

### *Editor's Note...*

The territory of Humanities and Social Sciences accommodates a vast array of diverse areas, which are all in a constant quest of exploring and revealing the hidden knowledge of the fundamentals and different facets of human nature from different perspectives. New knowledge is always sought to support the ultimate end of achieving “social development”. Social development, in its “broad and undistorted meaning”, is a “societal condition”, in which human welfare and wellbeing is ensured at least to a reasonably decent level. It reflects an enabling environment for everyone to meet almost all aspects of needs for a qualitative living condition including spiritual wellbeing.

Yet, let alone such a social condition of utmost human betterment, a miniscule inhabitant which has come to share this planet with us, which has now been identified as Covid-19, a virus, is now threatening our very existence. It challenges our “normal” in all aspects of our living and coerces us to find a “new normal” to which we will all take another few decades to become adjusted. Thus, it has already challenged our welfare and wellbeing. Frightening socio-economic and cultural implications of this challenge are unprecedented. We are at a crossroads, almost straddling a fierce situation between survival and extinction.

Welcoming you all to the new issue of the Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (JHS), which has somehow happened, unfortunately, in such a time of an unprecedented threat to human survival on this earth, in its all biological, environmental, social, economic, cultural, spiritual etc. aspects. I am concerned though that I am totally immune to the imminent threat that I may be seen as even pessimistic and resigned.

If so, let me explain how we can turn to be optimistic. We, the family of the Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (PGIHS) of the University of Peradeniya, constantly keep up our aspired commitment of contribution to human betterment. It is the ultimate goal of PGIHS, all the way on the path towards upholding standards of excellence in postgraduate education and research in Humanities and Social Sciences. On that path, this is one golden moment for us too, the JHS, to demonstrate our bit of contribution, no matter what is taking place, maybe from a tiny facet of our key focus, critically looking at human behavior and relationships as socio-economic and cultural beings from social sciences and humanities perspective. If we keep continuing, it will ensure our small contribution to

the ongoing worldwide efforts of relentless scientific knowledge exploration and research which aims to emerge victorious against ferocious Covid-19. The constant advice of the scientists, who have engaged in tireless efforts towards developing an effective treatment, a vaccine, has been, “let’s control the rapid spread of this deadly disease”, by changing our behaviour, by simply adhering to prescribed public health care habits, wearing masks and maintaining social distance, avoiding mass gatherings, maintaining our maximum personal hygiene, frequent hand-washing, using effective sanitizing, etc. All humanly possible readjustments to our normal habitual social and cultural patterns of behavior is the only way to control the rapid spread of this deadly virus in order to avoid pandemic, until we find a successful vaccine. Certainly, in that, the leading role is for us, those who are in social sciences and humanities, so we have a critical role to play to contribute towards controlling the spread of disease until medical scientists find a permanent solution. The JHS is seriously concerned about this aspect of its contribution as the next issue will show.

We have decided to allocate our next issue as a specific platform to discuss the implications of covid-19 from all aspects in our own territory, humanities and social sciences. We believe that we are still not too late for it to be done, yet, certainly this very well justified task needs to be fast-tracked in order to bring it out as soon as humanly possible for us. By doing so, the JHS can make a timely contribution to the ongoing universal effort of research discussing how Covid-19 closely associates with socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of human behaviour in our local context from our own local perspective. Again, it enables us to explore the impacts of the novel coronavirus pandemic on socio-cultural, health (including mental health), economic, political, and educational aspects of our lives. In this discussion, we should emphasize two important aspects, firstly we may attend to finding ways how to deal with the crisis, confronting the challenges it throws at us destabilizing our day-to-day living, and secondly how we prepare ourselves to deal with all the aspects of possible impacts in the post-pandemic social situation. The discussion in our local context may generate global implications. It demonstrates and reiterates the fact that from local to global is a key aspect of the JHS vision that we carry through as we clearly stated at the very beginning, in our very first issue as well.

