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Mamai Benai (Apiyi) - A Show of Hope for the Future of Sinhala Community in Brisbane

The popular Sri Lankan musical show by Rohana Baddage and Bandula Wijeweera staged on Sunday 22nd July at Cannon Hill Anglican College was an aesthetic experience worthy of mention.



A scene from the Play - "Mamai Benai"

Nourished both by the authentic experience of a villager and knowledge acquired by serious study of authentic Sinhala rhythm, the two talented musicians shared their deep understanding of the 'voice' of the hard working, simple folks of the Sinhala village. Their fears and anxieties, their joys and jubilations were immortalized through songs that struck a chord with many an audience.

No doubt the Sinhala Community in Brisbane will extend their congratulations to the Sinhala Association of Queensland who organized the show, for the effort made to promote the talents of the younger members in the community. The budding musicians had an opportunity to whet their appetite for music in Sinhala accompanying the veteran artists.

The canteen run by the pupils of the Brisbane Sinhala School supported by the parents raised funds for the new venue of the school after the demise of Yungaba which has been a haven for multicultural communities in Brisbane.

Wimal Kannangara

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**Workshop on Sri Lankan Folk Music
 Rohana Baddege and Bandula Wijeweera**

By Jayantha Weeresekara

A workshop was organised jointly by the Sinhala Association and the 4EB Sri Lankan Radio Group on "Ape Jana Gee". This was held at the 4EB Auditorium last Monday, the 23rd of July. It was well attended by enthusiastic members of Sri Lankan community who were keen to listen to Rohana and Bandula speaking on traditional Sinhala folk music. They are not only talented performers, but also erudite scholars on this subject, which is close to all Sri Lankans. The participants at the workshop were treated to delightful snippets of traditional folk songs sung by Rohana in his clear and deep voice. There were moments when all of us who attended the workshop were transported, in time and place, to the rural environs of that beautiful island of ours. These were the moments when the sense of belonging to the beloved country of ours, a sense of being one with our traditions, was most acute.

Rohana Baddege hails from Rigam Koale. Perhaps because of his rural background, and perhaps because of growing up within the confines of a traditional society, Baddege had a natural desire to research "Ape Jana Gee". His current position as a lecturer in aesthetic studies at the University of Kelaniya has provided him with the opportunity to continue his research in the academic domain.

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The workshop generated significant audience participation. The members of the audience were eager to know more about the traditional folk music, how the songs originated, how the music was developed and influences to which the music was subjected. Rohana's answers were simple. He said folk music is part of the cultural development of any society in the process of its civilisation; music was an extension of language. It is natural for music to develop where there is a language. Whereas language provides words to express baser emotions, music gives expression to higher emotions that language cannot convey. Thus, folk music is that



Rohana Baddage and Jayantha

higher emotion we all have towards our cultural heritage, our collective history, and to the land where we, as well as our forefathers, were nurtured and nourished.

Baddege also mentioned that the traditional

Sinhala folk music is often related to the particular vocation people were engaged in. In a way, he said, the lyrics and the rhythm of the music developed to ease the toil of the villager engaged in his or her labour, in the field or at home. For instance there are different genre of songs and poems, such as:

- Nellum Kavi
- Pal Kavi
- Onchlili Waram
- Daru Nalavili
- Karaththa Kavi

The words of these traditional songs and poems were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, just like in all other cultures. In their long passage through time, our folk music has been influenced by the prevailing nature of the political climate under different kings. In Sri Lanka, due to our close proximity to India, we also have had our share of foreign influence. The four and a half centuries of colonial domination has further influenced our culture. Nevertheless, we have been able, remarkably, to maintain the purity of our Jana Gee.

In a brilliant exposition of folk music, Rohana depicted a farmer ploughing a paddy field with a traditional plough to the strains of "Anda Haraya". He followed this up with several "Seepadas". These came naturally to him. But, unfortunately, there was no traditional drum to accompany him with the "bera padaya". Rohana went on to explain the traditional beliefs of the people and the songs and music employed by them to evoke the blessings of gods and to ward off evil, such as those used in "thovil" and in "shanti karma". "Nadagam Gee", Rohana said, were influenced by church hymns and possibly by "kolam" theatre of Kerala.

Rohana went on to elaborate on the necessity to preserve the traditions of our folk music in a world where, under globalisation, there is a strong current of cultural convergence. To let go of our culture and tradition is to lose our identity as a people. And, for a small country like ours, it could be the death knell of our very existence.

Listening to the beating of the traditional drums, Rohana said, would move any Sri Lankan to feel in his heart the longing for the country we have left. It would indeed be strange if it does not happen. That sentimental attachment is not there when one listens to traditional music of other cultures. The reason, Rohana said, is that folk music evolves along with a society's cultural development and becomes part and parcel of one's heritage and identity. Not to have that is not to have an identity.

