



## Intervention of the early left movement in the culture in Sri Lanka: in the light of the red poets in the Colombo period

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### Abstract

*The Leftist Movement of Sri Lanka (1935-1964) worked first against imperialism, then against the Ceylon National Congress and thereafter against the UNP. This was the main movement that fought for political and economic freedom in the context of colonialism. The functioning of several political parties, such as the L.S.S.P, C.P, and the M.E.P. as well as the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, is commonly known as the Leftist Movement. This research looks at what the left-wing movement did in the cultural field. Opinions of ten scholars, books, newspapers and websites have been used as the sources of the study. Qualitative data collected is subjected to qualitative analysis. The study focuses on an inquiry into creative works and political activities of very popular 10 poets who had associated with the left movement. The key factors this pursuit has disclosed includes that those politically minded poets involved in their literary activities and both active politics at the same time. It has also been found out that the format they commonly used was quatrain with rhymes. Newspapers, magazines, books and leaflets containing a versified account of unusual true contemporary incident were the important media they used. Their creations were largely propagandist, but occasionally there were also creative works. All these poets also could reel off impromptu verses. Solely for this reason the left movement sought the support of these poets in order to attract masses. Based on these facts, it is concluded that the early left movement is marked by the intervention of the poets of the second generation or Romantic poets of the Colombo period in it. It is impossible to remove these poets from the leftist movement.*

**Keywords:** The early left, poets of Colombo era, communism, national movement, Samasamaja party.

### Introduction

The early left movement was an alliance of a few leftist political parties, the LSSP, the Communist Party, the MEP, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and a few political movements adhered to a middle path. The period these leftists were most active was from 1935 to 1964. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party was founded in 1935. In 1964 the left-wing parties joined the Samagi Peramuna alliance. Thereafter, a young revolutionary left-wing movement comes to being. The early left movement of Sri Lanka was engaged in an active struggle against imperialism and the affluent ruling class. Whether they had intervened in culture during this period is an important academic issue. The most important issue in Lankan society in the 1930s was the liberation from imperialism. To liberate the country from imperialism, armed struggle was the strategy employed in the early days by the indigenous people. The peasant rebellion of 1818 and the "anti-government tax" rebellions of 1848 were brutally suppressed by the British saying that they were only suppressing the insurrection villages were totally destroyed by the British<sup>1</sup>. Armed measures came to an end after these destructions. Then the fighting for freedom began. It was a two-fold fighting to get political and economic independence and to restore or revive culture. The only social movement that sought to win political freedom was the leftist movement. The other

main group engaged in politics at that time was Ceylon National Congress and they were supporters of the British rulers. Those who took part in the cultural renaissance movement can be divided into two categories, i.e. those who led the religious renaissance and those involved in the language revivalist movement. The religious renaissance was led by the prelates and the Buddhist laity. It was not limited to Buddhism. Anagarika Dharmapala was one of the leaders who gave leadership to the Buddhists. The language movement was led by a group which later organized themselves as "the Hela Havula", oriental scholars and monks. These people were mostly fighting for their culture<sup>2</sup>. So they were nurturing literary art. The aim of this study is to examine whether the leftist movement that took part in active struggle for independence has whatsoever engaged in cultural activities.

As Marx referred to it the intervention in culture is the intervening in the superstructure. It has been interpreted by various critics in different ways. Tyler says, "Culture... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society"<sup>3</sup>. Raymond Williams's definition for culture gives a clearer picture more than Tyler "the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social

relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate”<sup>4</sup>. What we are studying here is an investigation into the intervention of the Left Movement in literary art and communication which are just a part of culture.

## Methodology

Both live and inanimate data were used for the research. This data refer to the basic concepts of the research, i.e. “the early movement of the left” and “the cultural interventions”. Qualitative discussions were held with ten scholars of the field of study. A few of them are interviews and the rest is telephone conversations. The group with whom the matter to be discussed was decided after going through the literature pertaining to it. Accordingly discussions have been held with the following ten scholars.

Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda, Prof. Rathnasiri Arangala, Somaweera Chandrasiri, Prof. Sunil Ariyaratne, Prof. Jayantha Amarasinghe, Prof. Nawaratne Bandara, Geethanath Kudaligama, Kuliyapitiya Sri Prananda, Bandupala Guruge, M.D Daniel and Asoka Weerasinghe de Silva are the ten. Information supplied by them has been helpful to determine the direction of the research. It was from this group that diverse details such as various divisions of the left movement of Sri Lanka, whether they intervened in culture and varied individuals involved in the early left movement etc. were learnt.

