatory message to the KDU publication, Megha: (In)visible lines of creativity in trilingual expression, which is an outcome of a creative writing project launched by the Department of Languages of the Faculty of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities of KDU, during the time of the first attack of COVID-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka.

When the whole country was shocked by the Corona pandemic, which made its way to our land, most organizations and people withdrew themselves into a shell. Yet, we at KDU did our best in whatever possible way to assist the government, health authorities and security forces involved in encountering the pandemic by creating helpful products and tools, and by providing health services wherever possible to boost the stamina of those in the forefront fighting the pandemic, and both staff and students of several Faculties such as Engineering and Medicine were involved in those activities.

The creative writing entries in this book written in trilingual media speak of the importance of the silent effort made by the Department of Languages. The effort has been significant in several ways: First, it has provided a path for our students and staff to divert their minds from negative thoughts of hopelessness through a different engagement, secondly it has given them an opportunity to discover their hidden talents in creative writing, and thirdly it has made a contribution to the field of literature with imaginative pieces of writing that discuss and portray human problems with new insights.

So, I make this an opportunity to appreciate the effort of every student and staff member who submitted entries for the competition representing all Faculties of KDU, and I congratulate those who won places in the competition as well as those whose entries have been shortlisted for this publication.

Finally, let me appreciate the effort made by the Dean of the Faculty, Head of the Department of Languages, the Editors and all others who have helped this effort in different ways. I wish that this initiative would continue as an annual event so that there would be similar publications annually.

## MILINDA PEIRIS RWP RSP VSV USP ndc psc MPhil (Ind)

Major General
Vice Chancellor

## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL SCIENCES \& HUMANITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a paradigm-shift in the $21^{\text {st }}$ century. It has irrevocably shaken the public psyche all over the world, and has challenged the world order in a decisive manner, compelling people and nations to rethink their way forward in all aspects of life. The first attack of the pandemic on Sri Lanka in March 2020 came as a shock that instigated us to live in fear under the overarching gloom caused by an unseen enemy.

In this backdrop, the idea of a creative writing competition at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) crossed my mind when reflecting on what we could do while being in virtual prisons. Having been poised by the encouraging approval of the Vice Chancellor and assisted by the staff of the Department of Languages, we launched the project in April 2020 by making an open request from all KDU students and staff to submit poems, essays, short stories and play scripts in any of the three languages. The result was very positive and we received 52 poetry entries, 14 short stories, 16 essays and 02 play scripts adding up to 84 entries altogether.

Megha is the outcome of the project, and it contains the winning and shortlisted entries. In hindsight, we are humbly proud of being able to create an environment to awaken the latent talents of our students and staff of all Faculties, and we sincerely believe that this publication would be an impetus for furtherance of their literary creativity through which they will make a positive contribution to humanity.

Finally, I consider it my duty to express my gratitude to the Vice Chancellor of KDU, Major General Milinda Peiris for his prompt approval for this project and for constant encouragement given at all times. I thank Dr. Namali Sirisoma for her assistance during her Deanship and all staff of the Department of Languages headed by Ms. Nalinika Rajapakse for their contributions. I appreciate the panel of
judges and the editorial board for all the hard work, especially Ms. Krishanthi Anandawansa for her continuous dedication and hard work throughout the project to culminate with this publication, to Ms. Lakshani Willarachchi for her creative contributions and to Mr. Champika Gunasekara for editing the Sinhalese entries.

Every dark cloud has a silver lining, and Megha is a positive outcome of the otherwise negative pandemic. Let Megha contribute, in its small way, to revive the literary canons of the pristine past submerged in the busy mechanical life patterns of the postmodern man.

## W.A.A. KITHSIRI AMARATUNGA

Dean- Faculty of Management, Social Sciences \& Humanities

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## POETRX

## 12 Years Apart



Mouth dry, head throbs
Stale breath-fogged visor,
A human onion of protective clothing
Cascade of sweat pooling at my feet
Slipping more than stepping, tripping more than walking
The scorching Colombo pavement pricking at my soles I catch myself in a car window, reflected like a warped fluorescent astronaut
My thermometer up, aimed at scared heads
Men, women, children
Which one is sick?
A memory stirs in my mind:
Heart pounds, head spins
Voices scream inside my head and out
The stinging rain needling into my torso while waist deep I stand, in mud, blood, salt and the sea deafened by gunfire, blinded by explosions; Mute incomprehension of the abundance of death

Fighting to tread light, struggling to stay afloat
The Nandhikadal lagoon clutches at my boots Is it rain? Is it sweat?
Or are they just my tears making my eyes blurry?
My gun cocked, aimed at scared faces:
Men, women, children
Which one's a terrorist and which one isn't?
M.I.A. Perera

D/MBBS/15B/0065
FOM

## Nature's Payback

Vast are the wonderful joys in our lives Lives spent collecting, like bees in a hive Nothing virtuous, but of power and gold Where are the riches, when these lives are gone?

Destroying nature, throughout the years
Mother earth left weeping cold tears
Oh! The mockery we have faced
For nature's payback was just in days.


No color, no race, no gender, no age An enemy without purpose, but is at rampage Only constant is change, from birth to death

The law of nature, leaving us all in vain.
Lustful attachments are biting the dust
Ones filled with love, enjoying the sun Customs and traditions which were led astray Are now being practiced to live another day.

The 'greatest' of nations being 'trumped' in dismay
By a foe so small, they overlooked instead
But one small nation surrounded by the sea Defeated all odds when the time came to be.

Guarded by the bravest, armed with their hearts
Treated by the selfless, against nature's darts Where the lives of others, mattered more than their own
'Tis the land of the lions, to their blood and bone.

## Colours of Change

If the world is a canvas, you and I, are the colours to it.
Our thoughts, actions and words, colours this bare stretch of white.


The world comes to a deafening standstill.
A swirl of murky greens, darkest blacks and the brightest of burning reds stare back at me from the canvas.

From the depth of the swirl, Mother Earth screams in pain.
Her air putrid with chemicals, her agonized oceans drowning in waste, her melting glaciers scream frantically, her trees, slain by humans, tumble helplessly.
This dark swirl - a burning song of fire and ice.
Blotched by the darkness of our cruelty, the burning amber of our impatience and the murkiest shades of our destructive thoughts.

Change is integral.
Change from murky greens to rejuvenating greens, change from the amber of impatience to violets of love and empathy. The swirl needs colours of change.

Our population has dwindled.
Our lives confined to our homes.
We now care more, look around more, appreciate and love more.
It is time to rethink, to rethink, The colours we must add to the world.





















ชดา

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Tharindu Athapaththu
D/IT/18/0059
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# Tharindu Athapaththu <br> D/IT/18/0059 

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T.A.U.D. Perera


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## The Piano Player

Fingers flew over the coloured keys,
Tunes flying, Mesmerising the audience. Calmness enveloped me,
As I watched the hands, Hypnotised,
In meditation, perhaps.
My mind strolled down the memory lane, Thoughts gushed,
Yet, very serenely.
This was the cure I needed today.
Beautiful tunes,
Penetrating my mind, Easing my heart
And calming my soul.

## கொரோனா



பெருஞ் சீன தேசத்தினாங்கே உலகப்புலமையில் பழமையான பெருமைசோ் வஹான் எனும் பெருமாநகாின் நுண்புலத்தில் கருவாகி உருவாகி உருமாறி தரணியதை இக்காலம் காலனாகி அழித்துவரும் கண்ணற்ற கொரோனா

மாா்தட்டி விரல் நீட்டி மற்றவரை அதட்டி உலகத்தில் யார் கிட்ட வந்தாலும் நான்பணிய மாட்டேனென்று சூழுரைத்து போாி்டு அடக்குவேன் என்ற டொனால்ட் ட்றம்பையும் இன்று ஊர்விட்டு அனுப்பியது இந்த உயி்்கொல்லி கொரோனா

ஊனின்றி உறக்கமின்றி தாம் உல்லாசமாக வாழ்வதற்கு நேரமின்றி உழைத்து நித்தம் தவங்கிடந்து பாரில் ஈரேழுபரம் பரைக்கும் உழைக்கவென திடமாக இருந்தவனை மீழாமல் முடக்கியது மிகக்கடிய கொரோனா

உனக்கொரு நோயென்றால் அனுமனைப்போல் பறந்து
அளப்பாிய சஞ்சீவியை அப்படியே தான் கொண்்ந்து உனக்கு தளப்பமிலா மருந்தளிப்பேன் என்றவனை இப்போ மறக்க வைத்த இக்கொடிய மனிதகொல்லி கொரோனா

காலையிலே யெழுந்து கதறியே வெளிக்கிட்டு எந்நாளும் பாட சாலைக்கு பறந்தடித்து பாங்குடன் சென்ற பிள்ளையை மூலையிலே முடங்க வைத்து மொக்களாக்கி பரம்பரைக்கு உலைவைக்க வந்து சேர்ந்த ஊதாாிக் கொரோனா

வருவிருந்து பா்த்திருந்து நாங்கள் வாழ்த்தி உணவுண்டு இரவுபகல் பாராமல் ஏற்றம்கு உறவு கொண்டு தேனியாய் ஒன்றாக வாழ்ந்த ஒற்றுமையான உறவுகளுக்கு இப்போ ஒரு மீட்டா் இடைவெளியை உவா்ந்தளித்த கொரோனா

ஆகாயத்தில் ஆராய்ச்சி அந்தரத்தில் தொங்கும் புலம் பாதாளத்தில் நகரம் இன்னும் பலபல கண்டுபிடிப்பு என்று சாலச் சிறந்த விஞ்ஞானம் இன்று தன்னிலாமையினால் வாழப் பழகிக்கொள் என்கிறதுகொரோனாவுடன்

## V. Alagaratnam Staff

## அவா்கள்

நான் என்னும் அகந்தை என்றும் நல்லவர் பக்கம் செல்லா
தேன் எனும் மொழியால், நேர்மை செயலினால் அன்னார் என்றும்

வான் உயர் புகழை எய்தி வாழ்ந்திடல் உண்மை, அன்பு தான்அவர் சொத்தாம்.மண்ணில் தனக்கென எதுவும் கொள்ளார்

> பிறவியை எடுத்த நோக்கம்
> பிறருக்கு உதவு தற்காய்
> உறவினர் பகைவர் என்று நெஞ்சினை எரித்தி டாது அறவழி நிற்கும் சான்றோர் அழிந்திடா தென்றும் வாழ்வர்

அன்னவர் எதிரில் நின்றால் அதுஒரு கணமென் றாலும் உண்மையின் ஒளியை காண்போம் உள்ளத்தில் அமைதி கொள்வோம் மண்ணிலோ அவர்களால் தான் மற்றவர் உயிர்வாழ் கின்றார் என்னதான் இருந்த போதும் இவர்களுக் கீடுண் டாமோ

பணமது படைத்த போதும்
பதவியில் உயர்ந்த போதும்
இனசனம் நிறைந்த போதும்
ஈடிலாப் புகழின் போதும்
குணமது மாறி டாது
குன்றென உயர்ந்து நிற்கும்

அணையாத விளக்காம் அந்த அன்புள்ளோர் என்றும் வாழ்க கோபமே அறியார். வாழ்வில்<br>கொடுமையின் நிழலே காணார் பாபமாம் செயல்கள் அன்னார் பக்கத்தில் வரவே அஞ்சும்<br>சாவது வந்த போதும்<br>சத்தியம் காப்போர் இந்தப்<br>புவினில் நிறைதல் வேண்டும்<br>புன்மைகள் அழிய வேண்டும

M. Bawatharani

D/LLB/20/0004

## அன்பு பொங்க வேண்டும்

அன்பு பொங்க வேண்டும்-இங்கே
அமைதி தங்க வேண்டும்
சுயநலம் மிரண்டு ஓட, தொல்லைகள் மறைந்து போக
பயம் அழிந்து மக்கள் எல்லாம் பண்புடன் இணைந்து வாழ அன்பு பொங்க வேண்டும்-இங்கே

அமைதி தங்க வேண்டும்
சாந்தி ஓங்க வேண்டும்-உயர்
தர்மம் என்றும் வேண்டும்
பட்டதெல்லாம் போதும் என்று பாதியாய் இளைத்துத்துன்பக்
கட்டினுள் ஒடுங்கி உள்ளோர் கவலைகள் மறைந்து போகச்
சாந்தி ஓங்க வேண்டும்-உயர்
தர்மம் என்றும் வேண்டும்
நீதி வாழ வேண்டும்-சத்ய
நெறி தழைக்க வேண்டும்
நான்எனது என்ற போக்கு நலிந்து வீழ, நன்மை செய்யும்
நாம்எமது என்ற எண்ணம் நாளும் நிலைத்து நிற்க
நீதி வாழ வேண் டும்-சத்ய
நெறி தழைக்க வேண்டும்
சோகம் ஓட வேண்டும்-மக்கள்
சுமைகள் மாற வேண்டும்.
துன்பம்என்ற வார்தை மாளத் துவண்டவர் எழுந்து நின்று
இன்பம் இன்பம் என்று சொல்லி இதயகீதம் பாட இங்கு
சோகம் ஓட வேண்டும்-
சுமைகள் மாற வேண்டும

# M. Bawatharani <br> D/LLB/20/0004 

FOL

# English shortlisted winners 

## The Carmelyzed Fornication

I, embrace the warmth of love Amidst a bright night with no moon Hearken to the song of smiley rain drops Through the fumes of my blunt
The drizzling rain droplets
Blushing with lustrous emotions
Canoodle the tree tops and Enfold the earth
Insane flora intones love symphonies
For the baby blossoms,
Conceived with affection
To the love epistle of rain
Me, yearned for love
Through the isolated quarantine Now kissing the lustrous nature Biting the lips of rain
The endless intense climax under
Warm exhaust and cold breeze Whispers slowly, It's the Immortal endearment

## I am a Maze Runner

> A universal contest! Millions of competitors from thousands of nations from hundreds of countries are in the game. From the womb to the tomb all are running seeking the way out.
> The Maze is grey dark and shabby; hard to find a light...
> Around the clock
> The Maze changes. You have to find a new way. Multiples of different directions
> Diversity of selecting patterns Plenty of cycles Varieties of choices
> Mistakes to the Square of Infinity come along the way.
> Sense the smell of your destiny I have chosen my way.
> But still, I AM A MAZE RUNNER...
> seeking the way out.
H. E. Hansamali

## In The Core of Your Heart $\mathbb{O}$

> I did know from the beginning that I would make the ending The saddest thing about my regret is I can't forgive and you can't forget You helped me to stitch back my heart Showed me the way for a brand new start Never did you want to see me cry But I never kept your eyes dry You brought me all the brightness and filled my life with happiness In return I gave you endless pain and you lost your hopes in vain  Breaking your heart into tiniest pieces I robbed you of your smile and happiness though the scars I made will last forever I know you wanted me to leave you never

> I had solid reason to leave, I believe which you didn't want to believe
> But I know in the core of your heart I still own one small part.........

## A Petition

An enemy
Invisible......
An attacker
Powerful......
Where do the battalions hide?
Why did the massacring weapons malfunction? Why are the boasting World Powers so silent?

The enemy
brutally unleashed on the earth
not blood nor wounded soldier
But
thousands of cadavers.....
without a prior death warning......
No matter who....
of whom......
No allied powers
against him......
Neither NGO nor any Human Rights Committee.....
Only way
Is.....
A Petition.....
To God and The Nature......
No alibis on us.....
for being insane on
materialistic world and power......
Though you punish
our common enemy
What our eternal hope
is to stop him
Not to compensate us
However the enemy
taught us $\qquad$
two Precious Lessons

> 'Love Nature'
> 'Embrace Humanity' WE......
> Hereby sign the Petition....... with 'animals, countries, celebrities, politicians, commoners, the rich, the poor, beggars, priests, soldiers.......
> and Whole World.....'
> Hope your justice
> to make us not cry furthermore..... as our ancestors did on Hiroshima....
> Nagasaki......
> Mercy on Wuhan.....
> Mercy on Lombardi...... WE.....
> patiently await..... your mercy .....
> From Holy Jurisdiction.......

