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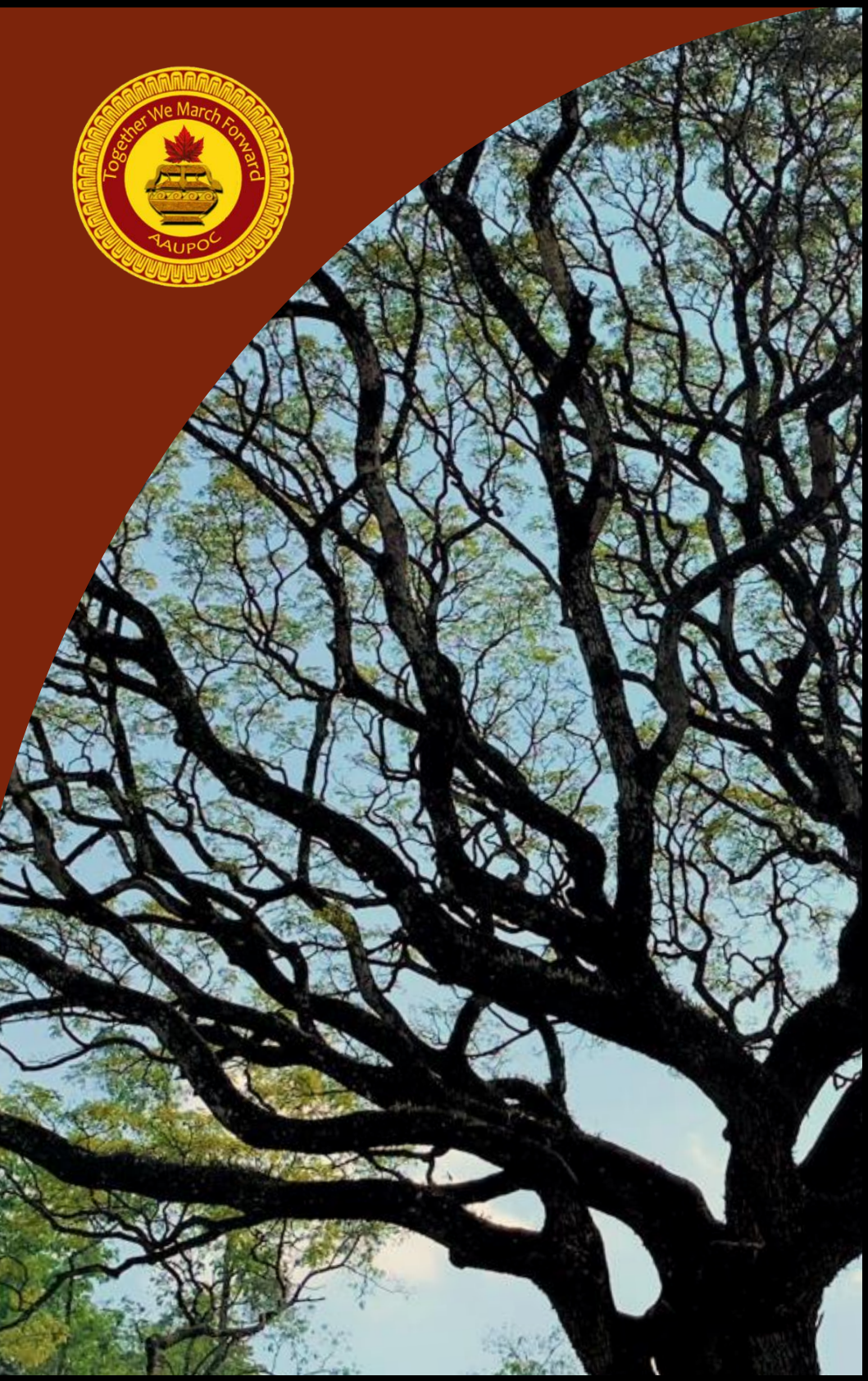
Hanthana Pavura



Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya - Ottawa Chapter - Canada

Volume: 8 Issue: 1 - October 2023

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya- Ottawa Chapter (AAUPOC) has completed its 10th year of operations and is now preparing for another decade of work ahead. The AAUPOC has conducted only a limited array of its activities for the past three years because of the pandemic. We were fortunate in 2023, which marks the return to normalcy, allowing us to pursue all our usual social activities.

Over the years, our primary objective has been to help our alma mater. This was achieved by supporting financially challenged students through a scholarship program, providing in-kind support in improving the quality of education while fostering interactions and friendships among our alumni and the Sri Lankan community living in Ottawa. Since its inception, AAUPOC has gradually but steadily expanded its activities to achieve its social and financial objectives. Even during the pandemic, when the world was at a standstill, AAUPOC devised creative ideas and alternatives to achieve its objectives. These include, for instance, interactive webinars and walkathon challenges providing opportunities for community interaction and fundraising.

This year's events began with "Gee Padura" on May 13, 2023, in honour of Sunil Santha, a legendary Sri Lankan singer and composer who revolutionized the country's music culture. This was followed by the "Summer Picnic" on August 5, 2023, held at Silver Lake Provincial Park. This was well attended by AAUPOC members and their friends in the community. On July 9, 2023, the annual cricket match between AAUPOC and Ottawa Cricket Club (OCC) was held, raising substantial amount of funds for the scholarship program. The Walkathon challenge was another fundraising event held from September 11-20, 2023, that help improving members' health. The Health Walk marked the end of the walkathon on September 23, 2023. The walkathon winners and all participants were awarded attractive prizes sponsored by our sponsors. Our prime fundraising and social event of the year, Hanthana Night, took place on November 11with approximately 240 attendees representing members and friends of the community.

The AAUPOC newsletter, published annually, is a collective effort of the editorial board of AAUPOC and our creative contributors. It allows our members, their family members, and friends to showcase their creativity. I take this opportunity to thank the editor and editorial board members, reviewers, and article contributors for their contributions to this year's publication.

AAUPOC's fundraising goal for this year is to raise CAD 6500 (approximately LKR 1.5 million) to provide at least 25 scholarships (LKR 60,000 per year) to financially challenged students at the University of Peradeniya. In addition, following the success of the "Award of Excellence of Artistic Talents" pilot project, launched in August 2023, AAUPOC plans to expand this initiative to other faculties of the University to improve students' skill development and capacity building.