The other source, inanimate data include books, newspapers, websites, blogs and videos. Two video clips on P. Malalgoda and Sirilal Kodikara could be found. As most of the verses (quatrains) contributed to newspapers by poets of the left movement have later been collected and published in book form we did not need to look up those newspapers. We could gather information about impromptu verses reeled off by these poets through internet which contains copies of contributions made on them to the press by some writers from time to time. Studies done on left movement and biographies of Lankan red leaders also have been gone through. Move over, investigations have been done into various divisions of literature, i.e. novels, short stories, etc. with a view to seeing whether they contain in them any reference works with a left-wing tendency. Reference has been made to these works in the literary analysis.

Through this study a group of those who had produced works with left-wing ideas and at the same time who had involved in active politics has been identified and an attempt was made as to find out how they had been connected with politics. In that attempt has only been focused on hostile attitudes, criticisms, satire, insults etc. embodied in their works which are revolutionary, radical, communist and hostile to social injustice. Works meant for children, religious works and aesthetic compositions written by these authors have not been included in this research. As both these writers themselves are with a left-wing history behind them and are intimately connected with literary criticism and poetics their knowledge and experience

enabled them to make the most relevant selection of literature. Data collected are qualitative and thus they have been qualitatively analyzed. Therefore an attempt has been made to present to the reader a clear picture of how the left-moment intervened in culture. Analysis tries to make the reader aware of the group behind this pursuit and also makes reference to relevant events of importance.

**Literary Review:** Ariya Rajakaruna is his work titled “*Nutana Sinhala Kavya-2*” says, “Signs of a yet new tradition of poetry are being emerged around 1935. This third poetry tradition is the Colombo Poetry tradition.” He has given 59 names of poets belonging to this period. He also says that a good number of some more names should be added to the list. One of his observations about this new tradition is as follows: “Leftist movement began around 1930 affected even literature. Colombo poetry tradition is a result of this. That is why a lot of poetries round the dark side of the average man have been written in the language of ordinary men”<sup>5</sup>. However, Rajakaruna makes no more reference to their tendency forwards left-wing beyond that. Nor does the list contain names of those poets who had a tendency towards left movement. Poets like Raipiyel Tennakoon, Jayantha Weerasekara and Chandraratne Manavasinghe who flourished in the period prior to this were also leftists. P. Malalgoda, Somaweera Chandrasiri, Ariyavansa Pathiraja and P. B. Alwis Perera etc. were leading left-wing poets<sup>6</sup>. As Jayadeva Uyagodasays Rev. Fr. Mercelin Jayakodi and Rev. Fr. Ernest Porutota, Progressive Writers Association – Jaffna (northern part of Sri Lanka), and left-wing artists of Chilaw and the Ven. Udakendawala Saranankara Thera also should be included in this groups. Further, Batuwandara Gunawardena and Bantis Ranaweera etc. also were poets who represented the left movement<sup>7</sup>. Accordingly information about several leftist poets could be gathered. According to Geethanath Kudaligama almost all of the Colombo period poets are leftists. It was their political attitude. But it appears that not all these poets have produced creative works on which there is left political influence.

Then an attempt was made with a view to finding whether there are any other form of literature or art in which one finds creative works with left political influence on them.

For instance Ediriweera Sarachchandra who presents facts in respect of history of the Sinhala novel, has not given any account on leftist novelists<sup>8</sup>. Even Sarachchandra Wickramassoriya in his work “*Sinhala Navakatave Nagīma*” makes no reference to whatsoever novelists who had ties with the early left movement<sup>9</sup>. Kulatilleke Kumarasinghe who writes a work on “*Sinhala Ketikatave Prabhavaya ha Vikasanaya*” (origin and Evolution of the Sinhala short story) while referring to T.G.W. De Silva makes mention of works with some leftist political influence on them. His short stories contain satire. Characters “Bhagalawathie Iskolehamine” (Schoolteacher Bhagalawathie) “Pandita Olmorondan” (Pandit Olmorondan) and “Jagath Ram of University of Kokarodiya” occurring in his