## A.P. Tharuka

## Matters of the Heart \& Mind

The mind, has many visages
Mostly, an ardent advocate of logic and reason
Sometimes, overwhelmed by emotion Seldom, a blank slate

The heart is a vessel governed by emotion An abundance or a minuscule amount thereof The stark difference between the kind and the wicked

The heart and mind lie in constant battle
One trying to supersede the other The continuous collision, a source of great distress

True serenity lies in equilibrium
A state in which they both co-exist
One complimenting the other No more, no less

## The Break

He ran and ran and ran and ran
My dear you need to take a break Whispered she softly to the tired-looking man He didn't want to listen for God's sake

I'm not tired he said out loud Yes you are and so am I She said solemnly, knowing his fraud Sorry to do this but soon you'll know why

## All of a sudden he wasn't allowed to be free Not anymore

There was an invisible barrier Controlling his life, no one could see Wasn't expecting a move so scarier

> He stayed, rested, learned new ways of being He listed to himself more deeply
> Found hidden toxic wounds He has never seen "Oh" he exclaimed his voice rose steeply

Then looked up to her. "You were right" Was the only thing he wanted to say He found her smiling as usual in daylight But she looked different in a way

What is the reason for this change Suddenly It became clear, she's healing too
Merry flowers bloomed in a wide range
Birds were singing and the sky was blue

Day by day it began feeling free again Pandemic was gone, time woke up from its freeze She was glowing "darling l'll never put you in pain" He promised walking in scented evening breeze

A.A.K.K. Athapaththu<br>D/PST/19/0020 (1802)<br>FAHS

## Oh Privileged One!

> You sit at home feeling sorry for yourself.
> A comfortable home, with an AC, a fridge and online shopping. They still toil in the sun, sweeping and cleaning, harvesting their crop; feeling responsible for what they do. Others at home, unable to feed children lay hungry, weeping daily.
> Do you still feel sorry, Oh privileged one! You have more, while they have none.

## Sinhala shortlisted winners

## ๕కిలి ఠఆ(®



ఆฺ అకిదిల





రะ อชอิอ ๕องอ






๕జికి อนజి อుఠంฒ ఐฺ



ఠగతి ఐఠఁ్రే ఠ®లె అટఎం

## 














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3ออ్రక
ธะฝ్రకో
శర్రకో


రజీఆేకి


## ఇ్రరిక్

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## B.S. LOKUHETTY

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ตைชา








## KDU Staff and Students


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## 

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ఠతి ఝఠగె చைைอజి తియ్రఱ






ఠతి 民ఠగె చைைอజి తియ్రఱ








## 






๑ธิవెఁદ....


రెอఱ







## Tamil shortlisted

 winners
## KDU Staff and Students

## கொரோனா வைரஸ்

ஐநா கூப்பிட்டால் உலகமே கூடும்
உன் வருகை தெரிந்துவிட்டால் உலகத்துடன் ஐநாவும்
வீட்டுக்குள்ளே அடங்கி ஓடும்
பொதுவுடைமை வாதிகளின்
நாட்டில் பிறந்த
உலக பொதுவுடைமை
வியாதி நீ
அண்டம் பிளந்தவனும்
அணுகுண்டு கொண்டவனும்
ஆகாயம் பிடித்தவனும்
மண்ணை மடித்தவனும்
உன் முன்னே மண்டியிட்டுத் தாழ்கிறான்
உலகை பூட்டி வைத்த முதல் சாவி நீ
ஏழைக்கு காசு தராத கஞ்சனுக்கும்
வீதியில் நடந்தால்
வழக்கு போட வைத்தது நீ
சானிடைச் தீரத்தம்
மாஸ்க்கு உலக தேசிய சின்னம்
தூய்மை வாழ்க்கைத் தகுதி
இதுவும் சாத்தியமாகும் அறிவோமே

## MEGHA - (In)visible lines of creativity in trilingual expression

## என் கிராமத்தின் ஓவியம்

பெரும்பாறைக் குன்றுகள் சூழ்ந்த
என் வெப்பமுற்றநிலங்கள்
புவியதிற்சியின் வெடிப்பினைப் போல
பிளவுற்றிருப்பதைஎப்படிசகிப்பேன்
உளுந்துச் செடிகள் கைகளில் சிராய்க்க
புல்லறுத்துக்கட்டியசுமைகளுக்கு
கூப்பிய இருகைஏந்தி
கூலியாய்க் குடித்தபழங்கஞ்சியின்
அடர்ந்தகந்தகச் சுவை
நாளமறுத்தசுரப்பினைப் போல்
உடலெங்கும் பரவிக் கிடக்கிறது
பழகியவிலங்குகள் இறந்துபோகையில்
சுமந்துசென்றுபுதைத்துப்போட
வீசியஒருபடிநெல்லும் பதராகி
பட்டினியால் புரண்டதும் நினைவிலாடுகிறது
எட்டாததொலைவில் நின்று
பனையோலைகளில் தேனீர்அருந்துகையில்
உதட்டிலிருந்துவழியும் சாதியின் வலி
காலணிகளற்றபாதங்களைநனைக்க
என் கிராமத்தின் ஓவியம்
தன்னைச் சட்டமிட்டுக்கொள்கிறது
ஒருபோதும் உறங்காதரெட்டைவாழிடத்தில்.

# M. R. M. Anaas <br> D/RTP/20/0012 <br> FAHS 

## விதி வரையும் கோடுகள்

சுகமாக சென்று கொண்டிருக்க
வாழ்க்கை என்ன
செங்கம்பளம் விரித்த பாதையா?
ஒரேதிசையில் பயணிக்க
வாழ்க்கை என்ன
முடுக்கி விட்ட காற்றாடியா?
விரும்பியவை மட்டுமே கிடைக்க
வாழ்கை என்ன
கற்பகத் தருவா?

இல்லவே இல்லை...
வுாழ்க்கை....
விதியின் விளையாட்டு..
நாம் பிறக்கும் முன்பே
எமக்காக வரையப்பட்டவை
அல்லவோ!
மேலிருந்து கீழ்நோக்கி
பாயும் காட்டருவி
போல் தானே
நம் வாழ்வும்...
ஏமக்கென வரையப்பட்ட
விதிக்கோடுகளில் பயணிக்கின்றோம்....
ஆசைக்கும் மீண்டும்
கடந்து வந்த பாதையில்
திரும்பிப் போக முடியாதே!
சில சமயம் வேகமெடுக்கும்
சில சமயம் தேங்கி விடும்
சில சமயம் வற்றியே விடும்
காட்டாற்றாய் வாழ்வும்
அதன் போக்கில் பயணிக்கும்...
விரும்பியவை சில போது
கிடைக்காது,

விரும்பாதவை வேண்டாமலே
கிடைத்து விடும்,
எதிர்பார்த்தவை இருந்திருந்து
நடக்காது,
எதிர்பார்க்காதவை அதன்போக்கில்
நடந்துவிடும்,
விதி வரையும்
மாயாஜால கோடுகளில்....
ஒருவர் விதி பார்த்து
மற்றவர் சிரிக்கும்
உலகமிது,
நாளை நம் விதி பார்த்து
எத்தனை பேர் சிரிப்பார்
என மறந்து...
சில நேரம்
வாழ்க்கையே ஸ்தமித்தமாய்
மனம் நொந்து விடும்,
என் கற்பனை படி
விதி சற்று ஓய்வெடுக்குதோ
என்னவோ..
விதி வரையும் கோடுகளில்
என் வாழ்வும் அழகாகும்
காலங்கள் தொலைவில் இருக்காது
என்ற நம்பிக்கை மட்டுமே
நிகழ்காலத்தை அழகாக்கும்
வாழ்க்கையில் பிடிப்பை தரும்
அருமருந்து அல்லவோ!

## நட்பு

நட்பே,
மெழுகானேன் திரியாகவந்தாய்
புத்தகமானேன் கவிதையாகவந்தாய்
நிலமானேன் நிலாவாகவந்தாய்
மண்ணுலகில் மனிதனாய் பிறந்துவந்தேன்
நண்பனாய் கூட வந்தாய்
ஏட்டில் எழுதமுடியவில்ல
எமது இதய இராகங்களை
ஒருபாட்டில் எழுதமுடியவில்லை
நாம் பழகியநாட்களை
எங்கிருந்தோவந்தநாம் எதிர்பாராமல் சந்தித்தோம்
அன்புளன்னும் பாசகயிற்றால் கட்டுண்டோம்
இப்பாசக்கயிறுஎன்றும் தொடரவேண்டுகிறேன் இறைவனை!

SHORT STORIES

I lifted my arms to let them know I surrendered. Soon I was blindfolded,
 handcuffed and pushed inside a vehicle. After nearly thirty minutes, someone kicked me out of the vehicle and dragged me along a wet cement floor. The blindfold was removed and so was my sarong. I was then locked in a tiny cell.

The cell had a musty smell mixed with the smell of stale blood. I could hear a scream which slowly faded into a moan after every "bang" a gun made. One, two... I counted for every "bang" I heard. My count was thirty-six when a clock somewhere made eleven strokes. It heralded me that today or tomorrow would be my day. The cell was then unlocked by a man, bare chested, who covered his lower body with camouflage pants. I was taken out of the cell and directed to a different room where I was tied to a chair.

I stared at the floor promising myself not to spit anything out. The scarlet, brown and black patches on the floor told me the story of men, even of women, perhaps, whose life fluid drained out telletale crimson as the flesh split open to an aggressive kiss of a bullet, for the sin they'd committed by trying to colour the lives of the majority proletariats of the country.

Three men entered the room. Two were shirtless, dressed only in camouflage pants, and the other was a fully-dressed army officer who had stars on his shoulders. He trudged towards me, lifted my chin up and threw a mocking grin. "Do you know me?" he asked. I said "no". "Good, very good", he said with barbarity lurking in his eyes. "Tell me this and I will let you go home". He asked two or three questions to which I lied. Knowing that I lied, he kicked the chair with all his might. I fell on the ground. He stamped his foot on my neck in frustration. For the first time in my life, I felt the fierce currents of death starting from
my head, travelling to the tiniest part of my body and kept swirling inside my chest.

I was questioned again. But, I kept my promise. The two-bit crook hammered my fingers and pulled my nails apart. I cried out as excruciating pain paralysed me and found myself dressed in motheaten pajamas lying upright on an old bed, covered in sweat.

I needed some water. I pulled out a piece of paper from an old book and scribbled "water" on it and rang the bell I was given. For a couple of minutes I had to stare at a spider who was confidently reaching towards an insect trapped in its web until it was suddenly ambushed by a gecko who was passing by. The nurse came to look at what was written on the paper, and the next minute, I was offered a glass of water.

This was how things happened here. Since the day I was diagnosed with paralysis, I used to stroll on the wheel chair or ring the bell to get help. Except for the fact that they made a little delay in arranging everything, the staff here was friendly and caring.

When everyone here loved the comfort they gained after a good nap, I hated it, for I had to wake up with haunting demons of my past. I wished that I had Alzheimer's like Jaya for he had forgotten most part of our struggle and regret over the things he lost. I strolled towards the dining room to get myself a coffee and saw Jaya refusing to eat. He was my companion since grade eight, but I never thought that we would be together in our eighties too. Our illnesses prevented us from talking much. He would forget what I say and would not tolerate me stammering.

I gulped down the last sip of my coffee and strolled towards my room. In the corner of my bed, I found my diary left open.
$12^{\text {th }}$ May 1989

The milky light seeped through the half opened window drawing patterns, which were sometimes stirred on the floor when the wind swooped up a tree and rustled the leaves. Her face shone in the moon light. She was soundly asleep. I caressed her hair while watching her. I wanted to tell her that I loved her, that I loved her more than anything. Suddenly my feelings that were silently residing in the deepest place of my heart burst out in tiny drops of tears. I wasn't sad. I wasn't happy. I was tearing down the emotions of love for her. Her eyelids fluttered as I kissed her head. She looked at me and drew a gentle smile over her lips, grabbed my hand and slowly placed it on her belly. I kissed there too, where our little one was growing. She put her arms around me as I kept my head on her chest to feel her breath rising and falling. I was overwhelmed by the love she gave. I wished I could live in those moments forever. I was allured to this life and didn't want to leave it.

As I read, I drew a mental picture of the past. I wished I had travelled back the time to live there a little longer, for they were the best moments of my life that I never wanted to return from.

I stared out of the window. I could clearly remember what happened. It was October $16^{\text {th }}$ 1989. Madhavi had only two weeks for the delivery. I woke up early and prepared breakfast. Then I went to get Madhavi to wake up. She said she was feeling a bit uncomfortable. I comforted her and informed the neighbouring house to take care of her while I'm gone for work. She asked me whether I could come early that day. I didn't say anything. But my inner self accused me for not being able to stay for my wife when she needed me the most. Was I working for my people or was I risking my wife's life to fulfil my selfishness? I've always had this conundrum.

I knew Madhavi wasn't in a good mood. But, I had to work and attend a discussion of the party about the tense situation that prevailed. That was the time when people prayed for the night not to dawn, for those nights filled the air with an acrid smell of burning flesh. The mornings that dawned after such nights were not pleasant either. One could
witness where the smell came from seeing half burnt bodies held between tyres. Sometimes the head was separated from the body and was supported by a stick standing on the ground. I was in mental agony having experienced this disaster. They were our people, the people who joined the struggle expecting a better way of life, not a life that questioned them whether that dream was worth fighting for. But, we didn't step back or kneel down before the totalitarian government.

I attended the meeting in a secret house that belonged to the party and we were informed that some active members were arrested at Rathnapura. This scared the members of the party that they would divulge the hideouts of the party leaders. After the meeting, I drove back home. Madhavi wasn't there. She had left a note for me that she couldn't bear the pregnancy contractions and left to the Thalawakele hospital with our neighbour. I prepared some stuff that I thought she'd need and stepped out of the house. The house was invaded by an army squad. I surrendered. I had nothing to do except that. I was brutally detained. I couldn't feel my right leg for nearly two weeks. But, I wasn't killed. Few weeks later, I was transferred to another place. Later, I got to know that it was Mattegoda army camp. There, I got to hear the tragic news of the murder of our leader.

I was released two days later. I went back home. I was shocked to see that half of our house was burnt. I ran to my neighbour and found their house locked. I ran to and fro like a mad person and found my wife's body half burnt and blackened at the back door. For a moment, I stared at her, shook her body and raised her eyelids. But, she didn't wake up.

I learned that our first and only baby had died during labour. Some people had seen my wife multiple times in front of an army camp holding a doll to her chest. I accused myself for murdering my family. My involvement in the struggle had penalized them. They had paid the price with their lives.

## KDU Staff and Students

Jaya walked into my room with his radio. He had no idea what I was feeling. He sat on my bed and switched the radio on.
"pera un aya sitawu amba gas wala
Palayen api adatath labanemu pala
Apen pasuwa ena ayatath ema pala
Labennta salasuma apage yuthukama"

Jaya and I, failed revolutionists, failed husbands and failed fathers, sat on the bed and listened to the song.
It is true that we sowed the seeds for your future sacrificing our lives. But, neither you nor us could eat the fruits.

## A Doctor and a Ghost



At 1.30 a.m. on a misty Monday morning, I spoke to a ghost.
It was the usual double casualty weekend. Earlier that Saturday, I took over the nearly empty ward from the hands of my Registrar as he was off to get happily married. I was running a 3 day shift alone, with him getting married and the other SHO off on her maternity leave. I wasn't sure whether he looked happy because of the wedding or simply because he was walking out of the ward. A doctor is rarely upset leaving a shift. It is the universal feeling all working people have felt since the beginning of time. The prehistoric scribe leaving his cave full of stick figures at sundown probably sighed the same satisfied sigh as a government department worker clocking out at 4 p.m. The same applies to doctors.

It was a quiet Saturday. I greeted the longest standing patient in the female ward, holding the hospital record for the longest stay and also the recipient of all my affection.

Miss Anula has had more heart problems than anybody I know. The only child conceived to the wealthiest couple in the area after 20 years of trying, she had been a sickly child at birth. Given a month to live at most, her parents did everything they could. Weak as a child, she miraculously made it to adulthood while her parents treated her tenderly, scared she'll breathe her last each time she was rushed to hospital. Between hospital and home, she grew up seeing very little of what happens outside her compound. Her parents passed away timely, leaving all their wealth to the single, weak daughter. At 30 years, she was left with only the manservant Paulis who had looked after her since the day she was born, his wife and their 10-year-old daughter Manori. Manori was as much her friend as her student and foster child. Their family lands had stretched for acres, yet she had never walked
past the hedge that bordered her garden - her failing heart hindering her. At 68, she had outlived her parents, her doctors, her companions and even Manori. She had never seen any other family. She had enough money to build her own fully equipped infirmary, but she had chose to stay at the forever underfunded, medicine regularly out-ofstock, short-staffed hospital that had seen little development since the British left the island. In the meantime, her money had built schools, temples, hospitals for the betterment of many lives in the area. She refused to occupy a room for herself and instead, spent her days in the ward, loving the continuous presence of people and companionship; breathing oxygen through her mask, known by all and loved by all; frequently visited by her beneficiaries and fans of all ages.

I occupied myself with the mountain of paperwork, which, regardless of hours of filing, takes but a day to reaccumulate to Himalayan proportions. The patients were also mostly in peaceful slumber. For the first time in a long time, I saw our head nurse take her shoes off as she and our junior nurse put new covers on the worn ward registers. Even the support staffer had run out all her errands and now read the newspaper aloud to Miss Anula. I was cautiously pleased. This patch of sunshine like all other short-lived moments of peace, was sure to pass.

And it did pass so quickly that we forgot it existed. There one moment, gone so fast the next, we felt like our memories of it were but figments of wishful imagination.