I am grateful for the invaluable support of the Executive Committee members and friends of the community in achieving the success of AAUPOC's activities and fundraising initiatives targeted for this year.

Ajith Samarajeewa

President / AAUPOC

"People's passion and dedication can conquer anything." - Brie Bella

FONDLY REMEMBERING PERADENIYA LIFE IN THE MID 1960'S

By Sarath K. Malaviarachchi
An Alumnus of the University of Peradeniya
(Faculty of Engineering)

I believe it was in September 1964, that I with a group of my friends, travelled by train to Peradeniya to start our 3rd year at the Faculty of Engineering, having finished the first two years in Colombo. Although we were to start in June, some of the infrastructure for the new Faculty of Engineering was not ready at that time.

It was late morning when we arrived at the newly constructed Akbar Nell Hall and the room allocation to students had not yet started. One of my friends whose girlfriend happened to be at Ramanathan Hall at the time, suggested we could go there for a visit. (Another friend had his sister there). We thought it was a very fine idea, and we all crossed the new Akbar Bridge, went pass the Arts Theatre and walked along Galaha Road to Ramanathan Hall. To say the least it was a very pleasant walk. When we returned to Akbar Nell however, all the good rooms had been allocated and I and a friend of mine had to settle for a ground floor room in the Nell wing with only a view of an earth embankment from the window. It did not feel like a very auspicious start, but we were able to move into a 1st or 2nd floor room after a few months.

We felt much happier and relaxed at Peradeniya and had no regrets in leaving the Thurstan Road Campus. Everything we saw around us, the flowering trees and shrubs and the well-laid out lawns were truly beautiful and a treat to look at. The presence of numerous couples sitting under shady trees or walking on the many footpaths that were present seemed a little strange at the beginning. It seemed perfectly normal after a few months.

Life at Akbar Nell was quite pleasant and had no surprises as such. In Colombo my friends and I happened to stay at Brodie House, a university hostel run by the YMCA. It was on Bullers Road, a 15-minute walk from the Thurston Road campus. Though located in Columbus 7, amidst shady trees, the building itself resembled an old army barracks building, while Akbar was newly built and smelled of fresh paint.

One thing I remember about Akbar Nell life is how the serving of student meals changed during a very short time. At the beginning, all the food dishes were laid out on the table for the students to serve themselves like at a restaurant. After a few days, the meat / fish dishes were not laid out on the table, but each student was given a portion in a small dish by a server. After some time, a completely new buffet-like system was introduced with the students having to line up for their food, the servers standing behind a counter serving the food.

The engineering students had a heavy workload with compulsory coursework (engineering lab reports and the like) to be submitted by stipulated deadlines etc. with not much free time. It appeared, however, that the Arts Faculty students somehow managed to have plenty of free time to enjoy the beauty of the campus. Some of us were able to find the time to visit places of interest close to the campus like the ancient Hindagala Buddhist temple and go on hikes to places like the Hanthana Hills. One of my friend's sister who was in the Arts Faculty was instrumental in organizing these trips. Also, I remember watching Henri Jayasena's stage play Janeylaya at the Open-Air Theatre (wala). Around the same time, Prof. E.F.C. Ludowyk's timeless classic, He Comes from Jaffna (written in the 1930's) was staged at the Eng. Fac. Auditorium with Winston Serasinghe playing the leading role and it was extremely entertaining.

Campus life was quite pleasant with hardly any irritations. Going to the Gym to play badminton in the evenings became a routine. There was a pond (University Lake) located above Jayatilleke Hall where one could go for a 'swim' on a Saturday or Sunday morning. For any serious swimming however, one could go to the Mahaweli River to a place near the water intake for the university water supply scheme. This was not a very safe place to swim though, since the currents were very rapid, and as such perhaps swimming at this place was not officially permitted.

The 1965 student unrest was a unique experience. I cannot remember whether the Engineering Faculty Union supported the strike action launched by the Peradeniya Student Union or not. We were however aware that that the Vice Chancellor, Sir Nicholas Attygalle was an autocrat who did not want to listen to students' demands and also was not on good terms with our Dean Prof. E.O.E. Pereira. On the day the troubles started, we went across the Akbar Bridge to see what was happening. The main entrance to the Science Faculty building was blocked by a large group of students. When we were there, we saw a girl climbing onto a high windowsill and then go into the building. This made the students angry and agitated. We however, left the place after some time and started walking towards the Arts Theatre when we saw the police coming up Galaha Road with students pelting stones at them while running away. We also had to run away for our safety. We managed to get back to Akbar Nell safely and only later learned that some students, including some of our friends, were seriously hurt and needed hospitalization. As far as I can remember going to the hospital to see the injured students was a problem. Somehow, normalcy was restored after a few days.

We graduated in 1966 and I stayed back at Peradeniya for about an year as an Instructor at the Faculty of Engineering. Even Instructors, let alone Assistant Lecturers, had all the privileges and perks of Staff members. This was the best period of my university life.

The most beautiful things are not associated with money; they are memories and moments. If you don't celebrate those, they can pass you by. - Alek Wek -

AMAZING HEALTH BENEFITS OF AVOCADO

By Nimal Ratnayake, Ph.D.
An Alumnus of the University of Peradeniya
(Faculty of Science)

Avocado is highly demanded internationally because of its creamy rich texture and for its exceptional nutritional profile and numerous health benefits. It belongs to the flowering plant family Lauraceae, a native of Central America and Mexico. It is grown as a commercial crop, mainly in Mexico, Saint Dominic, Peru, Indonesia, Colombia, Brazil, Kenya, Venezuela, Chile, The United States, New Zealand, and South Africa (FAO 2019). On the back of rapidly growing global market because of its potential health benefits, world production of avocado reached an estimated 6.3 million tons in 2018, representing a 6.7 percent increase from 2017 (FAO 2019).

This review article explores the chemical composition of avocado, its health benefits, and the diverse range of avocado-based products in the market today.

Avocado nutrients related health benefits

Avocado is a complex fruit comprising of a rich array of essential nutrients, vitamins, and beneficial phytochemicals. Avocado consumers tend to consume significantly more key nutrients-especially, oleic acid, dietary fiber, vitamin K, and E, potassium, and magnesium, in their diet than non-avocado consumers (Fulgoni et al 2010; Dreher and Davenport 2013, Dreher et al. 2021). The nutrition and phytochemical composition are summarized in the Table.

The following components contribute to avocados' potential health benefits.

