



Dr S.J. Reddi GOSK

We have the pleasure to welcome Dr Sadasivam Jaganada Reddi G.O.S.K, C.S.K as Pathirikai Personality of the month. Dr Reddi forms part of the Elite in Mauritius and we are proud to have such an eminent personality in our Tamil community. Dr Reddi holds a B.A History from University of Leeds, a M.A in history from University of London and a PhD in history from University of London. He has written a lot of articles on the Tamil community. He received the Grand Officer of the Star and key in 2006 as recognition for his contribution in the field of Education. He is also a successful father with two sons who are both legal professionals and one of whom was a HSC laureate and the other came out second. Despite all these honours, Dr Reddi is involved deeply in social works and has remained humble and is always within reach for his community. This man is an Institution by himself.

Dr Reddi, first of all, we wish to thank you for **being our guest this month** . Can you tell us about **your family background** ?

As to my family background, i have to go a little in the past. My grand father on my father's side, Jaganada Reddi came as a labourer who became himself a job contractor and a notable, and on my mother side my grand father, Sinaya Thaver was a clerk in a trading house in Port-Louis. My father was a policeman and a small planter. I have 4 brothers and a sister. I am married to Rouna Marimootoo. My families, past and present have been crucial in all what i have achieved.

In Mauritius we do not have many historians. There are very few professionals, and you are one of them. Dr Reddi, why did you choose to become a historian?

In fact I wanted to study chemistry for this was my favourite subject but since i did not study Physics, i opted for the Art side with English, French and History. I became interested in history because of its close connection with politics. My uncles in Port-Louis were strong supporters of the Labour Party in the 1950s. History in those days was mainly political history.

There's one Dr. Carl Sagan who said that "You have to know the past to understand the present." Is the history of Tamils in Mauritius well understood by our people, or is there a need to better promote it ?

As Sagan rightly says you need to understand the past to know the present. The Tamils know quite a lot about their past but do not have a critical understanding of that history. We need to approach the past critically, understand it to build our future. If we do not have a critical understanding we do harm to ourselves. For example many people believe that Tamils do not own land to day because they had wasted the land because of their profligate life. This is not true. Many Tamils did not own land because they lived on sugar estates which were not broken down and sold for morcellement. They lived mostly in the South where there were no great morcellement or in urban areas such as Stanley and Mont –Roches where the only tiny plots of land were sold for housing rather than for small farming.

Dr Reddi, we note that few of our professionals are involved in the administration of our Kovils and prefer to stay aloof, what according to you is the reason for this lack of involvement ?

The main reason is a difference in organisation cultures. Those who are professionals will tend to follow a more rational and critical approach which may not be acceptable to those who may have a less critical approach to management, record keeping, book keeping and other operations. So to avoid any conflict from these irreconcilable values, they prefer to stay away.

Being very knowledgeable in Tamil Culture, you know that Tamils inherited a very rich culture from its ancestors. Besides Cavadee, Canjee and Teemeedee, we have other arts like Martial Arts, Architecture, the Siddha Medicine, our Dance and history of great Kings. What can be done in Mauritius to bring to light those parts of our culture which have stayed so far in the dark?

As we all know Tamils have inherited a holistic culture which embraces every aspect of life even before birth to after death. When we came to Mauritius, for many reasons we did not and could not bring all aspects of our culture or even sustain all that we brought. If we have the will we can recreate all the vital aspects that we have lost that we need. There is nothing which prevents us from having a dosa breakfast or popularise a particular songs, dance, craft or recreate the Kamon procession. We can recreate our traditions because we have also a tradition of reinvention. A few years back some young have recreated the Tappu tradition. This can be done for other aspects of culture.

You have been in the academic sphere for decades, and recently you retired as President of the University of Technology, Mauritius. What is your opinion on this youth generation?

Our youth are dynamic and creative but they need our guidance but unfortunately we do not have enough organisations which focus on the youth and guide them. In addition we also need to guide the parents and support parents in counselling their children. In other countries the youth go through a civic education and the Government has just started a National Civic Education project on a pilot basis. But we also have to take the initiative and encourage the young to take the initiative. In my young days with a group of friends we took the initiative to set up the Mahebourg Dravidian Association which has sustained the Tamil youth in Mahebourg since 1965. Pathirikai has recently done a marvellous job in running a course on Journalism: it should continue on other aspects of youth education and empowerment.

You have been among the first supporters of Pathirikai, we wish to thank you for this confidence you placed in this young e-journal. What, according to you, should be done to better promote the e-journal among our people?

Pathirikai has been the best and happiest event which has happened to the Tamil community recently. We should find a way to inform the maximum of people on-line. Secondly i would be in favour of a hard copy thrice a year which summarises some of the main articles of Pathirikai for those who do not go on-line. With a group of young journalists, we should have articles on what goes on in the community on a local basis but also internationally.

I seize this opportunity to wish all the readers of Pathirikai the seasons' greetings and a Happy Pongol and send the Pathirikai Team my best wishes and plenty of success in their laudable endeavour.