By the evening, patients had started to trickle in. By night, the ward had returned to its full glory. I finished up admitting one patient only to see another being wheeled in. It was the usual bag of cases; chest pain, headache, fever for 3 days, vomiting, diarrhea... the list continued.

It was midnight by the time I clerked in the last patient. Miss Anula was reading her Pirith book as the head nurse wished me goodnight as she left for home, several hours past her change of shift. No shift changes for me, I thought. The consultant will drop in temporarily, like he came
today to a mostly empty ward. Well, I thought, he'll be busy tomorrow. Then all of a sudden, a shout "DOCTOR! Miss Anula is arresting!!"

My hair stood on end as I sprang up from the chair and raced down the ward. She lay spread-eagled on her bed as casually as she would have been any other day, Pirith book in one hand but oxygen mask askew and not breathing. I immediately started compressions. The nurses rushed about; connecting leads and tubes, calling for help, waiting for her to be revived. Within minutes, the male ward MO rushed in, switching with me for the compressions. We kept at it, taking turns. 10 minutes turned to 20 , then 30 .

My head started buzzing and the noise around me muffled as 1 processed the situation. The only defibrillator in the hospital in the emergency unit had been sent to be repaired, I heard a nurse say. How ironic? Paid for by this woman and not there to save her life. The longest I had resuscitated someone was 40 minutes. I was told to stop by my consultant at that point and we called it. I watched as my sweat dripped onto her wrinkly skin as I pumped on her chest, hoping she woke up before 40 minutes. Is this futile for a 68 -year-old? No, I can't just call it! No time is long enough! Ammamma, please wake up!

An aide came running into the ward and started saying something too fast for me to catch.
"RTA case in the ETU!" my friend said, "Sounds big."
We kept at it. I was too occupied to think about anything else but her. The ward phone rang first, then my phone. I ignored it. 40 minutes up. Still nothing. Then simultaneously, the ward phone, mine and my colleague's phones rang - as a first lazy spike appeared on the cardiac monitor.

Sinus rhythm. Finally. My eyes blurred with tears. We stepped back, staring at the wave in the screen as it multiplied, waxing and waning.

The cacophony of ringing phones silenced as my friend answered his and the nurse answered the ward phone. Mine stopped ringing by itself.
"Machan, big accident. Mass casualty they say. Look, you've got this under control, no?" my friend said, clearly preparing to run to put out a bigger fire.
"All good," I said, eye still on the lazy wave as it climbed and fell. "Thanks, machan, you go on." He disappeared.

The patients watched with great curiosity; their own pains forgotten. It's not everyday you see someone being brought to life from the dead. I looked at her, my heart refusing to stop racing yet; still unconscious, but alive. The risks of reviving a person after that long started going through my head but I brought those thoughts to an angry halt. She was alive. SHE WAS ALIVE.
Suddenly exhausted, I turned away as one of the nurses started clearing up. "What's happening at the ETU?" I asked our ward aide as I washed my hands.
"I don't know the specifics, but some big accident. I think several dead on-arrival."
"Very bad?"
"Don't know yet. Shall I go check?" she asked.
I was still trembling with energy. I both wanted to know what was going on and not. The phone pressed against my thigh as I leant against the counter. Wiping my hands, I checked the phone. Multiple calls from the hospital number and the emergency unit. Something was up. Something big. I had to check, but I had to be here.
"Never mind, stay here." I said.

I walked back to Miss Anula. She still hadn't opened her eyes. The nurse was documenting her recovery on the chart. The other nurse who left to the emergency unit hadn't returned yet. I could go and check it out... Yes, I should. Things are ok here at the moment, I felt.
"Miss, I'm going to the emergency. Call me if anything," I told nurse Ayoni. She was a young girl but she looked supremely calm as she nodded. I touched Miss Anula's warm hand for a long moment.

I walked to the ETU. The other wards were all bare of staff. An odd nurse, some nursing students. Some wards just had the aide. I started running.

It was a scene from hell, like drawn in the temple walls. People: complete and in pieces, dripping with blood, carried by other people, people impaled by things. Ear-splitting screams and howls of pains, moans and groans in between. A calamity. I walked into the ETU through the throng, slipping on the thick streak of blood that disappeared in through the doors of the ETU.
The rest of the night soon became a blur. I found myself everywhere. When the beds and trolleys were all full, we treated them on the floor. The injured were carried in whole and in parts; in arms and in sacks of ice; some screaming, some silent, some beyond saving. Trolleys rushed to the small two-theatre complex all night. The injured were rushed to other hospitals in whatever vehicle was available. I sutured more injuries under dim torchlight that night, than I'd ever done before.

A massive forehead gash, an iron bar through a foot. A man covered in multiple shards of glass and brick dust with not much intact face left. Women in white and formerly white clothing. Women in nightdresses and women in nothing. Men and children of all ages. What had happened? I badly wanted to ask but it wasn't the time I thought, splinting the bizarrely bent arm of a man, while he screamed in agony.

Then there was one who had no external injury at all, looking peaceful and warm with what I soon realized were the last vestiges of life. Her neck had multiple fractures which she couldn't have survived. I covered her with her the same bedsheet she was carried in with and moved on.

There were shouts for blood, but we had run out. Supplies had to be run in from the wards. We weren't a big hospital, but we were the only hospital for miles. Calls were made all around, but help was far away in this fight. We had no help but ourselves.

The stable patients were removed to make way for people who were still being brought, hours since the first patient. The dead were also removed for the same reason. We weren't just the hospital staff by then; other patients, villagers, police and army men, bystanders anyone who could stand blood was a healthcare worker.

## "THIS ONE’S ARRESTING!", I heard from inside.

I ran in to a room that was painted with blood. The ETU doctor was straddling the patient, the whole bed bucking as she forced blood through a stopped heart. A dripping bandage and a tourniquet where the rest of her arm should be. A nightgown which probably wasn't blood red when she went to bed. I squeezed past the nurses, aides and doctors to take over from her. She went back to curbing the bleeding as I started to pump life into another's chest for the second time within a day. I don't know how long I was at it. Nobody came to take over the compressions, because there was nobody left. I didn't feel tired but I saw the doctors' heads shaking in defeat. Then, I saw her eyes open and watched her blink several times, looking around frantically. The blinks slowed each time until she didn't blink again.

Stop compressions, someone said. The slight pause and then the time of death. I fell onto my haunches.
"Ok, nurse. Cover up," said the emergency doctor through her blood splattered mask and wiped a bloody hand across a blood-stained forehead. We all scattered, looking for the next person in need of care.

I didn't realize how light it had become outside until the morning rays shone in through the doors that had been swinging all night. It was morning and we finally had support arriving. My own registrar who was supposed to be married in Colombo later that day looked at me wide eyed from head to toe as he relieved me. Ambulances and staff from other hospitals had arrived finally. I felt it was like one of those scenes in the movies where l'd light a cigarette. Walking out of disaster to the rising sun, to light a fag. I almost smiled.

Nurse Ayoni was walking towards me. I saw her eyes also go wide and then recover quickly as she approached me.
"Doctor, are you alright?" she asked.
I wasn't sure, but I said I was. What's up, I asked.
"It's Miss Anula. I think it's time," she said gravely.
The past few hours had driven the earlier incident completely out of my mind. I felt my brain slowly awaken to the memory of the first MI for the day.

I broke into a brisk walk to ward, feeling multiple eyes staring at me as I rushed to ward with Ayoni tailing. The dark morning air felt cold in my lungs as I reached the ward still in slumber. All lights were turned off except over Miss Anula's where she lay peacefully, face turned my way as if she was waiting for me. The cardiac monitor beeped slowly as her heart slowed down, the waveform gradually dipping. I knelt and held her soft hands in mine, and looked at her kind face.
"Thank you for everything, Ammamma," I said. "Go safely. Budusaranai"

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And her eyes opened.

Unlike the previous pair of eyes, Miss Anulas's looked straight into mine with peace and purpose for a long moment and then shut, to never open again. Ayoni later told me that was the only time she opened her eyes since we revived her. She was gone.

I was tired. I walked back to the ETU, now in daylight. Doctors, nurses, the military and police - everyone was there now. The patients had finally stopped coming in. Doctors, nurses and other support staff were lying around exhausted. Several had actually lit their smokes. I watched as a nurse walked out to a tap and held her head under the flowing water, washing away a stream of red. I didn't want to sit for the fear that l'll not get up.

A bus full of people on their way back from a pilgrimage was the cause of the accident. The driver had fallen asleep and the bus had crashed onto a women's hostel for garment factory workers. Many died that night and many were maimed for life. But we also saved nearly 60 people from definite death. Later I heard the total number of patients we attended to were over 150.

I remember standing under the common shower with a dozen bloodred fully clothed men and women, watching a flood of red drain away as we showered. I remember walking back to the doctors' room in the ward, still dripping pink drops behind to fall onto the bed and nothing more.

When I came to, it was dark outside. My phone was charging on the table next to my other belongings which I didn't remember putting there. I was dressed in dry clothes I didn't remember changing into. It was 1am. I had slept for 12 hours straight. I walked out of the room to the misty air of the night, feeling the chill as I sat down in the steps that lead to the garden planted by the patients. I closed my eyes and breathed in, trying to recall all what had happened.
"That was some amazing work, dostharamahaththaya".
I opened my eyes to see her standing in front of me, a bright figure in white among the flowers that somehow appeared fully abloom in the night.
"Ammamma!" I started tearing.
"Now, now, don't cry. It was bound to happen sometime. You should know, doctor and all," she laughed. "I couldn't save you. I couldn't save a lot of people tonight." I mumbled, "I don’t even know what happened to you after that."
"You needed a long rest after that long day. Don’t worry about me. I am here as you can see. And what else of me is there for you to see once I'm dead? You worry about my body? My child, you know it's not as much my body as anybody's body now."
"I'm so proud of you. All my life, I've wondered what the universe intended to do with me. I grew up unable to walk 10 steps without feeling like my chest will explode. I hated it. I didn't know why I was made this way. It took me a long time to stop hating myself and start doing what I can to be of any good to the world. After all, that's all we leave behind, no? Look at you - my greatest pride. My greatest achievement. My greatest good to the world."
"My love, you have done more in one day than I could have ever dreamt of. Look around you, all the people you help on daily basis, all the people you saved yesterday... You did everything you could do and you did it sparing nothing. That is your everything you gave to these people. I know Manori and your father will both be as happy as I am to know how their son turned out."

I teared again, "What happens now?"
"Now, I leave." She walked to me and held my face in her hands. My face felt warm in the cold night air. "Never change. Be the same kind, little boy who wanted to become a doctor to help me get better. And whatever happens, I always will be with you. I love you, putha"
"I love you too, Ammamma"

## The Six Hours

We had been preparing for today's walkout. Masks, bags and the grocery list all waiting ready for the ultimate lift off after three days of continuous curfew. The epidemic Covid 19 has taken the whole world in its grasp for weeks now, spreading the terror in all minds alike.

The early morning news broadcast repeated the death tolls and the marginal risings of the infected worldwide. Sri Lanka is staying at 81 infected, with no one down until now, 24th March.

Every advertisement, news alert, post and even the dial tone on the telephone now broadcasts just one message: "Wash your hands. Be clean. Stay home. Stay safe!"

Continual prayers are rising from all nooks and corners of the world to help redeem the humanity. Even now, I hear the Rathana Suuthraya being chanted on the loudspeakers at our temple. People believe their prayers are heard, therefore, life can revolve back to normal.

Environmentalists around the world have been claiming that the Earth is healing these days. Especially because of the halt in all industry and human related activities, absolutely because we, humans are at home. This is pleasing news apart of all the dreadful tragedy because we have been asking for too much.

It is 5 minutes to 6 a.m. I get the grocery bags and put on the face mask, ready for the adventure.
"Take the hand sanitizer. You might need it" Amma calls and jams it in the side pocket of my denim trouser. I pray and step out.

The morning is beautiful as usual. I jog down our lane towards the Galle Road. I can hear the engines starting in private garages and people starting to move out. Saying good mornings and hellos here and there, after the long home stay.

My first stop is the bank as I had to carry some cash in hand. What a queue? This is a surprise. 10-15 people lined-up at the ATM. I look down at my watch, its sharp 6 a.m., but all of them? Who knew everyone could teleport here at the exact time. All of them wearing masks or a serviette over their faces and keeping the one-meter distance between, abiding to the proper hygienic rules. Amongst them I see a familiar face.

Aunty Malkanthi it is and I approach her. She stares at me for a second.
"Hello Putha! How are you doing? How is everyone at home? All safe right?"
"All good, aunty. How about you? How is Samith Aiya in Australia? Are they all okay?" I inquire. "By the way aunty, when did you even get here, the curfew just lifted but the queue's this long?" Aunty Malkanthi used to be our neighbour, and now she lives in some other place close to our local railway station.

She retorts with a chuckle "Uncle received the news there was going to be a rush really early, so he dropped me here at around 5.30 a.m. Despite that, you see where I am." "Come in join in here, behind me" She offers and makes space. I look at the queue behind me with a meek smile and join in, happy for seeing aunty after all. For some kind of luck, no one seemed to notice or tried to object this weak offensive act of mine. The stay cost me nearly a half hour, but we had a nice distant chat from corona to my boyfriend. Thanks to it all ending there.
"See you later, Putha" and she scurries off into the gathering crowds.
The bakery is my next stop, so I close in on that. I called in last night and placed my order of two loaves of bread. I join the purchase queue which is long enough and wait. It seemed to move quicker than I thought. As I get closer to the cashier, the man shouts out "All sales done, only previous orders await".

The man in front starts a slow muttering in rage. "We have been waiting for this long to be turned down that we have no bread anymore! We are all struggling to eat something during these hard times" he starts blaming the baker for his lack of concern.
"This is all we have to sell, sir. What can we really do?" replies the man behind the counter helplessly.
"You could have restricted sales for a maximum two for one family than giving 4-5 for some, who came and claimed it. We are all the same and see how you are leaving us hopeless. The struggle is so hard for my family to have a proper meal."

The rest of the queue starts dispersing in despair. But he continues bargaining. The man turns back to face a woman carrying a toddler in one arm and holding a bag of dry rations on the other. Along her side is a little girl playing around with a handkerchief over her face. The man's eyes glisten with desperate tears, as he tries to conceal it. The cashier instantly recognizes me and calls me out "Ah miss, eeye raa order karane" "Oww" And I approach him. He knows both Amma and myself as frequent customers here.

The man keeps on asking any other possibilities. I have two loaves on order and purchase them. As I turn on my heels, I can see them gazing at me.

I walk towards his wife and hand her the paper bag, "I don’t need any bread for now, you can have this". I see tears gleaming in her eyes "Mahaththayo, meh noonata salli denna" she turns to the husband who keeps on staring. "Ekata kamak naa. Salli ona naa. Parissamata inna" I reply with a smile at the little girl who hides shyly behind her mother's skirt, and walk away. I imagine the happiness in their faces. I see a family just like mine, a mother, father and two little girls, but two very different worlds. I am running for the store because I feel I am late enough. I see another queue. I get closer and see it is on donations and a free dispatch of dry rations for the needy. I remember the bag in that
woman's hand. I look at all the people gathered, and it's a question between who is needy and who is greedy. I see the donation box and walk up to the organizers. I ask them about their process and express my gratitude, and make a small donation. "This is all for the extremely needy people who really have no way of getting the goods, miss. But our people tingle for anything given free, and there are way greedier people who have the money but still grasps the opportunity of the innocent and helpless as well." I nod in agreement and bid farewell.

It's exactly a curve of nearly half a kilometer of people in line, to the last man standing when I reach the store's queue. It's nearly 8 a.m. now and more people are crowding in. I walk in pants and puffs, to get in line, when I notice something. Across the road, a lorry stops suddenly.

Two men with serviettes substituting for masks clamber out of the lorry and open its rear door. Suddenly, they hang a price chart of a vegetables, all types of onions, potatoes, dry fish and a few other essentials. I look up my grocery list and I see a few on it. One look at the queue and $I$ start crossing the road in a hurry. Very bad timing and $I$ could have been hit by the speeding tri-wheeler. I could see the driver cursing through his lips as he sped away. Very careless driving, I blame under my breath. But honestly, it was my fault as well. I just forgot the zebra crossing. Here, I am the third in line, feeling like a heroine as I purchase the bitter gourd, red and big onions, dry sprats and keeramin.
"Menna noona ithuru",the seller clambers back with the change and presses it into my hand. Then, I start running for my spot at the last man standing, further down the road in a blinding distance. I join the queue with the distance maintained and remain standing.

Vehicles are moving up and down the Galle Road now. The few districts with the curfew lift-off are now buzzing into activity making the best use of the 6 hours provided.

