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**Work and Utopia in the Fiction of
Martin Wickramasinghe and James Goonewardene**

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the relationship between work and utopia in a twofold manner: how fulfilment is achieved through work in a material sense and how happiness is attained in a spiritual sense as a result of the comparative absence of work. The city-village binary is a prominent factor here as the city is generally associated with the first kind of utopia while the village is associated with the latter. My focus is the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist context and the primary texts under analysis are selected Sinhala novels of Martin Wickramasinghe and selected English fiction of James Goonewardene. Theories of the pastoral, Arcadia, utopia, the tourist gaze and works of postcolonial theorists such as Lyman Tower Sargent and Edward Said form the theoretical basis of this study.

The two novelists under investigation are from different cultural and social backgrounds and have written in different languages. Such differences in subject position have affected their vision of utopia in relation to work and this disparity is expressed in their writing. The changing social, economic and political situation of Sri Lanka in which they wrote and which they depicted, in its development from a British colony to an independent nation, has also had a great impact on the vision of these authors. The changing social order from a feudal agrarian society in the village to a capitalist work system in the city is discussed in this thesis in relation to its depiction in the fiction of these authors. The portrayal of the feminist movement in Sri Lanka and its impact on the place of women in relation to work and utopia in these novels, too, is analysed in this study.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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The past two years have been a new and challenging experience for me, living away from my home country, family and friends. I thank all those who have kept me going and never let me give up. Special thanks go to my parents for instilling a love for reading in me from my childhood and for believing in me and supporting me in everything.

Contents

Chapter One: Work and Utopia – page 08

Chapter Two: Martin Wickramasinghe and the City – page 38

Chapter Three: James Goonewardene and the Village – page 77

Conclusion – page 127

Bibliography – page 131

In Ancient Kotmale¹

In the beautiful principality, in Kotmale
 I will build my house of the good soil's brick
 With the timber of the ringing forests,
 And I will cover it with the tiles flat
 One on one, as the palms of the farmers –

And in the morning will I see
 The sun wounded as my heart with a million arrows
 Rise between the mountain ranges
 And spread in the green valley its golden blood

And I will go into the fields in the seasons –
 I will sow the grain, a stream between my hands,
 I will cast the grain in falling nets –
 It will stream up round the calves of maidens
 From the viridian fire of that clay;

And in the kilns of my sun-wed fields
 And under the haven of passing clouds, as I repose
 In those almost everlasting days,
 In the time ordained, in green calendars
 Will come my yearned harvest.

Lakdasa Wikkramasinha

¹ Lakdasa Wikkramasinha, "In Ancient Kotmale," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 12 (Asian Studies Centre, Michigan State University, Fall-Winter 1976), 86.

CHAPTER ONE:

Work and Utopia

I – Research Statement

This thesis analyses the relationship between work and utopia in a twofold manner: how fulfilment is achieved through work in a material sense, and how happiness is attained in a spiritual sense as a result of the comparative absence of work. The city-village binary is a prominent factor here as the city is generally associated with the first kind of utopia while the village is associated with the latter.

II – Scope of the Study

In order to analyse the work-utopia relationship I am focusing on the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist context and the primary texts under analysis are selected Sinhala novels of Martin Wickramasinghe (1890-1976) and selected English fiction of James Goonewardene (1921-1997).

Wickramasinghe was a pioneer of the Sinhala Realist novel and his contribution to the Sri Lankan literary scene is immense. As will be shown later in this chapter, critics such as Ediriweera Sarachchandra² and A. V. Suraweera³ have commended him for recreating in his novels the socio-political and economic atmosphere of colonial Sri Lanka with verisimilitude. As the Russian critic Boris Riurkov points out, Wickramasinghe realistically discusses issues such as social differences, colonialism, the growth of revolutionary sentiments and their

² Ediriweera R. Sarachchandra, *The Sinhalese Novel* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1950), 146.

³ A.V. Suraweera, *Essays on Sri Lankan Literature and Culture* (Colombo 10: Godage, 2003), 41.

impact on family and social relationships.⁴ Wickramasinghe does not merely replicate reality through his novels but brings new thought that are important to my study into these issues that he fictionalises. The universality of Wickramasinghe's writing is evident by the fact that his fiction has been translated into several languages such as English, Tamil, Chinese, Russian, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Dutch, French and Japanese.⁵

According to Anupama Mohan, the appearance of utopian notions in twentieth-century Indian literature was mainly a counter product of Gandhian politics against British rule.⁶ In India, authors such as Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Premchand (1880-1936), Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) and Raja Rao (1908-2006) focused on the village, promoting the idea of a utopic, pre-colonial nation. In Sri Lanka, the concept of utopia was explicitly interwoven with Buddhism and the idea of nirvana. Mohan further discusses that, these religious beliefs, coupled with the influence of the Indian struggle for independence, led to the projection of a similar utopic vision in Sinhalese literature in Sri Lanka. Many Sinhala language authors, led by Martin Wickramasinghe, represented the Sinhala Buddhist village as an idyllic microcosm of the pre-colonial nation. Mohan adds that the colonial present was depicted as dystopic against the image of this rural utopia.⁷ These aspects will be discussed further in chapter two of this thesis, particularly in relation to Wickramasinghe's "recreation of a timeless Koggala."⁸ The selection of Martin Wickramasinghe's *Koggala Trilogy* for analysis in this study has two main reasons. The first is Wickramasinghe's prominence as a canonical writer in Sinhala fiction. The second, and most importantly for my study, is his

⁴ Boris Riurkov, "Destinies of Generations," in *Martin Wickramasinghe The Sage of Koggala: Essays on the Life and Work of Martin Wickramasinghe, Published on his eighty fifth birth anniversary*, ed. Rupa Saparamadu (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo, 2001), 71.

⁵ The Official Website of Martin Wickramasinghe,
<http://www.martinwickramasinghe.info/english/books/index.htm>

⁶ Anupama Mohan, *Utopia and the Village in South Asian Literatures* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 131.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ Ibid., 139.

representation of the Sinhala Buddhist village as idyllic as opposed to the city, particularly in the three novels under discussion.

James Goonewardene's fiction provides an interesting comparison to Martin Wickramasinghe's trilogy. He was a pioneer of the English language novel in Sri Lanka and published more novels written in English than any other Sri Lankan. He was also the first Sri Lankan author to have a novel published by Penguin India (*One Mad Bid For Freedom*, 1990). Therefore, in addition to the English-speaking minority in Sri Lanka, he had a readership in India and beyond. Importantly for my study, he was one of the first Sri Lankan novelists to write about the Sri Lankan village in English. In the literary scene of pre-independence Sri Lanka, the depiction of the Sinhala village in English fiction was limited. As pointed out by Chandani Lokuge,

a perusal of nineteenth century English literature in Sri Lanka, [sic] reveals that both British and Sri Lankan writers of the time generally avoided writing about the country's indigenous experience. It appears that even when they did strive to do so, their depictions of this milieu were gravely distanced from reality due to (a) the restrictions imposed on the writers by a colonial situation, (b) their imitation of contemporary modes of British fiction and (c) their dissociation from the realities of Sri Lankan indigenous life and character.⁹

As a result of these reasons, the literature in English produced during this period in Sri Lanka was mainly limited to Orientalist accounts by British colonials and anglicised Ceylonese. They discussed and analysed "the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it [...] dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."¹⁰ As Yasmine Gooneratne points out, in the nineteenth century, "the Ceylonese imagination was caught, not by the rural

⁹ Chandani Lokuge, "English Fiction in Sri Lanka and the Portrayal of Contemporary Society" (master's thesis, University of Peradeniya, 1986), 1.

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), 3.

peasant, but by the Englishman [...] the Ceylonese writer was not prepared to deal sympathetically with native character in fiction.”¹¹

Gooneratne indicates the gradual emergence of a literary tradition in the twentieth century that was more sympathetic towards the depiction of local contexts as can be seen in “the perceptiveness of Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle*, and J. Vijayatunge’s [sic] nostalgic *Grass for my Feet*.”¹² In one of the earliest comparatively positive depictions of a Sinhala village by an Englishman, Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) gives an insider exploration of a segment of Sri Lankan village community of the dry zone and speaks with authority about the villagers. When it comes to creative nonfiction, Jinadasa Vijayatunga (1903-89) was a writer who turned back to the village. His *Grass for My Feet* (1935) and *Island Story* (1949) narrate realistic and non-Orientalist accounts of Sri Lanka. As Tissa Jayatilaka states,

Using legends and myths and interweaving these with fact, [J. Vijayatunga’s] *Island Story* relates its author’s knowledge of Sri Lanka’s past both to later-day and to her age-old traditions [...] Vijayatunga’s vividly descriptive prose takes us back to a rural Sri Lanka: Our farms and fields and *hena* (which means a patch reclaimed for cultivation from hilly jungle or forest) adjoin each home-stead. When we speak of the *village* we mean the houses of the villager, as well as their gardens, farms, fields and *hena*. This means that there is less proximity between houses in our villages than there is in our towns or in European villages. While this arrangement in no way detracts from the intimate atmosphere that is in a village always, it fosters that rugged individualism of the peasant which, for all its defects, is a marked characteristic of islanders.¹³

This trend of depicting the Sinhala village in English literature was continued by local writers as a result of the strong nationalist consciousness that was prevalent with the dawning of independence. The poem “In Ancient Kotmale” by Lakdasa Wikkramasinha (1941-1978)

¹¹ Yasmine Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon: 1815-1878* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo, 1968), 156.

¹² Ibid., 186.

¹³ Tissa Jayatilaka, “The English-Language Novel of Sri Lanka and the Critical Response to it: An Overview,” *Navasilu: Journal of the English Association of Sri Lanka* 17, ed. Nihal Fernando (Colombo 3: English Association of Sri Lanka, August 2000), 9.

that is presented as the epigraph of this thesis clearly captures how village utopia was rejuvenated in Sri Lankan English writing. Here, Wikkramasinha celebrates rural work as a means of fulfilment. This poem, which is a re-imagining of the poem “Lake Isle of Innisfree” by W. B. Yeats, illustrates how Sri Lankan English writers of the time skilfully blended their Western literary influence with the sense of national pride of post independence Sri Lanka.

James Goonewardene was a prominent figure in this tradition that commenced with Leonard Woolf and J. Vijayatunga. His *A Quiet Place* (1968) and *Call of the Kirala* (1971) are representative of post independence Sri Lankan English-language novels that depicted the village as idyllic. Goonewardene’s position as a representative of his generation of Sri Lankan English writers who focused on the village made me select these two novels for my thesis. His novella *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi* (1976) offers a contrasting image by representing the dystopic city atmosphere of post independence Sri Lanka, making it an interesting addition to my comparative analysis.

As cultural theorist Benedict Anderson states, “It is ‘print capitalism,’ manifested most clearly in the novel and the newspaper that provided the technical means of ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.”¹⁴ In the Sri Lankan post-independence context, the creation of a national consciousness through the written medium was seen as a great opportunity by the Sinhala and English language writers.

III – Significance and Limitations of the Study

As David Damrosch discusses in *World Literature in Theory*, there are two opposing views to studying world literature: “that a global study of world literature is impossible, and

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 30.

that it is all too easy.”¹⁵ While there are commonalities in all culture-specific literatures making literature transcend its moorings, certain theories that are applicable to Western contexts are not universally applicable to non-Western backgrounds. Both Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene are hybrids. As Sri Lankan writers, they have a very particular Sri Lankan cultural aspect in their writing. However, there are also Western influences in their writing as a result of their English education and access to Western literature. Therefore the hybrid nature of these literary works will be taken into consideration in this thesis. I will be analyzing selected fiction of Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene in relation to the concepts of utopia and work. Since their focus is the Sri Lankan milieu, an understanding of the concepts of utopia and work in relation to this background is important in addition to the universal concepts of utopia and work. Critics on the work of Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene do not make references to the village or city as utopia. Nor do they focus on the place of work in the seemingly utopic settings described by these two authors. Therefore, I feel that an investigation on this topic will make a significant contribution to the area of utopian studies.

When analysing the works of Martin Wickramasinghe, I have referred to the English translations¹⁶ of the novels, firstly for practical reasons because this thesis is in the English language and secondly because it is the language which has opened up a new international readership for Wickramasinghe’s trilogy. All three English translations have been published by the Martin Wickramasinghe Trust, headed by the author’s son Ranga Wickramasinghe. The first novel of the trilogy, *Gamperaliya* (1944),¹⁷ was translated into English as *Uprooted*

¹⁵ David Damrosch, *World Literature in Theory* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 2.

¹⁶ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Gamperaliya - The Village*, trans. Lakshmi de Silva and Ranga Wickramasinghe (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2011); Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Kaliyugaya - The Age of Kali*, trans. Ranga Wickramasinghe and Aditha Dissanayake (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2013) and Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Yuganthaya - Destiny*, trans. Ranga Wickramasinghe and Deenesha Wickramasinghe (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2014).

¹⁷ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Gamperaliya* (Dehiwela: Thisara Prakasakayo, 1997).

(2011) by academic and acclaimed translator Lakshmi de Silva¹⁸ in collaboration with Ranga Wickramasinghe. However, the translation does not do justice to the Sinhala original. The main drawback in this and the two other translations of the trilogy, which were both translated by Ranga Wickramasinghe in partnership with Aditha Dissanayake (*Kaliyugaya – The Age of Kali*, 2013) and Deenesha Wickramasinghe (*Yuganthaya – Destiny*, 2014) respectively, is that in each the original novels have been edited and sections have been left out. Additional explanations of Sinhala idiom are also provided in the English translations. For example, in *Uprooted*, which was translated by Lakshmi de Silva and Ranga Wickramasinghe, “Yantra-mantra-gurukam” is explained as “the collective village idiom for amulets, incantations, spells and the like,”¹⁹ while “the thovil ceremony” is described as “an elaborate exorcist’s ritual of masked dancing and chanting.”²⁰ Such descriptions, which are provided for the benefit of an outside audience, disrupt the flow of the narrative. Regretfully, these are the only English translations available of the *Koggala Trilogy*. I consider the lack of good quality translations as a limitation of this study.

IV – Literature Review

There is substantial research available in the field of utopian studies. This research can be divided into historical studies and more contemporary thematic studies. Historical studies present how the notion of utopia goes back to the writings of Sir Thomas More (1478-1535). It also focuses on the gradual development of the definition of utopia. In *Utopianism:*

¹⁸ D. C. Ranatunga, “Changing Face of a Changing Village: ‘Gamperaliya’ to ‘Uprooted,’” *The Sunday Times*, 15 March, 2009.

¹⁹ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Gamperaliya - The Village*, trans. Lakshmi de Silva and Ranga Wickramasinghe (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2011), 54.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

A Very Short Introduction,²¹ Lyman Tower Sargent offers a comprehensive account of the development of the concept of utopia from the very earliest times to the present context. In *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*,²² Gregory Claeys has compiled several studies that focus on utopia. They provide an illustration on the evolution of the concept of utopia from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) to political and science fictional dystopias of the twentieth century. Utopian studies of the twentieth century focus on topics such as science fiction, romance, feminism and ecology in relation to utopia. Such studies evoke how general utopian thought has branched out to other fields and created interest in diverse disciplines.

Much of this research focuses on Western contexts and Western concepts of utopia. However, more recent utopian studies, such as Lyman Tower Sargent's "Colonial and postcolonial utopias,"²³ Jacqueline Dutton's "'Non-western' utopian traditions"²⁴ and Bill Ashcroft's "Introduction: Spaces of Utopia"²⁵ focus on other contexts such as New Zealand, China, India and Africa. These studies are more relevant to my thesis as I, too, will be focusing on a 'non-western' postcolonial situation.

Sargent, in "Colonial and postcolonial utopias," looks at actual colonial experiences and shows how "the settler colonies produced a rich harvest of utopias."²⁶ As he points out "Most settlers wanted to improve their own lives and some had a specific utopian vision in mind."²⁷ In this study, Sargent discusses the place of work in relation to utopia. It is through hard work and labour that these "economic immigrants" hoped to achieve a better life: "They travelled because they believed that the new place was sufficiently different that they would

²¹ Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²² *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²³ Sargent, "Colonial and postcolonial utopias," 200-222.

²⁴ Jacqueline Dutton, "'Non-western' utopian traditions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 223-258.

²⁵ Bill Ashcroft, "Introduction: Spaces of Utopia," *Spaces of Utopia: An Electronic Journal* (2012): 1-17.

²⁶ Sargent, "Colonial and postcolonial utopias," 200.

²⁷ Ibid.

be able to move up the economic and social ladders, and, in particular, they often aspired to own their own property.”²⁸

Sargent further adds that “settler colonies have produced a rich harvest of utopian literature and projects.”²⁹ Even though he is referring to colonies such as the British colonies in North America and the South Pacific, the Spanish colonies in the Americas and the Portuguese colony of Brazil, this observation can be applied to the Sri Lankan colonial context as well where individuals “chose to give up the familiar for the unknown or little known hoping to find or build a better life.”³⁰ Whereas Sargent is focusing on the colonizers and the settlers, I will be looking at the colonized locals and their pursuit of happiness. While colonizers and settlers went in search of success in a completely different country, the colonized locals in the Sri Lankan context hoped to find satisfaction in a different location in their own country. For Wickramasinghe, who located his fiction in the colonised Sri Lankan context, prosperity through work seemed to be located in the city, far away from the village.

While Sargent focuses on colonial experiences, Jacqueline Dutton discusses post-colonial situations in relation to utopia. Dutton points out that even though the concept of utopia originated in the West, studies in the recent past have established the existence of non-Western utopias such as Chinese, Japanese, African, Indian, Islamic, Australian, New Zealand and indigenous utopias. Dutton proves this point by presenting the example of Zhang Longxi³¹ who “has added vital and convincing elements to the argument that a Chinese utopian tradition has both roots and branches, continuing to grow in different directions from its western counterparts.”³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 202.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See for example Zhang Longxi, “The Utopian Vision, East and West,” *Utopian Studies* 13 (2002), 1-21; and Zhang Longxi, *Allegories: Reading Canonical Literature East and West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

³² Dutton, “‘Non-western’ utopian traditions,” 229.

Dutton then moves on to a discussion on the impact of religion on the shape of utopia, both Western and non-Western. Some of the religious views she focuses on are

Zoroastrian views of Dilmun, the Ramarajya – reign of the Rama in Hindu history, the Garden of Eden in Judeo-Christian beliefs, *datong* (Great Unity) in Confucianism, *taiping* (Great Equality) in Taoism, the ‘Dreaming’ in the indigenous Australian worldview [and] the first Caliphate or Medinan regime in Islamic thought.³³

These religious contexts fall under the category of Arcadia which is a state of lost perfection. For example, in Christian thought, the Garden of Eden cannot be recovered and Adam cannot become “unfallen”. Utopia, on the other hand, in the traditional sense of the word, is a state of societal perfection one aspires to or strives towards.