stories are satirical. Contemporary social issues, weaknesses and omissions are the subject matter of his stories. Although “*Tahanam Kaviya*” (Prohibited Poetry) (1960), “*deshapalanaketikata*” (political short stories) (1962), “*Pragatishili Bharyava*” (Progressive wife) (1966), “*Deshapalana Upahasa* (Political Satire) (1967) written by T.G.W. De Silva contain elements of politics in them they can’t be called as stories in which there is leftist tendency<sup>10</sup>. No information can be found as to an intervention of leftist in the art of story-telling and thus nourished it. Sunil Ariyaratne supposed that if there were poets involved in the left movement there would also have been story-tellers as well. But we could not find out any art of story-telling oriented towards leftist movement. Next the study was focused on works of Tissa Kariyawasam who composed the history of drama in order to trace the intervention of the Left in drama. However, no information about any playwrights with a tendency towards Left-wing could be found out from his very comprehensive work titled “*Visipas Vasaraka Natrya ha Ranga Kalava 1932-1956*”<sup>11</sup> and again his own work, “*Visvavidyaliya Natya Vansaya 1921-1981*”<sup>12</sup> and also other writings on history of drama<sup>13</sup>. (Somaweera Chandrasiri who is being studied here is also a play wright. Reference to his works has been made in the analysis). By that time media such as radio and cinema have already been commenced but no Left-wing tendency could be found in them. N.M. Perera acted in “*Rajakīya Vikramaya*” the first Sinhalese film when he was still a student. At that time there was no left movement in Ceylon<sup>14</sup>. Although radio Ceylon was introduced in 1925 there was no room for a Leftist content in it. In consequence except for poets engaged in their artistic activities representing the Left no any other men interested in other forms of art and literature could be found. A few such poets could be identified. Among them P.B. Alwis Perera, Somaweera Chandrasiri, Piyasena Malalgoda, Ariyavanssa Pathiraja, Batuwandara Gunawardana, Bantis Ranaweera, Pathiraja Tennakoon, Anagarika Dharmapriya Jayakodi, T.B. Tennakoon, Indra Kumaranayake, Sagara Palansooriya and Sirilal Kodikara deserve mention.

## Analysis

These left-wing poets at the early stage go against imperialism and employ their medium of art to struggle for freedom. Later they become either supporters of *Sama Samaja Party* or anti-UNP. When Sri Lanka Freedom Party was formed again as a political campaign bent on middle path many of those left-wing poets joined it. They joined it because *Sama Samaja*, *Communist party* and *Mahajana Eksat Peramuna* very often have supported Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Political affiliation of these poets is extremely complex. Alwis Perera not in frequently had close ties with *Sri Lanka Nidahas Pakshaya* (SLFP) and *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna* (MEP). Although Somaweera was a *Sama Samajist* at the beginning he was expelled from the party in 1937. But he contested the *Moratuwa* seat in 1947 with the help of *Sama Samaja Party*. He was able to contest *Kasbawa* seat in 1960 as an independent candidate

under the symbol “*spoon*” and win the election defeating all three parties *L.S.S.P.*, *U. N. P.* and *S.L.F.P.* From July 1960 election he represented *S.L.F.P.*<sup>15</sup>. He passed away in 1971 as the Deputy Minister of Cultural Affairs in that government.