It is 9 a.m. and I have moved 10 meters maybe. I stand waiting, only moving a few feet for several minutes. It is a hard wait for everyone. I can't see the store in vicinity yet. The wait is like forever. The uncle in front suddenly leans on the telephone pole.
"Uncle are you okay? Do you need any help?" I inquire immediately. The videos of people falling in the streets with the virus just flashed my memory instantly, that I prompted to avoid contact with him. "I am okay, just a little exhausted from this stay. My son dropped me here to stay in line, to go collect some other goods. But now he seems to be late. This wait is very tiring." He sighs and runs his hand along his sweaty forehead. He takes out a small water bottle and starts drinking. "Can you do me a favour and ring my son up for me, he should be close now"
"Sure uncle, just tell me the number?" I dial it on my mobile and a man answers. "Hello," I explain him the situation and who I am and ends the call. "He will be here in a few minutes' uncle, you sure you can hold until he gets by?"
"Yes, yes, thank you so much."
Now, the aunty behind me starts talking. A woman in her late fifties I assume. Clad in white trouser pants and a bright red blouse, sunglasses over her head and adding to it, a red mask over her face matching all her fashionables. I feel she isn't that bad for acquaintance in case of long queue situations.
"See Duwa, what has happened to our world now? This is the karma for all the bad deeds we have committed. We have been so sinful. Are you a Buddhist?" She inquires.

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"Yes" I reply
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She continues, "The Buddha's teachings have shown us the Majjima Patipadaa of living, but our people never understood the meaning,
when did they ever get satisfied than crave for more? Now, it is Corona. In the late 1980s, we experienced the worst with curfew and terror with the JVP riots. It was very different then. When the curfew was imposed, we didn't have the goods to buy. We didn't have water and electricity, and we lived with the fear of being murdered by our own kind. But now this is an invisible mass murderer coming for our lives. Who knows where and when, who can be spreading the virus..."

I nod in response and approval, with occasional questions and responses. As she continues, it is almost 11 am . I am exhausted and now I can see the store ahead. The little stuff I had bought earlier is now nagging on my side heavy. The sun is starting to become hotter and I unleash my umbrella in defense.
"Italy counts are rising very fast. They are having their worst time. I have one of my friends who spoke to me on Facebook saying they don't have enough space in the hospitals to accommodate the infected. Italy is one of the developed countries in the world but they are facing terrible ends over this issue. We are nowhere closer to those facilities," exclaims aunty with a worried sigh.
"Yes, aunty but thanks to our Triforces and Medical Staff, we are performing really well. If people had not been contained by imposing the curfew at the right time, this would have spread the country like wildfire in the blink of an eye. They are really doing a great service for the country. It is the people who have to be careful now, avoiding contact and gathering together." I reply.

A patrol of two gunned policemen in masks circle the roundabout and ride away slowly, inspecting the people on the sides of the road.
"Yes, Duwa. That's right..." We continue on our detailed talk. About the triforces, the doctors, international news and their views, when suddenly a news alert comes around that the lift-off has been extended for two more hours and so the curfew will be reimposed at 2 p.m.

As I walk forwards, I drink from the water bottle I brought from home. Keeping ourselves hydrated is another advice that is stressed on continuously. Sweat is trickling down the sides of my head. I can feel the mask being soaked in the sweaty beads and the sweat soaking my T-shirt. The heat has turned out to be unbearable during the day and Colombo is a major hot zone.

Store shopping has become the life of some people who try to develop a trend for themselves. They push the trolleys up and down uncaring about the rush outside and try to shop at their own pace just as if on any ordinary day. We are waiting forever. I look back and figure that the line now extends for miles down the road, somewhere barely visible to the last man standing. Now we are closer to the entrance but the time is closing 2 as well. I can feel my stomach rumbling in a hunger storm. My phone rings. It is Amma. She inquires on my whereabouts and asks me to get home soon even if I can't get hold of the items. Thaththa wasn't at home and that is why I am out on the hunt. "I am at the store entrance now, l'll get in somehow and come back." I slide my phone into the pocket and look at my watch.

It is 10 minutes to 2 O'clock. How can we all shop in 10 minutes? I wait for the next turn of people to leave in order to enter, when a police officer comes in suddenly. "Everyone go in quickly and get your stuff collected as soon as possible!" And I run in.

Behind me I can hear the clambering of a hundred feet into the store in one huge rush. I can feel the upcoming storm behind me. I get a lying trolley, speed across collecting things from memory. The onion racks are empty, what a delight I had bought it earlier. I collect milk powder, some spices, a few vegetables that remained, thosai mixture, noodles, pasta, flour and a couple of other non-perishables from the racks. And I speed to the rice counter. I am stopped short. It feels like watching a cock fight for orders. " 5 kg samba, 3 kg sudu kekulu, 3 kg rathu kekulu, 5 kg sugar" and the two hygienically clad salesman are at shock staring like aliens. The manager comes out and shouts "Please don't make a fuss! The process is difficult. Please make a queue and cooperate!"

And within minutes the fuss clears out. I push the trolley for the queue at one cashier. I can still see people coming in. As I wait for my bill, I listen to the conversation upfront in my booth. A father I assumed with some needy essentials on purchase, but the bill has exceeded the amount of money he had on hand.
"Miss can you remove some of the goods then and make it a 2000, I have only that amount to spare now." He looks at the money on hand and claims with saddening eyes.

I look at the cash on my hand and try to figure out a way to help him when suddenly the gentleman in front of me on the queue comes forward. "Put the rest on my bill, let him take them all" The man is in awe and says "Pin sidda wenawa mahaththayo" putting his palms together. "My kids are waiting for me to bring home something to eat."

I put mine on the counter and waits for my bill. I watch them talking at the corner. "I am a daily worker mahaththayo. These days it's a worthless job. This is our last savings from my wife's pass book, because we can't leave the kids hungry. The kind man inquires about his family and whereabouts and asks if there are any other essentials. "Keep this for any other uses" he says and puts in a thousand rupee note into the folded palms. He searches his shirt pocket and takes another two hundred rupees and says "Get home safe with this. We should help each other in our hard times. Stay safe" and they both leave the store in their own little conversation. I see them parting in the vehicle park.

As I pay my bill I can hear everyone around me, talking about the generous man. "Such a good man he was" says the saleswoman. "Of course. It was so nice to see him volunteering for that innocent guy. This is the humanity and the love we should extend to anyone during these bad times" I reply as I pick the groceries off the shelf.

I walk along the road, bags bulging in both hands, recalling what I saw in front of my own eyes. I open my gate. Its 3p.m. and I am home late

## KDU Staff and Students

on the reimposed curfew. Nanga comes to get my bags. I wash my hands and legs from the garden tap and apply sanitizer vigorously.

Just one moment remains unfazed "Sir,you are a god in disguise! May the triple gem bless you and your family!" says the innocent man, "God bless you too, sir. Stay safe!" and the godly gentleman walks away. Every other man stands still, speechless.

I close the gate. The end of a curfew liftoff expedition.




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## R.M .M. Rasanjalee Rathnayake D/BCE/20/0002

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Shazna Rilwan
D/ENG/20/0037
FOE

## English shortlisted

winners

## Meow Meow

I strongly believed that I was good at time management. But, my teachers and prefects who observed me sneaking through the gate at 7:35 am doubted it. It was a Friday and I was at the gate on my usual time. I knew some of the prefects at the gate. So, I could slip in inside without getting a "Late" seal on my Parent Teacher book.

I ran towards the Kottamba tree where we observed Pansil. Heving been frowned at by some teachers and prefects, I joined the line. After a ten-minute chanting of Gathas, 12Commerce-A started performing on the stage. There was one speech, which wasn't really long and a song. Then, it was the time for the Vice Principal's speech. His name was Wijethilake, whom we called "Hitler". He taught us Physics. He always came to the class with a half metre ruler and we were punished for almost everything. He talked about "Responsibility" that day. I, who was poking Ketiya's hair and counting lice didn't notice a word of what he spoke.

The assembly ended. We ran to the class. After drinking half a bottle of water, we all sat down for "Poshanaya". Sithmini brought "Poshanaya" that day and we were surprised to see that it was Chinese rolls. We were tired of eating Kaupi, Kadala and Kiribath. However, Chinese rolls made a great change even though it had "no poshanaya" at all. While we were eating, "Chandani mis" entered the class, kept her books on the table and said, "inform me when you are done, I will be in the Chemistry lab". Then, she went. After dragging the Poshanya time for another ten minutes, Kuku went and informed the teacher. Then, the toughest part of school life began.

After having nice three hours with "Seema" and "Awakalanya", the bell was rung for the next favorite twenty minutes.

It was the interval. About ten of us gathered around a table and started unpacking our lunch. First pack was Kuku's. We finished it within one
and half minutes not having had the chance even to see what was in it. Then came Lape's lunch. She brought it in a lunch box. She would open the lid, keep the box upside down on the lunch sheet and then turn the box around so that the part of the box which had the piece of chicken, fish or egg would face her. She would then lift the box, grab the piece and eat it all on her own. Today also, she did the same and Kuku's usual complain began. "That's unfair greedy woman! You do that every day" Lape had no ears to listen to those. She kept on eating as fast as she could.

After the interval, we were waiting for our physics sir. But he was already ten minutes late. During that time, we got to explore a new thing. That was a toy cat. When its stomach is squeezed, it issued a "meow" for exactly three times. Lape, who instantly fell in love with this new toy, grabbed it and sat at her desk.

After a minute or two, sir Hitler entered the class with the half metre ruler. He said "Ayubowan" and started turning the pages of "P.Geekiyanage's Physics book. He started reading the exact same note and we had to write until our wrists hurt.

He turned towards the board to draw a diagram. I heard Kuku saying "Squeeze, Squeeze!" under her breath. Then came the sound of three meows. Still with the piece of chalk on the black board, our sir turned his head at us and asked, "Poosek da?" as if not being able to believe what he heard. "Sounds like that sir" Plate replied from the back. I was forcing myself not to laugh. So, I burst into tears. Batta was pinching me to stop me from reacting anymore. Lape, who did this heroic thing was drawing the diagram on her book while trying to look as if nothing happened.

Lape passed the toy to me and I squeezed it hiding it inside my locker. Sir turned back again and noticed Kuku laughing with me. He came with the half metre ruler and hit both of us. Kuku offended. "It's not us sir. I am swearing on god!" Then Plate added. "Sir, I saw a cat's poop on the
corridor today morning. This must be the same cat, I guess". "The cat should have been mad like me to climb ninety stairs and come all the way to this idiotic class" Sir said and started reading the note again. I passed the toy to the other side of the class when sir was looking at the board. We wanted to let him think that it was not us, but, "a real cat". So, Ketiya from the other side of the class put it in her locker and squeezed it. Then, sir turned to face us. "Just see sir! Not our lips moved even an inch sir! That's not us sir" Lape said. Sir Hitler was in a state, "What should I believe now?". His face said it all. He slowly walked towards the window and put his head out to look down. "I don't see a single cat even climbing up this damn PVC pipe. Where the hell is it?" He asked.

We all were forcing ourselves not to laugh. A tear or two dropped on the book. The bell rang for the next period and sir left with an "Ayubowan".

## A Beggar's Diary in the Time of Corona

I opened my eyes in the middle of the night to the ear splitting sound of two ambulances driving at a very high speed as if they were competing with each other.

I stood on my bare feet to see what's happening at this hour of the day and saw that the two storeyed house across the street was well lit and there were a lot of people shouting at each other. This house stands next to the grocery shop where me and my 6 year old sister who is just two years younger to me, earn our living by begging from the kind hearted customers who would never turn their back on us.As this house continued to have several gatherings since the arrival of it's owner from abroad, it was always crowded with visitors. But today it seems to have a different atmosphere. I wrapped my sister who was fast asleep on the pavement, with the torn piece of cloth and slowly stepped towards the house. I could see that all inmates were crying and an army officer was busy commanding them to follow him. It appeared to me that someone has passed away and the rest of the family members have fallen sick. Then I saw a police officer coming towards me as if to hit me and I quickly ran back.

I sat beside the lamp post next to my sister who was fast asleep. I could not sleep that night because the awful sound of the ambulances kept echoing in my ears reminding me of the dreadful memories of the bomb attack we had almost one year ago, where everyone we knew were lost. It was my wicked grandfather who could provide us shelter but decided to throw us out of the house believing that we were the curse which destroyed his whole family. As a brother I was brave enough to walk out of his house carrying all the responsibilities of my sister on my shoulders. And now here we are with only two pieces of clothes and a pair of rubber slippers picked up from the garbage pit. I closed my eyes and could feel warm tears running down my cheeks.

The next morning was so dull and there was neither a single person nor a vehicle passing by, on the dusty road which is usually crowed at this time of the day. I was feeling lonely and anxious about this whole change occurred overnight and I starred at the big white house, which is now an empty place where all it's grandeur was washed off by the midnight's wind.

I walked towards the shop to see that it was closed for the first time in the entire period that I was here. We have no radios or televisions to listen to day today situation and not even the gossiping ladies at the shop to ask what was happening today. I pinched my arm so hard just to make sure that I was not in a dream. Just then my sister woke up and gave her sweet smile which is the only light which brightens my day.

Towards the afternoon we both started feeling hungry but yet the whole town was empty with pin drop silence. The whole day passed and there was no change. That evening, I went near a house and banged so hard as my stomach was almost screaming out of hunger. I could see some person inside the house getting frightened as if I'm a thief and quickly ran inside and closed the door. Being unable to understand her reaction, I went back to my sister whose face was withered with hunger and tiredness after walking along the streets in search of something to ease our hunger. But it was only water which could fill our stomachs and that night we slept with no food to eat. We could hardly sleep that night as we were in hunger but deep inside my heart I was feeling doubtful of our future tomorrow.

As I was sleeping I could hear some footsteps to which I quickly got up and ran towards the old lady walking in the cold misty morning. She was wearing a cloth over her face covering her nose and mouth. I begged for some money and glanced at her kind looking eyes which were barely visible above the piece of cloth wrapped around her face. Then she handed me a packet of biscuit and told me that people are not allowed to talk to each other since a deadly disease was spreading
in our country. I didn't understand what she said but all I wanted to do at that time was to eat the packet of biscuits with my little sister who was starving as well. It was only the packet of biscuit we had for the whole day.

The following day I could see several army officers marching by. I ran to one of them, knelt down on my knees and begged for food with eyes filled with tears. I could see the pain in the eyes hidden in his expressionless face. He assured me that he will bring us food and it was the only hope for the day. He returned in a couple of hours with a packet of rice and handed over to me. I stared at his dark black eyes for a moment and saw that they were filled with kindness and compassion. When he left, I turned back to give him a smile of gratitude and that's when I saw him wiping tears off his eyes and I could realize that he sacrificed his own meal to feed us and I'm still grateful to him.

However for the next few days the same old lady we met earlier continued bringing us food in the afternoon and evening. She brought us food but hardly spoke to us. For a moment I felt like she was an Angel sent from above to feed us. With time it came to our knowledge that this deadly disease is spreading so fast and it can lead even to death. Having the hardest times in life soaked in poverty I did not have any worry to find or get protected from this disease as we were already suffering from the bitterness of life.

Few days later the old lady suddenly stopped coming to see us. It was a gloomy day with heavy rain and thunder, and admist the water pouring from the gutter I could see a white flag hanging on the gate of the Old lady's house and I burst into tears.

Everyday, after walking along the streets for hours, me and my sister could find something to eat in order to survive the day.

But yet, everywhere was becoming dull and deserted day by day. One misty morning I was feeling so tired and could barely stand on my feet. Hence, I sat down leaning to the lamp post and stared at the gloomy sky which did not have a single cloud which made it look so dull and empty just like our lives on the pavement. My sister went in search of food as I was too weak to walk. Just as she left, a strict looking army officer with a mask and a plastic cover over his face came to me and held a device on my forehead. I almost panicked and started to breathe so hard as I was scared of his gesture. He then ordered me to get in to the vehicle and since I stepped back reluctantly, two other men with masks and gloves hold my arms tightly and grabbed me towards the vehicle. I started to become so aggressive and screamed so hard, that it could even shatter glasses if there were any. I shouted continuously that I cannot leave my sister alone. A lady army officer who was standing near the door touched my shoulder gently and promised me that she will make sure that my sister is doing well .But yet I could not stay calm as she is the only person whom I have on earth. As I was screaming for a long time, I started to become breathless and collapsed. As my eyes closed the only thing I felt were the brown eyes of my sister smiling at me with her rosy cheeks.

I could feel a chill running down my body and something tugged over my face. I opened my eyes slowly and saw that I was in a hospital with an oxygen mask and some people probably the nurses with some strange clothes walking here and there. I remembered my sister and started to shout and struggle when a nurse came near me, held me tightly but gently and then explained to me what I was going through. I could understand everything she said but my struggle to leave the bed did not stop as my whole mind was focused only on my sister's wellbeing. Just then the lady army officer whom I met before came to me ,introduced herself and told me that she took my sister to a safe place run by army officers That's the only time I felt some warm blood running through my body.