This definition of utopia is closely related to the concept of nirvana in Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka from India in the third century BCE. However, by the tenth century, Buddhism had become non-existent in India as a recognised national religious tradition. Of the two main schools of Buddhism practised in the world today, Theravada is considered to be the older tradition. It is traditionally practised in Sri Lanka in the region of South Asia and in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos in Southeast Asia.³⁴ Theravada is different from the more popular tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. The goal of Theravada Buddhism is nirvana or personal liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Mahayanists, on the other hand, concentrate on Bodhisattva figures who delay personal enlightenment in order to help all other sentient beings attain liberation.³⁵ Theravada Buddhism is a more conservative and historical tradition that uses the Buddha’s teaching preserved in the Pali canon. It represents an unbroken tradition from the times of Gautama Buddha. In her discussion of non-western utopian traditions, Dutton mentions “*Nirvana*, the

³³ Ibid., 231.

³⁴ Asanga Tilakaratne, *Theravada Buddhism: The View of the Elders* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012), 79

³⁵ Ibid., xxii.

Pure Land of Eternal Happiness in ancient Indian Buddhism.”³⁶ However, she does not offer a discussion of the present-day Theravada Buddhism practised in Sri Lanka. Thus, even in non-western approaches to the study of utopia there are gaps when it comes to the Sri Lankan context. As well, even though issues pertaining to postcolonial utopias have been addressed by scholars such as Sargent and Dutton, the village-city dichotomy and the place of work in relation to utopia are factors that are yet to be discussed in this field of study.

A study that runs parallel to my thesis is *Utopia and the Village in South Asian Literatures* (2012). Here, Anupama Mohan focuses on the village as utopia in the fiction of several writers such as Leonard Woolf and Raja Rao. Interestingly, she, too, focuses on Martin Wickramasinghe and Koggala. However, she is interested in the concept of a Buddhist utopia in Wickramasinghe’s writing. My study will be different as it will be focusing on the place of *work* in reaching utopia. Another factor is that Mohan limits her analysis to representations of the village as utopia. In addition to the village, I will be paying attention to the city as well. James Goonewardene, the second writer I will be analysing, is an urbanised Sri Lankan who wrote in English. His attitude towards the village and the city are different from that of Wickramasinghe, who himself was of the village. My study will therefore have more scope as a comparative analysis, focusing on the representations of both the village and the city, from the perspective of two writers from two different cultural backgrounds.

A more recent study that discusses utopia in relation to Sri Lanka is *Thomas More’s Socialist Utopia and Ceylon (Sri Lanka)*³⁷ by Laksiri Fernando. However, unlike Mohan, Fernando does not focus on Sri Lankan literary texts as representations of utopia. Here, the writer’s intention is to find parallels between the actual Sri Lanka and the island of Utopia

³⁶ Ibid., 232.

³⁷ Laksiri Fernando, *Thomas More’s Socialist Utopia and Ceylon (Sri Lanka)* (Createspace, 2014)

described by Thomas More in his seminal text. This study is based on historical, social, economic and political facts and not on literary analysis.

As pointed out before, Martin Wickramasinghe was one of the pioneers of the Sinhala Realist novel. His *Gamperaliya* is commended for its “stark realism”³⁸ and is considered to be “the first realist novel in the true sense of the word and this work perhaps became the model for all other Sinhala novels until 1956.”³⁹ Therefore, there is substantial research on his work, in both English and Sinhala. One of the earliest studies that analyses Wickramasinghe’s fiction is E. R. Sarathchandra’s *The Sinhalese Novel*. Here, Sarathchandra dedicates one chapter to Wickramasinghe and discusses the merits of his writing, particularly his novels. Sarathchandra focuses on the realism in Wickramasinghe’s writing and also on thematic concerns such as the impact of modernisation and capitalism on rural life.⁴⁰ Alawattagoda Pemadasa’s *The Incredible Gam Peraliya* [sic], *A realistic evaluation of social, economic, cultural and environmental reliability and realism of Martin Wickramasinghe’s Gam Peraliya*,⁴¹ as its subtitle suggests, too, is an investigation into the realism of representation of the village in Wickramasinghe’s novel. He attempts to answer the question “How realistic is *Gam Peraliya*?” by arguing that “*Gam Peraliya* depicts a distorted socioeconomy” and that “*Gam Peraliya* depicts an unrealistic society.” Wimal Dissanayake discusses “Martin Wickramasinghe and the Anxieties of modernity.”⁴² A. V. Suraweera,⁴³ too, presents discussions on Martin Wickramasinghe’s *Gamperaliya* from the point of view of Realism and Modernism. Like Pemadasa, he also analyses people and places in the novels of Martin Wickramasinghe in order to discern the reliability of representation in his novels.

³⁸ Sarathchandra, *The Sinhalese Novel* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1950), 146.

³⁹ Suraweera, *Essays on Sri Lankan Literature and Culture* (Colombo 10: Godage, 2003), 41.

⁴⁰ Sarathchandra, *The Sinhalese Novel*, 150-1.

⁴¹ Alawattagoda Pemadasa, *The Incredible Gam Peraliya* (Weligama: Sathmina, 1996).

⁴² Wimal Dissanayake, “Martin Wickramasinghe and the Anxieties of Modernity,” in *Sinhala Novel and the Public Sphere*, 123-156. Boralesgamuwa: Visidunu Prakashakayo, 2009.

⁴³ Suraweera, *Essays on Sri Lankan Literature and Culture*.

Interestingly for my study, Suraweera further analyses “Martin Wickramasinghe’s Perception of the Country and the City.”⁴⁴ He focuses on the representation of geographic and socio-cultural differences between these two spaces. The philosophical movement of Modernism, which arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Western society, had an impact on the writing of Sri Lankan authors such as Wickramasinghe. The development of modern industrial societies and the rapid growth of cities were among the factors that shaped modernism. Such themes of modernization and westernization and their impact on the village and city communities are clearly depicted in Wickramasinghe’s *Koggala Trilogy*, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

In *Sinhala Writing and the New Critics*, Ranjini Obeyesekere discusses the place of Martin Wickramasinghe, not as a novelist but as a critic in Sinhala literature.⁴⁵ Wickramasinghe’s *Landmarks of Sinhalese Literature*,⁴⁶ which has been translated into English by Ediriweera Sarachchandra, is an exhaustive critical study that demonstrates the important role played by Wickramasinghe as a critic in the Sri Lankan literary context.

As can be seen from the aforementioned examples, much of the literature available on Martin Wickramasinghe focuses on generic concerns such as Realism and Modernism in his novels. In my thesis, however, I will be investigating the concept of utopia in relation to work in both the village and the city. This is a topic that has not been dealt with in relation to the novels of Wickramasinghe.

When compared with the literature on Wickramasinghe, the criticism available on James Goonewardene is hostile. As an English-educated westernised writer, Goonewardene

⁴⁴ Ibid., 85-103.

⁴⁵ Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Sinhala Writing and the New Critics* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1974), 74.

⁴⁶ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Landmarks of Sinhalese Literature*, trans. Ediriweera R. Sarachchandra (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1963).

was seen by local Sri Lankans as an outsider unsuccessfully attempting to depict the village setting in his novels.

Similar to Wickramasinghe, Goonewardene, too, was a critic in addition to being a novelist. In "Nationalism and the Writer in Sri Lanka," he discusses the importance of writing as a form of nationalism.

The vacuum created by the transfer of power from the foreign ruler to the nationals of a country is most felt by the artist, who, more than others, has to grapple with such intangibles as identity, tradition, and national consciousness [...] In trying to create an art that could be identified as truly national, writers, dramatists, and musicians here attempted to link their work, after Independence, with what they believed were the roots of our culture.⁴⁷

Through novels such as *Gamperaliya*, Wickramasinghe focused on the village in the Sinhala literary context as a means of establishing a sense of nationalism during British colonisation in Sri Lanka. The fact that his novels were written in Sinhala further establishes their rootedness in the local culture. Goonewardene, who wrote just a few decades after Sri Lanka gained independence from the British, along with many other Sri Lankan English novelists of his generation, saw the need to express a national consciousness in Sri Lanka's postcolonial context. Goonewardene was from the westernised city background of Colombo. Wickramasinghe, on the other hand, was from the village of Koggala where there was less Western influence. Nevertheless, Wickramasinghe, too, was influenced by the West as a result of his English education and immersion in Western literature. Both Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene saw the village as a purely Sri Lankan pastoral space, uncontaminated by Western influence.

⁴⁷ James Goonewardene, "Nationalism and the Writer in Sri Lanka," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 9 (1974): 50.

One of the earliest commentaries on James Goonewardene dates back to 1971 in the form of a review by Thiru Kandiah on *Call of the Kirala* in the Sri Lankan journal *New Ceylon Writing*. Here, the reviewer focuses more on the use of language in the novel and less on the author's thematic concerns. However, Kandiah makes a point that is important to my study, and that is the focus on the village as opposed to the city in Goonewardene's novels.

Like so many contemporary writers of English fiction in Ceylon, he located his positive in the village, on the other side of the very high wall erected between himself and the rest of the nation by a knowledge of English. So Vijaya [in *Call of the Kirala*], the city man, wants to liberate himself from the tensions, the superficiality, and the lack of humanity of the city, and escape to a 'quiet little niche' in the village, where he could be a 'man of the earth', having 'the smell of the sun in his nostrils and the feel of the grass on his body, and the noise of the winds and the trees in his ears.'⁴⁸

Ashley Halpé,⁴⁹ Chandani Lokuge,⁵⁰ Rajiva Wijesinha⁵¹ and D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke⁵² are among other critics who have commented on the turning back to village experiences by James Goonewardene and his contemporaries in Sri Lankan English writing of the sixties. These scholars criticise Goonewardene for orientalising the village as a paradise and as a means of reconnecting with ancient Sri Lankan roots.

Recent investigations on Sri Lankan writing in English shift the argument to a different level. One such critic is Minoli Salgado. Like her predecessors, she, too, draws upon the fact that James Goonewardene based his novels in the village context as a means of revitalising Sri Lanka's sense of nationalism. However, unlike in previous analyses, Salgado

⁴⁸ Thiru Kandiah, "New Ceylon English," review of *Call of the Kirala* by James Goonewardene, *New Ceylon Writing* (1971): 92.

⁴⁹ Ashley Halpé, "Brief Chronicle: Some Aspects of Recent Sri Lankan Literature in English," *Navasilu* 7 & 8 (1987): 175.

⁵⁰ Lokuge, "English Fiction in Sri Lanka and the Portrayal of Contemporary Society".

⁵¹ Rajiva Wijesinha, "Sri Lankan Fiction in English," in *Breaking Bounds: Essays on Sri Lankan Writing in English* (Sabaragamuwa University Press, 1998), 27.

⁵² D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People, 1917-2003* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2005), 18-19.

seeks to defend Goonewardene against the charges of ruralising in his novels by focusing on the politics of criticism such as critical territoriality and biases.

The negative evaluations of Goonewardene's rural texts are informed by differently inflected but politically connected forms of critical territoriality. They are also informed by the hierarchic and essentialist discursive registers to be found in the texts themselves.⁵³

As can be seen from the criticism available on the literary work of James Goonewardene, there are no discussions that focus on themes of utopia and work, particularly in relation to the Sri Lankan village and city contexts. Therefore, my study will add a new dimension to the existing literature.

V – Theoretical Framework

In the analysis of the fiction of Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene, the theoretical basis of this study consists of theories of work, utopia, the pastoral, Arcadia, the tourist gaze and Orientalism. As utopian scholar Lyman Tower Sargent points out, "Work is essential to the continued existence of any society or, for that matter, any human life."⁵⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines the noun *work* in a number of ways, including "4a. Action or activity involving physical or mental effort and undertaken in order to achieve a result, esp. as a means of making one's living or earning money; labour; (one's) regular occupation or employment"⁵⁵ and "11a. The product of the purposive labour or operation of a specified person or other agent; things made, considered collectively; creation, handiwork. Also more

⁵³ Minoli Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42.

⁵⁴ Lyman Tower Sargent, "Everyday Life in Utopia: Work" (seminar, Monash University, Melbourne, May 5, 2014).

⁵⁵ *OED Online*, s. v. "work," accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/view/Entry/230216?rskey=FUNGv2&result=1#eid>.

generally: the result of (one's) labour, something accomplished."⁵⁶ For my thesis, I have selected these definitions amongst the many dictionary meanings on the concept of "work" as they best define the ways in which work is used in my study. However, the term "work" is more complex and it can mean anything from "meaningless drudgery" to "fulfilling occupation." In *Useful Work Versus Useless Toil*, William Morris discusses this complexity. According to him,

worthy work carries with it the hope of pleasure in rest, the hope of pleasure in our using what it makes, and the hope of pleasure in our daily creative skill. All other work but this is worthless; it is slaves' work – mere toiling to live, that we may live to toil.⁵⁷

During my travels by bus and train, I see people rushing to and from work on a daily basis. The main reason why humans get up in the morning and go to work every day is to reach the "most basic utopia of all – a full stomach, decent shelter and clothing and a better future for themselves and their children."⁵⁸ For some, work does not merely enable such fulfilment but in fact constitutes it, as is the case of an artist, dancer, writer, scholar, or someone with a vocation to work with the poor. "Work" is thus a complex concept that can be seen as playing an integral part in the search for utopia.

The term "utopia," which was introduced by Thomas More in the sixteenth century, has undergone many changes throughout the centuries. In More's seminal text,⁵⁹ Utopia is a place, an imaginary island "presented by the narrator as having a perfect social, legal, and political system."⁶⁰ The *OED* defines the present-day usage of the concept of utopia as "2a. An imagined or hypothetical place, system, or state of existence in which everything is

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ William Morris, *Useful Work versus Useless Toil* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1894), 5-6.

⁵⁸ Lyman Tower Sargent, "Colonial and postcolonial utopias," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 200.

⁵⁹ Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (London: Penguin, 2003).

⁶⁰ *OED Online*, s. v. "utopia," accessed May 14, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/view/Entry/220784?redirectedFrom=utopia#eid>.

perfect, esp. in respect of social structure, laws, and politics”⁶¹ and “4. A plan for or vision of an ideal society, place, or state of existence, *esp.* one that is impossible to realize; a fantasy, a dream.”⁶²

Defining the concept of utopia in relation to work is essential to my thesis. In what follows, I shall use the term “utopia” not in its traditional sense of an ideal polity or social order but as shorthand for whatever it is that individuals aspire to: their imagined place of happiness. It is more an endlessly receding target than an actual place you can live in. If this utopia is achieved, people do not stop aspiring, but simply imagine another, higher version. Unlike other living beings, humans always strive to attain a better place in life either in a materialistic or spiritual sense. It may be better living conditions or merely spiritual peace and quiet. It may be physical or psychological betterment. Better living conditions would include the ability to nourish oneself and one’s family adequately. It could also include having a house and vehicle of one’s own, and better health facilities. In order to achieve psychological bliss, too, one needs to first gain the ability to fulfil basic needs such as food, drink, shelter and clothing. It is after reaching these goals that one would have the means of achieving emotional and spiritual wellbeing. This kind of contentment, be it physical or psychological, that is reached through work, can be seen as a form of utopia that human beings yearn to achieve. This search for happiness is an integral part of human existence and it is therefore important as a field of study.

As pointed out above, one of the main routes to utopia is work. Many people find better work opportunities in the city in order to achieve fulfilment. Therefore for them, utopia is located in the city. On the other hand, there are individuals who want something different from life. They do not yearn for physical comfort that can be purchased for money. They do

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

not yearn to own a house and car and live in luxury. Such individuals are most often disillusioned with work conditions in city life and look to the village for what they assume to offer a simpler lifestyle. The concept of Arcadia and the pastoral are applicable in such instances. The proper noun Arcadia refers to

a district of the Peloponnesus named after Arcas, son of Jupiter, chiefly inhabited by shepherds and the abode of Pan. According to Virgil it was the home of pastoral simplicity and happiness. The name was used by Sidney for the title of his romance (1590) and soon became a byword for rustic bliss.⁶³

According to Peter V. Marinelli, “the dominant idea of pastoral is a search for simplicity away from a complexity represented either by a specific location [the city] from which the refuge is in a rural retreat to Arcadia.”⁶⁴ For such individuals, Arcadia comes with the absence and rejection of the city. This city-village binary in the search for “simplicity” is a main concern in this investigation.

According to Charles R. A. Hoole, “The Sinhalese conception of utopia, [sic] arises in the tradition represented by the ancient *Chronicles*,⁶⁵ and can rightly be called the true motivator and the psychological founder of its civilization. [...] Here utopia takes the form of an ideal Buddhist state.”⁶⁶ In the Sri Lankan context, for the majority of the population that consists of Sinhala Buddhists, utopia is more a state of mind than an actual place. The Buddhist concept of nirvana or nibbana is the closest that comes to utopia in the Sri Lankan context and it can be defined as

⁶³ *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, comp. Ivor H. Evans, 14th ed. (London: Cassell, 1989), s. v. “Arcadia.”

⁶⁴ Peter V. Marinelli, *Pastoral* (London: Methuen & Co, 1971), 11.

⁶⁵ *Dipavamsa* (fourth century C.E.), *Mahavamsa* (fifth century C.E.) and *Culavamsa* (thirteenth century A.D.)

⁶⁶ Charles R. A. Hoole, “A Reassessment of Sinhalese Utopia: Explorative Essay on the Sri Lankan Political Crisis,” *Journal of Church and State* 33 (1991): 100.

the Supreme Goal of Buddhist endeavour; release from the limitations of existence. [...] *Nirvana* is, therefore, a state attainable in this life, by right aspiration, purity of life, and the elimination of egoism.⁶⁷

According to Theravada Buddhism which is practised in Sri Lanka, this is a state of mind that can be achieved through continuous meditation. The end result of this meditation is the achievement of nirvana or enlightenment that will permit one to exit the cycle of life and death, and thereby exit all suffering and misery. For Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist and writer, “Nirvana simply means freedom from ignorance, freedom from anger, freedom from lustful desires. It is a consummation worth striving for. Renunciation therefore from all sense pleasure and from all evil is Nirvana.”⁶⁸

Buddhism, which is not limited to a discussion of the afterlife, also emphasises the importance of work in order to lead a life of contentment. According to Theravada Buddhism, the way to reach nirvana is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path or *ariyo atthangiko maggo* in Pali and *aryastangamarga* in Sanskrit. The eight practices that lead to liberation from samsara or the cycle of suffering and rebirth are right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditative absorption or union. Important to my study is “right livelihood” which advises how to earn a living in an ethical manner. “One should abstain from making one’s living through a profession that brings harm to others, such as trading in arms and lethal weapons, intoxicating drinks, poisons, killing animals, cheating.”⁶⁹ This path is referred to as the Middle Path because it avoids two extremes: “one extreme being the search for happiness through the pleasures of the senses [...]; the other being the search for happiness through self-mortification in different

⁶⁷A *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Terminologies*, comp. K. Krishna Murthy (New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1999), s. v. “nibbana”.