K.A. Sagara Palansuriya, yet another poet of *Colombo* period contested *Horana* seat at 1956 general election as a *M.E.P.* candidate and won the election and entered Parliament. The election campaign was led by P. B. Alwis Perera the poet. In 1958 he lost his voice and fell ill and passed away in 1961. He was not fit enough to contest 1960 general elections<sup>16</sup>. T.B. Tennakoon who was popularly known as “the poet from *Dambulla*” contested the general election 1956 as an *M.E.P.* candidate. He contested March 1960 election as an *S.L.F.P.* candidate. He represented *S.L.F.P.* until his defeat in 1977. He was Deputy Minister of Cultural Affairs and Social Services in 1956 regime, Deputy Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs and was Minister of Social Services in 1970 regime<sup>17</sup>. The poet Pathiraja Tennakoon entered politics by contesting in 1947 general election as a *Sama Samajist* for *Horovpatana* seat. As a member of the same party he contested 1952 and 1956 elections but was defeated. In March 1960 he contested the newly established *Mihintale* seat as *L.S.S.P.* candidate and winning it entered the Parliament for the first time. He represented *L.S.S.P.* till March 1960 election. From July 1960 due to the treaty he represented *S.L.F.P.* until his defeat in 1977. The poet Malalgoda always represented “the left” and although he esteemed Bandaranayke’s crossover from *U.N.P.* yet he did not approve of his reactionary steps he took after coming to power. Though he had ties with powerful political parties he had no strong political affiliations. Even if a friend of his favoured anti-progressive act he couldn’t get away from his sharp criticism. In March 1960 election he contested *Habaraduwa* seat as a candidate of “*Samajavadi Mahajana Peramuna*” but lost. Although as a witness of *Bandaranayake* Assassination case he gained an unexpected popularity the number of votes he obtained was only 591. In 1965 election he contested *Bulatsinhala* seat against *Mangala Munasinghe* of *L.S.S.P.* as an independent candidate although lost the seat yet coming third with 344 votes<sup>18</sup>. The poet Hakmana Bantis Ranaweera according to information received had favoured D.M. Rajapaksa who contested for the second state council in 1936. D.M. is the eldest brother of D.A. Rajapaksa<sup>19</sup>, Dinesh Gunawardana says that one hundred poets participated in the reception given to D.A. when he led a motorcade to *Kataragama* in 1955. Out of the political activities of these poets one can gain knowledge as to the fact what is “Left” and an idea of the poets intervention in politics.

It is also important to study the nature of the media used by these writers. They were primarily using the press and then more or less magazines, leaflets, books, and the platform. Somaweera Chandrasiri commenced his career as a poet contributing verses to the newspaper like ‘*Sinhala poetry crown*’ (*Sinhala Kavi Kirula*) ‘*Sinhalese Nation*’ (*Sinhala Jathiya*) and ‘*Sinhala Buddhists*’ (*Sinhala Bauddaya*) etc. Later he became

the translator of the 'Lakmina' newspaper and next he was appointed as the editor of the paper, 'Sarasavi Sandaresa'. After that he left *Sarasavi Sandaresa* the newspaper and started editing "Nidahasa". *Ranasinghe Arachchi* says that he had edited a newspaper called 'Hena Pahara' prior to the 'Nidahasa'<sup>20</sup>. He has published poetry in newspapers *Dinamina* and magazines like "Dedunna" edited by P.B. Alwis Perera, 'Meewadaya' edited by *Jhone Rajadasa* of Galle, 'Kaweendraya' edited by V.D De Lanerolle, 'Kavikirula' edited by poet *Aththidiye Adhikaram*, and also in 'Vadakaha journal', 'Lakwesiya', 'Vanitha Journal', 'Janaugaya', 'vidyadarshaya' and 'Kawmuthuhara'<sup>15</sup>.

For the first time, *Malalgoda* joined *Somaweera Chandrasiri's* *Nidahasa* newspaper (Freedom) as an assistant editor and later he became the editor in chief of the *Sinhala Jathiya* (Sinhalese race) and the chief editor of the 'Janaugaya'. He published a newspaper called 'Secrets' and also published a monthly poetry magazine called 'Amawa'. At the time of his death in 1984, he was the General Secretary of the *All Ceylon Sinhala Poetry Federation* and the chief editor of the monthly newspaper 'Kaviya' published by CSPF. And also he was the chief editor of newspaper 'Dinakara' published by the *Sri Lanka Mahajana Party*. His 'Blood Label' (1955) (*Le salakuna*) contained poetry already published in the 'New World' (*Nawalokaya*) magazine, edited by *Rev. Udakendawala Siri Saranankarathero*, and in the newspaper, "Sinhale" edited by *Hemapala Munidasa*. Poems contained in his book 'Modern Devadatta' (1977) (*Nuthana Deawadaththa*) were poems already published in Newspaper 'Kaviya' edited by himself<sup>21</sup>.