With time, I could hardly breath and I was having a loud cough andeverytime I cough, I felt a severe pain tightening my chest as if someone was hitting hard on my chest.l could not swallow my own saliva as it was very painful, even to open my mouth and I could feel my saliva dripping down the corners of my dried lips. My whole body was weak and feeling lifeless with a severe pain in my arms and legs. This was the most dreadful experience I have ever had with a disease. Time to time I was feeling breathless and a nurse would turn to me and change my oxygen mask and give injections to the canula on the my right hand which was already so tender and red due to the displacement of the needle during my struggle. I could feel as if I was tired of breathing anymore. But when I close my eyes I could see the sweet face of my sister and her laugh was echoing in my ears and that gave me a hope to attempt to breathe even though it was so hard to take a breath without the miserable pain along my throat to the chest. I realized that I was actually struggling to live. My only satisfaction was the army officer who consoled me and assured me that my sister was taken into a safe shelter. Every other day she used to visit me and bring messages from my sister and I was glad to hear that she was in good health.

Time passed and I could feel that all my aches and pains were fading away. I had a dull but continuous cough throughout the day. But the felling of getting better gave me a great hope in life. In about a fortnight my cough was completely cured and I was discharged. I thanked all the doctors and nurses who treated me and mostly for helping me to cope up with all the stress I was going through as I was having no one to share my sorrows. I didn't expect anyone to take me from the hospital, so I got down from the bed alone with high hopes to see my sister. I was having lack of energy to stand and my legs were so weak that I was about to fall back when the most loving army officer came to me and held me by my hand. I felt as if my mother was holding me. I was so glad that she came to guide me to where my sister was.

She also told me that we will be sent to a children's institution where we can complete our education and live as other children. My heart filled with happiness, that for the first time in my life, my eyes filled with tears of joy. For two homeless children who were fighting for their survival in the battle of life, by begging for food everyday, this was an opportunity that brings immense joy and hope.

When I met my sister, I hugged her so hard as if I would never let her go off my hands and thanked God a million times for giving us another chance to live and a bright future to proceed. Deep down in my heart I promised to myself that one day, I would join the forces to serve the nation in its every need, because it was what that saved us giving us a wonderful life.

## Lost

P.Ranjani Mohan

Aged 42, Ht. 5'3", dark in complexion
Last seen wearing a pale blue saree
Missing since October 2008
If seen, contact M.Lakshmi, Rajendra Prasath Rd, Changaththnai, Chavakachcheri
Phone: XXXXXXXXXX

The clock struck 2 a.m. Usually for me, the nights passed either by rolling on the bed, whimpering under the blankets or staring at the clock until it struck " 6 " in the morning.

The moon shone up in the sky with stars glittering around. The night was amazing in the eye of a romantic poet. Yet, the night dawned upon the Palmyra groves filled the air with fierce mourning yearning for life.

The relentless roar of the guns had been keeping me awake for years, and to make it worse, Akka joined the Liberation Tigers, which added silent cries to sleepless nights. Amma had been weeping over her and even tried to withdraw her from the organization. But she never wanted to return. Even if she wanted to, she would never be allowed. Neither I, nor Amma had known that she joined the LTTE until we were informed by the organization itself. She was happy to fight for the liberation of Tamil people.

Since Appa had left us for another woman, Amma took all the responsibilities in her hand. She worked at BalanAiya's house as a maid and sewed mats until late night. As time passed, getting to sleep for two hours continually was just a dream. The fierce roaring of rifles overtook the calmness of a night that l've always wished for. Every night questioned me for a day that Akkawould come home and eat Diwali sweets with us and for a day that I would wake up to a bird's
chirp instead of a rattling rifle. But these were petitions pigeon-holed in God's already overburdened offices.

I was in the $10^{\text {th }}$ grade when the battle became fierce. The constant defeat of the Liberation Tigers made them recruit lot of young soldiers. They were taking two hours per week in every school in the area to raise awareness on the importance of their struggle against the Sinhalese. The speeches were emotional and at the same time, motivational. The inner me wanted to join the organization but was scared about Amma who was constantly weeping over Akka and Appa.

Two months took me to choose which way to go. I finally decided to fight for the liberation of Tamils. I had logic; If I could contribute to the Liberation, Tamils would be liberated, Amma would be liberated. But what if things didn't work the way it was expected to? I had no answer.

I wrote a letter to Amma saying that I would be back soon and rode towards the nearest camp and joined the LTTE as a female soldier for the Malathi brigade. To my surprise, Akka arrived in my camp after two days I was enlisted. I was so happy to see her. But she frowned at me, dragged me to a corner and slapped me. "There is no fantasy here. You won't know when the struggle ends. You won't know the moment a bullet would pierce your chest. Why the hell you came to this HELL?". She yelled at me and looked away to hide the emotions behind the tears that were rolling down her cheeks. She finally said, "I am going to Colombo tomorrow" and went away.

Later that evening. I heard my friends talking about an attack to be launched in Colombo. Akka was brave enough to face such a challenge. She would return victorious. I was confident about it.

The next day was busy with a lot of weapon training. Towards the end of the day, we were summoned at the main ground. A leader from the Malathi brigade addressed us. "We all are destined to die one day. But sacrificing your life to save your own kind is the most precious thing
you could ever do in your life. Our mission to attack Colombo launched by the air wing suicide attackers has become immensely successful. The victory is credited to...."

I felt like the world around me shattered into pieces and fell upon my skin piercing and tearing every inch of it, finally leaving a wound to ooze out every now and then and stain my life. I wanted to cry as loud as possible, but was forced to withstand.

Amma must have heard all about it. I assumed. How could she face it all alone? She should have had me. She was bullied and cheated by the one to whom she had given her heart, and now, she lost the one to whom she had given her blood. I was worried a lot about her and wanted to escape. But the monsters out there were mocking me for being a soldier and a weakling.

After the struggle of nearly two weeks, I managed to get the assistance of Kanthan Anna from the Charles Anthony brigade to run home.

The dried leaves of the mango tree that stood nearby the fence had scattered all over. The doors were shut and locked. The mats that she sewed all day were lying upon the three legged stool, discoloured and that seemed to have rotten. I could not catch a glimpse of her.

I still search... Search behind the Palmyra groves, search between the walls of hospitals, search everywhere around the world. She is dark in complexion and thin, with sunken cheeks and hollow eyes. If you happen to see her, please let me know.

## L.J.M.O.D.Bandara <br> ENG/16/067

FOE

## Service

I reloaded the gun and held my breath. My heavy breaths were loud in my ears in this dense forest. As the trees rustled breezily leaving the pitch-black darkness free to my eyes, I turned to look at my buddy. He was the person I always turned to when I had to relax my mind. But in this pitch-black dark forest for which our eyes had gotten so used to I only saw the short plant that was breathing in our necks. The audible sigh made me escape an emotional drop of tear which I hadn't know that I was holding back from falling.

Though I had said the forever goodbye to my buddy with his bloodsoaked chest pressed tightly by my hand and his head which was heavy due to the service of the country on my lap I still remember the last words he uttered as his shuddering $b$ reaths tried to leaves his nostrils. "Machan, don’t leave them machan. Kill them all machan. Kill them", as he uttered the words his gaze began to drift away. I held my breath tight. But he opened his eyes again as though remembering that he still had a duty left, and he muttered again. "Tell my family I am sorry machan. For leaving without completing my duty. For leaving before him. Tell them I am sorry. And lastly kiss my chootiduu for me machan. Show my love to her machan. Don't leave them machan. Kill h-".

Time was a cruel thief and before he could finish his sentence death had welcomed him to his unworthy hands. The war beaten land had covered my heart's flesh with a wall of metal chunks and I only had to wipe away an imaginary tear in my heart heavy with burden and unpromised promises I shut my buddy's eyes and carried him to the camp.

Though it had been six months since this uneventful happening I can still fell my buddy's lifeless form over my shoulder. It's been a long time but still I wasn't able to fulfil my unpromised promise. Being in the war front hadn't made me able to have a holiday for a long time and I don't think that even having a holiday and resting on a comfortable bed will
make the constant firing noises to go from my head. It's always ringing in my ears no matter I am in the war front or not. I sighed again and faced the front line as the buddy in my memory had given me his smile and reassuring nod.

As we moved forward with less noise a sudden revolting sound issued form among the trees in front of us and we started firing. We fired left and right with the sound of empty bullet shells falling to the ground echoing in our ears. I ran forward with my eight man team and fired. I did not want to leave the unworthy sons and daughters alive who had been a part in putting my buddy's life end to an end way before his time.

I moved to my left and kept on firing. Dead bodies were falling down like flies before my eyes. A wicked smile crept up my face. They had to pay the price. They had killed my poor buddy and now they had to pay the price for their deed. Though being in the war had toughened us to the highest we still had that soft spot that was reserved to our loved ones.

The dark night was ablaze with the gunshots. The silent night was deafened by the constant racket of the bullets. A bomb blasted here and there and luckily enough for me I was yet on my feet. I couldn't even go near the blasted area as that would result in making my spot weak in strength. I kept on going forward thinking that 'If this is the last day for me I am brave and strong enough to face it. But I will not go alone. I will go taking many with me and yet I will face the grim reaper with a proud smile on my face. Proud that I have done the expected duty to my country. Proud that I am dying in this war field as a brave soldier who faced death bravely'. My head was filled with motivated thoughts even though I felt my fingers go numb by shooting constantly. But I didn't have a second to dawdle. It's my country at stake here.

All it took was a second. A sudden ringing in my ear and a loud blast made me fly back in surprise and land painfully over my right leg whichl
knew was bent in an odd angle. As the loud shouts filled my ears and the pending duty I had to do to my country I felt a growing pain in my leg and my vision darkened.

After 15 years from the uneventful day where I had to stop my duty in half as I was made a cripple forever. I saluted to my buddy in the war memorial. Today was his Remembrance Day and I still miss him terribly. His lively smile and his rib cracking jokes were the ones which kept me alive during my hardships. I draped my hand over chootiduu's shoulder as I saw a silent tear roll down her cheeks. The poor little girl hadn't even seen her father. Her father had just seen a picture of her. Not her true self. He hadn't held his daughter in his arms. He hadn't kissed her lovingly as any other fathers. He hadn't been there when his little princess opened her eyes to the world. He hadn't been when her first cry reached her mother's ears. The little baby had been just one months old when her father left her. I knew that life had been hard for this little girl who had never seen her father. But she is brave enough to accept the sad fate with a smile on her face. I had fulfilled my unmouthed promise to my buddy.

Though I had been there for this little girl in her happiness and sadness, growing up with her single mother had made her become more matured than half the girls of her age. I was really proud of the girl she had grown into and I knew that her father will also be proud of her and I also know that she will grow into a beautiful young woman. As a part of the family of a soldier who had sacrificed his life in the name of this country, the least we can do is being a support to his family who had lost a member. But living in a country where good is forgotten with the blink of an eye and the bad is treasured in the heart, that does not happen at all.

We went to war to protect the country and protect its people. We forgot families and fought on behalf of them. We put our lives in lines of fire. Some of us left our families forever. Some of us, like me, had neither friends nor a family and became crippled for life. It is actually very funny to think that though intelligent people are there, they are always in the same level of mind when it came to judging people. Every time when a disabled soldier is in civil society, people look at him as though he was not worthy. As though it was by his own fault that he had been crippled. As if it was his mistake. But as usual they are blind to the truth. They are blind to the fact that, that is a soldier in front of them. That he is a person who lost a part of his body to protect them. To protect thousands and thousands of families. To make a better future to the unborn children of this nation. To protect fathers so their children will not be orphaned. To protect the children so that our nation had future leaders. Our sacrifice to the country has made them forever indebted to us. But are they sure that their unpayable debt is still in their mind? Do they know that their actions towards the sons of our mother nation is unacceptable? Questions arise only to be answered by silence.

Humans tend to forget easily. They salute to the person with three stars on his shoulder, but they look down upon the person who had lost an arm that was once fixed to that shoulder. Their ill treatment towards us is nothing compared to the difficulties we have faced in the forest. However badly they treat us we are always ready to protect them against threats and diseases.

As a soldier I really feel proud of the way people treat us. They call us the 'defenders of the nation'. It's not easy to receive such love from unknown citizen. Their love towards us brings a drop of happy tears to us. At least someone can remember the service we made. But all of it lasts just till a certain day. Just like the rising sun bursts the dew, it won't take a second for them to turn against us. All it took was a virus. As long as it was spread among the civilians it was fair. We helped them to recover and in their different needs. But as soon as it was
infected to one of our boys, they turned their backs on us. We were no longer the helping hand they needed. We were just some sort of aliens who had come to spread the infection to them. After all, though we are in the forces, we are also still humans, aren't we? So why can't they give us a hand when we need them. A hand to keep our minds peaceful. Why do they use their harsh words that poison us? But yet, we neither treat them the way they treat us. As a soldier to our nation I could promise that to them.

I sighed heavily and looked up at the sky. A high-flying bird caught my eye. A lazy smile crept up my face. The fate of life is quite astonishing. I was once like that bird. I lived freely listening to no one. I did what I wanted to do. But from the day I joined the Sri Lankan Army life changed. It made me realize the mistakes I have made as a civilian. It changed me. It made me to follow orders. It strengthened me. It gave me friends. It showed me the purpose of a life. It made me realize how to forget and move on. That's what our boys do now. However badly they are treated they forget and move on. Cause it was always 'Country before self' for us. Life taught us many lessons. They are unforgettable. Now laying back lazily and while enjoying the soft breeze with a crippled leg the smile on my face grows as I remember that I have fulfilled my duty to my motherland. As a soldier I have paid my price to my country.

Because it was always 'For the motherland forever...'

# Sinhala shortlisted winner 

## ©ఠબ゚ ๕డిఱు







































## KDU Staff and Students


















































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## Tamil shortlisted

winner

## நிஜங்களைத் தேடும் மனித நிழல்கள்

மாலைநேர மயக்கத்துடனான அந்திமாலை நேரமது. அலைகள் இசைபாடிக் கொண்டிருக்க காற்றோ தாளமிட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தது. ஏதேதோ எண்ணவலைகளில் சிக்கித்தவித்தவளாய், நயனா கடலோரக் காட்சிதனில் லயித்துப்போயிருந்தாள். அவள் மனதில் குடிகொண்டிருந்த வினாக்கள், கடலோரம் புரளும் அலைகள் போல் ஆர்ப்பரித்த வண்ணமிருந்தன. துன்பக்கடலில் மூழ்கும் முத்தென அவள்...

கடலோரக் காட்சியினை ரசித்தவண்ணமே எழுந்து கால்போனபோக்கில் நடக்கத் தொடங்கினாள் நயனா. அவள் முன்னே காவியக்காதல் அரங்கேறிக்கொண்டிருந்தது... வானமும், கடலும் இணைந்து அரங்கேற்றிய நாடகமது... மனமே களைப்பினை ஏற்கவில்லை எனினும் கால்களுக்கு ஓய்வே தேவைப்பட, சற்றற வெண்நிறப் பஞ்சான மணலில் கால்களைப் புதைத்தவாறே உட்காந்தாள், மனமோ சலன நிலையை அடைந்தது...

தன்னிலை மறந்து அமா்ந்தவண்ணமிருந்தவளின், காதுகளில் பல ஆண்களில் கூக்குரல் ஒலித்தது. திகைத்தவாறற திரும்பிபாா்த்தாள். வாட்டசாட்டமான ஆறு இளைஞர்கள்... இளமைத் தொனிப்புடன் வந்துகொண்டிருந்தாா்கள்... உற்றுநோக்கினாள்... ஒருவன் மட்டும் கண்களில் கறுப்புக் கண்ணாடி அணிந்திருந்தவண்ணம் வந்துகொண்டிருந்தான்... கால சங்கடம் அவளைச் சூழ்ந்ததால் தன் பார்வையினை கடலிடம் மீண்டுமொருமுறை சரணடையச் செய்தாள்.

ஏதோ ஓர் விதமான பயம் ...‘மனிதா்களைப் பா்்த்து மனிதர்களே ஏன் பயப்படவேண்டும்...? என்ற கேள்வி என்றும் புரியாத புதிரே... நிமிடச்சக்கரங்கள் உருண்டோடின.

வந்தவா்களில் ஒருவன் மட்டும் அவளுக்கப்பால் உட்கார, மற்றுவா்கள் சிற்றுாண்டிச்சாலையை நோக்கிச் சென்றார்கள். அவள் விழியோர விம்பமாய், நடுநிலைத் துாரத்தில் அவன் அவளுக்குப் புலனானான்.

அலைகளை ரசித்தவாறே, அவளது சிரம் அவன் பால் திரும்பியது. அந்நிமிடம் விறைப்படைந்தது. அவனை உற்றுநோக்கினாள்.

அடுத்தகணமே, அவன் அவள் பக்கமாய் தலைதுாக்கி புன்சிாிப்புடன் ஓர் முகவணக்கம் சொாி்தான். இதயத்துடிப்பு அதிகாிக்க, அவள் தலையை திருப்பிக் கொண்டாள். அவனோ எழுந்து அவள்பக்கமாய் வந்தான். அருகில் வந்தவன் "நான் தமிழ் ...", உங்க பெயா் ....? என்றான்.