Let us now turn to what we offer in this current issue with the aim of sparking your intellectual curiosity. This time, the JHS includes seven papers and one book review. It starts with an expedition of spiritual exploration unraveling the concept of *sīla* from the spiritual imagination that many ordinary laymen have contemplated. The author, Professor Emeritus, says

that *sīla* is one among many other terms that the Buddha adopts from pre-Buddhist usage giving his own new meaning removing the term from its pre-Buddhist interpretation with ritualistic associations. In pre-Buddhist usage, *sīla* is not connected to a wholesome transformation of the conduct of a person. Instead, the Buddhist usage conceives it as practice that is conducive to the establishment of the foundation necessary for the complete ethical transformation of the individual leading ultimately to liberation from suffering. In this way, the focus of *sīla* in Buddhist usage is mainly on the transformation of our verbal and bodily conduct through the exercise of restraint and the cultivation of more positive modes of behaviour, the foundation on which the ultimate goal of destruction of all taints that lead to suffering is to be achieved, the first step in the path of liberation leading progressively to mental composure (*samādhi*) and insight (*paññā*). However, the enlightening quest that the author draws our curious attention is that, even Buddha, similar to some of his predecessors, recognizes the fact that the value of adopting *sīla* in the meaning of certain principles of restraint enables the foundation for achieving a superior goal of perfection in the ethical life. He points out the futility of adopting certain practices that have no direct experientially tested beneficial consequence in respect of their conduciveness to such perfection. Using the very concept of *sīla* that was recognized in the ethical sphere of life he has been selective in determining those items of *sīla* which he has found to be most conducive to the promotion of a sound basis for ethical progress and recommended them at the various levels of the Buddhist practice. This accounts for the difference in the number of items of *sīla* and the content of *sīla* described above. Sinking deeper into a tranquil intellectual depth, the author concludes that the items of *sīla* laid down by the Buddha's interpretation for our usage were not merely meant to function as a set of commands or rules governed by a kind of deontological approach to our judgments in the sphere of ethics but as practical guidelines in terms of which certain ethical intuitions or attitudes could be cultivated so that one could, in the practical day to day life respond appropriately to the demands of ethical living. It is certainly a new insight into interpretation and usage of *sīla*. It is no doubt a magnificent piece of writing though it leaves us in wonder of the sacred personage who brought such a magnificent philosophy to light the world.

The paper by Janitha Ekanayake discusses that, in the discourse of English literature in the pre-independent Sri Lanka, Lucien de Zilwa's *The Dice of the Gods* and S. J. K. Crowther's *The Knight Errant* have secured a prominent position as those works have attracted much scholarly attention from the Sri Lankan academia. The author then brings to our notice that the criticisms on the said works seem to have two dimensions. Some critics take

these works as exercises which are part of contemporary nationalism. Others argue otherwise taking them as satire aimed towards the natives. By utilizing the colonial and postcolonial writings and theory as the framework, the author makes an attempt to find an accurate synthesis of these two contradictory stances and examines whether the novelists would have, indeed, directed some criticism on the natives. The important stand that the author takes in this attempt is concerned with the social context of growing nationalism and nationalist movements in which these two works were created. Both works make references to the growing nationalist sentiments and how the movement has impacted the social values and relationships of the societal context at the time the work was done. This in a sense enables today's reader to understand the historical atmosphere and the gradual evolution of the physical set up of the country. The documentary function of these novels also allows a better comprehension of Sri Lankan history. Taking all these facets into creatively critical consideration, the author reaches the conclusion that although the novels are satirical in nature, yet when engaged in some further analytical reading, the deeper realities of the "Ceylonese Society" at the time these works were done can be discovered. Despite our, readers', standpoint of agreement or disagreement, I find that it is certainly mind-blowing and thought-provoking.

In our next paper, Nimal Wijesiri engages in a fascinating literary quest into the reflection of identity, a subjective relationship between individual and society, in Sinhala theatre that, as he says, has not yet happened even if Sinhala theatre has subjected to periodic social, political, and theatrical study inquiries. The Author starts with a broad interpretational perspective to identity as a "meaning construction" in persons' both individual and group contexts, as a result of which, when an individual occupies multiple roles, multiplicity of identity is also created. This interpretation builds the author's main conceptual basis of this paper, notion of intersectional relationship of identities, which he applies to examine the constructing identities of marginalized communities through Sinhala theatre. The author finds that, throughout history, Sinhala theatre has represented various identities, for example, Sinhala ritual drama represents ethnic, religious, and gender identities in different performances. Sinhalese Buddhist male identity is identified as 'self' throughout ritual drama performances. The author finds that this practice has an impact on Sinhala folk drama in the subsequent period and the same practice has continued up to the transition period of Sinhala theatre from folk drama to modern theatre represented by playwright John De Silva. With reference to Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist movement, the author asserts that it establishes Sinhalese Buddhist identity within the Sinhala theatre. With this diversity of patterns in meaning construction, the

Author concludes, that there is difficulty in separating 'self' and 'other' that represented in Sinhala theatre because all identities, including ethnicity, race, religion, class, caste, gender, sexuality, and disability, are interconnected. He suggests, based on the findings of this review, it is important to understand how traces of representation identities in pre-modern folk plays has had an impact on contemporary Sinhala theatre, and leaves it for further explorations.