Fats: Avocado can fit into a heart healthy diet such as the US DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet plan (USDA and HHS, 2010) because of its high content of oleic and polyunsaturated fatty acids. These fatty acids promote cardiovascular health, aid in reducing LDL cholesterol (i.e., the bad cholesterol), and provide a source of sustainable energy. A ripened avocado fruit, Hass variety (136 g) generally contains 21 g fat (15.4 wt. %) of which 76% is oleic acid (predominant monounsaturated fat (MUFA) in dietary oils), 13% polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) (as linoleic and α-linolenic acids) and 16% saturated fatty acids (SFA) (Table). Though saturated fatty acids tend to increase bad cholesterol, the high content of MUFA and PUFA can suppress the LDL-raising effect of SFA. The use of avocado oils, dips, and spreads as an alternative to more traditional hard, SFA rich oils, spreads or dips can assist in lowering dietary SFA intake.

Dietary fiber: Avocado is a good source of fiber, which aids in digestion, regulates blood sugar levels, and promotes feelings of fulness. Avocado fruit carbohydrates are composed of 80% dietary fiber, consisting of 70% insoluble and 30% soluble fiber (Table). A ripened avocado fruit contains 9.2 g (or 6.8% of total weight of avocado) and this amount is shown to have similar effects on weight control as low-fat fruits and vegetables (USDA 2011). For maintaining cardiovascular health and controlling blood sugar levels, daily intake of 14 g of dietary fiber per 1000 Kcal from all dietary sources is recommended (USDA 2011). Two-thirds of this fiber level can be met by consuming an avocado per day.

***Sugars*:** Compared to other fruits, avocado contains very little sugar (USDA, 2011). A mature avocado contains only about 0.4g sugar. Moreover, the primary sugar in avocado is not sucrose, glucose, or fructose, but a unique seven-carbon sugar called D-mannoheptulose. This seven-carbon sugar accounts for almost 100% of the total sugar found in avocado and most importantly it does not behave nutritionally as conventional sugars. It is more of a unique phytochemical to avocado. Preliminary research suggests that D-mannoheptulose may support blood glucose and weight management (Fulgoni et al)

2010; Dreher and Davenport 2013, Dreher et al. 2021). The glycemic index and load of an avocado is expected to be zero (Dreher and Davenport 2013).

Calories: Avocados are low in total calories (201 kcal per mature fruit) compared to per standard serving of 42.5 g of healthy tree nuts such as almonds (239 kcal), pistachios (235 kcal), and walnuts (269 kcal) (Dreher and Davenport, 2013).

Vitamins: Avocado is abundant in various vitamins, including vitamin K, vitamin C, Vitamin E, and B vitamins such as folate (essential during pregnancy) and pyridoxine (vitamin B6) (Table). These vitamins contribute to overall health, immune system function, and cellular metabolism.

Avocados are one of the few foods that contain significant amounts of vitamins C and E (Table). Vitamin C plays an important role in recycling vitamin E to maintain circulatory antioxidant potential such as slowing the rate of LDL-cholesterol oxidation. Evidence suggests that vitamin C may contribute to vascular health, arterial plaque stabilization, and greater CVD protection for specific populations such as smokers, obese and overweight people; people with elevated cholesterol, blood pressure and type 2-diabetes (Fulgoni et al 2010; Dreher and Davenport 2013, Dreher et al.2021). A mature avocado fruit contains 12 mg vitamin C and 2.7 mg vitamin E. A randomized clinical trial suggested that a combination of vitamin C and E may slow atherosclerotic progression in hyperchloremic persons (Fulgoni et al 2010; Dreher and Davenport 2013, Dreher et al. 2021).

Vitamin K (phylloquinone) functions as a coenzyme during synthesis of biologically active form of proteins involved in blood coagulation and bone metabolism. Vitamin K found in plant-based foods is the primary source of vitamin K in the human diet. Avocados are rich sources of vitamin K--a ripe avocado can provide 28.6 µg of this vitamin.

Deficiencies of B vitamins such as folate and B-6 may increase homocysteine levels, which could reduce vascular endothelial health and increase CVD risk). Avocados contain 62 µg per mature fruit.

Minerals: Avocado contains essential minerals such as potassium, magnesium, and copper (Table). Potassium helps regulate blood pressure, while magnesium is vital for nerve function and bone health. Copper plays a role in the production of red blood cells and collagen synthesis.

Adequate potassium intake promotes blood pressure. The recommended potassium intake for an average adult 19-50 years of age is 3,400 mg per day for men and 2,600 mg per for women. Fruits, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat dairy foods and fish are good natural sources of potassium. Among them, avocado is the richest source of potassium- one fruit can provide 690 mg (Table), whereas other well-known sources such as banana and mashed sweet potatoes provide much lesser amounts-226 mg (one medium banana) and 456 mg (cup of smashed sweet potato), respectively. Also, avocados are naturally low in sodium (10 mg per fruit, Table).

Magnesium acts as cofactor for over 300 cellular enzymes required in energy metabolism and it may help support normal vascular tone and insulin sensitivity. Adults who get less than the recommended amount (320 mg per day for women and 420 mg per day for men) are at risk of developing diabetes, inflammation, heart disease and cancers. Adequate intakes of magnesium inhibit fat absorption in healthy subjects. Avocado contains about 40 mg magnesium.

Copper plays an important part in many of the body's organs and systems. It helps make red blood cells, keep nerve cells healthy and support the immune system. Copper can help keep certain conditions at bay, such as anemia (low red blood cell count) and osteoporosis. Adults need about 900 µg per day. One mature avocado fruit can provide 230 µg- that is approximately 25% of recommended intake.

Phytochemicals: Avocado contains a variety of beneficial phytochemicals, such as carotenoids including (lutein and zeaxanthin), phytosterols, flavonoids and polyphenols (Table). Polyphenols and flavonoids possess anti-inflammatory, antioxidant properties that may help mitigate inflammation in the body which can help reduce oxidative stress and protect against chronic diseases. Lutein, zeaxanthin, and other carotenoids supports eye health by protecting against age-related macular degeneration.