பதிலற்றவளாய் அவளிருக்க, அவனோ அவள் அருகில் அமா்ந்துகொண்டான். முகச்சுழிப்புடன். அவனை நயனா ஏறிட்டுப் பா்்த்தாள். எவ்வித அசைவுமற்றவனாய் இருந்த அவனது, கண்களை கறுப்புக்கண்ணாடி மறைத்தவண்ணமிருந்தது.

ஏதோ ஓர் கடினவுணர்வுடனும், சிறிது தயக்கத்துடனும், "நான் நயனா..." என்றாள். அவனோ முல்லைசிரிப்புடன்,
"ஏங்க பயப்பிடிறீங்க...? நான் என்ன அவ்வளவு பயங்கரமாகவா இருக்கன் . ..?''என்றான். இருவரும் மெய்மறந்து வாய்விட்டுச் சிாித்தாா்கள்.

சிறுசிறு வாா்த்தைகளால் உருவான அவா்களது உரையாடல், கடலில் பேரலையென வள்்ந்தது. காலச்சக்கரம் மீண்டும் பயணித்தவண்ணமிருந்தது: கடலலைகள் ஓய்ந்தன: பேச்சுக்கள் அலைமோதின.

திடீரென, நனயா விழிப்புற்றாள். கண்களை நம்பமறுத்தவளாய் அவனிடம்...‘நீங்கள் கவிதையாசிாியா் தமிழ்வாணன் தானே...'என்றாள்.

அவனோ, ‘...தாமதமானகேள்வி...'என்று कூறிவிட்டு சிாித்தான்.
மிகுந்த முகப்பொலிவுடன், அவள் பையிலிருந்த கவிதைத் தொகுப்பு புத்தகத்தை எடுத்து நீட்டினாள். அவனோ கடலினை பா்்த்தவ்ணமிருந்தான். மீண்டுமொருமுறை அவனைப் பா்்த்து, 'இதில எனக்காக உங்களால் சைன் பண்ணமுடியுமா...?'’ என்றாள்.

திகைத்த வண்ணம் அவன் அவள்பால் திரும்பி செய்வதறியாமல் தவித்தான். அவனது அசைவுகளை விளங்கிக் கொள்ளமுடியாமல், தடுமாறும் அவனது கரங்களைப் பற்றியவண்ணம் கவிதைத் தொகுப்பினை கையில் கொடுத்தாள் நயனா. அக்கணம் ஓர் யுகமென விறைப்படைந்தது. ஸ்தம்பித்துபோனாள். அவனோ புத்தகத்தை முகர்ந்தவாறற கையொப்பமிட்டான்.

நயனாவோ சொல்வதறியாமல் திகைத்து உறைந்திருந்தாள். "உலகின் ஒவ்வொரு அசைவுகளையும், வண்ணங்களையும் செவ்வனே ஒப்பித்து பிற்் மனம் குளிர ரசிப்பவன், விதியின், சதியினில் தான் ஒப்பிப்பதனை பார்த்து ரசிக்க முடியாதவனாகியது ஏன் ...? என்ற கேள்வி நயனாவின் மனதை வாட்டி வதைத்தது. கண்கள் குளமாகிநின்றன.

அக்கணம் மனதிலுள்ள அனைத்து கேள்விகளும் உறைந்துபோயின. எவ்வித கலக்கமுமின்றி அவளது வலிகளை ஏற்றுக்கொண்டான். ...நிசப்தமானநிலை...

தொலைவில் மீண்டும் ஆண்களின் கூக்குரல் சப்தம் கேட்டு சுயநிலையை அடைந்தாள். நிஜத்தினை தேடும் மனித நிழலாய் நயனா அவனருகில் அம்்ந்த வண்ணமிருந்தாள்.
.......முற்றும்......

## K. Sivanesan <br> D/LLB/19/0053 <br> FOL

ESSAXS

## Coronavirus; The Ace to Heal Weeping

Globalization, industrialization, global warming and deforestation
 have been trending matters of discussion over the past decade. As per the gravity of the words themselves, they have instigated bad consequences on the nurturer of us all; Mother Nature. These insensitive malpractices of the self-obsessed humankind have led the powerful sources of nature to take control over the world. Natural disasters and pandemics often take the initiative to restore the balance of the Earth, which is unceasingly disturbed by the 'inhumanity', causing raging wars, large scale deliberate wild fires to burn down lifegiving forests, air pollution and ocean pollution. These ruthless human reimbursements have triggered nature to take a resilient leap forward to save the planet Earth, employing the invisible knight; Coronavirus.

Coronavirus impacts the human respiratory system and is fatal when the condition develops to pneumonia. It was originated in China, but the source of origin is still a burning question. The spread of the virus is explained to be rapid yet solid, caused by just a sneeze or cough, resulting in colonies of infected. The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic has been causing chaos all around the world, because even the so-called 'advanced technology' has yet failed to find a proper cure for it. The world has surrendered in the face of an invisible force. Highest hit from Coronavirus has been the most developed nations such as United States of America, Italy, China and Great Britain, where it has caused massive disruption to the environment. The number of people affected from the pandemic outbreak is sky rocketing as per records, and hospitals have exceeded their tolerance capacity. Weakening workforce and increasing threat of the virus have forced numerous, powerful nations to lockdown, followed by travel restrictions. The economies have collapsed and education systems have been disrupted. The world claims that job security of many firms has been put in risk, thus forecasting a major unemployment crisis in
the future. Poverty stricken population has become the most ill-fated victims of this pandemic outbreak. The situation has raised trembling concerns in executives of many international bodies such as World Health Organization. Rigid steps have been taken to raise the hygiene standards, when the entire globe unites to fight against a common enemy. Mother Nature who has been patiently tolerating the enormous harm done to her by humans, has finally given them a 'timeout' to recall and regret their wrongdoings. Even though Coronavirus has forced people for quarantine and social distancing, it has brought families closer with ample time to cherish pleasant memories. Wonders of miraculous nature have put humankind to a temporary silence to mend its impaired wings.

Quarantine period of the Coronavirus pandemic has indeed done marvels to the Mother Nature. Rivers, seas and oceans have turned cleaner and purer whereas meadows, grasslands and forests have become greener and brighter. Whilst the humans are 'caged' in, animals have trespassed their usual boundaries to rise out of shadows of fear and suffering. They have sensed the dawn of a quieter and cleaner Earth. Dolphins freely swim in the isolated canals of Paris, while seagulls intrude the marine borders of harbours which were out of bounds due to ships and cruises. Otters play briskly in the abandoned river banks, whereas ducks waddle through the fields where there are no traces of humans. Rabbits, deer and wild boars wander freely in parks and lanes relishing their times of life. Massive drop in air traffic has reduced the vulnerability of bird mortality, especially for migrating flocks of birds. This has unbridled the barriers for birds to migrate or fly freely over the precincts of states. Due to temporary closure of factories, travel bans and imposing of curfew, the air pollution rates have strikingly reduced over time of the pandemic. The miraculous recovery of holes in the ozone layer, during the period of Coronavirus has astonished scientists, and is indeed an extraordinary soothing of Mother Nature. The burnt down forests are retrieving their green cover to stand stronger than before as guardians of the Earth and lungs of humanity. Meanwhile, most people have initiated home gardening and
reforestation, either due to deprivation of food or as a calming hobby, which has also triggered a spike in the green cover. With the lessening of greenhouse gas emissions, the impact of global warming has started to reverse. The rapidness of melting of glaciers has slackened, enriching the hope of more durable habitats for seals and penguins. This has also slowed down the rising level of sea water, which has been threatening beautiful paradise islands like Bora Bora and Maldives. Nature has pressed the pause button on human actions to convalesce the deteriorating environment. However, when the Coronavirus fear slowly lifts from the world, everything will be 'back on track'.

The frontline warriors of almost every nation are carrying out a strong strike-back against the pandemic. Doctors, nurses and military personnel are risking their own lives for the betterment of an entire nation. Meanwhile, the countries which rise above the ashes of this unfortunate period of time, plan to launch their policies and guidelines to pull through their collapsed economies. However, a sudden boom in economic activities and routine operations will slowly start abating healed Mother Nature. It is the utmost dutiful right of humankind to take good care of Mother Nature, who's the supreme of all. Learning from the marvels of nature itself, humans should be more humane to the Earth they live in. Sustainable resource utilization, reforestation programs, energy efficient products and increasing the use of renewable energy will guide us through the treks of development, whilst consoling nature. Enrichment of individual stances on environment protection and embracing nature will sustain mankind in the realm of Mother Nature. Lessons of Coronavirus pandemic should be learnt to unleash potentials to preserve and protect nature. Let us be socially distant yet closer at hearts, until Mother Nature heals herself to anticipate more love and humanity from humankind.

## COVID-19, a Wakeup Call?

The air was filled with excitement and euphoria as the countdown for the New Year began, for this time when
 the clock strikes 12 it wouldn't just be heralding another year but also the dawn of the new decade. Mankind had huge plans for the 'Roaring 2020s'. Maybe this would be the decade that we finally send human missions to Mars? The possibilities were endless and each more exciting than the other.

We were all prepared to have our minds blown away, but Mother Nature had other plans and we were given a rude wakeup call in the form of COVID-19. This disease caused by the 2019 novel Coronavirus has singlehandedly brought humanity to its knees. Today we have realized that despite walking on the moon, having developed nuclear weapons and made significant advancements in healthcare we are still vulnerable as we were when the black plague broke out in the $14^{\text {th }}$ century. Such a wee virus still has the potential to wipe us off the face of the planet.

We are facing unprecedented times. We are embroiled in a totally different war; A war where those who fight in the frontlines are not soldiers armed with guns and explosives, but health professionals armed with facemasks, gloves and anti virals. It is a war where nuclear weapons have been replaced by disinfectants and hand sanitizers as lethal weapons; a war where instead of fighting against each other we have to come together to fight a common enemy.

Lockdown has given many of us some much needed solitude, as well as time to stop and smell the roses. It has given mother earth time to heal and recover from all the damage and destruction caused by us, but more importantly it has shown light on the cracks in our lifestyle.

The path back to pre COVID-19 times is a long and winding one, but not one that is impossible. The real question is, is it advisable? After all that is what got us here. We have none to blame, but ourselves for all the problems we are facing today, be it global warming, the pandemic or
resource depletion. Mother Nature has pressed the reset button presenting us with a golden opportunity to reinvent ourselves. We still have time and we can undo our mistakes. So what can be done in order to reverse our past mistakes as well to prevent another pandemic? It begins from starting with the man in the mirror.

1. Adopting an eco-friendly lifestyle

An eco-friendly lifestyle is no longer a choice but a necessity. In the last decade, global warming has gone from becoming a thing of the future to a matter of the present. While many agreements were made to combat climate change, a disparity still exists between what countries have pledged to do and what should be done in order to turn the tide against climate change. It is imperative now more than ever to reduce, reuse and recycle. Lockdown has shown us how schools and universities do not need to meet up everyday in order to function efficiently and how working from home is feasible. Virtual meetings and virtual classrooms enable classes as well as business meetings to be conducted at the comfort of our home. Think about all the automobile and aviation gas emissions we can reduce. As individuals, it is our duty to make a conscious effort to reduce, reuse and recycle. As a state, school and university curriculums should be upgraded and developed in a way that infuses traditional methods of learning with virtual learning, so that students do not have to commute everyday, but also do not miss out on hands-on-learning and important social skills that traditional classrooms offer. In the same way, businesses should also be encouraged to carry out majority of their work virtually by providing incentives such as easy internet payment packages.

## 2. Becoming self-sufficient

With lockdown restricting the importing of products and purchasing of goods locally, we have learnt to become self-sufficient at both individual and state level. Considering the fact that most pandemics are caused by zoonotic diseases, it is advisable that we try and limit importing products. At an individual level we can turn to home
gardening, while as a state we can take steps to produce products locally as well as encourage people to engage in home gardening by providing low-cost fertilizers and specialized grants.

## 3. Health is the greatest wealth

COVID-19 doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight- we all have an equal chance of contracting the disease. This pandemic has made us realize that health is indeed the greatest wealth in our life. It has also brought to light the shortcomings of the healthcare system. It is our responsibility both as individuals and as a state to give priority to our health. As individuals we should eat healthy meals, take time to engage in physical activity and lead a healthy life. As a state we need to allocate more money to the health sector so that hospitals can be adequately equipped to meet the growing health demands as well as carry out awareness programs to educate the public on leading a healthy life.

## 4. Preparing for the future

This is not the first pandemic, nor will it be the last that we face. With glaciers melting thanks to global warming, new viruses are being discovered making us more vulnerable. To face pandemics successfully states should give more importance to biological researchers. Researchers can be encouraged and motivated to predict newly emerging diseases and find cures, new vaccines and drugs by providing financial incentives. A program should be launched to research the possibility of a link between nuclear weapons and technological advancements and the outbreak of new viruses and if proven, laws and regulation should be introduced. Artificial Intelligence used currently can be improved and utilized in fighting future pandemics. Lastly, disaster management units that have been set up in the wake of COVID-19 should continue after their resolution and operate to educate the public on preventing and facing pandemics and other disasters. As Chief Seattle said "The earth does not belong to man, man
belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man does not weave this web of life. He is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself". So we have no right to disrupt the delicate balance of the eco-system. It is clear now more than ever that we do not own this planet and that Mother Nature is still in charge. We are mere inhabitants just like the animals and plants. It is time that we respected Mother Nature and lived in harmony with the other inhabitants of planet earth.

After so many years of living life in a certain way, one might wonder if it possible for us to change our lifestyle. After all, old habits die hard. Homo sapiens have lived for centuries facing and overcoming many challenges and the key to their survival has always been their ability to adapt to changes. Look at how we are handling the present crisis. People all over the world have changed their lifestyles, resulting in working from home, having virtual meetings, virtual classrooms, virtual shopping and virtual socializing becoming the new normal. It all boils down to how willing we are to adapt.

As every dark cloud has a silver lining, this pandemic has opened our eyes to our destructive way of living and given us an opportunity to redefine and reinvent ourselves. So grab it. If not now, when? Mother Nature has pressed the reset button. Now is the time and we must seize it. The clock is ticking. Don't hit the snooze button. For when you next wakeup it might be the end of the world.

# Good Health is not Something We Can Buy. However, It Can Be an Extremely Valuable Savings Account and IoT Will Provide an 



## Extra Amount of Interest to Your Savings Account

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a massive area that makes smart gadgets and captures the development of smart cyber-physical networks. Healthcare is the most important factor which directly connected with the community and development of any country. The latest example is the COVID-19 virus and it has directly affected the economy and the day-to-day life of people in most countries. This survey advances IoTbased innovative solutions and technologies in healthcare and analyses applications, platforms and network architectures (state-of-the-art), new industry trends in loT-based healthcare, and data security and privacy. As per now ambient intelligence, big data, wearable devices, and augmented reality are the new innovative things in the field.

IoT is the internet-connected billions of physical devices around the world and these devices collect and share data. The arrival of supercheap computer chips and ubiquitous wireless networks make everything done possible today. Connecting different projects and using sensors to these will add a higher level of digital intelligence to these projects and it will be helpful to communicate with real-time data without involvement of a human being. IoT will merge the digital universe with the physical and will also fabricate the world as smarter and responsive. Benefits of using loT include improvement in safety and security, increase in productivity, enhanced asset utilization, efficient processes and cost saving. Another benefit of IoT includes advanced connectivity of systems, projects, devices and systems. Morevoer, loT also provides solutions for problems related to applications such as security, industrial control, health, road traffic controls, logistics, waste management, retailing process and smart city.

Out of the above mentioned applications, healthcare takes a major role as well as has added attractive interesting applications, which use IoT these days. IoT has given rise to some medical applications like remote patient monitoring, wearable-like fitness bands, fitness programs, elderly-use equipment for chronic diseases and infectious diseases or a kind of method to use in epidemic situations in the world. The latest example is the rise of COVID-19 virus, where many people including students, doctors and new inventors moved to prepare new gadgets using loT and robotics. Within the last few weeks, a lot of loT-based applications came up in the world to find solutions to give treatments to COVID-19 patients without going near them. This will helps to reduce the spread of the virus to people who work in the medical field. Then the doctors can check and assign medicine and also nurses and attendants can provide patients with all necessary stuff including food, medicine and other requirments using these gadgets. This recent incident has compelled Sri Lankan inventors to think innovatively and as a result, they have come up with new and brilliant innovations in the world.

Smart devices such as diagnostic devices, imaging devices, medical devices and sensors are the core part of IoT. Main expectations of IoTbased health care services are increasing the quality of life of patients, enhance or enrich the user's experience, while reducing cost. loT-based healthcare applications most probably interact with loT-based healthcare services. These applications are developed using these services. Here the application is user-centric and the service is developer-centric. Proactive systems are converted to reactive systems using IoT applications, and IoT will improve power, availability and accuracy of existing devices.