Sri Lanka's maritime security, especially due to the attention of global as well as regional super powers to the country's strategic geographical location, has been no doubt a matter of concern since recent past. In our next paper, the author, Jeevaka Saman Kumara, addresses this concern and our attention to the fact that Sri Lanka's marine area and maritime security is vulnerable to the international and regional constrains that are not only military but trade and commercial too. In his critical analysis of the existing information from primary and secondary sources, the author tells us that traditional realist approaches and a liberal approach are not adequate for protecting, maintaining and managing the country's maritime security. In this context, how the country can strategically apply available resources and establish a strategy to safeguard the country's maritime security has been a serious structural and practical challenge, especially after the Cold War, as the author says, because of the country's strategic location, rich marine resources, and the regional and extra-regional power rivalry in the Indian Ocean region between India, China, USA and Japan. Some views that in this context, importance of Sri Lanka's marine area to the United States, China, Japan and India as a new 'Great Game'. The author hints out that Sri Lanka is at crossroads and needs to emerge with realistic policy approach as it cannot afford to continue with sectoral approach which has so far hindered the country's successful maritime security safeguard. The author concludes with a range of suggestions for consideration in strategic and realistic policy formulations.

We next offer you some food for thought on how our pattern of clothing is more or less a reflection of the culture we belong to or have been socialized into, which can in a sense be received as, and most often is indeed, a social construct. The authors start saying that clothing not only provides protection but is also a symbol of culture, religion and personality. This hints that, our clothing pattern is more or less a collective social construct that we all, collectively, consciously or unconsciously choose to unquestionably share and continue. Again, culture is a dynamic and therefore once it changes over time we may collectively deconstruct and reconstruct it as a whole, or only some aspects of it, and start sharing and continuing the new construct. The

authors say us that our clothing can also be recognized as a non-verbal medium of communication. Turning to the key focus in this paper, the authors start the discussion on the fact that clothing is a significant element in human civilization and indeed that the historical evolution of Sri Lankan female clothing reveals how Sri Lankans have attempted to move from “immodest” to “modest” clothing. In this process of evolution, the key factor that the author emphasizes upon is that in contrast to the dress code of many countries, which have evolved in favour of comfort, preferences and duties performed once they are worn, the historical pattern of dress code change among women in Sri Lanka shows that Sri Lankans were more concerned about nationalism and cultural beliefs in deciding on a suitable dress for women. Accordingly, the dress *Saree*, which is also called *Osari* depending on the style one may wear it, is traditionally considered the most suitable and decent dress for Sri Lankan women. The authors say that based on the findings of their review in this paper, they are of the opinion that clothing and real-life practices have some mismatches in Sri Lanka though dress code should ideally be decided on to ensure maximum job performance based on scientific grounds and individual preferences, not merely considering cultural grounds and gender stereotypes.

We continue our discussion around gender-stereotypes discourse to the next article too, where the author, Kaushalya Karunasagara, discusses that, in the Asian culture, almost all social institutions including religious institutions are male dominated. Even in religious contexts it appears that the decision-making power is kept with the male religious order and sometimes decisions which involve the female religious order also are taken by the male. This is well-reflected with the fact that the existence of *Bhikkhunī* order is not accepted by the authorities of *Bhikkhu* order and not recognized by the Sri Lankan government based on the decision of the *Bhikkhu* community by emphasizing that religious authority is more valued than the constitution of the country. The *Bhikkhunī* is denied “right to franchise” as their identity is not approved by the government and they are not recognized except as *Dasasil Māta*. This controversy has extended due to different interpretations which have been put forward on Buddhist *Vinaya* rules enacted by the Buddha regarding *Bhikkhunīs*. When someone claims that *Bhikkhunī* order of Sri Lanka cannot be revived because of there being no provision in the *Vinayapitaka* to do so, this is raising a question about the Buddha’s ability to foresee the future and his legislative ability by showing a gap (which does not really exist) that became an obstacle 2500 years later. This is a serious matter where Buddhism is interpreted wrongly where there is no gap in both *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* to be criticized or pointed out by anyone. Therefore, the matter of accepting *Bhikkhunī* revival should be solved as soon as

possible by the most venerable *Mahā Sangha* of all three *nikāyas*. If this matter of ordination of *Bhikkhunīs* is to be solved and their revival accepted, all other elements will fall into place. They will also be able to enjoy their rights just as the other citizens of the country. Finally, Sri Lanka will be recognized as a Theravada Buddhist country which propagates the spirit of the Buddhist doctrine by letting the four-fold disciples of the Buddhist order continue peacefully by protecting *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* for the well existence of Buddhist dispensation.