Avocado clinical and observational studies

1) Role of avocado in cardiovascular health

Three clinical trials in healthy overweight or obese subjects with dyslipidemia (imbalance of blood lipids such as cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol, triglycerides and HDL-cholesterol) found that intake of at least one avocado a day over 4-5 weeks significantly improved blood lipid profile (reduced total cholesterol, reduced LDL-HDL cholesterol ratio, reduced triglycerides), reduced oxidized-LDL, significantly increased LDL particle size (less atherogenic LDL cholesterol) compared to control diets (average American diet, moderate-fat diet, low-fat diet or vegetarian diet) (for a comprehensive review of the three clinical trials see Dreher et al. 2021).

2) Role of avocado on body weight management

Four observational and five clinical studies evaluated the effects of avocado on weight management (for a comprehensive review of the clinical trials see Dreher et al. 2021). All nine studies showed that avocados are consistent with dietary guidelines calling for an increased intake of fresh fruits and vegetables to support weight management.

For example, two observational studies of the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) conducted between 2001 and 2012 showed that US adult consumers of avocado had lower body weight, body mass index (BMI), and waist circumferences than non-avocado consumers, by 3 kg, 1 kg/m^2 and 3-4 cm, respectively (O'Neil et al., 2017, Fulgoni et al 2017). Also, avocado consumers had a 33% lower risk of becoming overweight or obese, a 32% lower risk of enlarged waist circumference, and 50% lower risk of metabolic syndrome than-non consumers (Fulgoni et al., 2013). Results similar to the US NHANES studies have been observed in an Australian observational study (Guan et al. 2021). In the Australian study for each 50 g serving of avocado, researchers predicted avocado consumers would weigh six pounds less than non-consumers.

Avocado-based products in the market

The growing popularity of avocados has led to a wide range of avocado-based products world-wide. Some popular examples especially in USA, Canada and Mexico include:

a) ***Avocado oil***: Cold-pressed avocado oil is used for cooking, salad dressings, and as a nutritious replacement of other oils.
b) ***Guacamole***: An avocado-based dip made with mashed avocados, lime juice, onions, tomatoes, and various seasonings. Guacamole is especially used as a dip for eating potato and corn chips.
c) ***Avocado Slices***: Pre-packaged fresh or frozen avocado slices, suitable for salads, sandwiches, or as a topping for various dishes.
d) ***Avocado Toast***: A trendy breakfast option that involves mashing avocado onto toasted bread and adding additional toppings such as eggs, tomatoes, or feta cheese.
e) ***Avocado Smoothies***: Blending avocados with fruits, vegetables, and other ingredients to create delicious and nutritious smoothies.
f) ***Avocado Skincare Products:*** Avocado's beneficial properties are also utilized in skincare products, including moisturizes, masks, and creams.

Conclusion

Clinical trials and observational studies have identified two primary avocado health effects which promote: Cardiovascular health by improving blood lipid profiles and healthier weight and body composition. These health effects are primarily due to avocado's unique combination of four nutritional features: high oleic acid to saturated fatty acid ratio; Insoluble fiber; relatively low energy density and high content lutein along with other carotenoids. Avocados are also micronutrient dense. For example, avocados can provide 10% or more of the daily values for potassium, folate, vitamin K, pantothenic acid, copper and magnesium, very low in sodium and sugar, and contain polyphenols to further support secondary health benefits. Avocados are compatible with dietary guidelines that call for cutting down of intake of total calories, saturated fats, carbohydrates, sodium and increased intakes of unsaturated fatty acids, insoluble fiber, phytochemicals, and essential minerals.

With its diverse range of avocado-products available in the market, individuals can easily incorporate this versatile fruit into their diets and enjoy its many healthy advantages, including heart health, weight management, improved nutrient absorption, eye health, and anti-inflammatory properties.

Table: Avocado (variety Hass) Composition of Edible Portion (USDA, 2011)

Nutrient/Phytochemical	Value per fruit (136g)	Nutrient/Phytochemical	Value per fruit (136g)
Proximate		**Fat composition**	
Water (g)	98.4	Saturated fat (g)	2.90
Energy (kcal)	201	Monounsaturated fat (g)	13.3
Protein (g)	2.67	Polyunsaturated fat (g)	2.47
Fat (g)	2.67	Linoleic acid (g)	2.27
Carbohydrates (g)	11.8	Alpha-linoleic (g)	0.17
Fiber (g)	9.20		
Sugars (g)	0.41		
Starch (g)	0.15		
Minerals		**Vitamins**	
Calcium (mg)	18.0	Vitamin C (mg)	12.0
Iron (mg)	0.83	Thiamin (mg)	0.10
Magnesium (mg)	39.0	Riboflavin (mg)	0.19
Phosphorous (mg)	73.0	Niacin (mg)	2.60
Sodium (mg)	0.92	Pantothenic acid (mg)	2.00
Zinc (mg)	0.92	Vitamin B6 (mg)	0.39
Copper (mg)	0.23	Folate (µg)	121
Manganese (mg)	0.15	Choline (mg)	19.3
Selenium (mg)	0.40	Betaine (mg)	1.0
		Vitamin E (mg)	3.20
		Vitamin K_1 (µg)	28.6
Phytochemicals		**Phytochemicals**	
Carotene, beta (mg)	86.0	Sterols	110.0
Carotene, gamma (mg)	33.0		

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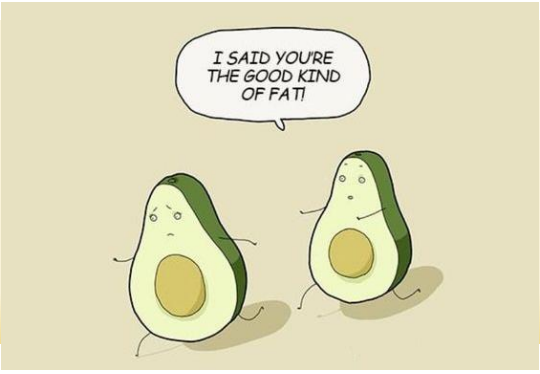

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Poetry & Photography by:
Don Susil Premaratne

THE ROOM 207

At 8:00 am on the fifteenth of May 2023, I landed in the Budapest Ferenc Liszt airport in Hungary. The morning air was refreshing, and the colourful surroundings excited my inner feelings. After collecting my luggage, I arrived at the historic Nemzeti Budapest Hotel around 10:00 am. The receptionist informed me that my reserved room would only be ready for occupancy in about half an hour.