The first poem written by *Ariyawansa Pathiraja* (1946) was published in the newspaper 'Sinhalese Nation' (*Sinhala jathiya*) edited by *Piyadasa Sirisena*. Thereafter, he published poetry in magazines such as 'New World' (*Nawalokaya*) and the newspapers like 'Truth' (*Eththa*), 'Janasathiya' (People's week), 'Jana Dina' (People's Day), 'Silumina' (The great gem), 'Janakaviya' (Folk poem), 'Rella' (The way) and 'Dinakara' (The Sun). His prose has been published in 'Jana Shakti' (People's power), 'Mawbima' (Motherland) and 'Communist' newspapers<sup>22</sup>.

P.B. Alwis Perera served the weekly newspaper 'Heladiva' as editor in chief and played an important role in contributing articles to newspapers and magazines. 'Sinhala Jathiya', 'Samasamajya', 'Swadesha Mithraya', 'Lankadeepa', 'Dinamina'. 'Rainbow' (*Dedunna*) Monthly Poetry magazine was started in September 1946 by P.B. Alwis Perera. Poetic creation of *Somaweera Chandrasiri*, *G.H Perera*, *Meemana Premathilake*, *Wimalaratne Kumaragama*, *Sagara Palansuriya*, *H.M. Kudaligama*, *Bambara kotuwe Sudarma*, *John Rajadasa*, *Thiharie Peter Perera* and many other contemporary writers were published in it.

The journal 'Kavindraya' edited by *VD.de Lanerol*, The journal 'Kaviya Malani' edited by the *Rev.S. Mahindathero*, The

journal 'Kiviya' edited by poet *Bantis Ranaweera* helped new Sinhala poets to publish their creations. The 'Sinhala Buddhists' 'Sinhala Race' and 'Home Friend' (*Swadesha Mithraya*), edited by *Hemapala Munidasa*, were also the newspapers supported these new poets<sup>23</sup>.

These leftist poets have published not only collections of poems but also abstract poetry books. In 1942, P.B Alwis Perera published his first collection of poems 'Ukdandu Dunna'. Later he published "Sobadahama", "Ranthaliya", "Ape Hatana", "Wedanawa", "Lamainge Surapura", "Miyagiya Kirilli", "Conversation" (*Sanvadaya*), "Blind Poet" (*Anda Kaviya*), "Budu Medura", "Minipana", "Dewlovagiya Kammeliya", "Lumumba", "Keys", "Wimalaratna Kumaragama", "Janma Bhumiya", "Torn flag" (*Irunu Kodiya*), 'Anura Seenaya', 'Suwandawilaun', 'Nogayana Geethaya', 'Wanamala', 'Kawdaewilla', 'Sudu Menike', 'Govi Peramuna', 'Karadasei Pahan', 'Nagaha Yatadee', 'Japan Ratedeeliya unakavi', 'Aluthkandula', 'Prabu Mini' etc. his other collections<sup>24</sup>.

P. Malalgoda also composed a good number of books. Among them there are prose and poetry both. The prose is on politics. His books include 'Buddhist Girl' (1949-prose) (*Baudha Balikawa*) with *Peter Wijesiri*, 'The mark of blood' (1955) (*Le salakuna*), 'The lighted life' (*Jothimath Jeewithaya*) (1955-prose), 'The political arena' (*Deshapalana Karaliya*) (1957), 'Here! The Dahanayake' (*Menna Dahanayaka*) (1957), 'How Wimala Wijayawardena published Junk newspapers against Prime Minister' (*Wimala Wijewardhana Agamethita Kele Paththara Gesu Heti*) (1958-prose), 'How conspired to topple the government' (*Anduwa Peraleeme Kumanthranaya Kala hetu*) (1959-prose), 'The mystery of killing of Prime Minister SWRD Bandaranaike' (*Bandaranayake Agamethi Mereeme Abirahasa*) (1959-prose), 'Lip to lip' (*Tholata Thola*) (1959), 'The Holy Offering' (*Deva poojawa*) (1959), 'Bandaranayake case and Malalgoda's testimony' (*Bandaranayaka Naduwa Saha Malalgodage Sakkiya*) (1961), 'The Platform' (*Vedikawa*) (1961), 'Sebala Udanaya' (1962), 'The three calamity' (*Thunvipatha*) (1968), 'Poetic Inflorescence' (*Kawya Manjari*) (1973), 'Modern Devadatta' (*Nuthana Deawadaththa*) (1977) edited by *Sirilal Kodikara* and *Gunapala Senasinhe*, 'No Dead Malhee Gee' (*Nomala Malal Gee*) (1985) edited by *Shriya Malalgoda*, 'Colombo poetry' (*Colambo Kavi Ugaya*) (1981), 'Poson Dawn' (*Poson Udawa*) and 'Famous personality' (*Prasidda Pudgalayo*) etc.<sup>25</sup>.