⁶⁸ Anagarika Dharmapala, “Immortal Sayings of Bodhisattva Anagarika Dharmapala,” in *Flame in Darkness: The Life and Sayings of Anagarika Dharmapala*, Sangharakshita (Pune: Triratna Granthamala, 1995), 135.

⁶⁹ Walpola Sri Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (Bedford: Gordon Fraser, 1972), 47.

forms of asceticism.”⁷⁰ It is a path of moderation. Consequently, Buddhism also denounces lethargy. All individuals have their work cut out for them, and they must perform it in order to lead a happy life. Selfless work is also encouraged in Buddhism. In *The Buddha and His Teachings*, Theravada Buddhist monk and translator Narada Maha Thera quotes the Buddhist scripture *Sutta Nipata* that invites the readers to “work for the welfare of others.”⁷¹ “Shrama daana,” which can be translated as “the donation of labour” or “rendering free service,”⁷² is a common practice in Sri Lankan Buddhist society. Therefore work has an important place in the lives of Sri Lankan Buddhists.

In Sinhala, the word “work” can be translated as “weda,” and according to Somapala Jayawardhana’s *Sinhala-English Dictionary*, it means “development, work, decoration.”⁷³ Jayawardhana distinguishes “weda” from its singular form “wede” and translates the latter as “job, work.”⁷⁴ The Sinhala concept of “work” has been influenced by its western counterpart during the British colonisation of Sri Lanka from 1815 to 1948. However, the concept of “work” in Sri Lanka goes back to the pre-colonial feudal work ethic of the ancient Sinhala kings. According to W. I. Siriweera,

the king could commandeer labour for military services as well as for services such as the construction of roads, religious monuments and reservoirs. This service was known by the term ‘mahavar’ in the inscriptions after the eighth century A. D. The terms ‘*rajakariya*’ and ‘*sevakam*’ have been used for the first time in the thirteenth century Sinhala literature. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the term ‘*mevara*’ was also used to denote these services.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁷¹ Narada, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988), 576.

⁷² *Sinhala-English Dictionary*, ed. Somapala Jayawardhana (Colombo 10: S. Godage & Bros, 1997), s. v. “shramadaana”.

⁷³ Ibid., s. v. “weda”.

⁷⁴ Ibid., s. v. “wede”.

⁷⁵ W. I. Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka: From Earliest Times Up To the Sixteenth Century* (Colombo 10: Dayawansa Jayakody & Company, 2002), 88.

The Sinhala word *rajakariya*, which means “duty” in current usage, originally meant “service for the king.” This system that was practised from the times of ancient Sinhala kings was continued up to the nineteenth century by feudal landowners. The villagers engaged in traditional *paramparika* work that was passed on from generation to generation. The close association between work and class in this system as it is represented in the fiction of Martin Wickramasinghe will be discussed in chapter two. As work was traditionally categorised according to a hierarchy of class, the aristocratic landowners had the privilege of not engaging in work. Here, unlike in the present-day definitions and translations, the idea of “service” is connected with work. There was also respect and admiration, particularly towards those who engaged in agricultural work, as they were the main food suppliers of the community. A famous Sinhala proverb, which was recorded by English sea captain Robert Knox in 17th century Ceylon, clearly captures how the farmer was held in high esteem in traditional Sri Lankan society: “Take a ploughman from the plough, and wash off his dirt: and he is fit to rule a kingdom.”⁷⁶

In 1833 the service-based *rajakariya* work system was abolished by the British Government.⁷⁷ According to historian K. M. De Silva,

the abolition of *rajakariya* had its destructive aspect [for the village] for it involved the sudden demolition of the traditional communal machinery which had kept the village irrigation facilities and the major tanks that were still in use functioning and in a state of repair.”⁷⁸

This pre-colonial feudal village work ethic shifted to a city-centred one as a result of British colonisation. As Kumari Jayawardena points out,

⁷⁶ Robert Knox, *Nineteen Years’ Captivity in the Kingdom of Conde Uda in the Highlands of Ceylon*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2004), 311.

⁷⁷ K. M. De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005), 340.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 379.

Colombo, the capital and an important port, was the base from which the British community controlled and directed the economy [...] it was also the centre of the working class of skilled and unskilled workers employed in both the government and private sectors.⁷⁹

With British colonisation, Sri Lanka, particularly the big cities such as the capital Colombo, was influenced by western social systems that were not based on the *rajakariya* system. The new Sinhala bourgeoisie that emerged as a result of Capitalism and Socialism comprised both ‘nobodies’ and ‘somebodies’ of the old social system.

The Sinhala bourgeoisie consisted of persons from various castes, and in class terms included both the ‘Somebodies’ and the rich ‘Nobodies’. [...] The high status of the *goyigama* in traditional caste society was however challenged by the spectacular successes of other ‘Nobodies.’ They were the *karava* arrack renters whose vast profits were reinvested in other economic activities, and those of the traditional caste stratification to emerge as successful planters and businessmen, or by virtue of a high level of education, to join the professions.⁸⁰

In Wickramasinghe’s *Gamperaliya*, Piya is a representative of the new rich class of “nobodies” that Jayawardena discusses. He is a “nobody” according to the old feudal order but rises to the ranks of the bourgeoisie through business. However, between these two ends of the spectrum of “somebodies” and “nobodies” is the aristocracy of the old order who did not succeed in the new order. In *Gamperaliya*, the Mahagedara family and Jinadasa, who lose their belongings and status in society, do not belong to either of these categories of the new bourgeoisie.

The change from the feudal *rajakariya* system to the capitalist work ethic led to a change of attitude towards the concept of “work” in Sri Lankan society. Different connotations developed according to the socio-economic attributes of professions. Agricultural work, which was held in high esteem during the times of ancient kings, was

⁷⁹ Kumari Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies: the Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association and Sanjiva Books, 2012), xix.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

looked down upon as a result of the shift of work ethic. As Jayawardena points out, urban clerical work was considered more “refined” than rural agricultural work during the period of British colonization in Sri Lanka. The latter was seen to be “meaner” compared to the former which was considered more “respectable” as it provided the opportunity of entering a “better” class in society.

A white-collar job [...] meant not only a break from agricultural work and village life, but also a breakthrough into the urbanized middle-class pattern of living. An elementary education in English and the adoption of European dress gave the clerks a “respectable” status in society [...] white-collar occupations were considered more honorable than manual labor.⁸¹

The impact of this change of work ethic in the Sri Lankan context as it is depicted in the fiction of Martin Wickramasinghe, particularly in relation to Piyal and Jinadasa in *Gamperaliya*, will be analysed in the next chapter of this thesis.

The evolution of the concept of utopia in Sinhala Buddhist society, similar to the concept of work, was greatly influenced by British colonisation. Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was under British rule from 1815 to 1948. Rebellions against this foreign rule arose from time to time, mainly the Uva Rebellion in 1817-1818 and the Matale Rebellion in 1848. In the twentieth century, the independence movement took on a more non-violent intellectual form at the hands of social reformers and scholars who promoted a sense of national identity amongst the majority Sinhala Buddhist population. As Hoole points out, the idea of a Sinhalese Buddhist utopia

enabled the Sinhalese Buddhists to visualize periods of intense spiritual awakening in the future, giving them much needed hope to endure their present state of dishonor. With the advent of print capitalism during colonial rule, these ideas became widely disseminated, and helped to create a more mobilized and politicized population.⁸²

⁸¹ Kumari Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labor Movement in Ceylon* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1972), 13.

⁸² Hoole, "A Reassessment of Sinhalese Utopia," 103.

During the British rule, social reformers and activists endorsed the village as Sinhala Buddhist utopia in order to re-discover a sense of national identity that they thought could be found in the rural setting. Sri Lankan philosopher, historian and renowned “traditionist”⁸³ Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) unequivocally promoted Sinhala nationalism during the period of British colonization in Sri Lanka. In his *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908), Coomaraswamy criticised the Sinhalese people for their lack of national sensibility and urged them to make an attempt to embrace their lost cultural roots.

Evidence of shallow thought is everywhere to be seen in an exaltation of the present age at the expense of the past. It is, however, only in an effort to realise the ideals of this very past [...] that there lies the possibility of a true regeneration and revitalising of the national life of the Sinhalese people.⁸⁴

According to James Brow, Coomaraswamy was criticised by critics such as Senake Bandaranayake, Michael Roberts and Roger Lipsey for depicting an unrealistic, utopic vision of the Sri Lankan village by focusing merely on harmony and integration in rural Kandyan society and ignoring its oppressive side and conflict.⁸⁵ In one such representation, particularly related to rural agricultural work, Coomaraswamy recollects the

great charm, as one walks along the narrow village paths, in coming suddenly upon some hillside clearing where twenty or thirty men are at work, singing in chorus with an old man leading them; or a party of women seeding and singing as they work across a field with stooping backs in the hot sun.⁸⁶

Another proponent of the national cause during British colonial times in Sri Lanka was Anagarika Dharmapala, one of the founding contributors to non-violent Sinhalese nationalism. As pointed out by De Silva, “One sees the Buddhist revival [...] in retrospect as

⁸³ Ian K. Watson, “Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy & the traditionists,” *Asian Studies Association of Australia* 7 (1984): 52.

⁸⁴ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908), 1956, vi, quoted in Gooneratne, Yasmine, “The English Educated in Sri Lanka: An Assessment of Their Cultural Role,” *South Asia Bulletin* 12 (1992): 2.

⁸⁵ James Brow, “Utopia’s New-Found Space: Images of the Village Community in the Early Writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy,” *Modern Asian Studies* 33 (1999): 81.

⁸⁶ Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, 31.

an integral part of the recovery of national pride.”⁸⁷ According to Hoole, Dharmapala’s “activism thus led to the revival of the spirit of Buddhist utopia which had remained dormant for several decades.”⁸⁸ An aspect that is of importance to my study is that social reformers like Dharmapala promoted work as a means of reaching this Sinhala Buddhist utopia: “Buddhists in Asia arise, [...] awake from your degenerate life of indolence... The religion of Buddha proclaims a life of *strenuous activity* and living *service*.”⁸⁹ As part of the nationalist movement, Dharmapala promoted self-sufficiency through work and local production: “We must revive our industries, give work to our countrymen first before we feed the distant Austrian and Belgian who supply us with manufacturers... We have lost the spirit of patriotic independence and we depend too much on others.”⁹⁰

While scholars and social reformers promoted a sense of nationalism amongst the native population at a grass-root level during the independence movement, Sri Lankan leaders of post-independence Sri Lanka, such as D.S. Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake and Ranasinghe Premadasa, took systematic measures towards nation-building from the upper levels of government. In pre-colonial Sri Lanka, the main work carried out by the inhabitants of the island was paddy and *chena* cultivation. As W.I. Siriweera points out,

the earliest civilized people in Sri Lanka, [sic] did not straight away start wet-rice cultivation [...] but resorted to the easier slash and burn techniques [*chena* or swidden agriculture] [...] In the ancient Dry Zone civilization wet-rice cultivation was the pivot around which the economic life of the villager revolved. It was also the main source of revenue for the king.⁹¹

⁸⁷ De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 464.

⁸⁸ Hoole, “A Reassessment of Sinhalese Utopia,” 105.

⁸⁹ Anagarika Dharmapala, *Maha-Bodhi and the United Buddhist World* 13 (Sept/Oct. 1904), 45; my italics.

⁹⁰ Anagarika Dharmapala, “A Message to the Young Men of Ceylon,” in *Return to Righteousness; A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of the Anagarika Dharmapala*, ed. Ananda Guruge (Colombo: Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 1965), 511-12.

⁹¹ Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka*, 182-3.

It is this pre-colonial state of agricultural self-sufficiency where Sri Lanka was referred to as the “Granary of the East” that the leaders of the newly liberated nation aspired to achieve. The city-based work ethic of the British was reverted to the village by the nationalistic United National Party Government. D.S. Senanayake (1883-1952), Minister of Agriculture and Lands from 1942 to 1947, and elected in 1947 as first Prime Minister of Independent Ceylon, promoted peasant colonisation⁹² in the dry zone. Land was allotted to peasants for the purpose of paddy and *chena* cultivation. According to De Silva, Prime Minister Senanayake regenerated the peasantry through peasant colonisation. “He saw the peasantry as a stabilising element in the social order which was now under increasing pressure from a politicised and radical urban working class and white collar workers.”⁹³ As De Silva further points out, Dudley Senanayake (1911-1973), son and successor of D.S. Senanayake, who was elected as Prime Minister of Ceylon in 1965,

had a passion for traditional agriculture and regarded it as the key to the economic regeneration of the country [...] By 1969 there had been a notable improvement in the production of paddy. Annual production had reached 68 million bushels in that year, compared with the best previous achievement of 50.1 million bushels in 1964. In 1970 it reached 77 million bushels. Rice production had reached an all-time high level of 75 per cent of self-sufficiency in May 1970.⁹⁴

According to Brow, “the Sinhala nation was presented as a nation of villages”⁹⁵ through the nationalist discourse of the time. He further adds that the self-sufficient work system of the village was represented as utopic, based on a nostalgic backwards glance at the “glorious past of the Sinhala kings.”⁹⁶ Therefore, the political agenda of the government promoted a shift of the economy from the commercial capital of Colombo to the paddy fields of the villages. As a result of the development of agriculture as a work force, the farmer

⁹² De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 575.

⁹³ Ibid., 471-2.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 536-7.

⁹⁵ Brow, “Utopia’s New-Found Space,” 68.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

regained the dignity that had been lost during the time of British colonisation. Another important village uplifting project was *Gam Udawa* or “village reawakening,” initiated by Ranasinghe Premadasa (1924-1993), Prime Minister of Sri Lanka from 1978 to 1989. This project built housing schemes throughout Sinhalese villages and it was an important and innovative rural work development programme. As historian Patrick Peebles points out,

villagers did most of the construction with government funding. Money for wells, public buildings, and even clock towers (to encourage punctuality) was provided. [...] The program was presented with an appeal to Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism.⁹⁷

In 1956, almost a decade after independence, Sinhala Nationalism was brought to the forefront by the S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike (1899-1959)-led Sri Lanka Freedom Party. The Sinhala Only Act, formally the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956, replaced English as the official language of Ceylon with Sinhala, the language of the majority of the Sri Lankan population. With this linguistic change, the village rose further in national dignity as Sinhala was the main language of commerce in rural areas. While Sinhala rose to the status of official language, the dethroned English language lost its former prestige. However, the status of the English language in Sri Lankan society after independence reveals a complex relationship of resentment and love for the language. On the one hand, the nationalist extremists condemned the use of the language of the former colonizer, leading to the 1971 youth insurrection by non-English speaking youth. On the other hand, the English language was referred to as “kadda” or “kaduva”⁹⁸ in Sinhala which means “sword” in English. This term indicates the power and prestige granted to those who can wield this weapon and the ability to defeat the class barrier and rise to upper echelons of society. While the English language gives power to those who possess it, it also discriminates against those who do not have access to it. This

⁹⁷ Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (West Port: Greenwood Press, 2006), 146.

⁹⁸ See Thiru Kandiah, “Kaduva: Power and the English Language Weapon in Sri Lanka,” in *Honouring E.F.C. Ludowyk: Felicitations essays*, ed. Percy Colin-Thomé & Ashley Halpé (Dehiwela: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1984), 117-154.

double-edged nature will be studied in chapter two of this thesis in relation to the characters of Piya and Jinadasa in Wickramasinghe's *Koggala Trilogy*.

In the 1970s, partly as a result of the shift from the Sinhala language to the English language, many Sri Lankan academics who had studied in the English medium migrated to foreign lands. According to H. R. Gunasekera, Director, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, "losses in professional categories such as doctors, engineers, accountants, etc. were prominent. Their destinations were mainly western countries with advanced economies."⁹⁹ The term 'brain drain' is commonly used to describe this situation and it can be defined as the "emigration of trained and talented persons from the country of origin to another country resulting in a depletion of skills resources in the former."¹⁰⁰ As the International Organization for Migrations points out, many Sri Lankan professionals including doctors, accountants, engineers and university lecturers had left for foreign employment between 1960 and 1972.¹⁰¹ H. N. S. Karunatilake shows through his research that one reason for brain drain was "discrimination against scientists and social scientists within the country [...] This has contributed to what may be characterised as internal brain stagnation."¹⁰² The concept of brain drain will be examined in relation to Goonewardene's *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi* in chapter three of this thesis.

⁹⁹ H. R. Gunasekera, "Development of International Migration Statistics in Sri Lanka," (paper presentation, United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Measuring International Migration, New York, December 4-7, 2006), 1.

¹⁰⁰ *International Migration Outlook - Sri Lanka 2008* (Colombo 05: International Organization for Migration, 2009), 121.

¹⁰¹ L. K. Ruhunage, cited in *International Migration Outlook - Sri Lanka 2008*, 19.

¹⁰² H. N. S. Karunatilake, "Sri Lanka," in *Migration of Talent: Causes and Consequences of Brain Drain - Three Studies from Asia*, ed. Yogesh Atal and Luca Dall'oglio (Bangkok: UNESCO, 1987), 192.

VI – Research Methodology

Martin Wickramasinghe and James Goonewardene, the two novelists under investigation, are from different cultural and social backgrounds and have written in different languages. The impact of such differences in subject position on their vision of utopia in relation to work will be analysed in their writing. The changing social, economic and political situation of Sri Lanka in which they wrote and which they depicted, in its development from a British colony to an independent nation, will also be studied, highlighting the impact on the vision of these authors. The changing social order from a feudal agrarian society in the village to a capitalist work system in the city is discussed in this thesis in relation to its depiction in the fiction of Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene. The portrayal of the feminist movement in Sri Lanka and its impact on the place of women in relation to work and utopia in these novels, too, is analysed in this study.