Ashanthi Ekanayake discusses the effects of journal writing in promoting English language proficiency, examining such exercises of a group of university students as a case study. The author says that the findings show that journal writing is indeed a practice which promotes language learning and that it improves writing fluency. The paper evaluates it as a tool which provides two-way feedback which on one hand motivates students and on the other provides insights on the learning process to the language teacher. The author concludes that the language teacher is able to gain a comprehensive insight to the nature of the errors students make and thus becomes better equipped to help them along in the learning process through this exercise of sustained writing. The diary or journal is a useful tool for gaining insights to the language learning and teaching process when weighed against simple external observation. However the author says that, some limitations do remain, because the validity of data might be questioned and there is the problem of generalizability. Usually a journal is used in EAP courses by students to reflect on the writing process involved in writing a research paper. It then becomes a meta-cognitive activity. In second language learning too, ideally the journal should be maintained about the language learning activity and process. However, the journal writing activity which was part of this study demonstrates that both the student and the teacher benefit from the dialogue form although many students maintained it in the daily diary form. The student is able to practice the language and the instructor gains an insight to the difficulties the student has. It is a student-centered activity because when the instructor explains the errors in the true context it occurred in, it becomes clearer for the student. The author maintains the opinion that students should be encouraged to maintain the conventional language learners' journal if they are to benefit through this endeavor.

This issue of the JHS too concludes with a book review. Ayeshi Biyanwila reviews the book, titled, "International Migration and Development: Survival or Building up Strategy" which has been published in 2019, and says that the book explores how migrants and their families have been betrayed by the common notion of receiving development through migration. The reviewer

starts capturing the underlined theme, literarily the conclusion of overall analysis of the book in its' entirety, "one cannot conclude that international migration is positive in terms of a country's overall development, simply by looking at only the macro-level situation". According to the reviewer, the author of the book tries to identify development in a broader perspective which encapsulates both the country and the family of a migrant. In this effort author reflects his expertise in the field of international migration, clarity of theoretical understanding, and attentiveness to the grasp of much unnoticed social impacts of international migration on migrant sending communities in a situation where more and more contemporary analysis focus on macroeconomic repercussions of migration effects. The opinion of the reviewer is that it is noticeable and also adds value to the contemporary stock of literature on international migration, especially on the link between international migration and development of "sending" developing countries. Again, the reviewer reveals the fact that the author uses a holistic analytical framework and says that it enables a clear diction where by even a lay person is able to understand the content of the book though it seems to be somewhat academic, and oriented towards policy planning. And the context of the book is relatable to any person devoid of any racial, economic and social distinction. The importance in rethinking migration and development is vital to a society which has been ferociously affected by a pandemic such as the Corvid-19. Thus, it makes this the best opportunity to recommend this book for the academics and the ordinary reader alike.

Let me conclude this writing with a mark on what we expect from what we have offer you here in this issue and what we enthusiastically looking forward to offering you in our next special issue. Thus, as was stated earlier, this issue of the JHS has again become a splendid blend of knowledge and a source of wisdom from diverse fields reflecting the PGIHS itself as a place of diversity. We keep reminding of it carrying it as our theme through all of our issues. It is now again presented to the academia. Unlike in the past, where we posted only our abstracts online, we have taken another big step posting all of our previous and current papers online. They are all now widely accessible for everyone across the world. We hope that it will be used by a wider readership from every nook and corner of the human society and will spark critical thoughts and encourage innovative contributions to the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities. What we want to do in our next issue is, as we stated earlier, not to lose the moment and explore what would be the impact of novel coronavirus pandemic on socio-cultural, health, including mental health, economic, employment and work, and education aspects of our lives in general and in our own country's context, and come up with some implications to deal with it, and predictions for our



preparation, in the post-pandemic social situation, hopefully, in the near future. Thinking of the possible outcome in that way, even at this moment I am writing this, I am unable to avoid the feeling of overwhelming excitement to have the opportunity for introducing that specific issue to our readership soon. We try our best and with the slightest of positive energy which we keep at the face of tiny virus threatening to bring down the entire human civilization, we are positive and hope for a good, “new normal”.