These gadgets, products, applications and systems can be defined as innovative healthcare solutions. Such loT-based systems consist of diverse fields such as single solutions, clustered-condition solutions, to care for elderly patients and for paediatrics. Some loT-based applications includes Glucose level sensing; an application used by
diabetic patients. It records blood glucose levels over a protracted period, and this helps to manage meals and treatments. Blood pressure monitoring is an integrated KIT of blood pressure (BP) and Near Field Communication (NFC) enabled mobile phone. From this application BP can be controlled remotely through communication structure between the patient and the hospital. Oxygen Saturation Monitoring, Heartbeat Oximetry is required to check blood oxygen immersion non-invasively. This application combines IoT with Heartbeat Oximetry, and is a very useful IoT-based health care application. The function of the wearable is to indicate the oxygen level. This device is connected with a Bluetooth health device profile. Here the sensor is directly connected with the Monere platform.

ECG Monitoring or Electrocardiogram monitoring is an electrical activity of the heart recorded by electrocardiography. This includes heart rate measurement and even a simple heart rate change or rhythm can be captured. This will be helpful to diagnose multifaceted arrhythmias, myocardial ischemia and protracted QT intervals.

With the rise of the smart phone controlled sensor, a smart phone can be identified as the driver for IoT. Most loT-based healthcare devices and applications are designed to be used on smart phones. These include resource sharing services, cross-connectivity protocols for heterogeneous devices, notification services, internet services and link protocols for major connectivity. Low-power discovery of devices and services can be added to this service list with efficiency and security. Ambient Assisted living (AAL) is an loT-based platform combined or powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) to address elderly incapacitated individuals. This will be more effective to solve problems associated with the healthcare of aging and incapacitated individuals. It will help them to have their living in a convenient and safe manner. This may help to improve individuals' confidence by ensuring autonomy and giving them assistance similar to human-servant relationship in any situation. The Internet of m -Health things ( m -loT) is none other than mobile computing, medical sensors and communication technologies
for healthcare services. This model connects 6LoWPAN with 4G networks and the conceptualization of m-loT services leads to this. Adverse drug reaction or (ADR) is the injury of taking medicine. This will happen after a single dose of a drug or its prolonged administration, or as a consequence of a combination of two or more drugs. Here, the patient's terminal is identified by using barcode and NFC-enabled devices. The pharmaceutical information system is used to check whether the drug is compatible with electronic health record and allergy profile. The concept of establishing network coverage of an area is monitored under Community healthcare. This will be an loT-based network of a residential area, municipal hospital or a rural community. To materialize Community Health (CH), this network is integrated with Wireless Body Area Networks (WBAN). Sometimes CH can be called as a virtual hospital. Children's Health Information is raising awareness about children's health and providing for needs of children with mental as well as physical, behavioral and emotional problems.

The healthcare industry is one of the most rapidly developing industries. There were huge changes in the last few decades in integrating information communication technology. The latest technology of healthcare shifted from being disease-centered to being patient-centered, where the patient can choose. This generates a huge amount of data on a patient. To get effective results, the industry needs to increase data utility which means it transmits a huge amount of sensitive data. So now you can understand how crucial and important is data security and privacy. The healthcare industry must manage and safeguard personal information to address those privacy issues, and to process and analyse them industries must follow specific rules and regulations. If not, we have to develop such kind of rules and regulations or set protocols to follow. There are some rules carried out in different countries.

Today, researchers have moved on to do more research to enhance and improve the health sector by finding innovative technological solutions with the advanced use of IoT. IoT-based applications will also
help to provide smooth and continuous service to patients and will help obtain maximum use from limited resources through efficient scheduling. This will help more patients to get the best use of resources. This is how loT will increase the interest rate of one's health bank account.
K.P.M.I. Ramanayake

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## English shortlisted winners

## Not Everybody Lives

No one lives forever. Death is inevitable. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people do not live, they just exist. And there are some people who are fed-up of life and think killing themselves is the solution to all the problems. But it is not. Life is a gift. Life is a circle of happiness, sadness, hard times and good times. We just have to face them all. Dying is easy, it is living that is hard. We only live once, we may not get a chance to live with the same people again, to love them or to be loved. So we should live the life to the fullest.

Life is worth so much and there are people who would give anything to have the opportunities we have. That is why we should try and cherish every moment. There are some who die even before they start living, without even seeing this world and some are disabled. Yet they try their best to live. No one is perfect and life is not about being perfect either. It is about being happy, not all the time but every time we can. Happiness is a choice and nothing can make us happy unless we choose to be happy. Happiness does not come to us; it can only come from within us, and we should never ruin other people's happiness just because we cannot find our own. Living a happy life does not always depend on materialistic things. Even money cannot bring all the happiness in life, if we are not happy with ourselves. No one can make us happy. We have to be happy with ourselves first. If not, we cannot find happiness in anything else.

The most important thing in life is to learn how to give love and to let it come in. But nowadays people are too busy to love. Their heads are almost filled with hatred, jealousy and lust. People are so self-centered, that they work only for their own benefit. They are depressed, angry, and cannot live with each other. Some blow themselves in the name of non-existent Gods and some murder needlessly; love, which is a must to lead a happy life, is nowhere to be seen. There is so much negativity in the world, and we should not let that get to us. We should not focus on race, nationality, cast or religion of a person when loving, sharing or
helping, because we all are fallible. And at the end of the day, all of us mortals live on the same rock and and breathe the same air. So, we should love each and every person in order to have a meaningful and happy life.

We all make mistakes and bad choices in life. However, this does not mean that we have to regret or pay for them for the rest of our lives. It is true that we cannot go back and make a brand-new beginning once we have made a mistake, but we can start now and make a brand-new ending. Once we have made a mistake, we should admit it first and then learn from it and should not repeat the same mistake. No one should let mistakes to control or decide one's future. No one should be embarrassed by failures. Life is short; so we should learn to enjoy every moment as it comes. Thinking constantly about the past and future makes us anxious and depressed. Living in the present is where we can find peace and happiness. We have to enjoy working in the present towards the future.

We only get one life and we will never get back any passing moment. The present moment is so precious, so we have to be in it and make the most of it. Time does not wait for us, so why should we wait for the perfect time to do something? The problem is, we always think we have time. So we keep on wasting our time for no reason. Life becomes more meaningful when we realize that we will never get the same moment twice.

It is not death most people are afraid of, but getting to the end of life and realizing that they have never truly lived. At the end of our lives we regret not about the things we did, but the things we did not do, the risks we never took, the dreams we did not pursue and the chances we did not take. Everyone has dreams and goals in life, and every dream is possible if we would try our best to achieve them. Even if somebody says it is impossible, it does not mean it cannot be done. The only thing is that we should never give up on them. We should trust ourselves when everyone else doubts us, because if we do not try at least once,
then we most probably would regret it one day. We should take every chance to make this life better. And there is no need to feel guilty to do the right thing, because it always brings you inner peace and happiness. So, in our lives we should have the attitude of doing the right even if it is hard at times.

It is not death that is the greatest loss in life, but what dies inside us while we live. We should never let our ambitions, hopes, goals, feelings and emotions die. Rather, we should try to keep them alive. The greatest gift we can have in life is another day alive. We are born to this world and we must make the best of it. Why do we have to die to go to heaven? Earth is already in space and we can have heaven right here. This world is not a bad place if we all live in a meaningful way. Then we can find the happiness we hope to find in heaven while living our lives. Life is worth living, not just existing.
"Everybody dies, but not everybody really lives."

## Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining and Every True Herd Has a Black Sheep

No man is born absolutely well and no man exists entirely with bad qualities. As every white has black; black also has its beauty. The good of a thing in a certain place maybe the bad of a thing in a different place. It is the environment and necessity that labels a thing good or bad and an open view of things presents the true colour of its matter. Our eyes are scales and our minds make the judgment of what we come across. Where the balance of our eyes is wrong, then the judgment of our minds is misdirected. There is no proof that a thing seems either good or bad in its true form.

It was ambition that erected Hitler and Napoleon who caused the ruin of civilization. Adolf Hitler was the leader of Nazi Germany, and his fascist policies led to World War II, leading to the genocide known as the Holocaust, which resulted in the death of about six million Jews and five million noncombatants.

It was also ambition that erected Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi who served the poor and the weak, the fallen and the depressed. Mahatma Gandhi worked hard, day and night and brought freedom to India. People who have had great success in life have a very poor and hardworking background, which comes after they have fought every obstacle in life. Since failure is a measure of success, we need to be focused and determined. This enables us to learn new things and improve our skills and abilities.

What then is ambition? A dark cloud with a silver lining? Or a true herd with a black sheep? You may wonder as you ponder the yonder facts and figures of what you see with naked eyes.

Science may be the cause of human beings' destruction. It is also the cause of human progress in knowledge. Every coin has two sides. The
side that is seen at a glance and the side that is to be searched. Are we to take the exterior mould as a guide to the interior cast? Or are we to consider the exterior as the exterior alone and the interior just the same?

Heavy and copious dark clouds sometimes obstruct the sun. When that happens, the surroundings are dark and it's not a pleasant sight. But if we look closely at the clouds, we can see that the edges are glowing silver. This brightness tells us that the sun is somewhere behind the clouds. As time goes on, the clouds move and the sun comes out.

Wherever there is sorrow, happiness lies somewhere. The shadow should always be near the light. Whenever there is darkness, bright light approaches. This teaches us not to lose hope in the hours of darkness and sorrow. It reminds us to be optimistic and hopeful. It tells us not to lose heart, when we are just about to quit. Like silver on the edges of a dark cloud, happiness always lurks behind the darkest hours.

No form exists to give a true reflection without a difference. As darkness may be helpful to some, it may be harmful to others, but darkness itself is neither good nor bad. Goodness and badness depend on those who look at it for their profits and losses. Let us consider nothing as wholly bad. The good should be examined for its defect and the bad should be inspected for its effect. This is the true being of a shrewd mind, which would lead to happiness. This is the joy of life. It is in this quality that one's life becomes prosperous and the lack of this brings down life. A man or woman who sees both sides of a thing is the better judge of his or her own life. For s/he sees the good in the bad and the bad in the good.

## Humanity- The Dying Rose

"Being human is given, but keeping our humanity is a choice."
Let me start my essay with a small story that l've been told repeatedly when I was small by my beloved grandma. Now this story will give a kick start to what I intend to leave in the hearts of all reading this.

It starts like this:

A king once ruled a very wealthy kingdom. Despite the fact that he was wealthy, he also possessed the ability to talk to birds and animals. Every morning, before breakfast he takes a walk in the forest situated next to his kingdom. So one morning, while he was having his usual morning walk, he came across a fight between a deer and a lion. Putting his life in danger, he made his way towards the fight and started to listen to every detail. The deer was definitely fighting for its life, whereas the lion was giving reasons as to why it should be killed. After listening to all the facts the king decided to save the life of the innocent deer. So he asked the lion what he could do to save the life of the deer. The lion asked the king to give him the equal amount of flesh to the weight of the flesh of the deer. Agreeing to the lion's condition, the king starts chopping off his own flesh equal to the flesh of the deer. After donating a little bit of his flesh, he still found the deer heavier. Finally he surrenders the whole of himself to the lion to eat. That is the moment when both the lion and deer turned into angels who appeared on Earth to test the extent of the king's humanity. The king is now rewarded with the most precious rewards in heaven for his deed of humanity.

This is a simple story which exaggerates the importance of humanity in our day-to-day lives. Humanity is the act of pouring out unconditional love to all living beings on Earth. It is the quality of being human and it's the fact that differentiates you from the rest. We live in a world that recognizes all religions and respects all beliefs. Any individual has the choice of selecting the religion of his or her choice, and to worship
the God of one's choice without any fear. We fought for these rights long time ago. But now, we are taking away this right. We engage in holy wars or religious campaigns against other religions, creating hate between ourselves. As a result we are breaking the trust and bond that we desperately created over the past decade. We have shut ourselves from the world and have completely isolated ourselves. We are victims of advanced technology. We spend at least half of our day on the phone. It's ironic how touch screens have made us lose touch. Technology has made us more selfish and separate more than ever. Hidden behind the screens of our smart phones, laptops and computers we have alienated ourselves from the world. We have started measuring our self-worth based on the number of likes we receive and the number of followers we have. We have started to care less about people. We have started to grow in isolation. Serving the poor and helping the differently-abled people are definitely the greatest humanitarian help anyone could provide during one's lifetime. It is very essential to identify that compared to most people of the world, we are extremely lucky to be able to satisfy our basic requirements. Thousands of people all over the world are suffering without being able to eat at least one meal per day. Families are suffering since they don't have any means to feed their kids. As the eligible community it's our duty to help the needy and the less fortunate. Giving to others does not make us less fortunate. It makes us richer in heart and soul. A person is always remembered for his or her good deeds and it is essential to understand that there is no better deed than providing services for humanitarian causes.

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 put a hault to all activities, affecting the political and economic status of almost all countries in the world. We are encouraged to stay at home in order to prevent the spread of the virus. This pandemic has given us the chance to think about ourselves twice, about our future and mostly about humanity. No matter whether you are rich or poor everyone is confined to their houses. This is where the act of humanity comes into play. The pandemic has made us realize that there is nothing constant in life, and only acts of humanity will be rewarded in heaven!!! An individual can
be compared to a 'fresh rose'; when you keep watering it, it remains fresh and attractive, just like when we perform acts of kindness and love. However, if we don't water the rose, it withers and beceoms unattractive. Just like that, if we don't help the poor and the differently-abled, we become like withered roses. No one wants a withered rose, right? We should always try to be like a fresh rose. But due to developments of technology, people have started to become more like withered roses: no acts of kindness, no love. It's time we take a stand against this!

It's time we realize that an individual's life becomes more successful not by the number of degrees he or she attains but by the degree of humanitarian activities that the individual performs on a day-to-day basis. It's the small things that will make a huge impact in the years to come. Helping an old lady cross the road is humanity, helping your mom with household activities is humanity. Basically helping anyone in need is humanity. It is an important part in life which helps us to understand each other, look at life from the view point of the people who are suffering and try to help them in any means we could. One thing we need to keep in mind is that to show humanity we don't need to be rich persons. Humanity comes from the heart and it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor. Every person can help someone in need. Every religion tells us about humanity, peace and love that is why no religion is higher than humanity!

I would like to conjoin this quote and wind up:
"Be the reason someone smiles. Be the reason someone feels loved and believes in the goodness in people" Roy T. Bennett

## D. Amalya Gunasekera <br> DS/LLB/18/092

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## A World on Pause - A Family on the Go...

In around December 2019, it was all over the news that the people in China were suffering from a pneumonia-like disease. With each passing day, patient counts went high and the first few deaths were announced. Despite this, people went on with their daily routine office employees, teachers and students travelling to their respective work place, schools and educational institutes. Little did anyone know that a mystery virus was out in the air and that they made themselves vulnerable to it.

With the help of advanced science and technology, experts in the field later named this mystery virus as the Novel Coronavirus, or rather, COVID-19. It was bullet fast. COVID-19 did not stop in one country. It spread across the globe. Schools, universities, high profit companies, shopping malls, places of worship and all other places where people would gather had to shut their doors. Everyone had to stay sealed inside the only safe place they had; their home. Countries were on lockdown. A busy world came to a halt. A globalised world had to stop on its tracks.

One such affected country is Sri Lanka. Along the west coastal belt of this paradise island lies the district of Puttalam - one of the high risk areas of the country. In this district is the city of Marawila, where a family of four reside; a grandmother, mother father and their only daughter who is awaiting to begin her final year in Medical Faculty.

Just like any other family, they were also staying indoors, keeping away from COVID-19. For a day or two they wondered when this pandemic would end. They wondered when they could get back to their normal routine. Uncertainty had hit the house and everyone was on 'thinking mode'. During tea time, the four members would think out loud about how odd it felt to be out of their usual routine, especially the father and the daughter, who were so used to their work, and university schedules. It felt like there was nothing left to do at all. The day seemed very unfruitful as they would wake up when the sun was out
and go back to bed when the night was very quiet. The one thing they would eagerly wait for was when they could watch the news at night. Why? To get to know about the country's situation. To know about the global situation.

One morning, just after breakfast, the daughter decided to think of all the possible work she could do without wasting precious time. It then occurred to her that she had so much to do! It occurred to her that instead of just two people carrying out all the housework, it could be done together as a family! She then rushed to the kitchen to where her mother and grandmother were and started sharing the workload with them. She enjoyed it. Seeing this, the father too got involved. Lunch was cooked by the whole team. Household work was shared by the four members. Everyone was very happy.