In chapter two of this thesis I will be analysing the representation of the city in relation to achieving utopia through work in selected fiction of Martin Wickramasinghe. In contrast, chapter three will examine selected literature of James Goonewardene, highlighting the depiction of village work as a means of achieving utopia.

CHAPTER TWO:

Martin Wickramasinghe and the City

In this chapter I will analyse the idea of work in the Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist context in Martin Wickramasinghe's novels, paying close attention to the search for happiness *in the city*. I will interpret the selected texts within the theoretical frame laid out in the introductory chapter which includes theories of utopia, the pastoral and Arcadia. The first subsidiary question in this chapter is "How do social categorisations such as class affect the idea of work?" The second is "What is the place of women in this context?" Thirdly, I will analyse the impermanence of utopia by focusing on Wickramasinghe's perception of how and why utopia turns into dystopia and vice versa. In order to investigate these questions, I will be analysing Wickramasinghe's Koggala trilogy that comprises *Gamperaliya* (1944; English translation *The Village* 2011), *Kaliyugaya* (1957; English translation *The Age of Kali* 2013) and *Yuganthaya* (1949; English translation *Destiny* 2014). Even though *Kaliyugaya* was published several years after *Yuganthaya*, it is the sequel to the events that ended in *Gamperaliya*. Therefore I will not be treating the trilogy in the order in which they were published but according to the development of the story. As noted in the introduction, I will be referring to the English translations of these novels.

Theories of utopia, the pastoral and Arcadia contribute a new angle of vision that enriches our reading experience of Wickramasinghe's fiction. His autobiography titled *Ape Gama*¹⁰³ and the first novel of the trilogy, *Gamperaliya*, are depictions of village life as utopic and pastoral. Such representations demonstrate that Wickramasinghe idealised the

¹⁰³ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Ape Gama* (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 1940).

Sinhala village. In fact, the village of Koggala in *Gamperaliya* has been analysed as a “Reclaimed Buddhist Utopia.”¹⁰⁴ The titles of *Ape Gama* and *Gamperaliya* themselves refer directly to the village as the term “gama” in the Sinhala language means “village” and the two titles translate as “Our village” and “Revolution of the Village” respectively. Wickramasinghe’s later novels *Viragaya*¹⁰⁵ and *Bawa Tharanaya*¹⁰⁶ can be seen as presenting models for a Buddhist Socialist utopia. What I am interested in analysing in this chapter is not utopia in relation to the village or Buddhism, but utopia that is achieved through work in a society that is undergoing economic, social, political and revolutionary change, as is suggested by the title of *Gamperaliya*.

As Anupama Mohan points out, “Wickramasinghe’s writing, in general, presents the rural as the abiding mainstay of a uniquely Ceylonese collectivity caught in a moment of crisis brought on by colonial modernity.”¹⁰⁷ The *Koggala Trilogy* was published during a period of great economic, political and social change after Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948. Much of this changing atmosphere is expressed in the fiction that was produced during that time, and these three novels are no exception. The meaning of the title of *Gamperaliya* implies change. This novel is set in a Southern coastal village of Sri Lanka and the story begins in the month of April in 1904. Crucial to any analysis of these novels is the context of British colonisation. As Mohan further points out, Wickramasinghe depicts the village as a pre-colonial space uncorrupted by colonialism while the colonial present is represented as dystopic.¹⁰⁸ Here, what Mohan implies is that the Sri Lankan village is represented by Wickramasinghe as a pre-colonial utopia, or even a pastoral or Arcadian space.

¹⁰⁴ Mohan, *Utopia and the Village*, 131.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Viragaya* (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 1956).

¹⁰⁶ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Bawatharanaya* (Dehiwela: Thisara, 1973).

¹⁰⁷ Mohan, *Utopia and the Village*, 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

The titles of the three novels in the trilogy are themselves indicative of Wickramasinghe's focus on the themes of utopia and dystopia. The economic and social changes that occurred in colonial Sri Lanka, as discussed in the introductory chapter, had a negative impact on the village community. One of the major factors of transition, as portrayed in *Gamperaliya*, stemmed from the villagers' aspiration to better their lives by seeking employment in the westernised city. This change is the initial step taken by the villagers towards achieving success in the *Koggala Trilogy*. However, the title of the second novel, *Kaliyugaya*, shows this happiness turning into "the age of Kali." As W. I. Siriweera points out, "throughout centuries, there had been an exchange and absorption of ideas and beliefs between Hinduism and popular Buddhism"¹⁰⁹ in the Sri Lankan religious context. Hindu kovils can be found in the premises of Buddhist temples. Therefore it is not surprising that the Hindu religious concept of Kali Yuga be a part of Sinhala idiom and is used by Wickramasinghe in his novel. In Hinduism, as the Sanskrit scriptures propound, "Kali Yuga" is the last of the four stages the world goes through as part of the cycle of yugas or ages. Here, Kali Yuga is associated with the apocalyptic demon-side of Goddess Kali. The "Kali" of Kali Yuga means "strife, discord, quarrel or contention."¹¹⁰ It is at this point of the trilogy that the economic and social utopia that was reached through work in the city in the first novel gradually turns into dystopia.

In the 1957 epigraph to *Kaliyugaya*, Wickramasinghe quotes the following lines from *Maha Supina Jataka* of the *Buddaka Nikaya*: "Dried gourds sink in the water while rocks float. Tiny frogs devour black snakes. A crow is attended by an entourage of golden swans. Wolves shiver in fear of goats. Change will take place, but these visions will not materialise

¹⁰⁹ Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka*, 255.

¹¹⁰ *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, comp. Wendy Doniger (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006), s. v. "Kali Yuga".

in this era.”¹¹¹ This quotation describes five of the sixteen nightmares dreamt by Pasenadi, King of Kosala. According to the Jataka story, Lord Buddha explains the meanings of these dreams to the king in the following manner:

The low born will become great lords and the nobles will sink into poverty. Nobles and wise men will be scorned while upstarts shall have their own way. A time will come when men, because of lust, will become the slaves of their wives and be ruled by them. Ignorant and cowardly kings will arise letting their footmen, barbers, and the like, and not their peers, rise to power. Nobles will be reduced to waiting on these upstarts. The lowborn will be raised to lordship and nobles will sink into obscurity and distress. When the latter plead for their rights, the king’s minions will have them cudgelled and bastinadoed.¹¹²

This is a Buddhist take on the concept of “Kaliyuga” and Wickramasinghe quotes this as the epigraph to his novel to indicate its destructive nature. It is also a reflection on colonised Sri Lanka where class categorisations went through drastic changes as a result of capitalism and commercialism that were introduced by the British. This aspect will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The third novel of the trilogy is entitled *Yuganthaya* which can be translated as “the end of an era.” This title can be seen as a reference to the end of the discontentment that came about in *Kaliyugaya*. According to beliefs, some of which are Hindu, “Vishnu’s 10th and final avatar, Kalki, is described as bringing the present cosmic cycle to a close by destroying the evil forces that rule the Kali *yuga* and ushering in an immediate return to the idyllic Kṛta *yuga*.”¹¹³ In this final novel of the trilogy, the characters belonging to the fourth generation of the family make an attempt, mainly through their transformation of the work ethic, to turn the Kali Yuga or dystopia back into utopia.

¹¹¹ Martin Wickramasinghe, epigraph to *Kaliyugaya* (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2012). This is my translation as this epigraph is left out in the English translation of the novel.

¹¹² *Dhamma Wheel: A Buddhist discussion forum on the Dhamma of the Theravada*; “Mahasupina Jataka: The Sixteen Dreams of King Pasenadi,” accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.dhammadwheel.com/viewtopic.php?t=10807>

¹¹³ *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, s. v. “Kali Yuga”.

As described in Buddhism, life is shown in the *Koggala Trilogy* as a never-ending cycle that turns from dystopia to utopia and again from utopia to dystopia and so on. The cycle of happiness and discontent created in relation to work in the city in the Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist context as presented by Martin Wickramasinghe will be analyzed in detail in the three following sections of this chapter: Section I – The Class Aspect, Section II – The Place of Women and Section III – The Impermanence of Utopia.

I – The Class Aspect of Work

From the Life of the Folk Poet Ysinno¹¹⁴

Ysinno cut the bamboo near Hanikette,
 And from those wattles made his hut
 And had nothing to cover it with, nothing
 Like a hundred and sixty
 Bales of straw.
 So he made his way to the Walauwa at Iddamalgoda
 And to the Menike said how poor he was,
 And how from his twenties he had made those lines of song
 Swearing before her all his fealties.
 So she said, wait for the yala
 Harvest and take the straw.
 Ysinno said, O the rains are coming near,
 My woman fretting, her kid will get wet.
 Then the Menike said, O then
 You take what straw you need from the behind shed.
 And Ysinno being a folk-poet, and his lines being not all dead,
 The benison of the Menike of Iddamalgoda

¹¹⁴ Lakdasa Wikkramasinha, "From the life of the folk poet Ysinno," *New Ceylon Writing* 4 (1979).

Lives even today.

Lakdasa Wikkramasinha

This poem by Lakdasa Wikkramasinha clearly captures the class-based feudal *rajakariya* work ethic that was prevalent in pre-colonial Sri Lankan villages. The poet “tries to bring out some of the positive aspects of feudalism.”¹¹⁵ According to Suresh Canagarajah, Wikkramasinha celebrates this social order by evoking the innocent faithfulness of the villager, the generosity of the Menike and the mutual satisfaction of the transaction.¹¹⁶ There is no irony when Wikkramasinha thus praises the feudal lady.¹¹⁷ We see a similar depiction of the feudal *rajakariya* work ethic in Martin Wickramasinghe’s *Gamperaliya*. The relationship between feudal landowners and the peasants will be discussed further on in this section in relation to the character of Matara Hamine, the wife of the feudal landowner Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram, and her association with the villagers.

As Anupama Mohan points out, “Much of his [Martin Wickramasinghe’s] fictional writing took as its centre the folk life and local culture of Ceylon and the struggle between the changing classes can be said to be a central theme in his entire corpus of writing.”¹¹⁸ In *Gamperaliya*, Wickramasinghe compares the different ways in which the “high” and “low” classes came to terms with the changing social and economic atmosphere in the village brought about by British colonisation by contrasting the representative characters of Jinadasa and Piyal.

¹¹⁵ L. Paramanathan, "The Reflection of Sri Lankan Sensibility in Lakdasa Wikkramasinha's Poetry," in *Proceedings of Jaffna University International Research Conference* (March 2014): 166.

¹¹⁶ A. Suresh Canagarajah, "Competing Discourses in Sri Lankan English Poetry," *World Englishes* 13 (1994): 373.

¹¹⁷ D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, "Sri Lankan Literature in English and the Changing Phases/Faces of Nationalism," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 31/32 (1996/1997): 246.

¹¹⁸ Mohan, *Utopia and the Village*, 133.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the social relationship that existed in pre-colonial Sri Lanka between the village workers and the landowners was based on the feudal *rajakariya* system. This is clearly captured by Wickramasinghe in the scene where Matara Hamine hands out silver coins to the villagers who come to the Mahagedara for the Sinhala New Year festival. This was a class-based activity in the Sinhala village where the aristocracy showed their generosity to the lower classes. Even though their economic situation is gradually getting worse, Matara Hamine keeps up this ancestral practice that had traditionally been carried out for generations in their family. For her, satisfaction is not based on the accumulation of wealth but on maintaining the feudal work ethic in which the hierarchy graciously showed their benevolence to the workers. However, as an insider to the village context, Wickramasinghe notes hidden subtleties in such feudal exchanges: “Although many came in the firm belief that it was auspicious to receive a coin from Matara Hamine, there is no denying that *some were more interested in the money itself.*”¹¹⁹ By adding such commentaries, the author indicates how the lower classes take advantage of the aristocrats for their survival when opportunities arise.

As depicted in the poem “From the Life of the Folk Poet Ysinno” by Lakdasa Wikramasinha, when the villagers had economic difficulties they would seek the patronage of the wealthy landowners in return for their loyalty and labour when needed. We see this relationship between Matara Hamine and Kathirina, a poor woman of the village. When the latter has financial difficulties she goes directly to Matara Hamine. In return, Kathirina acts as Matara Hamine’s loyal and trusted aide. In this relationship, Wickramasinghe indicates the shrewdness of the lower-class Kathirina who manages to remain in Matara Hamine’s good graces with smooth talk. According to the author,

¹¹⁹ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Gamperaliya - The Village*, trans. Lakshmi de Silva and Ranga Wickramasinghe (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2011), 27; my italics.

it was not with the intent to flatter that Kathirina spoke in this way. She knew that Matara Hamine was not a vain lady susceptible to flattery. Rather, Kathirina spoke effusively to Matara Hamine to lighten the burden of the gratitude she felt, and to *foster feelings of affection*.¹²⁰

Another instance where Wickramasinghe portrays the feudal work relationship in *Gamperaliya* is when Nanda, the younger daughter of Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram and Matara Hamine, falls ill and the entire village helps with the preparations for the traditional ritual of *thovil*¹²¹ without taking a single cent for their labour. Wickramasinghe's celebration of this pre-colonial feudal work ethic of the village is apparent in his description.

The respect and affection the villagers had for the Mahagedara family were evident during the ceremonies [...]. The Mahagedara never lacked men and women to fetch or prepare all the items needed for the ritual [...]. The villagers who came to give their assistance during those rituals would not accept payment. The custom was to give them meals on such occasions. Not all partook of the food. Those who went home for meals did so unobtrusively and without the knowledge of the people of the Mahagedara.¹²²

Through this description, Wickramasinghe depicts how the villagers find their worth in such collective activity, perhaps indicating their deep-rooted Buddhist values which encourage the practice of *daana*.¹²³ Here the author idealises the feudal work relationship by highlighting what he sees as its positives.

Simultaneously Wickramasinghe elaborates on the less savoury aspects of the old order. One of the main criticisms the author levels against the feudal aristocrats is their unwillingness to adapt to the changing social order. Wickramasinghe exhibits great insight by

¹²⁰ Ibid., 28; my italics.

¹²¹ Thovil or 'devil-dancing' is a ritualistic healing ceremony that primarily belongs to folk religion. It is exorcistic in character and is meant to curb and drive away any one or several of the innumerable hosts of malevolent spirits, known as yakshas, who are capable of bringing about pathological states of body and mind.

¹²² Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Gamperaliya - The Village*, 56.

¹²³ In the current usage of the term, "daana" can be translated as "alms-giving or "donation". In Buddhist scripture, "daana" or "generosity" is the first of the ten parami or transcendental virtues that every Bodhisatta must practice in order to attain buddhahood. See Narada, "Parami: Perfections," in *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988), 576-587.

analysing the situation from the point of view of the aristocrats. He does not simply condemn them but empathises with their predicament.

It was not to flaunt feelings of superiority that the elders of the Kaisaruwatte family clung to the traditions of their patrician lineage, but for self-preservation of themselves and their way of life, now declining in the face of social change. It was their inability to adapt to change due to the rigidity of their adherence to tradition, [sic] that was also the cause of their decline. Extinction is the inevitable lot eventually of all living things where their inheritance has ceased to be of adaptive value in self-preservation.¹²⁴

In a conversation that Nanda has with Piyal, a young schoolmaster belonging to the lower-class of the village, she reveals that she is learning English only to be able to sign in English and to read telegrams. Wickramasinghe, who studied both English and Latin at Buena Vista, a Christian missionary school in Galle, seems to be critical of this trivialising attitude towards the English language. As a novelist who appreciated world literature, Wickramasinghe expresses his critique through Piyal who laughs at Nanda and argues: “Yes, you can read a telegram with a limited knowledge of English. But it is not just to read telegrams, but to be able to read books that you should learn English.”¹²⁵ Unlike Piyal’s class, the aristocrats saw no other use for the English language since all their basic needs were provided through the *rajakariya* system.

Wickramasinghe portrays Jinadasa as a representative of the earlier work system of feudalism. He is a member of the aristocratic class of the past that was not accustomed to “work” in the capitalist sense. His family was of the landed gentry who possessed the necessary wealth, passed on from generation to generation, so that they did not face the necessity of earning a living. This is the *paramparika* work order (see p.13). Jinadasa is shown by Wickramasinghe as a tragic figure caught between the feudal system and the

¹²⁴ Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Gamperaliya - The Village*, 30.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

capitalist work system. He was brought up in the old feudal system only to be pushed into the new capitalist way of life as a result of his family's gradual impoverishment brought about by the changing social order in the village. He is completely unprepared for this change. He has no knowledge of English and has no access to a formal education as it was not thought necessary for their class.

Nevertheless, once their fortunes diminish as a result of the new capitalist social system entering the village, Jinadasa makes a gallant attempt at securing the wellbeing of his family by leaving them behind in the village and embarking on a business venture on his own. He goes to Bibile, or Sinhale as it is known in the novel, an area of commercial importance of the time. This journey in search of work in Sinhale is Jinadasa's attempt at achieving success in life, a realistic practice in the society that Wickramasinghe depicts in *Gamperaliya*, as Padma Edirisinghe notes.

Jinadasa epitomises[,] though in a rather miserable way[,] the withdrawal of the Southerner to the highlands to make a success in his life. This migratory factor now forgotten is first raked by this author. [...] This migratory thread runs throughout the trilogy.¹²⁶

However, Wickramasinghe suggests that there is no hope in such ventures for the members of the old feudal order who are unprepared and untrained for the changing social order. Jinadasa surrenders to his habit of gambling, and also as a result of this weakness, he fails at his business and dies destitute in a hospital in Ratnapura. While sympathising with the village aristocracy for their tragic fate, Wickramasinghe criticises the *rajakariya* system which is at the heart of their downfall.

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¹²⁶ Padma Edirisinghe, "An ode to the doyen of Sinhala literature," *Sunday Observer*, December 7, 2014, Spectrum, 36.