I looked around the beautifully decorated room; historical artifacts were visible everywhere. Suddenly my eyes caught a framed newspaper article on a wall. The title of the article read *Rigó Jancsi: 1858-1927.* The article had been published in a local newspaper, and it had a brief description about *Rigó Jancsi* in connection with a Hungarian dessert. However, before I could complete my reading, a call from the reception desk distracted me.

"The room 207 is ready for you" a man at the desk said, and he handed me a large metal door key.

I was fascinated to see a heavy metal key, as what is commonly seen in hotels today is a plastic, electronic key. I presumed that a metal key signified the ancient and bygone practices still followed in this old Budapest hotel.

After settling in room 207, since the day was still young, I decided to walk about in the city; the roadmap provided by the reception desk helped me to find my way.

I enjoyed seeing some historical sites, but what attracted me the most was the Danube River — a ribbon-like body of water that flows downhill, starting in the Black Forest Mountains of western Germany to its mouth on the Black Sea — which embraces Budapest, making the city scene unique. Although a waltz had been composed by the Austrian Johann Strauss in 1867, titled 'Blue Danube', to my dismay, the river Danube carried dark brown water. Perhaps the river water might have been blue at the time this waltz was composed, I concluded.

After several hours of walking, I returned to the hotel exhausted, and I crashed after a bath.

While falling asleep, for some unknown reason, I felt unease. Yet, I was too tired to worry about my feelings; I dozed off with ease. Then, close to midnight, I was awakened by a delightful tune played on a violin.

It was the tune of 'Blue Danube'!

I jumped off the bed and looked around. The music had stopped but I sensed that someone was in my room. I panicked and ran down the stairs without waiting for the elevator.

"Is anything the matter? Is your room having any issues? You seem to have seen a ghost" the receptionist exclaimed. When I explained why I was agitated, he detailed a fascinating story.

"A famous Romani Gypsy violinist named *Jancsi Rigó*, at that time also was known as 'Johnny Blackbird', took over the European scene by storm at the end of the 19th century. On one of his tours, while residing in this hotel, he met Clara Ward, a daughter of the industrial magnate Eber Brock Ward from Detroit. For both, it was love at first sight.

Seemingly, their love evaded the reality, and a few months later, they tied the knot secretly, although at that time, Clara was married to the Belgian prince Charman-Chimny. Rigó and Clara became celebrities before anyone had heard about 'celebrity culture'.

As it often goes with forbidden love, the secret relationship between the two lovers did not have a happy ending, as the famous musician was unfaithful to Clara. His infidelity had her break off the relationship in the early 1900s. To recover from her grief, she had re-married twice but failed to express her love to any other man. Clara died on the December 9, 1916, at the age of 43, and the legend says that she never got over the breakup with *Rigó.*

Apparently, neither did the musician.

He was found dead on the streets of New York, frozen and emaciated, while he had tried to find solace and an income as a street performer." With that, the clerk at the desk he looked me in the eye and said,

"Prior to their secret nuptials, the two lovers frequently had met in Room 207".

Suddenly, goosebumps sprang out all over my body. I wondered: *Had I been visited by a legendary fiddler?* I felt a tinge of happiness too; I presumed that perhaps the fiddler had decided to pay me a visit, sensing that I would appreciate his talents!

"We had not had any messages from guests before about musical events in room 207. Did you really hear violin playing in that room?" the clerk enquired.

"Yes, I did, and I sensed someone's presence in the corner" I replied. Then I took the opportunity to ask about the wall hanging with the Newspaper clipping.

"I saw a newspaper article preserved on the wall over at the entrance, what is that all about?" I asked.

"Apparently, *Rigó* used to treat Clara frequently with a special Hungarian chocolate Mousse 'cube cake' that he has had fancy for. So, after his legendary life ended, the chef of this hotel named that dessert after him, ***Rigójancsi***". Seemingly, this dessert is still being sold in the Budapest market and also served in several hotels in town.

While I would have enjoyed violin music again at night, I decided to leave the Room 207 soon after I heard the tragic love story. But I did not leave the hotel until I tasted *Rigójancsi.* It was delicious; no wonder the maestro serenaded his love for Clara with music and with such a sweet delicacy.

"How appropriate' I mused.

When I was checking out, I realized that the key to the Room 207 has been inscribed: *Jancsi Rigó*.

By Kumudini Nicholas

[This story is based on personal experiences and true historical facts]

'Blue Danube':

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCaIThkdeR4

RICE PRODUCTION, SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND WAY FORWARD IN SRI LANKA

By Jayantha Senanayake, Ph.D.
Director, Rice Research and Development Institute Batalagoda, Ibbagamuwa, Sri Lanka

In 1950s human population in Ceylon was 7,945,977, the paddy area harvested was 399,000 hectares, the average paddy production was 0.9 metric tons/hectare (mt/ha) and the rice imports were 649,000 mt (Kikuchi et al., 2002). At this time, only traditional rice varieties such as Heenati, Hondaravalu, Murungakayan, Muthu samba, Suduru samba were cultivated, mainly under rainfed systems. In 1953, the Rubber-Rice Trade Agreement was signed with the People's Republic of China to ensure rice imports to the country to feed the nation while promoting the rubber production in the country.

The governments of Ceylon realized the need for increasing rice production and productivity especially after gaining independence from the British Empire in 1948. As a result, irrigation facilities of the country were improved through the establishment of new irrigation schemes such as Gal Oya project and renovation of existing irrigation systems. At the same time rice research in Sri Lanka was initiated first at the Royal Botanical Gardens in 1914 and later expanded to Mahailluppallama of the North Central Province of Sri Lanka in 1940. In 1952, the Central Rice Breeding Station (CRBS) was established at Batalagoda, which is now known as the Rice Research and Development Institute (RRDI). Development of new high yielding varieties was started at the CRBS and the first rice variety H-4 from the cross between Murungakayan 302 x Mas varieties was released in 1958, which gave an average yield of 3.5 mt/ha. This was followed by the release of a few varieties such as H-7, H-8, H-9, and H-10. The variety H-4 is still found to be cultivated by farmers of some parts of the country.

These varieties were known as old improved varieties and were tall plants hence prone to lodging. The programme for developing such old improved varieties continued until 1970s. Since then, the development of new improved paddy varieties initiated at the CRBS and its satellite stations located in different agro-climatic zones of the country. These new improved paddy varieties had the beneficial features of shorter plant height, a greater number of tillers (grain bearing branches) and high response to inputs such as nitrogen fertilizers. The noteworthy new improved paddy varieties in 1970s were BG 11-11, BG34-6 and Ld 66.