Each passing day turned out to be very fruitful. The team would do everything together. There was more laughter and cheer during teatime now. They even made time for exercise. They would spend an hour of brisk walking outside, in their home garden. Prayer time was more frequent now. Meals were enjoyed peacefully and not eaten in haste. Chores were not done in a rush. There was more family time. Despite the crisis of the world outside, the family was very happy.

After about a week of being quarantined, both father and daughter began working and attending lectures online at the comfort of their home. Despite this commitment, they would still carryout everything they could as a family. They would even spend some extra time outside, after their brisk walk, to feel the breeze, to observe nature and much more...

Conversations were not just home-bound. They even started talking to their friends and relatives living overseas more often than they did. Those who used to visit the family once in a while spoke more often over the phone. Despite the distance, whether it was just a few blocks away or many miles away, relationships were maintained. They
became stronger and noticed many positive changes in their house and in their family within a month.

This is about how the COVID-19 pandemic had an effect on me and my family. Despite all the negativity that the world had to face and is facing, the positivity that I noticed was that COVID-19 made me realise the worth of being together as a family. This small unit called 'family' is our small world in this huge world. Family is not just about how many members are there. It is the togetherness that keeps it going. This keeps it surviving though tough times. Though the world was on pause, within the safe walls of our house, my family was on the go...

## B.S.C. Malshani Perera D/MBBS/15B/0062 <br> FOM

# Sinhala shortlisted winners 

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Rizna Rilwan
D/ENG/20/0036

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## K.G.P.H. Dilrukshi Bandara

## Tamil shortlisted winner

# மணிமேகலை எனும் தமிழ்க் காப்பியத்தில் பௌத்த தத்துவமும் அறமும் 

தமிழ்
ดொழி
உள்ளடக்கியதுடன் ஒரு பபருவளம் மொழியாகும். இந்திய இலக்கிய காலகட்டங்களிலும் அது பல்லேறு வகையான உட்பபாருட்களள்் கொண்ட இலக்கியங்களை கண்டிருக்கிறது. சங்க காலம் என்றழழக்கப்படும் கி.பி முன்றாம் நாற்றாற்டு வெையான காலப்பகுதியலல் காதலும் வீரமும் உட்லபாருளாகக் கொண்ட இலக்கியங்கள் உருவாகின. பத்துப்பாட்டு எட்டுத் தொகை எணும் நுால்களும் தொல்காப்பியம் எறும் எனும் இலக்கண நுறு|ம் முக்கியமானவை. ஐவகை நிலங்களிலும் வாழ்ந்த மக்களது காதலும் வீரமும் இவ்விலக்கியங்களில் போற்றப்பட்டன. இவ்வாழ்க்ணையில்ஈுுபட்டு திழைத்த மக்களது வாழ்க்கை பின்ன் சலிப்படைகிறது. இன்ப வாழ்க்கை ஒழுக்கமற்றதாக மாறுகிறது.இதனால் அறவாழ்வு நாடிய போக்கு இங்கு ஏற்படுகிறது. இதன் பின்னரான காலத்தை இலக்கிய வரலாற்றாசிிியர்கள் சங்கமருவிய காலம் என்பா். இக்காலத்தில் நாலடியாா், திருக்குறுள், மணிமேகலை முதலிய தத்துவவம் மற்றுு்் ஒழுக்க விடயங்களைப் போதிக்கும் நூால்கள் இக்காலத்தில் எழுந்தன. இந்நுல்களுள் பௌத்த சிந்தனைகளை அடிப்படையாகக் கொண்ட மணிமேகலல எனும் காப்பியம் பற்றுயதே இக்கட்டுறையாகும்.

சிலப்பதிகாரத்தில் நடனமாதுவாக வருகிள்ற மாதவிக்கும் கண்ணகியின் கணவனான கோவலறு்கும் பிறந்த குழந்தையே மணிமேகலை எனும் பெண்ணாகும். இப்பபண்ணிளது வாழ்க்ணையை அடிப்படையாகக் கொண்டு சீத்தலை்் சாத்தளாரால் இக்காப்பியம் படைக்கப்படுகிள்றது. இலக்கிய நயத்துடன் மட்டுமன்றி பௌத்த அறத்தையும் வெளிப்படுத்தி நிற்பதே மணமமேகலை எனும் இக்காப்பியமாகும். இது முப்பது காதைகளைக் கொண்டமைந்துள்ளது.அன்பி் வழியதுஉயர்நிலை என்பதுதான் மணிமேகலலயின் அடப்படை எண்ணக்கரு. அசையற்று வாழ்கிஞ்ற உயர்நிலையின் முக்கியத்துவத்றைப் போதிக்கின்றது.पபளத்தம் த்ாம்திற்கு அன்றைய காலகட்டத்தில் இருந்த ஒழுக்கச் சீ்கேடுகளை அகற்ற வேண்டிய தேவவயிருந்தது. இதனால் பபத்தம் போதிக்கும் பரத்தையா் ஒழிப்ப, தீண்டாமை ஒழப்பு, மது ஒழிப்பு முதிலியவற்றை நீக்கும் பண்பு இந்நுால்களில் காணணப்படுகிறது.

பௌத்த தர்மத்திற்கு மதம் அல்லது சமயம் என்னும் பதப்பிரயோகம் பொருந்தாது என்பதுடன் பௌத்த தா்மம் அல்லது பௌத்த சாசனம் என்பதே பொருத்தமான பதங்களாகும். ஏனெனில் பௌத்தம் இறை நம்பிக்கையற்ற கொள்கையை உடையதனால் சமயம் என அழைக்க முடியாது என்பது அனேகரது வாதம். ஏனெனில் கடவுள்சாா் அனுஸ்டானங்கள் இவற்றில் குறிப்பிடப்படவில்லை. மாறாா நிலையாமை பற்றியும் ஒழுக்கம் பற்றியுமே பௌத்தம் அதிகமும் கூறகிறது. இவற்றில் மூன்று முக்கிய விடயங்கள் மையப்பொருளாகின்றன. அவை மூப்பு, பிணி சாக்காடு என்பனவாகும். இவற்றிற்கு மணிமேகலையும் முக்கியத்துவம் அளிக்கின்றது.
> "......பிறத்தலும் மூத்தலும் பிணிப்பட்டிரங்கலும்
> இறத்தலும் உடையது இடும்பைக் கொள்கலம் மக்கள் யாக்கை இதுவென உணா்ந்து
> மிக்க நல்லறம் விரும்புதல் புாிந்தேன்" (மணிமேகலை 20: 135-140)

இந்த மூன்று விடயங்களும் தவிா்க்கட முடியாதவை. இதனை வெற்றி கொள்வதே மனிதனின் இலக்காக இருக்க வேண்டும். இதற்குரிய வழியாக துறுவும் இறுதி முடிவாக நி்்வாணமும் பிரோிக்கப்படுகின்றது.

பரத்தையா் மரபு சங்க காலத்திலிருந்து வந்ததாகும். இது ஒழுக்கமற்ற இயல்பு என்பதைக் காட்ட வேண்டிய தேவை சாத்தனாருக்கு இருந்தது. மாதவியின் தாயாா் சித்திராபதி பரத்தையா் குலத்தைச் சோ்்தவள். மாதவியும் மணிமேகலையும் அம்மரபை விட்டு பௌத்த வழி செல்வதை விரும்பவில்லை. ஆனால் மாதவியும்மணிமேகலையும் சேற்றில் செந்தாமரை முளைக்கும் எனும் திடம் கொண்டவர்களாய் இருந்தனர். உதயகுமாரன் முதலிய அரசா்களின் இச்சைக்கு இணங்குதல் தமது மரபு என்பதை சித்திராபதி பின்வருமாறு விளக்குகிறாள்:

> "நாடவாட காண நல்லாங்கேறி
> ஆடலும் பாடலும் அழக்ங் காட்டி கண்டோ் மெஞ்சம் கொண்ட கம்புக்கு பண்டோ் மொழியிற் பயன்பல வாங்கி வண்டிற் றுற்ங்குங் கொண்டி மகளிரை பான்மையிற் பிணித்து படிற்றுரை யடக்குதல் கோன்முறை யன்றோ"

என உதயகுமாரன் அம்பலம் புக்க காதையில் சாத்தனாா் கூறுகின்றாா்.காமமே இதில் முக்கியமாவதால் பரத்தையா் ஒழுக்கம் முற்றாக மறுக்கப்படுகின்றது.எல்லாச் சமுதாய சிக்கல்களுக்கும் பரத்தையா் முறை காரணமாவதை அவதானித்தே இவ்வொழுக்கத்தை போதித்தாா. குடும்ப ஒழுக்கம் நிலவ வேண்டுமாயின் ஒருவருக்கு ஒருத்தி என்பதே சிறந்தது என்பது சாத்தனாரது எண்ணம்.
‘ பத்தினிப்பெண்டிா் அல்லோம் பலர்தம்
கைத்துாண் வாழ்க்கை கடவிய மன்றோ"
என பாத்திரம் பெற்ற காதையில் (வாிகள்: 96-97) வாழ்க்கை சிறப்புற வேண்டுமாயின் ஒருவனுக்கு ஒருத்தி என்பது பேணப்பட வேண்டும் என்ற ஒழுக்கத்தை சாத்தனாா் முன்வைக்கின்றாா். ஒருநாகாிகமான வாழ்க்கை முறையை 1500 ஆண்டுகளுக்கு முன்பே சாத்தனாா் வெளிப்படுத்தியிருக்கின்றாா. அக்கால ஒழுக்கமற்ற வாழ்க்கையை மாற்றியமைக்க வேண்டுமென்ற எண்ணம் சாத்தனாாிடத்தில் இருந்தது. பௌத்த அடிப்படைத் தத்துவமான நால்வகை வாய்மைகள் (The Four Noble Truths) இங்கு பி்பற்ற்ப்படராமை சாத்தனாரால் உணரப்பட்டது. ஒழுக்கம் தவறுவதற்கு முக்கிய காரணம் இப்பரத்தையா் சமுக ஊடாட்டம் என்பதும் இதனை மாற்றியமைக்க வேண்டுமென்பதும் இவரது நோக்கம். இதனாலேயே காவியத்திற்குாிய பிரதான பாத்திரம் இச்சமூகத்திலிருந்து எடுக்கப்பபட்டது.

குற்றம், வினை $\quad$ வினைப்பயன் என்பன துக்கத்திற்கு காரணங்களாகும். நால்வகை வாய்மைகளான துக்கம், துக்க தோற்றம், துக்க நீக்கம், துக்க நீக்க மாா்க்கம் என்பன பௌத்தத்தின் அடிப்படை தத்துவங்களாகும். இதனால் மிகவும் அடிப்படையானது துக்கம் (Suffering) என்பது பௌத்த சித்தாந்தத்தின் அடிப்படைக் கொள்கை. இத்துக்கம் எதனால் ஏற்படுகிறது என்பது சாத்தனாாின் ஆராய்ச்சி. இதற்கு அடிப்படையாய் அமைவது அறியாமை அல்லது பேதமை (Ignorance) என்பதாகும். பேதமை என்பது என்னவென (Definition for ignorance) சாத்தனாரால் தரப்படுகிறது.
‘ பேதமை என்பது யாதென வினவின் ஓதி இவற்றை உணராது மயங்கி இயற்படு பொருளாற் கண்டது மறந்து முயற்கோடென கேட்டது தெளிதல்"

என்கின்றாா். நாம் கற்றதையும் நிராகாித்து எமது நேரான புலன்கலால் அறிவனவற்றையும் மறந்து ஒருவா் ஒன்றைக் கூறினால் அதனை நம்புவதாகும். சாத்தனா்் அதனை ஒரு உதாரணம் மூலம் விளக்குகிறா்். முயலுக்கு கொம்பில்லை என்பதனை நாம் பல அறிவு மூலங்களால் அறிந்திருக்கின்றோம். ஆனால் அதற்கு கொம்புண்டென்று ஒருவா் கூறின் அதனை ஏற்பதற்கு சமனானதே அறியாமையாகும். இவ்வறியாமையினால் நாம் பாவச் செயல்களைச் செய்கின்றோம் என்கின்றாா். மனிதன் செய்யும் செயல்கள் எத்தன்மையுடையன என்பதனைப் பாா்ப்போம்.

மனிதன் தீவினை செய்தலில் ஈடுபடுதல் அவனது துன்பத்திற்கு காரணமாகும் என்கின்றாா். தீவினை மனம், வாக்கு, காயம் எனும் மூன்றினாலும் பத்து வகையான தீவினைகளைப் புரிவதாக இவா் கூறுகிறாா். பிற்் பொருளை கவர நினைத்தல், வெகுளல், குற்றம்பட உண்்தல் என்பன மனத்தினால் செய்யும் மூன்று தீவ்னைகளாகும். பொய் கூறல், புறங்கூறல், கடுஞ்சொல் கூறல், பயனில்லாதன கூறல் என்பன வாக்கினால் (சொல்லில்) செய்யும் நான்கு தீவினைகளாகும். கொலை, களவு, காமம் என்பன மெய்யினால் (உடல்) செய்யும் தீவினைகளாகும். இத்தீயவினைகளின் வகையும், இயல்பும் பயனும் உணர்ந்தால் இத்தீவினைகளை செய்ய வேண்டியிராது என்பது பௌத்த நிலைப்பாடு. இத்தீவினைகளை நினைத்தாராயின் விலங்கும் பேயும் நரகருமாகி கலக்கமுற்று வலிச்சுமைகளை தாங்கி கவலை கொண்டு துன்பமடைவ்் என்று கூறுகின்றாா். இத்தீவினைகளையும் இவற்றின் பயன்களையும கதை மூலம்உருவகப்படுத்தி மணிமேகலையில் சாத்தனா்் காட்டுகின்றா்.

இவ்வாறு தீவினைகளின் வகைகைளையும் அதன் இயல்பினையும், அதனால் ஏற்படும் பலன்களையும் குறித்துக் காட்டிய சாத்தனா்் நல்வினை பற்றியும் விளக்குகின்றாா். இவாின்படி நல்வினை என்பது மேற்கூறிய தீவினைகளைச் செய்யாது, ஒழுக்க மா்்க்கம் பின்பற்றி, தானங்கள் செய்து வாழும் துாய வாழ்க்கையாகும என்கின்றாா்.

> " நல்வினையென்பது யாதென வினவின் மசால்லிய பத்த்ன் தொகுதியின் நீங்க்ச் சீலந் தாங்கித் தானம் தலலந்ன்று மேல்ல் வருத்த ஒரு மூன்று திறத்துத் மேவரும், மக்களும் பரரருமாகித் மேவிய மகிழ்ச்சி வினைப்பயன் உண்குவா்"

என நல்வினையின் இயல்பினையும் அதனால் ஏற்படும் பயன்களையும் விளக்குகின்றாா். இவ்வினைகளினால் எப்பிறப்பிலும் இன்பமே உண்டாகும் என்கின்றாா். இதற்கு அறிவு அவசியமாகும். இப்பாடலில் "உணா்வெனப்படுவது உறங்குவோா் உணா்வின் புாிவு இன்றாகிப் புலன்கொளா ததுவே" எனும் வாிகள் மூலம் மனதில் ஒரு அறிவு நிலை ஏற்பட்டு விட்டால் எவ்வித ஈா்ப்புமின்றி நிதானமான நிலை ஏற்படும் என்கிறாா். இது ஒரு விஞ்ஞான நிலையாகும். இந்நிலை எங்களிடம் இருந்து விட்டால் தீவினை செய்ய ஒருபோதும் மனம் அனுமதிக்காது.

பொதுவாக நோக்கின் அக்காலத்து வாழ்க்கை முறை ஒழுக்கமின்றி இருந்திருக்க வேண்டும். காமம், வெகுளி, மயக்கம் காரணமாக மனித ஒழுக்க நடத்ததைகள் சீாகுலைந்திருந்தன. இதனை திருத்துவதாயின் பௌத்த அறக்கருத்துக்களைப் போதிக்க வேண்டும். அதிலும் நல்வினை, தீவினை, பேதமை பற்றிய தெளிவட்டல் தேவையாயிருந்தது. இதனை நேரடியாகச்சொல்லாமல் ஒரு காப்பித்தின் மூலம்வெளிப்டுத்துதல் நன்மையை கொடுகும். ஏனெனில் கலை இலக்கியம் மாற்றத்தை ஏற்படுத்தக் கூடிய வல்லமையுடையது. இதனால்தான் மணிமேகலை இரண்டு விதமாக கடமைகளைச் செய்தது. ஒன்று இலக்கிய நயதடதுடனனான காப்பியம். முற்றது சமூகத்தைத் திருத்தக் கூடிய அறப்போதனை. இரண்டும் இப்பழம்பெரும் காப்பியத்தில் செறிந்து காணப்படுவதால் இன்றும் இலக்கிய மற்றும் தத்துவ உலகில் மணிமேகலை சிறப்புடையதாக இருக்கின்றது.

## V. Alagaratnam <br> Staff <br> Library

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## KDU Staff and Students





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## థఠరేదฺ(


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ஜరరతఱఱ
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