Gamperaliya demonstrates Wickramasinghe's positioning between Sri Lanka and foreign influences. As Padma Edirisinghe notes, "In these [translated works of Russian literature] he [Wickramasinghe] saw a close semblance between the rural society of his country and that of feudal Russia."¹²⁷ In 1964, Wickramasinghe received the UNESCO award for his book *The Rise of the Soviet Land*. From his youth, Wickramasinghe had ardently studied Anton Chekhov's literary works and in 1970 published a collection of essays titled *Chekhov and Sri Lanka*.¹²⁸ The economic downfall of the Mahagedara in *Gamperaliya* is similar to the collapse of the ancestral estate in *The Cherry Orchard* (1904).¹²⁹ Chekhov's play captures the socio-economic and political background of Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, mainly the rise of the middle class after the abolition of serfdom in the mid-nineteenth century and the collapse of the aristocracy. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the feudal *raja-kariya* system in Sri Lanka, too, was eliminated in the mid-nineteenth century (see p.14). Though Wickramasinghe's novel and Chekhov's drama are situated in two different geographical locations, they are set in the same time period and reflect parallel historical occurrences. Both aristocratic families in these two texts are victims of the changing social, economic and political situations of their respective countries. As Jayawardena points out, with reference to the changes in the class system, in nineteenth century Ceylon there was a

radical economic change from an agricultural subsistence economy to a plantation market economy — a transformation that led to important social changes. In the preplantation phase, the three main classes in Ceylonese society were the landowners, the peasantry and the administrators, but with the beginnings of capitalist development, new social classes emerged.¹³⁰

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Chekhov Ha Lankawa* (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2008).

¹²⁹ Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*, trans. Tom Stoppard (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

¹³⁰ Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labor Movement in Ceylon*, ix.

The aristocratic landowners of the Sri Lankan villages, who depended on the feudal “traditional economic base of rice cultivation”¹³¹ for their income, lost their place in the social hierarchy as a result of the rise of these new economic systems and social classes. This shift of socio-economic systems in colonial Sri Lankan society is fictionalised by Wickramasinghe through the plight of the Mahagedara inhabitants. The author sympathises with this aristocratic family that relentlessly clings on to the old feudal order. They fall in wealth as they are unable to adapt to the changing socio-economic atmosphere of the country. After the death of Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram, Matara Hamine and her children are completely unaware and unprepared to face their economic crisis. Lyubov Andreyevna Ranevskaya, Anya and Leonid Gayev, the aristocratic landowners in Chekhov’s drama, are remnants of the old Russian feudal order. They are untrained to engage in work in order to prevent the downfall of their estate which comes about as a result of the abolition of serfdom. Like Lyubov Andreyevna Ranevskaya, Matara Hamine clings to the ancestral house till the very end, at which point the Mahagedara literally falls apart due to lack of money for renovation. Similarly, the landowners in *The Cherry Orchard* lose all their belongings as their estate is sold to Lopakhin, the son of a former serf, and their beloved cherry orchard is cut down in order to build summer cottages. Piyal, on the other hand, similar to Lopakhin in Chekhov’s drama, gains economically and socially through work by adapting to the new social order of commercialism, surpassing the once powerful aristocrats. Jinadasa could be seen as the equivalent of Leonid Gayev, trapped in the old order, unable to engage in any form of work in order to move ahead into the new world. Through the eternal student Trofimov, Chekhov criticises the gentry and expresses the need to dismantle the old feudal order and engage in work for the betterment of society: “We just philosophise on, or complain we’re bored, or get drunk. But it’s so clear that to live in the present we have to

¹³¹ Ibid., 3.

redeem our past, finish with it [...] we have to work till we drop.”¹³² Similar thematic parallels with Wickramasinghe’s work can be seen in other more recent world literatures as well.

According to the Russian critic V. Korchitov, *Gamperaliya*’s theme, subject and novelistic qualities have close kinship to Giuseppe di Lampedusa’s ‘The Leopard’. Now, *Gamperaliya* was published in 1944, fourteen years before ‘The Leopard’ was published in Italian. Korchitov says that both present the vicissitudes of a feudal class in a modernizing world, the microcosm of a feudal family, the ups and downs in their circumstances and their joys and sufferings.¹³³

The character of Tissa, the youngest of the Kaisaruwatte children, in *Gamperaliya* is autobiographical as much of the happenings in Tissa’s life are based on events in the life of Martin Wickramasinghe himself.¹³⁴ As can be seen from Ediriweera Sarathchandra’s description of Wickramasinghe quoted below, the character portrait of Tissa is similar to the personality of the novelist and therefore Tissa can be seen as Wickramasinghe’s voice in the *Koggala Trilogy*.

The professional moralist is anathema to him [Wickramasinghe]. He is as much against conventional morality as against orthodox religion. Ardent nationalist though he is, he has no illusions about the past. He attacked, not western civilisation [...], but the blind imitation of its mere externalities. [...] And the changes in society, the breaking up of traditional morality, did not trouble him.¹³⁵

Tissa is the only character that Wickramasinghe allows to appear in all three novels of the trilogy. The author points out this fact in the 1957 preface to *Kaliyugaya*. According to him,

Tissa is a person who does not change on the outside, but he changes spiritually. The Sinhala culture changed as a result of its contact with western traditions. But the

¹³² Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*, 43.

¹³³ Sachitra Mahendra, “In Martin’s Shadow,” *Daily News*, October 15, 2014, Muse, 17.

¹³⁴ Rupa Banduwardena, “Martin Wickramasinghe: A literary genius,” *Sunday Observer*, October 19, 2014, Montage, 44.

¹³⁵ Sarachchandra, *The Sinhalese Novel*, 132.

Sinhala culture fought to protect its identity by clinging on to both its positive and negative traits. Tissa's character is symbolic of this struggle of the Sinhala culture.¹³⁶

Wickramasinghe seems to side with Tissa and in his point of view, Tissa's personality is different from the rest of his family members, and therefore his notion of utopia, too, is different.

Even before Tissa was born, their parents had lost much of their wealth. Until they came of age, Anula and Nanda had not suffered from privation. Tissa had known privation from his school days. He was a bright student, but he had to give up his studies and found employment at a low salary. He gave his entire salary generously to his mother and sisters, who were trying to make ends meet in difficult financial circumstances. He did not save a cent. He became accustomed to a life of hardship. He had never sought luxuries.¹³⁷

By ancestry, Tissa belongs to the old order of feudalism as the only son of Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram. However, he is much younger than both Nanda and Anula and belongs to the new generation that is moving towards capitalism and individualism. His education, too, differentiates him from his sisters. Tissa receives a westernised education in the city of Galle, away from the village. He can observe the village and its ways from a distance as he is not as attached to it. As a result of this, he is better at understanding the world that is changing around him. He achieves this by keeping a distance from both the old system and the new. He is an outsider both in the village and the city. As a recluse, he has no obligation to fulfil the traditional expectations of society. In a way, he is similar to Peter Trofimov, the eternal scholar in *The Cherry Orchard*, who remains a social critic without getting involved in the matters of the "real" world such as finding employment.

As a result of his westernised education and exposure to the world beyond the village, Tissa is sceptical of most of the traditional social practices and beliefs that were common

¹³⁶ Martin Wickramasinghe, preface to *Kaliyugaya*. This is my translation as it is not available in the English translation to the novel.

¹³⁷ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Kaliyugaya - The Age of Kali*, trans. Ranga Wickramasinghe and Aditha Dissanayake (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2013), 166.

amongst the Sinhalese villagers. He questions ritualistic practices such as *bali* and *thovil* that are carried out to cure Nanda's illness in *Gamperaliya*. Like Wickramasinghe, he also condemns social categorisations such as the class system which were very much rooted in the work practices of the villagers. From the very beginning, Tissa is the only member of the Kaisaruwatte family to approve of the lower-class Piyal as a suitable husband for Nanda. In *Yuganthaya*, towards the end of the trilogy, Tissa expresses his disapproval of the class system and the treatment of the working class in the city.

Through the character of Tissa, Wickramasinghe promotes the Sri Lankan Buddhist concept of Nirvana that was discussed in the introductory chapter (see p.12). This in turn can be seen as an endorsement of the image of a pre-colonial pastoral Sri Lanka that was untainted by capitalistic and materialistic values that were introduced through British colonisation. Both Tissa and Piyal are recipients of a westernised education, unlike Nanda and Anula. This is one reason why Piyal and Tissa have mutual respect. However, Tissa, unlike Piyal, has no desire to achieve economic success through work, perhaps as a result of studying under the tutelage of a Buddhist monk after moving to Colombo. Through him, Wickramasinghe rejects the hierarchical social structure in the village life but celebrates its natural beauty. The only reason why he moves to Colombo and starts working in a boutique is to support his mother and sisters, not for personal gain. After Nanda and Piyal's marriage, Piyal takes over the responsibilities of the Mahagedara household as well, leaving Tissa to take pleasure in the pastoral village life that he enjoyed in his childhood. Tissa refuses to get married, and more importantly for this study, he does not wish to take over Piyal's business when the latter falls ill. Therefore, Tissa rejects the capitalist work ethic by refusing to become a part of the work force of the city. He is content with what he possesses, devoid of any attachments and responsibilities.

If Tissa represents the Sri Lankan Buddhist ethic of detachment from worldly possessions in Wickramasinghe's depiction of colonial Sri Lankan society, Piyal is a representative of the new capitalist work ethic that was introduced through British colonisation. Through Piyal's journey from being a "nobody" in the village to a "somebody" in the city through work, Wickramasinghe brings to life the emergence of the new capitalist class in Sri Lanka. Jayawardena defines this term as

the class which, from the early decades of the 19th century, acquired wealth from the expanding commercial opportunities. [...] sections of the bourgeoisie branched out into other lines of enterprise: transport and *labour contracts*, graphite mining, *commerce*.¹³⁸

At the beginning of *Gamperaliya* we encounter Piyal as a young schoolmaster in the village of Koggala who is entrusted with the task of teaching English to the two daughters of a wealthy village landowner, Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram. Out of respect for Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram and his wife Matara Hamine, the villagers refer to the Kaisaruwatte household as Mahagedara, which implies wealth and elitism in Sri Lankan village culture. When Piyal's hopes of marrying their younger daughter Nanda are thwarted as a result of his ancestry, he moves to the city of Colombo. It is because Piyal's grandfather had worked as a vegetable seller that Piyal is deemed an unsuitable match for Nanda by the high class Kaisaruwatte family and he is patronized by Nanda, Anula, Matara Hamine and Kathirina in the village because of this low social status. However, one's class can be changed by bettering one's socio-economic status in society, for example through work. With colonisation, many lower-class individuals rose to a higher class as a result of the job opportunities offered through urban capitalism. According to Wickramasinghe, this seems to be a positive aspect of colonisation.

¹³⁸ Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies*, xix; my italics.

As pointed out in the introductory chapter, greater opportunities for employment were available in the city as a result of British colonisation and Piyal is given the chance of bettering his economic and social standing by making use of these work opportunities. He begins to work in the hotel industry, branches out as a food supplier to several hotels and builds up a business empire. Having moved from the village to the city, Piyal gets the opportunity of becoming a part of a new class – the bourgeoisie – which was created by British colonisation in Sri Lanka. According to Jayawardena,

as in many colonies, the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie was the product of a specific colonial form of capitalist production [...] there arose a class of local merchant capitalists [...] which profited both directly and indirectly from the development of the plantation system.¹³⁹

Once Piyal enters the domain of work in the city that was based on a westernised work ethic, his lower-class status is pushed to the background. In the city, he is not discriminated against for his family history. It is this classless nature of work in the city that enables Piyal to climb up the social and economic ladder through his natural gift for commerce. Had there been class barriers in the city work environment, his hopes of becoming an established and respected businessman would have been out of his reach, just as Nanda initially was. It is the change of location to the city of Colombo that enables Piyal to work his way up the social hierarchy, because Colombo was less bound, due to westernization, to class structures than the village.

As Michael Roberts points out, “Since English was the language of administration, a proficiency in that language and a western education soon became a requirement for entry into the ‘liberal professions’ and the prestigious government service jobs.”¹⁴⁰ Wickramasinghe depicts this importance given to the English language during British

¹³⁹ Ibid., xx.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Roberts, cited in, Manique Gunasekera, *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English* (Colombo 4: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2010), 14.

colonisation in Sri Lanka through Piya in *Gamperaliya*. Piya's knowledge of English is an additional qualification in his search for utopia through work in the city. This depiction is in contrast to that of Jinadasa, Nanda and Anula who had no formal education in English. Armed with his knowledge of English and natural skills for business, Piya quickly becomes one of the most respected and wealthiest businessmen in Colombo. The extent of Piya's economic and social success is revealed to the Mahagedara women in a letter that Nanda's brother Tissa writes to them. Despite these monetary achievements, for Piya, happiness lies in attaining Nanda, his first love from the village. The challenge that he has to overcome in order to achieve Nanda is the class barrier that stands between them. He does this by achieving economic and social stability. It must be highlighted that what Piya thus achieves by marrying Nanda is a personal utopia to which the pathway was work.

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As the trilogy progresses, Wickramasinghe shows us how the succeeding generations, now established in the city, engage in the search for happiness through employment. It is ironic that the third and fourth generations who were born and bred in the city, completely cut off from the village ways, rebel against the very utopia that the preceding generation yearned for by finding employment in the city. In *Kaliyugaya*, the second novel of the trilogy, Nanda's two sons Alan and Chandrasoma, in their different ways, rebel against their parents' ambition of achieving success through work.

In *Kaliyugaya*, the depiction of the plight of Alan and his wife Irene in England anticipates the actual large-scale migration of Sri Lankans to Australia, the "United Kingdom, Canada and the United States where there was considerable scope for economic gain, job satisfaction and enhancement of their skills."¹⁴¹ Especially Sri Lankans of Eurasian and

¹⁴¹ H. N. S. Karunatilake, "Sri Lanka," 190.

Burgher¹⁴² descent emigrated to these countries after “the social, educational and language policies introduced by governments after 1956.”¹⁴³

Through Alan and Irene, Wickramasinghe clearly captures the tragic fate of migrants who travel to foreign lands with the dream of reaching economic success but are hopelessly unprepared for the challenge. Alan’s eventual decision to make England his permanent home is quite a realistic depiction of how economic migrants gradually turn into permanent residents in foreign lands, even if they are disillusioned with the work conditions, and become expatriates of their native lands. Academic migrants, who also fall within the category of economic migrants, will be discussed in the next chapter with reference to the title character of James Goonewardene’s *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*.¹⁴⁴

In *Kaliyugaya*, Wickramasinghe skilfully explores the workings of Alan’s mind by opening the novel with a long letter that Alan writes to his mother Nanda. The trilogy, which was thus far narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator, shifts to Alan’s subjective point of view at the beginning of the second novel. The letter is as much an accusation as it is an explanation of the complex relationship Alan has with his parents. Alan’s parents discontinue sponsoring his education when he marries a Burgher girl against their wishes. Therefore, he cannot complete his studies as an engineer in Sri Lanka and is unable to find suitable employment that complements his studies. It is at this point that Alan decides to migrate to

¹⁴² In the Sri Lankan context, the noun Burgher refers to a member of a minority ethnic group which was a product of the interaction between the Portuguese, Dutch, British and the locals. The Burghers were an English-speaking, westernised community and therefore they enjoyed certain privileges under British colonial rule. Such linguistic and social advantages triggered resentment towards the Burghers from the other ethnic groups. In the post independence era of nationalism, the prejudice against this “mixed” people increased. The majority Sinhalese Buddhists, who considered themselves “pure” in descent and who were promoting a sense of nationalism, discouraged marital union with the Burgher community. See Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies*, 234-5.

¹⁴³ H. N. S. Karunatilake, “Sri Lanka,” 189.

¹⁴⁴ James Goonewardene, *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, in *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi and other stories* (Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1976), 1-33.

England with his wife Irene and attempts to earn a living through other modes of employment as Alan feels that England could offer them more job opportunities.

However, as Wickramasinghe points out, becoming successful through work by migrating is not an easy task. Like Jinadasa, Alan and Irene, too, find it a difficult task to adapt to the new situation. For them, it is a new country, a new culture and a completely new set of people. They are also unable to cope with the drastically different weather and the new work conditions. Alan takes up odd jobs while Irene works in a hotel. They suffer as a result of overwork, and as Alan reveals in the letter to his parents,

Irene died in a hospital in London a month ago. She died because she worked too hard, neglecting herself to look after me. When I left you and father and came here with Irene, I had no proper job to support ourselves.¹⁴⁵

Through such descriptions Wickramasinghe evokes the reader's sympathy towards economic migrants. As revealed in the above quotation, Irene was the breadwinner of the family. The place of women in work-related utopia will be discussed with reference to Irene in the next section of this chapter.

Through Alan's brother Chandrasoma, Wickramasinghe explores a different work ethic. Piyal attempts to initiate Chandrasoma into the world of work by hiring him as an employee in his office in Colombo. However, Chandrasoma refuses to conform to the role of the "perfect" son and goes against the wishes of his parents. More importantly to this study, Chandrasoma does not conform to the role of the "typical worker."¹⁴⁶ He uses shortcut methods such as stealing from his father and multiplying that money through gambling. He wants to become economically and socially successful like his father but is unwilling to put in the required labour. Therefore there is a clash between his desire to become successful and

¹⁴⁵ Wickramasinghe, *Kaliyugaya: The Age of Kali – Uprooted Trilogy Part II*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ A "typical worker" can be defined as a person who is employed in a specified type of work for a specified time period and wage.

the work needed to get there. Wickramasinghe contrasts his work ethic with that of his father. Piyal, unlike his children, is tirelessly and obsessively committed to building up his empire through work, because unlike his children, Piyal experienced village disdain and contempt and wished to escape this repressive environment.

In *Yuganthaya*, Wickramasinghe brings to life the champion of the capitalistic way of life through Piyal's son-in-law, Saviman Kabalana. He is represented as the typical cold-hearted businessman of the city. Wickramasinghe criticises the capitalist work ethic through Kabalana who has no compassion for his workers and exploits them to the fullest in order to achieve economic gain. According to Kabalana,

those who are moved by pain, grief, poverty, tears, pleading, criticism, and abuse, are people who live by the grace of others, or for others. Their strength becomes productive only in the hands of able, hard-hearted persons. Without exploiting the workers, there is no way in which their strength can be put to good use to create wealth. Only those who are ready to ruthlessly cut down and destroy the trees, and cast out the earth, rocks and the white clay, can bring forth the valuable plumbago, and become wealthy.¹⁴⁷

Through contrasting images of the sympathetic village landowners and the cold-hearted city industrialist, Wickramasinghe critiques colonisation and urban capitalism and upholds traditional Sri Lankan village values of pre-colonial times. Unlike in the village where respect for the hierarchy was unequivocal and uncontested, in the city the workers rise up against the employers when they are mistreated. The relationship between the worker and the employer is quite different in the capitalistic city background. While Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram and Matara Hamine (in *Gamperaliya*) and Viharahena Mudalali and Weligama Hamine (in *Yuganthaya*) of the village are compassionate towards the workers in their

¹⁴⁷ Martin Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Yuganthaya - Destiny*, trans. Ranga Wickramasinghe and Deenesha Wickramasinghe (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2014), 5-6.

estates, Saviman Kabalana shows no sympathy towards his employees in the city. He exploits the working class to such an extent that they rise up against him in the form of union action.