The programme of paddy variety development was continued and the RRDI has been able to release 89 paddy varieties for cultivation so far, of which most have been targeted for higher yields. Some of the paddy varieties have also been targeted for high grain quality including samba type, aromatic, long grain type, and for industrial purposes. In 2021 the average paddy yield was reported to be 4.8 mt/ha, an increase of about five-folds since 1950s. The success of the rice breeding paved the way the country not only to be self-sufficient in rice since 2005 but

also to get the second highest average paddy yield in the south Asian region where only Bangladesh remained a little ahead of Sri Lanka. The present average paddy yield of Sri Lanka is one of the highest among the many paddy producing countries in the world.

This tremendous success has been achieved by Sri Lankan bred own rice varieties along with improved agronomic practices. It has also been officially recorded that some farmers in areas such as Udawalawa, Ambalantota have obtained more than 9 mt /ha paddy yield in 2022/23 Maha season indicating the potential for further increase of average paddy yield in the country. Both the Central and the Provincial governments' Departments of Agriculture are working to achieve higher paddy yields while making the paddy farming more profitable. Maintaining rice self-sufficiency in Sri Lanka is greatly challenged by climatic changes and insect damages such as brown planthopper (BPH). The severe drought prevailed in the country in the late 2016 and the early part of 2017 led the country to import around 0.75 million mt of rice. Due to unavailability of some of the inputs for paddy farming in the late 2021 and 2022, a similar quantity was also imported in 2022. In other years such importations were confined mainly to Basmathi type rice.

The present research programme of the RRDI targets developing rice varieties for higher yields, higher grain quality such as Basmathi type, and aromatic rice. In additions, paddy varieties are developed to withstand abiotic stresses (physical environment) such as drought, heat, flood and cold, and also for high response to low nitrogen and low phosphorus applications etc., In general, all the paddy varieties are bred to resist or tolerate the major pests (brown plant hopper, gall midge) and diseases (rice blast, bacterial leaf blight). Development of Low Glycaemic Index (GI) rice is also another target.

Quality maintenance of paddy varieties is always done in the country through a very careful breeder seed production programme carried out by the RRDI. The Seed and Planting Material Division of the Department of Agriculture assures the quantity of downstream seed multiplications for framer. The quality assurance of the seed paddy is done by the Seed Certification Service of the Department of Agriculture. It is significant that all the paddy varieties grown and all the seeds used in paddy cultivation are of Sri Lankan origin.

In conclusion, there are noteworthy policy priorities related to paddy production of the country. Expansion of certified paddy seed usage by the farmers is considered as a high priority in the country, which is essential to realize the yield potential of the improved paddy varieties. Augmenting paddy yield using new high yielding varieties is also related to another policy priority of releasing paddy lands with low paddy productivity for other field crops expansion. The production of other field crops such as corn, black gram and green gram etc., are inadequate to meet the current consumer demand hence the deficits are met by imports with a significant burden on the foreign reserves. Consistent government policies on paddy sector, ranging from input supply to marketing and post-harvest handling are needed to maintain the prosperity of the paddy sector of Sri Lanka.

අපේ කෘෂි පීඨයම සදාතන මෙහෙවරක

කුමාර හෙට්ටිආරච්චි

කොකු නගුල තැටි නගුල කථා කරනා මිදුල
අපමණක් ස්නේහෙයෙන් ලවණ දාඩිය වගුල
මහ පොළාව ළය මඩල මහරු ගුණයෙන් උදුල
උනන ජලයෙන් ඔකඳ මෙහෙවරක ජය මඟුල

පුරුක් පණුවන් සමඟ අනුලෝම සංවාද
ගමේ ගොක් මැස්සන්ට පලිබෝධ නින්නාද
මොලොක් අංකුර තුඩ'ග මීදුමක පට සේද
ඉල්ලුපල්ලම නැතුව දේදුන්න පායාද?

මහ කන්නයට වහින ඊසාන වරුසාව
පොළොන්නරුවට උරුම සේසත ම දිය නෑව
වාන් ඇල දිගේ ගල ගලා එන කරුණාව
අපෙන් යළි උපද්දන ජාතියේ පලදාව

පසක උපතේ පටන් පැටිකිරිය අත ගාන
බණිජ පෝෂක සමඟ රසායන ශ්‍රමදාන
ගසක මුඳුනේ පටන් මුලට යහපත ගේන
අකුරු මිරිකා පනින ඉස්ම ඇදගෙන නාන

සත්ව පාලන සැපත කුකුල් කරමල් නටන
බත් නොකන තණකොළෙන් බුරුල්ලෙන් කිරි පෙරන
මේද පටක ම බහුල කොමල සූකර ගමන
රටක ප්‍රෝටීන උල්පතට ඉඩකඩ සඳන

සොඳුරු පේරාදෙණිය කෘෂිකර්ම පීඨයෙන්
ජාතියට ගලා ගිය මෙහෙවරක නාමයෙන්
ශුෂ්ක කටු පඳුරු වුව පුබුදු කළ ජීවයෙන්
මස්තිෂ්ක ඔකඳවෙයි හරිත ම ය ප්‍රාණයෙන්

පරාගනයක මහිම පෙනේ පුදින මලක
ප්‍රරෝහනයක අරුම ගෙනේ ජීවය ගසක
මහා ප්‍රගමන ගේන දැයේ පලබර හෙටක
අපේ කෘෂි පීඨය ම සදාතන මෙහෙවරක

පටක රෝපණ සතුට පීදෙනා කලවිටක
පිපුණ කුසුමක මුකුට වීදෙනා අළුයමක
යකඩ මැෂිමක දතට පෑදෙනා රන් බැතක
අපට දෑකැති උදලු ආහරණ එක මිටක

- Reflections of True Human Feelings Expressed Through Brush Strokes -

Sailboats

Stilt Fishing

Sunrise

Ever since I was a child, my number one passion in life was creating art. It grew even larger with the encouragement of my family and friends and felt that my passion for creativity was a gift passed down from my late father.

Painting is one of my favourite pastime hobbies. Over the years, I honed my skills towards creating abstract and landscape style of artwork.

The 'Sailboats' painting was chosen to be the cover photo for Canadian Artist Association for April 2023. I feel honoured to have been recognized for my artwork.