Even the list of *Somaweera Chandrasiri's* books is long. "Sadu Geethika" (poetry), "Madhura Geetha" (Poetry), "Pemvathiya" (Novel), "Prema Rajyaya" (Novel), 'Samanala Sandeshaya' (poetry), 'Sirakaraya' (Poetry), 'Virahava' (Poetry), 'Sipirigeisihinaya' (Poetry), 'Jathika Peramuna' (poetry), 'Uropakalacharaya' (Poetry), 'London Nuwara Sinhala Kavi' (Poetry), 'Mineemaru Kuduwa' (Poetry), 'Hamumahaththaya' (Drama), 'Dingiri Menika' (Drama), 'Parlimenthuwa' (Drama), 'Janashakthiya' (Drama), 'Goda Perakadoruwa' (Drama), 'Porakaya' (Shortstory), 'Rupa Rajanee' (Mixed) 'Siragedarin

*Parlimenthuwata* (autobiography) are important among his publications<sup>15</sup>.

Indra Kumaranayake, wife of PB Alwis Perera is also a progressive poetess. Her 'Broken heart' (*Bindunu Hadawatha*) (1952), 'Janapada Kalyani', 'Walwedeema' (1945), 'Dewlowa Kapothi' (1945), 'Liberation' (Vimukthiya) (1955) are poetry<sup>26</sup>.

Hakmana Bantis Ranaweera has published several books like 'Kaviyamava', 'Ranabima', 'Buduhamauduruwo', 'Hakmana Prabanda', 'Swarnathilaka', 'Badawiyatha' etc. He became most popular among readers with the poems of 'Saliya Asokamala'<sup>27</sup>.

All these leftist poets have published several books, but there is only a little number of poems with leftist themes. Alwis Perera's 'Pain' (*Vedanava*), 'Lumba Upaharakawya', Somaweera's books like 'Prisoner' (*Sirakaraya*), 'Siragei Sihinaya' and 'Jathika Peramuna' etc. Malalgoda's 'Le salakuna', 'Desapalana Karaliya', 'Menna Dahnayaka', 'Tholata Thola', and the works such as the "stage" are political as well as leftist.

The description of these publications is sometimes outside of our time frame. The reason is that they are needed to give a good picture of the relevant author. Writings of Lalith Gunawardana (1999)<sup>28</sup> and Lionel Sarath (2000) on political poetry were of little benefit concerning our research.

Since these creative writers were mostly poets it is important to focus on the poetic forms of their works. The usual form used in this era was quatrain or "verses of four lines."

In addition, they also used *Viridu*, *Seheli* and lyrics. Ariyawansa Pathirage has written both free verse or rhyme free verses, just as well as the prosody. They are much later creations. Anagarika Dharmapriya Jayakody's poems related to Arakawila farms struggle are songs. These red poets have often composed verses of four-lines using varied meters. Many of them had a good understanding of the rhyme and phoneticism. Creations of those poets are very much propagandist, but sometimes artistic too. P.B Alwis Perera's following poem illustrates this point.

*Haikaranyange Mudalin Hora Chand a*  
*Udura Jaya Labana Minisunveni And a*  
*Me rata wage ratakatanethi pita kond a*  
*Nidahasa Meeyameni Baluvalige bend a— Nidahasa Motada*<sup>29</sup>

People who win elections by means of bribes given by the rich are like the blind. Freedom to a country like this which lacks the backbone is like a hive built in the tail of a dog. What for freedom?

Malalgoda was a more erudite poet than P.B. Alwis Perera. His vocabulary and language were not as simple as Alwis Perera's. His poetic tone is also matured. In his book 'Here!

*Dahanayake*, He connotate that *Dahanayake* is now a naked person:

*Labannatamulasunaagamethienathenekamagadigataveti veti*  
*Duwanaahetiapoikohomadasahodarayavinayatheku heti*  
*Katin raja wee, sithinjadaweeluwapittaniwaladimara beti*  
*Meinmathukammuthuiyahaluweithinthamusegethibunabandapat*  
*i – Menna Dahanayaka*

It is important to ask how artistic is the following poem written by Ariyawansa Pathiraja.