Finally, Rohana paid a glowing tribute to the likes of Veteran Musicians W D Makuloluwa and Lionel Ranwela who had undertaken extensive research into the folk music of Sri Lanka. He emphasised the need for the younger generation to undertake further research into this subject. With this in mind, the University of Kelaniya has introduced a new subject called "Ethno Musicology". The objective of introducing this subject, Rohana said, is to undertake more extensive research in the field of folk music of all ethnic groups in the country, identify regional variations, and examine psychological issues that impact on the society especially on the ever changing living styles of the people.

The workshop was concluded with a traditional Sri Lankan shared dinner and it was a marvellous opportunity for the attendees to have a close chat with Rohana and Bandula in a relaxed atmosphere.

4EB Sri Lankan Radio Group acknowledges the support extended by the Sinhala Association of Queensland for yet another successful community event.



Some of the Workshop participants with "Mamai Banai"

Radio 4EB Sri Lankan Group actively encourages the youth to participate in programming, panel operating and other activities. Free training is provided for those who wish to get involved in panel operation. Listen to the programme every Tuesday 10pm to 11pm and send in your song requests and birthday/anniversary greetings to be broadcast. Contact the youth coordinator - Sandun Sandella.youth@hotmail.com

CHILDREN'S CORNER



My name is Dishmini Sriwardene. I am a student of Mansfield State School. I am in grade 7. I live in Mansfield, Queensland. My hobbies are collecting stickers and playing tennis.



Dishmini's Drawing

Radio Programme Schedule

Tuesday-Sandella 10.00 PM	Producer/ Panel Operator
31 July 2007	Sam Fernando (bi-lingual)/Wimal
7 August 2007	Youth/Sandun
14 August 2007	Seetha-Nande Gamage/Jayasiri
21 August 2007	Nishendra/Ananda
28 August 2007	Jay Wickramatunga (bi-lingual)/Sandun

A Beautiful Festival in a Beautiful Valley- Telling a Tale of Humanity

The Shrine of Our Lady - Help of Christians nestling in the lush green of Marian Valley and Madhu Church set in the harsh jungles of Vanni are locations almost worlds apart.

But the Faith that brings the diverse pilgrims from all walks of life, representing all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka together in worship, bridging racial and geographic boundaries, is the same. The adoration of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is one and the same. The Madhu Festival in Marian Valley tells the story of this unity in diversity.

It also tells the universal story of the mother and the child. The paintings and statues of baby Jesus in the tender arms of his mother, the famous statue "Pieta" of Christ crucified to redeem the sins of mankind, dying on the loving knees of his compassionate mother - a compassion extended to all suffering beings, tell a story that all humanity understands. There are no words in this story- only feelings.

To me it seems that, it is this feeling which defies words that over 150 pilgrims celebrated at the Madhu Festival held on Saturday 7th July. That feeling is called Faith.

Contributed by [Sugee Kannangara](#)



'Our Lady of Madhu' Shrine at Marian Valley, Cunnungra

We welcome contributions from children of any age. Send us your letters, stories, poems, drawings etc. We will make every effort to publish them in future issues.

Sunday Radio 8.30 AM	Producer/ Panel Operator
5 August 2007	Jayantha/Sandun
12 August 2007	Ajith Kossinna/Kossinna
19 August 2007	Gihan/Gihan
26 August 2007	Dushyantha/Aruna

Youth Corner

CHOICES

In September 2002, I was given the chances of two roads – ‘one that was grassy and wanted wear’, while the other road was less worn. The choice to embark by myself to Sri Lanka as a tender ten year old or to sit back and enjoy the NRL and AFL final series at home with my brother. After much contemplation, I decided to get out of my comfort zone and take ‘the road less travelled by’.

At first I was surprised at all the fuss I was receiving, as all it was to me was a plane ride to see the place of my heritage. However, once I reached the Brisbane International Airport, the enormity of the whole thing hit me. A month away from my family in a place I hadn’t seen for many years. Additionally, the fourteen hour plane ride with a transit of eight hours wasn’t going to be easy.

I questioned myself on whether I was ready for such an ordeal at such a young age or did I really want to do this, when I could take the safe option of staying at home and relaxing? But, it was too late, there was no turning back.

The plane trip went smoothly with the assistance of some fine young female stewardesses who eased me into the plane ride with their friendly and helpful ways. The transit was probably one of the hardest times out of the whole trip as I had to keep myself occupied for eight long hours at Changi airport. After coming out of Singapore relatively unscathed, I arrived in Sri Lanka, greeted by the warm friendly faces of my grand parents, uncles, aunties and cousins.