Several of my paintings were selected to be auctioned off during this year's CAME (Canadian Association for Medical Education) Foundation Art Auction.

My love for creativity burns deep within me, as I seek to broaden my understanding of the world of art and design beyond my current knowledge and experiences. – **Deepani Waidyaratne**

An Alumna of the University of Peradeniya (Faculty of Science)

Sun shines brightly, frost is away,
The climate has changed from
winter to spring
It is warm compared to the previous cold
Very soon we can see parks and gardens,
Full of flowers, vegetable and fruits.
See a picture of activity and gay
Squirrels and Rabbits come out
of their hiding places,
and search for food
Cockatoos and Sea gulls are seen flying flapping their wings
See clearly bushes, trees and meadows,
And happy faces everywhere.

Catholics remember the birth of
Jesus born to Virgin Mary
Today is Good Friday!
A day of mourning for Christians
Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross
The following Sunday reincarnation took place,
It is the Easter Sunday,
a day full of joy and merriment,
When delicious foods are served
almost in every home

By Charlotte Gardiyehewa
(Mother of alumna Nayana De Silva)

හැඟුම් හැඩ තල

පැහැය හැඩ රුව වෙනස්කර තුරුලතා පෙළ ඇත කැලඹිලා
මහඟු තෙදබල රිවිකිරණ මිහිමතින් ඇතක සැඟවිලා
ගතට උණුසුම ගෙනා පවනත් වියරු සිසිලට යටවෙලා
මහාබලගතු සොබාදහමට සියලු දෙය ඇත නතුවෙලා!

ලකළ දළරල එක්ව සිලිලාරයෙහි වෙරලට ඇයි ඇදෙන්නේ
වැටෙන හිමපිඬු පොලෝතලමත රැස්වෙලා කුමටද මිදෙන්නේ
සරණ සියොතුන් සැඟවිලා ඔත් දිවියකට කීම හැඩ ගැහෙන්නේ
ඇයිද කලෙකදී පිරුණු රොන් රැඳී මලින්බරරුක් මල් වරන්නේ

උරග, අටපා සතුන් සීපා කොහිද නොදනිමි සැඟැලනේ
මාවතින් ආ සිනා හඬවල් නොයේ වියැකී සේ දැනේ
නිමාකරමින් මියුරු ගිම්හානයක්, කටිමින් මහ විනේ
පිළිගැනීමට නොහැකි මුත් අද කුමට ශිශිරය පැමිණුනේ?

පැතුම් සමුදාහයක් නිරතුරු මිරිඟුවක් ලෙද පැතිරිලා
ඉමක් නොපෙනෙන තරඟයක් තුල ඇතත් හිත කම්පිත වෙලා
කුමක් කරමිද? මමත් සැමමෙන් සොබා දහමට නතුවෙලා
වැටෙන සැමතැන රැගෙන වැර වෙර යලිත් යායුතු නැගිටලා

කපටියන් නොමිනිසුන් විලසට උනුන් පරයා නැගෙන්නෙත්
ඇත්ත සඟවා දනන් රවටා නොයෙක් ආගම් දිලෙන්නෙත්
යුතු අයුතු හොඳ නොහොඳ මුසුවුනු ලෝක දහමක් තියෙන්නෙත්
ලොවේ දහමම තමයි, එයමය, “සොබදහම”ය කියන්නෙත්!

තුරුලතා, සිඳු, පවන, නුබකුස, දිනිදු, සැමදේ ජීවමානයි
රටාවන් හෝ කලාවන් ලෙස සැවොම එකටෙක බැඳුනු ගානයි
පරායන්තව නොසිට මිනිසා මමත්වයෙ රුදු අවිය මානයි
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(1990 දශකයේ දී විදුසර විද්‍යා සඟරාවේ පළවූවකි)

සටහන: නූතන මදුරාඹය ජලාශය, මහසෙන් රජ සමයේ ඉදිවූ බවට මහාවංශයේ සඳහන් **"මහා දාරගල්ලක වැව"** ලෙසින් ප්‍රති-නාමකරණයක් කළ යුතුයැයි යෝජනා කරනු කැමැත්තෙමි. ඒ, වය අපේ සිවිල් ඉංජිනේරු මුතුන්මිත්තන්ට කෙරෙන ගෞරවයක් මෙන්ම, නූතන පරපුරට විද්‍යාත්මක උත්ප්‍රේරකයක්ද විය හැකි බැවිනි.

ප්‍රියන්ත විජේවීර

ARTSCAPE: (I) THE USE OF BLACK IN ART TO SYMBOLIZE ELEGANCE AND BEAUTY; (II) THE POWER OF ABSTRACT ART TO EXPRESS A COMPOSITE OF REALITY IN ITS MANY FORMS[1]

By Martin Nicholas, Ph.D.

(An Alumnus of the University of Colombo, Science Faculty)

There are many definitions for Artscape. I see it as space for creativity which transforms human minds through art and its abstraction. I discuss two distinct applications within this space. The first is to transform any negative associations with the colour black to positivity, through examples from art seen across the ages. Second, I explore how the creativity which burns deep within abstract artists could play a role in untangling reality from its objects. In particular, expressing a composite of reality reflecting its many forms and dimensions through abstract art. Countering prejudices in colour symbolism through art would be a bonus (1).

Black in Art: In a previous newsletter (2), I claimed that associating the word "dark" or "black" with something negative is undesirable, because it would lead unknowingly to colourism, i.e., prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone[2]. In 2017, a Scientific American article discussed research showing a tendency for people to associate darker skin with perceptions of evil (3). Currently, we are surrounded by black and darkness as negative attributes through language, the social media, AI and even art (4). It is unfortunate that over time, somehow black had been linked to "fierce, terrible, wicked." This figurative sense came, in part, from the notion of "without light," being bad. Medieval paintings depicted demons and devils as black and angels and saints as vibrantly coloured (5).

In this article, I explore the positive depictions of the colour Black in Art as a counterpoint to the prevailing negativity. It is noteworthy that the word "black" originated from the positive Proto-Indo-European root word *bhel* meaning "to shine." Black was the first pigment used by artists in the prehistorical era and the first ink used by book printers. Thus, the colour black played an important role in the development of art and literature. Ancient artists used black charcoal and iron minerals to create a black pigment to paint on cave walls. For example, the great Black Bull from the Lascaux Caves in France was painted more than 17,000 years ago using black charcoal. Ancient Egyptians treated black as a positive colour. They associated it with the black rich soil of the Nile and considered it a colour of fertility. The Greeks painted black silhouettes of deity or prominent people (e.g., God Dionysus the Goddess of beauty, love, desire, and pleasure) on clay pottery using highly sophisticated art techniques. The "black figure" vases in Greece were signed by their makers, making them the first signed pieces of art in history.