In the pastoral tradition, the lives of shepherds, cowherds and other farm workers were often romanticised and depicted in a highly unrealistic manner. Alexander Pope promotes this literary tradition by stating that “we must therefore use some illusion to render a Pastoral delightful; and this consists in exposing the best side only of a shepherd’s life, and in concealing its miseries.”¹⁴⁸ However, Wickramasinghe, as an insider to village life, indicates the hidden drawbacks of the village work system by highlighting the hegemonic nature of the relationship between village employer and worker. In *Yuganthaya*, through his spokesperson Tissa, the author displays great insight by indicating how the hierarchical *rajakariya* system is internalised by villagers and how difficult it is to “change what they have inherited from the environment and the past they have known and in which they have grown up.”¹⁴⁹ According to him, the gap between rural employer and employee is less due to the close-knit nature of the village lifestyle. In the city, on the other hand, “the urban capitalists and the bourgeoisie differ in linguistic habits and dress from the workers.”¹⁵⁰ In Tissa’s point of view, this is why there is less resentment and malice towards the employers in the rural background, despite the villagers’ poverty and suffering.

In *Yuganthaya*, Wickramasinghe expresses idealism for certain aspects of village life by contrasting the Viharahena family (Viharahena Mudalali and Weligama Hamine) with the Kabalana family. Saviman Kabalana’s son Malin and Aravinda Viharahena are friends who had studied together in England. On the day Aravinda returns home from England after completing his medical studies, his mother Weligama Hamine celebrates this occasion by inviting almost the entire village to their house and providing them with food and drink. This

¹⁴⁸ Alexander Pope, quoted in, Marinelli, *Pastoral*, 53.

¹⁴⁹ Wickramasinghe, *Yuganthaya: Destiny – The Uprooted Trilogy Part III*, 174.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

depiction is similar to the feudal relationship that Matara Hamine shares with the villagers. No such benevolent activities are seen in the city-based Kabalana household to celebrate Malin's return. We are told that Weligama Hamine

enjoyed inviting the villagers and entertaining them [...] Weligama Hamine didn't try to acquire money. When her son was at home she derived intense pleasure in taking care of him and seeing to his needs. After he left for England she sought solace in entertaining and conversing with the rural folk. She learnt to share their joys and their sorrows and won their affections.¹⁵¹

In addition to this, Wickramasinghe contrasts Aravinda's father Viharahena Mudalali's perception of fulfilment with that of Saviman Kabalana. Viharahena, a village business owner, dreams of success that includes social status and prestige. He has earned more than enough wealth for himself and his family through hard work, and now dreams of a more sophisticated lifestyle for his only son Aravinda. As A. V. Suraweera points out,

the Vattuhams [Viharahenas] were typical villagers though in wealth not second to the Kabalanas. Vattuhamy [Viharahena] was out of place in the city. He could hardly walk on the well polished floor at the bungalow of his friend. Furniture, food and everything was unfamiliar to him. Kabalana's residence was open only to those of the upper class.¹⁵²

Wickramasinghe depicts a different concept of utopia through Viharahena. This character's dream is to convert the money that was earned through hard work and labour into displayable possessions. As soon as he is introduced to the Kabalanas and their lifestyle, Viharahena dreams of becoming just like them. Wickramasinghe portrays this character with a level of sarcasm as Viharahena gives prominence to appearance over reality in his understanding of a better life. In the author's point of view, Viharahena, the village businessman, has been corrupted by the capitalistic values of colonisation.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 41-2.

¹⁵² Suraweera, *Essays on Sri Lankan Literature and Culture*, 98.

Viharahena's work ethic is in stark contrast to that of his son Aravinda. When the latter, a doctor who returns to Sri Lanka after completing his higher studies in England, treats poor village patients, Viharahena objects and says that Aravinda should carry himself with more pride and only attend to patients at the Colombo hospital. For the idealistic Aravinda, work is work, whether it is treating patients in a big government hospital in Colombo or attending to the illnesses of the poor villagers that gather on to his backyard. Out of respect and gratitude the villagers address him as *Dostara Hamuduruwo*, which translates as "honourable doctor." The word "Aravinda" itself is a synonym for the lotus flower in the Sinhala language and this flower has great significance in Buddhism. The roots of a lotus flower extend into the mud but the stem grows up through the water and the flower blossoms above the surface. Similarly, the enlightened soul, like Lord Buddha, progresses from the mud of materialism, through the waters of experience and into the bright sunshine of enlightenment. Wickramasinghe's selection of the name Aravinda draws parallels between this Buddhist concept and the personality of this righteous character. Through Aravinda, Wickramasinghe expresses his view that pre-colonial village work values must be preserved for spiritual happiness. It is these values that Piyal and Kabalana leave behind in the village, permanently adopting values such as capitalism and materialism that entered Sri Lankan society through British colonisation and which are symbols of the dystopic city. The character of Aravinda is similar to the idealistic Dr. Kirithi in James Goonewardene's *The Awakening of Doctor Kirithi*,¹⁵³ as will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis. These two characters not only share the same occupation but also the same work ethic as idealistic and committed professionals.

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¹⁵³ Goonewardene, *The Awakening of Doctor Kirithi*.

Yuganthaya, the final novel of Wickramasinghe's trilogy, is set in mid twentieth century Sri Lanka. Here we encounter the main representative of the rebellious younger generation – Malin, the son of Saviman Kabalana. As Ediriweera Sarathchandra points out,

just as *Changing Village* [*Gamperaliya*] tells us the story of the break-up of the village economy, the disappearance of the small land-owner and the coming of the big business man in his place, *The End of an Age* (*Yuganthaya*, 1948) depicts the trends that will ultimately lead to the disappearance of the capitalist class of the city.¹⁵⁴

Through the character of Malin, Wickramasinghe depicts the rise of the labour movement in Ceylon. Malin is of the fourth and final generation that the author depicts. He is a Marxist and he rebels against his father Saviman Kabalana in a more active sense than both Alan and Chandrasoma did against Piyal. Malin expresses his displeasure of his father's work ethic and his exploitation of workers for profit by supporting union action against his father's company. Jayawardena describes the early twentieth century Sri Lankan labour uprising as follows:

Labor, which in the 19th century was unorganized and economically and legally in a disadvantageous position to bargain with employers, was able to seriously threaten the commercial life of the capital during the general strike of 1923, the militant strikes of 1927 and 1928, and the violent tramway strike of 1929.¹⁵⁵

Malin, as a spokesperson for the downtrodden working classes in the city, is very critical of his father's work ethic as an employer.

'Those who have amassed wealth by pounding and wringing out the strength of working men, as if they were crushing sugar-cane, are responsible for the tragic consequences we see around us [...] Father makes money, and exploits and pays his workers like a ruthless miser. But he spends like an English duke to entertain people, or to throw parties to gain social prominence.'¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Sarathchandra, *The Sinhalese Novel*, 150-151.

¹⁵⁵ Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labor Movement in Ceylon*, xv.

¹⁵⁶ Wickramasinghe, *Yuganthaya: Destiny – The Uprooted Trilogy Part III*, 5.

In a sense Malin is similar to his uncle Tissa as they both dream of creating a classless society. However, their attitudes towards work and the means of achieving this classless utopia are quite different. Tissa is sceptical of Malin's decision to help the downtrodden working class through political power. Tissa questions as to who will be set to work in the fields, factories and plantations by the likes of Malin, the handful who get in to power over the rest of society. Malin's response is that work will be carried out collectively and that everyone will work: "Everyone will have an income sufficient to live comfortably and educate their children."¹⁵⁷ His idea of work is both Marxist and idealistic. It is similar to the work ethic presented in Thomas More's *Utopia*¹⁵⁸ that was discussed in the introductory chapter.

II – The Place of Women

The second aspect that I will be analysing in this chapter is Wickramasinghe's portrayal of the place of women in relation to utopia and work in the Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist context. In *Gamperaliya*, the Mahagedara women, namely Matara Hamine and her two daughters Nanda and Anula, belong to the upper class, and at the beginning of the novel, they have servants to attend to their daily needs as they are a part of the pre-colonial feudal *rajakariya* order which was discussed in the introductory chapter. Gradually they lose these feudal privileges as a result of the change in the socio-economic system of the country. It is at this point that the aristocratic Mahagedara women, too, must engage in work in a capitalist sense.

As can be seen in *Gamperaliya*, women, most often as a result of cultural restraints, are unpaid labourers in the home in the Sri Lankan context. Matara Hamine, Nanda and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 188.

¹⁵⁸ More, *Utopia*, 55.

Anula never step out of the domestic sphere into the world of employment. This does not mean that they are not a part of the search for fulfilment through work. Wickramasinghe shows us how the Mahagedara women engage in the domestic sphere and do their utmost to keep the household going despite their financial difficulties. They cut back on unnecessary expenses and make the most of every rupee, gradually internalizing these habits.

In *Gamperaliya*, Wickramasinghe depicts how the Mahagedara women engage in a form of informal labour in order to support their family in the absence of the male breadwinners after the demise of Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram and the departure of Jinadasa and Tissa in search of work. As a result of cultural restraints placed on women, Nanda and Anula are prevented from leaving the domestic sphere in search of job opportunities, unlike Piyal, Jinadasa and Tissa. Wickramasinghe is critical of this patriarchal nature of the feudal work ethic. The women have many obstacles to overcome as they can only earn a living within the walls of their home and cannot step in to the world of capitalism even for the sale of their produce. Wickramasinghe is sympathetic towards the plight of the upper class women and displays a feminist attitude by depicting the Mahagedara women as courageous in the face of adversity. He portrays them as taking up lace (*beeralu*) knitting, a profession primarily carried out by women. It is one of the forms of occupations considered “respectable” for them to engage in within the walls of their house. They also strive to get their merchandise sold at the market through their male servant Sada. Here, Wickramasinghe does not fail to note that Matara Hamine, who belongs to the previous generation, does not engage in such money-earning activities but prefers to live in poverty while maintaining an air of feudal dignity.

Wickramasinghe highlights how the work opportunities of the women in the village differ according to their social class by contrasting the Mahagedara women with Piyal’s mother. This latter, who belongs to a lower social class, is not subject to the same social

restraints as Nanda, Anula and Matara Hamine. She has the freedom to make a living, albeit within limits that are applicable to her class and gender. She is one of the wealthiest women in the village as a result of her hard work. She also earns money through her pawning business, as the extract below shows:

Piyal's mother had been born into a poor family. She [...] had had to work hard from morning till night, often undertaking even the menial work of a servant. Making coir rope from coconut fibre was hard work [...] Later she had made a profitable business of buying coconut husks, and selling the softened husks. She had also engaged in pawn-broking.¹⁵⁹

Piyal's mother who made a living for herself through dedicated work demonstrates a contrasting image to the Kaisaruwatte women. This description expresses the author's admiration for hard-working village women. Matara Hamine, Nanda or Anula could never achieve what Piyal's mother accomplishes. However, Wickramasinghe does not criticise the Mahagedara women but portrays them with empathy. Wickramasinghe understands that the plight of these upper class women is due not to their inability or unwillingness to take up hard work, but to the patriarchal norms that restraint their movement. The Kaisaruwatte women are forever bound by the expectations of society on their high class. Even at their economic worst, they must keep up appearances and present their best to the world. It is this feudal *rajakariya* system that the author criticises. Wickramasinghe appears to satirise such practices and investigates several instances where the women of Mahagedara keep up the appearance of wealth to the outside world while their economic situation drops from bad to worse. One such instance is when they pawn their jewellery so that Tissa can buy a new suit to attend the wedding of his friend Baladasa. Therefore, Wickramasinghe does not endorse pre-colonial Sri Lankan village values, but critiques some of them. The plight of the

¹⁵⁹ Wickramasinghe, *Kaliyugaya: The Age of Kali – Uprooted Trilogy Part II*, 42.

Mahagedara women and their hypocrisy indicates that the author is critical of the traditional class-based work ethic that limited the employment options of the rural upper classes.

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According to Jayawardena, women in colonial Sri Lanka became stratified on class lines as a result of capitalist development and its socio-cultural and political consequences. One level was the bourgeoisie which included the wives and other close relatives of the newly rich. The second level consisted of women occupied in wage labour.¹⁶⁰ The Mahagedara women whom we encounter at the beginning of *Gamperaliya* were feudal land owners of the pre-colonial *rajakariya* system and do not fall into either of the categories of women that Jayawardena discusses. However, after moving to Colombo, Nanda becomes a part of the bourgeoisie, the first stratum of women discussed by Jayawardena. As the wife of Piyal, Nanda no longer has the need to work and earn money for her family by knitting cloth or by any other means. Her daughter Nalika and granddaughter Chamari, too, belong to this bourgeois class of women who are economically supported by their fathers and husbands. As Jayawardena points out, this new class of women had greater freedom and were released from some traditional roles as a result of advances in female education, westernised lifestyle and other modernizing influences.¹⁶¹ However, Wickramasinghe does not merely replicate this reality in his novels. He looks behind the template of reality and observes what the surface reality does not show up. Some of the complexities that these women also faced because of these changes are portrayed by him. He focuses particularly on how personal relationships suffer in the city context as a result of the distance between individuals in the capitalist system. This breakdown of relationships is represented through the characters of Piyal and Nanda. On the surface it appears as if Nanda has achieved happiness by marrying

¹⁶⁰ Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies*, 279-280.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

Piyal who is now a wealthy businessman. However, in Wickramasinghe's representation, Nanda is a lonely bourgeois wife who is estranged from her husband and children. This emotional distance between individuals is one critique that Wickramasinghe presents against Capitalism and city life.

According to Wickramasinghe, the restrictions placed on women in relation to labour get less and less in the city. As Jayawardena pointed out, apart from the women of the bourgeoisie who did not have the necessity to be a part of the work force, there was a second class of women who were involved in wage earning. These wage earning women are in contrast to the bourgeois women. The latter, which includes the likes of Nanda, Nalika and Chamari in *Kaliyugaya* and *Yuganthaya*, are exempt from taking part in household work as well since they have the economic means of hiring servants to carry out this work for them. However, this option costs money and therefore is not available to all classes of women.

In *Kaliyugaya*, Wickramasinghe criticises the capitalist work system of the city through the portrayal of the nanny or the *ayah*,¹⁶² the hired domestic worker discussed in the previous paragraph. This is one of the main female occupations we come across in the city that is absent in the village. All of Nanda's children are taken care of by a nanny from their birth. In the village, this role is taken up by female members of the extended family, such as the grandmother and aunts. Wickramasinghe shows us how this change came about as a result of the move from the village to the city, an unavoidable result of the new social order. Matara Hamine, Piyal's mother and Anula, who move to the city and live with Nanda in their house in Colombo, are unable to come to terms with this new practice. Wickramasinghe's critique of the new capitalist system is presented through these representatives of the old order who are still mentally living in the village. For them, the role of caregiver to a child is

¹⁶² A word derived from the Portuguese term for female tutor. It was used to refer to children's nursemaids or maidservants, especially of Europeans in India and South East Asia. The word would have been introduced to the Sri Lankan context through the British during colonization.

not a paid occupation but one that is taken up by the extended family, through the bond of love. Hiring a complete stranger and paying her wages for this work is unthinkable and unnatural in their eyes.

The diminishing of work restrictions on females in the city comes to a climax in the form of the prostitute that Tissa encounters outside the shop in which he works in Colombo. As a commercial sex worker, she, too, is a part of the work force. She remains unnamed. Traditional working hours and rates do not apply to her. She is not bound by the domestic sphere as location for her occupation. Unlike the Mahagedara women and the nanny, this woman has the freedom to move about in the city and practise her trade in order to earn a living. Wickramasinghe's position in the depiction of this character is groundbreaking as he empathises with the situation of the prostitute who is a victim of male oppression and male desire.

Wickramasinghe analyses the role of the migrant female worker through the character of Irene who travels to England in search of better work opportunities in order to build a successful life with Alan (see p. 51-52). Living abroad and completely cut off from the work restrictions applied to women in traditional Sri Lankan society, Irene now has the freedom to engage in any form of work. Even though she is now married to the upper class Alan, both of them are "nobodies" in England and they must start at the bottom of the economic ladder. In fact, Wickramasinghe reverses the traditional gender role of husband as breadwinner of the family in this instance as revealed in Alan's letter.

The money I earned from doing odd jobs was not enough to meet our needs. It was Irene who found work in a hotel and slaved from morning till late in the evening, to earn to sustain our frugal way of life.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Kaliyugaya - The Age of Kali*, trans. Ranga Wickramasinghe and Aditha Dissanayake (Rajagiriya: Sarasa, 2013), 7.

Wickramasinghe depicts Irene in contrast to Nanda and Nalika. She plays her role as worker outside the home as well as within the home, performing the traditional domestic duties expected of a Sri Lankan woman of her time in addition to the paid labour.

Even after she came home from work she had no time to rest. She did all the house work and saw to all my needs. To get the help of a servant was beyond our means. Irene insisted on doing everything, and would not let me help her. She did the cooking and went out to do the marketing regardless of the cold. We had only a few items of clothing between us, and Irene washed them herself. I tried to do my washing but she would not let me do even that. Life was hard. Yet, in spite of all these difficulties we were happy.¹⁶⁴

As Kithsiri Karunanayake points out in his study on unskilled women labourers, “the conventional image of the Sri Lankan woman is both that of a housewife and of a helpmate to her husband in economic activities.”¹⁶⁵ We see this in Irene who engages in work in both the traditional, private, domestic sphere as well as in the public domain of wage work. She seems to take on all the work from a subconscious awareness that she is a woman and from the lower class. As can be seen in the tragic fate of Irene, Wickramasinghe recommends a balance between the work carried out in these two environments by women.

Through Alan’s letter, Wickramasinghe criticises the traditional Sri Lankan view that taking care of the domestic work is a part of the woman’s duties. Alan reveals that he made an attempt to help Irene with the household chores but she took the burden upon herself. The author also highlights the deep connection between class and labour in the search for happiness. Had Alan and Irene been in an economically favourable position, they would have had the privilege of hiring a servant to take care of their household tasks. However, this is the reality that they are pushed into. Again, this situation is contrasted with that of Nanda and Nalika who do not work outside the home and do not work within the home either as they

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁶⁵ Kithsiri Karunanayake, “Unskilled Women Labourers,” in *Reconciliation of Roles: Women, Work and Family in Sri Lanka*, ed. Sirima Kiribamune (New Delhi: Navrang, 1992), 125.

employ female domestic helpers to complete their chores. In *Kaliyugaya*, through the portrayal of Irene, Wickramasinghe criticises the unfavourable work situations faced by women as a result of the capitalist work ethic and class system.