Looking back after a month, I laughed at my early apprehension in going to Sri Lanka. I was glad I had taken ‘the road less travelled by’. After a month of travelling around through Sri Lanka, I had realised there was much more to the world other than sports, though it still remains a central part of my life today. Also, my trip as a ten year old had opened my eyes to the world outside and helped me find a passion in the form of world travel.

My experiences from the Sri Lanka trip will remain with me till the day I die. I felt my time in Sri Lanka had given me the self-belief and confidence to do anything I put my mind

to, and I owe this to my parents for giving me the opportunity. Even if my trip had turned out sour, I would have been able to build on my experiences, as “what doesn’t kill you, only makes you stronger”. (Friedrich Nietzsche)

Therefore, I had gained a plethora of things from my experiences in Sri Lanka. I found what the world had to offer. I found a passion for world travel. I found a strong sense of belief within myself. But most importantly, I found an insight into choices – that in life you must be willing



Sachinka Ranasinghe

to take ‘the road less travelled by’ for better or worse, in order to stretch yourself. As in my case I was willing to get out of my comfort zone, and in my opinion it is a choice that paid dividends as it has ‘made all the difference’.

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.



15 years old Sachinka is a Grade 10 student of Brisbane Grammar School and an old student of Brisbane Sinhala School. His interests include Cricket, Rugby and Cross Country. He is a self proclaimed fan of Nandos - "cannot live without it"

Upcoming Events

BATHIYA & SANTHUSH **Namaste (Ayubowan)** **Musical Concert**



Date : **Saturday 4th August 6.00 pm**
McGregor Primary School Hall, McGregor
(UBD 200 P16)

Tickets:
Adults \$20 Children (8-12years) \$10 Family \$60
Please contact: **Anoma 32787809 Sandya 38492856**
(all proceeds will be donated to a charitable organization)

SILVER FAWN CLUB

18 August
Fancy Dress Nite & Dance Competition

Members: \$16, Guests \$20
Ithaca Bowls Club, Red Hill
For tickets contact [Davenal 3878 1667](tel:38781667)

26 August
Inter Club Cricket Tournament

9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

Souths Brisbane District Cricket Club
Fehlberg Park
269 Venner Road, Fairfield
For details contact
[Sarath Weerasinghe 0402421530](tel:0402421530)

A "Paduru Partiya" organised by the Sinhala Association of Qld (SAQ)

To raise funds for the next years Training Program of Public Health Professionals
from Sri Lanka

Saturday 11th August 2007
Venue: To be Advised

Meet and greet the visitors from Sri Lanka
(who will be here from 4th to 18th August)

Sing along and have a wonderful evening

Please support this worthy cause

For details, contact
[Aravinda Rubasinghe 3342 5778](tel:33425778),
[Sam Fernando 3243 2846](tel:32432846),
[Sujeeva Wanigatunga 3349 0548](tel:33490548)



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Support the Radio that supports you

Your renewal of Radio 4eb membership is now due for the current financial year.

**Act now before we lose our prime radio time on Sunday morning.
We have only one more week to comply the 4eb membership requirements.**

Membership costs \$25 for the whole year and \$15 for concession.

It is our community radio – with a Sri Lankan identity. Your support assists us to preserve this valuable asset.

For renewal, please contact the Station on **3240 8600**.

If you are not a member, the membership forms can be obtained from 4eb Web site (www.4eb.org.au) or contact a committee member.

Film News

Brisbane International Film Festival (BIFF)

Sinhala Film - "Sankara"

Producers:

Renuka Balasooriya,
Somaratne Dissanayake

Director:

Prasanna Jayakody

Cast: Sanchini Ayendra, Thumindhu Dodantenna,
Nilupa Heenkendaarachchi,



The young Buddhist monk, Ananda, arrives at a small village temple to restore fragile paintings. The paintings depict a moral story where Lord Buddha teaches that man must not be swayed by passion. A beautiful village girl awakens Ananda's repressed feelings, plunging the young monk into spiritual turmoil.

4th August 2007 19:00 PM

Palace Centro Cinemas - Palace Cinema 2
39 James Street, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

8th August 2007 17:00 PM

The Regent - Regent Cinema 3
167 Queen Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

For further information please visit www.biff.com.au

Details of the Sinhala Film to be screened at the International Film Festival are shown purely as an item of community interest and not as an advertisement or an endorsement in any way.



The current issue of this newsletter is edited by a guest editor, Jayantha Weerasekera.
If you are interested in being a guest editor, please contact brisbaneradio@yahoo.com.au

Send us an email so that we can include your address in our mailing list.
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