Through a compounding of factors black was associated with evil in the Middle Ages between about the fifth and fifteenth centuries. For example, the vilification of black by the Cistercian Monks in the 12th Century.

[1] I thank Kumudini Nicholas for her editorial review that helped me finalize the article.

[2] See the Harvard Implicit Bias Association Test which includes attest for a colour bias.

Around the 15th Century, a major shift began to occur in the perception of black from sinful to a symbol of power. For example, high-quality black dyes and outfits became a sign of importance, dignity, and power. Kings all over Europe, (as evident in the Portrait of Charles V by Titian (1548)), started wearing expensive, luxury black fabric. By the end of the 16th century, black was an essential color of royal families and their courts. At the same period, artists in East Asia developed "ink wash painting." It is a form of brush painting using only black ink in different concentrations, where entire scenes were depicted just in black.

In the 1920s, due to the explosive popularity of Coco Chanel's little black dress, black started being associated with individuality, refinement, and wealth. Even today, the elegant *Little Black Dress* has remained a wardrobe staple. That should remind us that Black is not only for funeral attire but makes a glamourous high fashion statement.

The depth and transcendence of Black as one of the boldest, and the most powerful colours is undeniable. A focus on the positive use of Black in Art referenced above may trigger people to work on removing any negativity related to black, dark and darkness from their minds. Such efforts would be expected to make them less prejudicial against people with darker skin.

The use of a Black Square on a White background by Kazimir Malevich led to Suprematism. Ironically, it was among the first, and highly radical, developments in abstract art. Here it serves as a segue (*segway)* from black in art to abstract art.

The Potential Power of Abstract Art: The tree on the right was pointed out to me by a colleague during our recent AAUPOC Health Walk in Barrhaven. While the photo I took reveals an unusual root formation above ground, it does not capture the drama unfolding below the surface. Recent scientific evidence gives us clues about the existence of Fungal networks interconnecting trees in a forest. The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate Discoveries from A Secret World is a remarkable book by Peter Wohlleben, where he gives evidence of a fungi-based social communication network for trees which has been called the ***"Wood Wide Web."*** The most advanced photographic or videographic equipment cannot capture the existence of Fungal networks interconnecting trees in a forest. Yet, abstract art could portray both the visual and hidden life of trees.

A Tree on the path of AAUPOC 2023 Health Walk

Rather than focusing on the depiction or imitation of an object, abstract art looks at other non-objective artistic elements of shape, form, color, and line. Abstract techniques have been used by artists to explore ideas beyond the canvas and the visual space we observe. Abstract landscape paintings are intentionally different from what is visible to the viewer. They are structured to reveal the hidden, and unearth the forgotten or buried to make it resplendent. For example, think of a forest of trees as a landscape of interest (left image below). Regular paintings, photos or videos may capture what our eyes observe, but cannot record the reality of what is happening inside the hidden, connected lives of these trees. The image

of a digital collage below on the right made by an Abstract Artist is an example of one such effort to portray the hidden reality.

Left Image: Forest of trees

Right Image: Digital Collage by Maureen Williams

Abstract landscape art has the power to help us understand reality free from objectification. As discussed above, it could reveal the mysteries of the cached interconnections in the world of flora. It is not surprising that the power of colour has been explored by abstract art (6).

Finally, my fervent hope is that abstract art while continuing to give access to reality not evident to the naked eye could influence change in deep rooted prejudices in a human mind. Beliefs associating black or darkness with negativity could be a classic and inclusive example of such a prejudiced mind.

References:

(1) Color Symbolism And Prejudices - **Marianna Glynska, Contributor**

(2) January 2022 issue of Hanthana Pavura pp 6-9

(3) The Bad in Black Effect - Daisy Grewal (2017)

(4) Racism, Color Symbolism, and Color Prejudice - David Goldenberg (2009)

(5) Color Black: What It Means In Art - Post in ARTDEX

(6) Exploring the Power of Colour in Abstract Art - Post in EZEEART

Editor's Notes

Welcome to *Hanthana Pavura*. This is the 8th volume of the Newsletter by the Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya Ottawa Chapter (AAUPOC).

The talents showcased by the authors and the contents of their contributions in this edition are truly spectacular. From where else can you read about *"He Comes from Jaffna"* a marvellous creation by E.F.C. Ludowyk, one of the pioneers of Peradeniya creative arts in 1940s? Or encounter a strange dream (is it?) about a fiddler who happen to stay in the same hotel room (207) over a hundred years ago in Budapest, Hungary? The variety of these contributions cater to a wide range of literary and artistic tastes, and I am confident you will enjoy these pieces as much as I did. I take my hat off acknowledging all those who contributed to this wonderful collection of creations.

Our legendary graphic designer Deepani Waidyaratne, as always, played an incomparable role in putting all these creations together. Her careful selections of designs and layouts are eye pleasing and add colour and richness to this edition of *Hanthana Pavura*. I received excellent support from Anura Herath and Susantha Mohottalage as reviewers of some articles. I also appreciate very much the valuable support and input from current executive committee of the AAUPOC.

I could not let you go without drawing your attention to something dear to me: the Faulty of Agriculture at Peradeniya. The halcyon days of my youth in mid 80s to 90s I spent at the Faculty of Agriculture. This year (2023) we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of this vibrant Faculty. I invited Kumara Hettiarachchi, a poet who won the National Honours (*Rajjya Sammana*) for several times for his poems, to honour the Faculty of Agriculture with a poem. Kumara is a batchmate and a good friend of mine, who obliged to my humble request with a compelling poem about our Faculty. Another batchmate, Dr. Jayantha Senanayake, current Director of the Rice Research and Development Institute of Sri Lanka, authored an article about the significance of paddy variety developments in Sri Lanka for which agricultural scientists provided unwavering intellectual dedication. These two pieces are for bestowing the due honors to the Faculty of Agriculture in its 75th anniversary.

Please send us your comments and suggestions to aaupoc@yahoo.ca.

Sincerely,

Dhammika Herath
Editor AAUPOC