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Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948 and from the 1930s women joined hands with the men on the political front during the struggle for independence.¹⁶⁶ The early Sri Lankan women's movements led to the gradual emancipation of women from the traditional roles they were expected to fulfil in society. As Neloufer De Mel points out, in the early part of the twentieth century, there was an expansion in women's education and entry into professions in Sri Lanka which encouraged a political consciousness among women.¹⁶⁷ This gradual change in the socio-economic status of women in the Sri Lankan society is clearly depicted by Wickramasinghe in *Yuganthaya* and this is one positive outcome of colonisation that is appreciated by the author. While Nanda expands her boundaries of womanhood by not playing the traditional role of mother and housewife, her granddaughter Chamari of the fourth generation of the Kaisaruwatte women, goes a step further by moving from the domestic sphere to the political arena. She takes this step in order to support her brother Malin in his union action against the work ethics of their father Saviman Kabalana. Her decision to go against her parents' wishes in order to support her vision of the ideal utopia of work is a new trend in the female protagonists thus far portrayed by Wickramasinghe. Her dedication and firm belief in the cause that she supports is expressed in the argument she has with Tissa, the eternal cynic.

Rich men's incomes must be proportionately reduced. [...] The larger part of their incomes must go to the poor. If only we could provide educational facilities and a

¹⁶⁶ Neloufer De Mel, *Women & the Nation's Narrative: Gender and Nationalism in Twentieth Century Sri Lanka* (Colombo 5: Social Scientists' Association, 2001), 25.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

living wage for these downtrodden people, like for the middle class, they too could lead happy lives.¹⁶⁸

Through Chamari, Wickramasinghe envisions a classless socialist utopia for the workers of the city. It is interesting to note that none of the female characters prior to this in the trilogy ever spoke of the rights of the working classes as Chamari does in this instance. Unlike Nanda, Anula and Matara Hamine in *Gamperaliya* and the lower-class women workers discussed in this section, Chamari does not need to engage in work, neither in the domestic sphere nor the public domain. It is this freedom from work that gives her the time and energy needed to spend on other activities such as social reform. Women of the lower classes do not have such privileges.

These social changes that Wickramasinghe depicts in relation to women and work were actually taking place in the Sri Lankan society that the author depicts in his novels. Women were stepping out of the threshold of the home and entering the sphere of politics with the gradual increase of feminist movements in Sri Lanka. According to Neloufer De Mel there was significant political activity on the part of women in Sri Lanka in the 1930s under the leadership of the traditional left. Women of the left organised against imperial/capitalist exploitation, militantly challenging the status quo and engaging with women's issues and a cosmopolitan politics.¹⁶⁹

Therefore we can see how Wickramasinghe maps the gradual change of the place of women in relation to work in the evolving Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist society through his *Koggala Trilogy*. A close reading of the three novels reveals how the women played an important role in the search for fulfilment through work in pre-colonial and colonial Sri Lanka. Wickramasinghe, though critical of British colonisation for introducing values such as

¹⁶⁸ Wickramasinghe, *Yuganthaya: Destiny – The Uprooted Trilogy Part III*, 208.

¹⁶⁹ De Mel, *Women & the Nation's Narrative*, 27.

capitalism and materialism, commends it for the emancipation of women from traditional Sri Lankan gender roles.

III – The Impermanence of Utopia

There is no permanency but change. From the minutest atom to the highest heaven everything is becoming. It comes into being, stays for a time and passes away, like the volume of water in the flowing stream.

Sangharakshita, *Flame in Darkness: The Life and Sayings of Anagarika Dharmapala*

In *Gamperaliya*, Wickramasinghe criticises the capitalistic work ethic through Piyal's search for social and economic betterment through work in the city. Initially Piyal is content with his lot in the village, living as a schoolmaster. Once he is made aware of his lower social and economic status in the village, he realises that the only option available to him to rise to the level of the upper-classes is through employment in the city.

However, Wickramasinghe points out the impermanence of utopia by depicting the failed marriage of Piyal and Nanda. As pointed out above, Wickramasinghe's *Kaliyugaya* begins with Alan's long letter addressed to his mother Nanda which reveals how the world that Piyal and Nanda built in the city through work has brought discontent for both themselves and their children. Here we are presented with Wickramasinghe's critique of the Sri Lankan middleclass that was created as a result of western colonisation. According to Godfrey Gunatillake,

From the vantage point of his [Alan's] bitterness and suffering he enumerates the trivialities and falsities that make up the major portion of his parents' life [...] The

son's bitterness assails that fine facade of middleclass respectability behind which the parents live, and exposes its sham, and moral worthlessness.¹⁷⁰

According to Wickramasinghe, a main cause of the discontentment in the lives of Piya and his family is his obsession with work. By this point of the trilogy, Piya is very much obsessed with work and has less and less time to spend with his family. There is no balance between work and family. His relationships with his mother, Nanda, and their children deteriorate gradually as a result of his obsession with earning money. Piya dies at the end of *Kaliyugaya*, not having the fortune of seeing his son Alan one last time before his death. It is ironic that while Piya once achieved success through work, this happiness gradually turns into discontent as a result of over-work.

In *Yuganthaya*, Wickramasinghe passes the role of the work-obsessed business owner to Piya's son-in-law, Saviman Kabalana. The dystopia of work that gradually builds up in *Kaliyugaya* with Piya comes to a climax in the form of Kabalana and his all-for-profit work ethic. Unlike in *Kaliyugaya*, this exploitative work ethic does not go unchallenged in *Yuganthaya*. The spokesperson of the workers comes in the form of Kabalana's own son, Malin, who fights against this oppression and speaks up for the need for better work conditions. *Yuganthaya* ends on a victorious note for Malin as he triumphs over his father and gets elected as a Member of Parliament with the help of the working-class trade unions. His uncle Chandrasoma predicts that Malin may one day even become a minister. Malin's role is similar to that of the Hindu god Vishnu who brings the Kaliyuga to an end, ushering in a new era. This seems to be Wickramasinghe's vision for a socialist society.

Unlike his father's, Malin's vision is of a Marxist Socialist utopia that will benefit the rest of the society, mainly the working classes. This is different from the all-for-profit work

¹⁷⁰ Godfrey Gunatillake, "Martin Wickramasinghe's Kali Yugaya," in *Martin Wickramasinghe The Sage of Koggala: Essays on the Life and Work of Martin Wickramasinghe, Published on his eighty fifth birth anniversary* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo, 2001), 149.

ethic practiced by Saviman that ensured an economically stable life for his children. Wickramasinghe gives us a glimpse of Malin's present living condition, suggesting that Malin will live up to his electoral promises of equality. When Nalika pays Malin a visit at his house at the end of the novel, this is what she sees:

The ramshackle house consisted of a verandah, a small hall and a bedroom. A small rickety dining table stood in the back of the hall. There were four battered chairs placed round the table, one on unstable legs. At the front end of the hall there were four chairs and a canvas reclining chair. On seeing the antiquated iron bed in the bedroom, Nalika shrugged inadvertently. Except for a clothes cupboard and a canvas bag, she could see nothing else.¹⁷¹

This picture is in complete contrast with the luxurious houses that Piyal, Kabalana and Viharahena built for themselves and their families. By ending the trilogy with this description, Wickramasinghe seems to be promoting a classless Socialist utopia based on economic and social equality of work through his *Koggala Trilogy*. However, Wickramasinghe questions the practicality of such a vision through his spokesperson Tissa, suggesting that this utopic society, too, will not be permanent.

“Then no one will work hard,” said Tissa smiling. “People work hard because their needs are unfulfilled, because they feel hunger gnawing within them. When their needs are satisfied they don’t see a need to work hard. Unless everyone works with three times their present commitment to work, what they produce will not be enough to provide the needs of even a quarter of the population to live comfortable lives.”¹⁷²

This chapter has examined how both men and women of different class backgrounds attempt to reach utopia through work in the city as depicted in Martin Wickramasinghe's *Koggala Trilogy*. I investigated how the changing social, economic and political atmosphere of colonial Sri Lanka during British colonization affected the notion of work, as perceived by

¹⁷¹ Wickramasinghe, *Yuganthaya: Destiny – The Uprooted Trilogy Part III*, 217.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 188.

Wickramasinghe. The author, who was of the village, was a firsthand observer of the impact of these changes on the rural community.

When it comes to the class aspect, the change from the feudal *rajakariya* system to the commercialist capitalist system that came about as a result of British colonisation had a great impact on the Sri Lankan work ethic. In this chapter I analysed these changes and the impact they had on the search for utopia through work in the city as depicted by Wickramasinghe in the *Koggala Trilogy*. I presented a detailed analysis of particular gender role differences of Sri Lankan society that led to a different work ethic in the women. I studied the gradual change of the place of women in relation to achieving utopia through work in relation to the three novels under study. The change of the socio, political economic system had an impact on the role of women in work, both in the domestic sphere and the public domain. The independence movement gave rise to labour movements which demanded equal work rights for the lower classes, as well as women's movements that demanded equal rights for women. Through his trilogy, Wickramasinghe has depicted the class struggle as well as the women's social economic and political liberation in Sri Lanka under British colonisation, particularly in the city context.

In the *Koggala Trilogy*, Wickramasinghe upholds socialist values as well as traditional Sinhala Buddhist values that were very much part of the Sri Lankan villages. He explores a pastoral and Arcadian image of pre-colonial Sri Lanka through his rural depictions which is in stark contrast to the capitalistic and materialistic Sri Lanka created through British colonisation represented by the city. However, Wickramasinghe does not completely endorse the Sri Lankan village values nor does he reject all aspects introduced through colonisation. He is liberal in his views and, similar to the character of Tissa in the trilogy, accepts the positive aspects of each system while rejecting the negative.

In the next chapter I will examine James Goonewardene's notion of utopia in relation to work in the Sri Lankan postcolonial context. Goonewardene, unlike Wickramasinghe, was of the city and therefore his perception of the village and the city in relation to utopia and work is in contrast to that of the village-bred Wickramasinghe.

CHAPTER THREE:

James Goonewardene and the Village

In the previous chapter I examined the search for utopia through work in the city in the colonial Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist context as represented in selected Sinhala novels of Martin Wickramasinghe by applying theoretical concepts such as utopia, the pastoral and Arcadia. As part of that analysis I focused particularly on class and gender aspects and also dealt with the issue of migration and migrant workers. In this chapter I will investigate how utopia is sought through work *in the village* in the fiction written in English by Sri Lankan author James Goonewardene. The novels to be analysed are *A Quiet Place* and *Call of the Kirala* and the novella *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*. The analysis of Goonewardene's fiction will be framed by theories presented in chapter one, including concepts such as utopia, the pastoral and Arcadia. In addition, Orientalism, Re-Orientalism, postcolonial tourism and the tourist gaze will also be applied.

In this chapter I will attempt to define Goonewardene's vision of utopia by analyzing his fictional representations of Sri Lankan village life. He published his work at a time when Sri Lanka was promoting a Sinhala nationalistic agenda that revitalised the village in its pre-colonial image, as a "pure", "uncorrupted" space as opposed to the westernised city which was seen as a sink of iniquity. Influenced by this socio-economic and political context against which he wrote, Goonewardene attempted to make a connection with rural Sinhala cultural roots. The author achieved this by contrasting the traditional village work ethic that was based on the pre-colonial Sinhala Buddhist *rajakariya* and *paramparika* work ethic with the western, capitalist work ethic that was introduced to Sri Lanka through British colonization. He depicts the village work ethic as subsistence-based in contrast to the city work ethic which he sees as profit-based, money-minded and workaholic. He also promotes the sense of respect

and dignity that he perceives in relation to work in the village as opposed to the city. This image of the Sinhala village and its work ethic is seen as desirable by Goonewardene. For the author and his villagers, utopia is the peaceful atmosphere that they perceive in the village. In the Sinhala Buddhist context it would be seen as spiritual enlightenment.

Goonewardene was recipient of an Anglophone education¹⁷³ and the influence of the western literary tradition is apparent in the fiction of this English-educated, westernised writer. He depicts the above-mentioned pre-colonial Sinhala Buddhist village in the western pastoral and Arcadian tradition in his novels. In western literature, the pastoral is depicted as a space of otium where all basic needs are provided by nature or divine intervention, as can be seen in depictions of the Garden of Eden. The appreciation of childhood, innocence and the rejection of the city, which are aspects of the pastoral tradition, can be seen in Goonewardene's fiction. Romantic poets such as Blake and Wordsworth associated the city with industrialisation and commercialisation while idealising nature and the rural. We see in Goonewardene's *A Quiet Place* (1968) and *Call of the Kirala* (1971) this tendency that also pervaded the fiction written by other major writers of the time, as for example Punyakante Wijenaike's *The Waiting Earth* (1966). This was a time when Sri Lanka was reviving a sense of nationhood after over a century of British rule. As the critic Rajiva Wijesinha points out, referring to Wijenaike's *The Waiting Earth* and Goonewardene's *Call of the Kirala*,

These were written in what might be called the pastoral mode or, perhaps more fittingly, the village well syndrome. [...] to assert kinship with the vast majority of the population, they deal with rural settings and peasant life, and by and large celebrate the latter.¹⁷⁴

This "pastoral mode" to which Wijesinha refers was introduced in the introductory chapter of this thesis and was also analysed in the depiction of the village in Martin

¹⁷³ Goonewardene completed his primary education at St. Peter's College in Colombo. See Nihal Fernando, "James Goonewardene (1921-1997)," in *South Asian Novelists in English*, ed. J. C. Sanga (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 88.

¹⁷⁴ Wijesinha, "Sri Lankan Fiction in English," 27.

Wickramasinghe's fiction in the previous chapter. Like Wickramasinghe, Goonewardene was influenced by the western literary tradition and represented the village in the pastoral mode, as will be explored further in this chapter.

Caught up in the nationalist agenda of the time, Goonewardene depicts most of the peasants in the villages described in *A Quiet Place* and *Call of the Kirala* as farmers and *chena* cultivators. In keeping with this agenda, Goonewardene makes his protagonists who leave the city and escape to the village take up paddy and *chena* cultivation as their chosen form of work.

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This chapter will analyze the ways in which Goonewardene's writing, unlike that of Martin Wickramasinghe, is affected by the fact that even though he was a local writer, he was an outsider to the village culture. It will position Goonewardene as a linguistic "other" as well since he wrote in English, the language of the former colonizer, whereas the majority of the Sri Lankan population is Sinhala-speaking. The political, economic and social background from which Goonewardene entered the English literary scene of Sri Lanka and the status of English in post-independence Sri Lanka were discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis. As Minoli Salgado points out, Goonewardene's decision to write in the language of the former colonizer "in the wake of the nationalist fervour of the 1960s and the JVP¹⁷⁵ insurrection of 1971" could be seen as a form of "cultural treachery."¹⁷⁶ Therefore, what is fascinating about Goonewardene's fiction is that he is both an insider and an outsider.

¹⁷⁵ Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or People's Liberation Front is a Sri Lankan communist and Marxist-Leninist political party that was founded by Rohana Wijeweera in 1965. The party was involved in two armed uprisings against the ruling governments in 1971 and 1987-89. After 1989, JVP entered democratic politics by participating in the 1994 parliamentary election.

¹⁷⁶ Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka*, 41.

Goonewardene's fiction will be analyzed through the lens of the postcolonial theory of the tourist gaze. As Graham Huggan notes, "tourism tends to nourish itself on the invented reminiscences of pastoral."¹⁷⁷ This chapter explores how, like a tourist, Goonewardene envisions the Sinhala villages that he depicts. However, as Salgado adds, the fact that Goonewardene chose the rural milieu and the indigenous culture as his subject matter is some compensation. As the author himself points out, "in trying to create an art that could be identified as truly national, writers, dramatists, and musicians here attempted to link their work, after Independence, with what they believed were the roots of our culture."¹⁷⁸

This attempt at re-discovering cultural roots by focusing on the village and rural themes received much negative criticism. Critics such as Thiru Kandiah,¹⁷⁹ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke,¹⁸⁰ Yasmine Gooneratne¹⁸¹ and Nihal Fernando¹⁸² censured James Goonewardene and his contemporaries for their distance from their subject matter and for presenting anglicised, idealised, exoticised and Orientalist accounts of rural Sri Lanka. Goonewardene himself acknowledges that "by trying to dig too deep into the past we are not only unable to find our roots, we also lose touch with the realities of the present."¹⁸³ However, in "A Blueprint for a Writer's Dream," Goonewardene defends himself against such critics and states, quoting the American novelist Thomas Wolfe, "I will know this country when I am through as I know the palm of my hand, and I will put it on paper and

¹⁷⁷ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), 179.

¹⁷⁸ Goonewardene, "Nationalism and the Writer in Sri Lanka," 50.

¹⁷⁹ Kandiah, "New Ceylon English," 93.

¹⁸⁰ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, introduction to *The Penguin New Writing in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1992), xiv.

¹⁸¹ Yasmine Gooneratne, introduction to *Stories from Sri Lanka* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), 11.

¹⁸² Nihal Fernando, "James Goonewardene," 89.

¹⁸³ Goonewardene, "Nationalism and the Writer in Sri Lanka," 52.

make it true and beautiful.”¹⁸⁴ Therefore, Goonewardene admits that he was a novice regarding village life and that writing was a way into it.

By 1976, when his collection of stories titled *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi and other stories* was published, Goonewardene was more at home with the representation of the Sri Lankan context as he was focussing on the urban environment to which he belonged. In the title story of this collection, the novella *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, he focuses more on the realities of work in a city environment rather than trying to rediscover lost cultural roots in a village setting as he does in *Call of the Kirala* and *A Quiet Place*.

As this study will discuss, Goonewardene’s notion of utopia is complex. He does not limit his representation of the Sinhala village to an idealised image, nor does he paint the city as a dystopia. I will examine how he identifies the oppressive nature of work in the village which is not apparent on the surface. Goonewardene’s protagonists also yearn for the attractions and leisure activities that they leave behind in the city.

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In the first section of this chapter I will examine *A Quiet Place* and *Call of the Kirala*, focusing on the relationship between work and utopia in the village. I will question whether Goonewardene’s protagonists seek fulfilment through work or leisure in the village. When possible, I will compare and contrast Goonewardene’s reconfiguration of village life with that of Martin Wickramasinghe.