*Gonesbeeraweeduruelukeuthu walin*  
*Rasa kalanohekapeedanayearalu bilin*  
*Gelaweekuhakakamapilinbandamakulu delin*  
*Oba authuyaeethalayakparidi kelin*

The word 'Gones' refers to Bull's eye. These are just a few creative works of these poets. Their poems are generally propagandist, but also sometimes artistic<sup>30</sup>.

The other important thing about these poets was that they could reel off impromptu verses. N.M. Perera contested for the Ruwanwella seat in 1936, General election of the State Council. Impromptu poems reeled off by Somaweera Chandrasiri for his victory are still in memory of the people in Tunkorale. His impromptu verses he used at Bibile when booed by opponents at the rally held for the victory of W. Dahanayake at Medagama in the Bibile electorate are also well known.

*Ipaduna Ekalata Nariyeku Hata Daw a*  
*Janmen Uruma U Dayadeki Huw a*  
*Kollani Methenadeemataadahukeew a*  
*Ammalangatagasmakawaganuhuw a*

(Boo is a birth heritage for the man who is born as a son of a fox. Youboys who booed me here today, go to the mother and ask her to erase the boo)

S.D Bandaranaike contested Gampaha electorate in the 1960 General Elections on the SLFP ticket. His opponent was H.R Seneviratne, the UNP candidate. This poem was an impromptu poem reeled off by P.Malalgoda at an SLFP meeting in Ganemulla.

*Den ethasatanbimamedia S.D ediye n*  
*Lanweijanabalayathawathawawediye n*  
*Pennannataethathjaya kola pehekodiye n*  
*Gampahadinanawa Hath dahakata Wediye n*

(SD is in the mid of the battle strongly, peoples are gathering more and more around him, though green peoples (UNP) try to show their victory, SD will win with more than 7000 excess votes).

This is the way a politically minded monk was attacked by P.B. Alwis Perera, a poet on the political stage using impromptu verses.

*Buddhagamata me rajayenthena lebuni*

*Sirimarajayaenabawakatath penuni*  
*Eyanopenunekuliyatadesumata pemini*  
*Dewayenkaranaladamottayekuta pamani*<sup>30</sup>

(Buddhism was given due place from the government. Everybody felt that *Sirima* would come to power and it was not seen only by a hired speaker, a timber dullard).

These poets, such as *Ariyawansha Pathiraja*, *Bantis Ranaweera*, *Pathiraja Thennakoon* and *T.B Tennakoon*, provide us with many examples of speeches accompanied by poetry. The poets on the left were poetry stars. At that time actors and singers were not known on the political stage and it was the poets who attracted people. Ordinary people gathered to listen to their poetic speeches. So, all of these poets had the ability to reel off poetry. It is clear that the left movement made use of the poet's ability and popularity. At the 1947 election, the LSSP supported *Somawara Chadrasiri* because his newspaper 'freedom' gave propaganda for the party. These leftist parties were interested in giving the contesting opportunities to poets for it increased their popularity. The SLFP seemed that they were particularly interested in it.

## Conclusion

The early leftist movement in Sri Lanka was predominantly represented by the *LSSP*, *CP*, *MEP* and the *SLFP* that maintained a non-aligned policy. In other words, early leftists can be identified as anti-imperialist and anti-*UNP* movements. There are grounds for an involvement of a large number of creative writers in the early left movement. Writers on whom we focused our research indicate that media employed by them were poems, stories and dramas. But among their creative writings it is in the verse of four lines or quatrain containing rhyme that the most prominent Left-wing expression is found. Almost all these poets publicized their poetry through media such as newspapers, magazines, leaflets, and books. They won the popularity of the political arena as all of them had the ability to read out Impromptu quatrains. The language they used was very simple. Eulogies written praising their radical friends, religious poems, writing for children, social injustice, political criticisms, and contemporary social reviews are among the themes of their poems. Although their Left-wing expressions abound with propagandist features often one finds in them even writings of creativity. Accordingly through this research an attempt has been made to examine as to how intervention of the early left movement in culture has had its influence on the Sinhalese society. This intervention of the left has affected the society more or less to some extent to change its rational and scientific outlook.

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