Secondly, I will move on to analyze whether this happiness they seek in the village is realistic or idealistic. As Minoli Salgado points out, James Goonewardene “presents the village as a retreat from the corruption and commercialism of city life *while exposing its*

¹⁸⁴ James Goonewardene, “A Blueprint for a Writer’s Dream,” in *Contemporary Sri Lankan Short Stories in English*, ed. Ashley Halpé (Colombo: The English Association of Sri Lanka, 1990), 156.

inadequacies.”¹⁸⁵ It is this dystopic underbelly of work in the village and its effect on the village lifestyle that I will be analyzing in the second section of the chapter. This will enable me to evoke another dimension to work in the village.

Following this I will move on to an analysis of the work environment of the city that is present in these three texts by Goonewardene. Here I will use as backdrop to the analysis of *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi* the case of academic migrants or “Brain Drain” which accelerated in the 1970s¹⁸⁶ in Sri Lanka. Finally, in the fourth section of this chapter, I will look at the place given to women in work-related utopia in the Sri Lankan context as depicted in the fiction of James Goonewardene.

I – Utopia and Work in Village Life

In sections I and II of this chapter I will be mainly focusing on James Goonewardene’s *A Quiet Place: A Man’s Quest in a Village by the Jungle* (1968) and *Call of the Kirala* (1971). As Ajith Samaranayake points out, James Goonewardene’s “first novel *A Quiet Place* and the subsequent work *The Call of the Kirala* invoked pastoral themes and juxtaposes [sic] the harsh, materialist culture of the towns against the quiet charm of the countryside.”¹⁸⁷ As pointed out in the introductory chapter, this focus on the rural setting in Goonewardene’s fiction was a result of the politically inspired social thought patterns of the time. However, since Goonewardene was a westernised English-educated writer, influences of the western pastoral mode also seem present in his writing. This mode of writing was discussed in the introductory chapter (see p.10-11). As Peter Marinelli points out with

¹⁸⁵ Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka*, 42; my italics.

¹⁸⁶ Gunasekera, “Development of international migration statistics in Sri Lanka,” 1.

¹⁸⁷ Ajith Samaranayake, “James Goonewardene and the English language novel,” *Sunday Observer*, 24 May, 1997.

reference to the pastoral, “By Renaissance poets the court is seen as the heart of the city and as a microcosm of its evils; a move to rural retirement represents a search for the recovery of innocence.”¹⁸⁸ This rejection of the city and the appreciation of the pastoral village are also applicable to the postcolonial nationalistic Sri Lankan context and I will be analysing its depiction in Goonewardene’s fiction.

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The fact that the title *A Quiet Place* refers to the village is confirmed by the subtitle of the novel: *A Man’s Quest in a Village by the Jungle*. Abhaya, the protagonist of this novel, is in search of a peaceful environment. “Quest” refers to this search and he finds tranquillity in the village context. This quest is similar to Prince Siddhartha’s search for the Truth, leaving behind all worldly possessions. Allusions to Buddhism are very much present in this instance as Prince Siddhartha attained Enlightenment in a jungle and Abhaya, too, finds spiritual wellbeing in a village *by the jungle*. However, it must be noted that the jungle is also associated with danger and darkness. Goonewardene avoids using the word “forest” which is less sinister and has more positive connotations. Therefore, the deliberate choice of the word “jungle” in the subtitle to the novel hints at the veiled problems of this seemingly tranquil village work life, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The word “quiet” in the title of *A Quiet Place* also signifies the calm, peaceful atmosphere of village life in contrast to the noisy life of the city that is generally associated with factories and other places of commercial work. City life is bustling, challenging and hectic, while village life is tranquil and more inwardly. Some of the quietness in the village is due to the rural work style, which comprises mainly agricultural work. The village is Arcadian because of the tranquillity of work. The author is referring not only to the physical peacefulness of the village. He is metaphorically referring to the psychological peace and

¹⁸⁸ Marinelli, *Pastoral*, 23.

quiet one finds in the tranquil village work atmosphere. This is the “utopia” of the Sri Lankan villager. This peaceful village work life is depicted in Lakdasa Wikkramasinha’s poem “In Ancient Kotmale,” which is the epigraph of this thesis.

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From the beginning of *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene establishes the calm, quiet and peaceful atmosphere of village life. Abhaya “could bathe if he wanted to, or not bathe. This was what was good about his new life [...] He had all the time and freedom he wanted.”¹⁸⁹ Abhaya leaves behind his worldly possessions in the city and resorts to a life devoid of attachments. Goonewardene’s depiction of a life of detachment from desire has similarities with the Buddhist path to nirvana. Influences of Christianity and the western literary tradition are also apparent in Goonewardene’s portrayal. Initially, Abhaya does not get involved in work in the village. The village is almost like the Garden of Eden to him, providing him with food and shelter, with no work involved. In Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve discuss this leisurely atmosphere of Eden: “Not so strictly hath our Lord impos’d / Labour [...] / For not to irksom toile, but to delight / He made us.”¹⁹⁰ According to Christianity, this idyllic atmosphere is present only as long as they remain “innocent.” After falling from grace, humans are condemned to work in order to fulfil their basic needs. As Marinelli points out, there is no return to this paradise after the Fall: “The consequence is exile from the pastoral garden, exile to a world of toil and labour, and the eternal regretful backward glance of which pastoral is the result.”¹⁹¹ The pastoral is a form of escapism that offers temporary salvation from the reality of work.

In *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene unveils this reality of work in the village by contrasting Abhaya with the carter. While Abhaya lethargically considers whether or not to

¹⁸⁹ James Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place: A Man's Quest in a Village by the Jungle* (Colombo 4: K. V. G. De Silva & Sons, 1968), 2.

¹⁹⁰ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 9, lines 235-6 and 242-3.

¹⁹¹ Marinelli, *Pastoral*, 20.

bathe, a “man untied the bull and led it into the river [...] and bathed it.”¹⁹² The villagers, unlike the recluse from the city who has free time to contemplate a trivial activity such as bathing, must carry on with their day to day work: “The peasants, living around, would go [to the river] for water for their household needs and for watering their vegetable patches.”¹⁹³ “They went gathering firewood”¹⁹⁴ in the jungle across the river for needs such as cooking and keeping warm. We are also told that Bempi Singho, Abhaya’s friend in the village, tends a manioc plot. In Goonewardene’s depiction, village life is by no means devoid of work and there is a clear distinction between his representation of the villagers and the city-bred outsider when it comes to work. As the author gradually comes to realise, no real society can survive without work. Utopia is just a notion that exists only in the imagination.

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According to Edward Said, when it comes to Orientalism, there is “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.”¹⁹⁵ As pointed out in the introduction, Goonewardene was a member of the westernised Sri Lankan bourgeoisie that emerged after Sri Lanka gained independence from the British. This English-speaking middleclass was a minority compared to the majority Sinhala-speaking population. There was tension between these two linguistic groups as a result of the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 that proclaimed Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka, dethroning English from this prestigious position. In Goonewardene’s fiction, this tension is felt as the English-speaking westernised author sees himself as somewhat superior to the villagers. Even though the author is not European, his western education and city upbringing makes him see the village and its inhabitants as culturally and intellectually

¹⁹² Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 2.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

inferior to the city dwellers. According to Lisa Lau, this kind of Orientalism is “Re-Orientalism”. It is

no longer an Orientalism propagated by Occidentals, but ironically enough, by Orientals [...] Re-Orientalism dominates and, to a significant extent, distorts the representation of the Orient, seizing voice and platform, and once again consigning the Oriental within the Orient to a position of ‘The Other.’¹⁹⁶

Goonewardene himself, having been born and bred in the city, sees the village through a tourist’s gaze. Rajiva Wijesinha, referring to both Goonewardene and Punyakante Wijenaike, criticises the detached attitude these two novelists exhibit when describing rural settings.

They [the rural settings and peasant life] are presented from the point of view of the elevated middle class to which the two writers belong. The result is a detachment that serves to keep the subject matter at a distance, as though it consisted of specimens to be examined rather than experiences to be shared.¹⁹⁷

This distanced attitude and sense of cultural superiority can be analysed in Goonewardene’s depiction of the villagers. According to Goonewardene, “these poor villagers can only barely live out of their labour.”¹⁹⁸ The author’s use of the adjective “poor” to describe the villagers expresses condescension towards the rural inhabitants. For Goonewardene, who is himself of the city, the work carried out by villagers involves more physical strength than mental effort. Goonewardene’s position as a superior outsider is also expressed in his description of the villagers’ visit to the shrine.

The inhabitants of the village turned out to begin a *strange* trek to worship at a *broken-down* shrine of a very *curious* and ancient design, lying deep in the jungle and close to what seemed like an *old defunct* irrigation tank. [...] There was a belief that in that *broken down old* shrine dwelt a deity who was the guardian spirit of all that area

¹⁹⁶ Lisa Lau, “Re-Orientalism : The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals,” abstract, *Modern Asian Studies* 43, 2009.

¹⁹⁷ Wijesinha, “Sri Lankan Fiction in English,” 27.

¹⁹⁸ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 48.

[...] The villagers now made this journey to the shrine to plead with this *strange* deity.¹⁹⁹

Goonewardene's repetitive use of adjectives such as *strange*, *broken-down*, *curious*, *old* and *defunct* distances him from the environment he describes. His position is that of an outsider who is observing practices that seem exotic and primitive to him. In *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene further criticises the villagers for their "ignorance"²⁰⁰ and patronizes them by referring to them as "this village full of fools"²⁰¹ through the character of Punchi Gura, a villager who takes on the role of a native informant. These negative expressions seem more convincing coming from a respected figure of the village, rather than from an outsider like Abhaya.

Homi Bhabha's concept of the Third Space is in contrast to Said's Orientalism. The latter speaks of one culture taking over the other. But in Bhabha's point of view, what occurs is a dialogic exchange when the two cultures meet. "In an intercultural site of enunciation, at the intersection of different languages jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation opens up through the process of dialogue."²⁰² It provides a space in which to negotiate cultural diversity and hybridity.²⁰³ This theory can be applied to Goonewardene's fiction. Along with the sense of superiority apparent in his novels, there is also a certain admiration for the villagers and their practices. He seems to envy the villagers' simple, Arcadian lifestyle. In *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene's complex attitude towards the villagers is reflected in his description of village women.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 8; emphasis throughout mine.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 129.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 127.

²⁰² Homi K. Bhabha, "In the Cave of Making: Thoughts on Third Space," preface to *Communicating in the Third Space*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (New York: Routledge, 2009), x.

²⁰³ Jonathan Rutherford, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 207-208.

He [Abhaya] watched them [Nandini and her mother] leave the water and dry their bodies and then change in their strange complicated way. He was convinced now that he wanted this girl, wanted her to be his woman. He did not think of her as a wife. The word had too many middle class and western overtones. In the villages they did not live as husband and wife but simply as man and woman.²⁰⁴

Here, Goonewardene's position is that of an outsider who observes the villagers' "strange complicated" actions from a distance. However, his preference for the village way of living as "man and woman" to the "middle class and western" manner of "husband and wife" expresses a desire to be a part of this different culture. It is because of the curiosity regarding the other that the author selects this milieu as his subject of discussion. As a man who is from the city, the practices of the villagers seem exotic and appealing to Goonewardene and he wishes to experience them. However, this exchange involves the risk of losing one's own roots and there is also the fear of rejection. Perhaps this is why Goonewardene maintains his position as a culturally superior outsider. This gives the impression to the reader that he wishes to remain an outsider, observing from a certain distance, but at the same time there is an attempt to be a part of the village scene. Therefore, there is ambivalence and complexities in Goonewardene's representation of the village. Like Goldsmith in *The Deserted Village* (1770), he patronizes and envies the villagers at the same time, making his depiction multi-dimensional.

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The connection between tourism and work is important in this discussion. John Urry contrasts tourism and work in the following manner: "Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organised work. It is one manifestation of how work and leisure are organised as separate and regulated spheres of social practice in

²⁰⁴ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 5.

‘modern’ societies.”²⁰⁵ He adds that “The places gazed upon are for purposes not directly connected with paid work and they normally offer some distinctive contrasts with work (both paid and unpaid).”²⁰⁶ Occasionally tourists engage in work in the environments they visit to acquire an “authentic” experience of the places they visit and to interact in the “actual” lives of the locals. As Graham Huggan points out, there is a perceived distinction between “travellers” and “tourists”. The former, he explains,

pride themselves on engagement with the cultures they encounter. They look down on ‘superficial’ tourists, whom they see as having little or no interest in the countries they visit; as contributing irresponsibly to the despoliation of their environment; and as seeking maximum enjoyment with a minimum of effort.²⁰⁷

Goonewardene, too, attempts to project an image of a “traveller” as opposed to a “tourist”. He represents his protagonists in *Call of the Kirala* and *A Quiet Place* as ‘authentic’ travellers who engage in work alongside the villagers in the rural environment. In *A Quiet Place*, Abhaya gradually joins the village work force as a cultivator.²⁰⁸ He learns the work from the villagers and becomes adept at the tasks he has to complete.²⁰⁹ Towards the end of the novel, Abhaya’s work in the village turns into a routine and he is content.

Abhaya settled down once more to the routine he had become accustomed to since he came to the village. He would work strenuously among his vegetables for about two hours and then wash down at the river. [...] life was good again and peaceful.²¹⁰

Even though Goonewardene attempts to distinguish himself from a tourist and to project himself as a traveller, his gaze is that of a tourist. For example, he portrays Abhaya’s involvement in work in the village as recreational and touristic. The protagonist spends only

²⁰⁵ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2002), 2.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰⁷ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 179.

²⁰⁸ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 17.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

two hours working on his vegetable plots. This is in contrast to descriptions of the villagers who work throughout the day and have no time to spare on leisure activities. For Goonewardene's protagonists, this is a temporary involvement as they return to the city at the end of the novels. As John Urry points out, tourists on vacation are temporary visitors: "The journey and stay are to, and in, sites outside the normal places of residence and work. Periods of residence elsewhere are of a short-term and temporary nature. There is a clear intention to return 'home' within a relatively short period of time."²¹¹ This resembles Homi Bhabha's Third Space as represented by Robert Young. According to him, the Third Space is not a fixed space. It is transient:

It is more like a shifting caravan site, a place where people come unobserved and where they go without trace, the place which determines their lives for the moment they pitch their tents there, a place which is not a space because it is the site of an event, gone in a moment of time.²¹²

For the locals, on the other hand, work is their livelihood. Therefore what we find in Goonewardene's novels seems to be a touristic approach to understanding the Sri Lankan village, its inhabitants and their work habits. It seems superficial and exaggerated when the author says that Abhaya "merged with his environment like an animal in the jungle. He became a villager and therefore, a part of the village scene."²¹³ The comparison of Abhaya's transformation into a villager to that of "an animal in the jungle" seems to suggest that Goonewardene attributes animalistic qualities to villagers and that he views the village as a jungle. There are other instances where Goonewardene compares the villagers to animals, for example "The mother, like an anxious mother hippopotamus, looked sharply at him"²¹⁴ and

²¹¹ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 3.

²¹² Robert J. C. Young, "The Void of Misgiving," in *Communicating in the Third Space*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (New York: Routledge, 2009), 81-82.

²¹³ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 38.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

“Abhaya saw the girl become alert and tense, like a frightened animal.”²¹⁵ Such descriptions are evocative of the author’s Orientalist and exoticizing attitude towards the villagers.

Goonewardene contrasts the difference between Abhaya and the villagers by highlighting the importance the villagers give to work. Unlike Abhaya, they do not have time to spend on leisure activities as their work requires constant attention. For them, actual physical work and labour is worth more than mere talk and words.

Nandini’s mother joined in then to prevent a quarrel. “It is of little use to quarrel about a thing we are ignorant of. Is it not better we spend such time *clearing the mess*.”

“Yes, she speaks right,” said Sedaris Appuhamy. “We waste time talking when there is *work* to be done.”

The Headman taking his cue from her added. “Yes, we waste time talking. We have *work* and we must go.”

[...]

“I would that I stay to help you, but there’s *work* in the boutique,” said Piyadasa as he turned to go.²¹⁶ [Emphasis throughout mine]

In Goonewardene’s representation, Abhaya, unlike the villagers, has free time on his hands to spend on leisure activities such as going for walks and bird watching.²¹⁷ Reading is another typical pastime. Goonewardene, being from the city himself, promotes this intellectually stimulating activity as part of a tranquil lifestyle. Abhaya, as “an educated one”²¹⁸ of the city, unlike the villagers, “sat down to reading a book before sitting down to his meal.”²¹⁹ Here, too, Goonewardene portrays Abhaya as culturally superior to the villagers. Even when the villagers’ work is destroyed by drought, Abhaya “avoided thinking about the

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 25.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 4.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 17.

drought or its effects on the village. He read a great deal during this time.”²²⁰ No matter how comfortable Abhaya gets with the village work routine, he is represented as an outsider to this backdrop and “he didn’t want the *village* problems to *intrude* on his life.”²²¹ By using the noun modifier “village” and the verb “intrude,” Goonewardene highlights the distance between Abhaya and the villagers. The protagonist is like a tourist on vacation, unmindful of village life and issues.

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In *Call of the Kirala* and *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene presents his readers with an array of village professionals and the work they perform. As a city-dweller, he is fascinated by these work practices that are unique to the village setting and seems sincerely to want to experience them as a “traveller.” It is a completely new and strange experience to him, whereas for the villagers, these would be normal work practices. However, perhaps as a result of being an outsider to the village context, his representation lacks depth. Goonewardene sees the work carried out by the villagers through a touristic gaze and he appears to depict an exoticised view of the village work environment, trying to educate a western readership. As an outsider, Goonewardene’s representation of the village is in contrast to that of Martin Wickramasinghe. Goonewardene pays particular attention to details that are visible on the surface that would be ignored as “ordinary” by insiders or villagers. He mentions many village trades by name but does not go deeper into the lives of the villagers and examine them as individuals. They are all represented as one identical mass, as can be seen in phrases such as “the peasants, living around, would go for water for their household needs”²²² and “the inhabitants of the village turned out to begin a strange trek.”²²³ It is only a handful of

²²⁰ Ibid., 114.

²²¹ Ibid., 115; my italics.

²²² Ibid., 7.

²²³ Ibid., 8.

individuals that stand out such as the physician, the katadiya or sorcerer, the trappers, the village priest and the toddy tapper who are identified by their trades or role in village life. These are professions that would seem important or exotic to an outsider's view. Wickramasinghe, on the other hand, pays great attention to intricate details such as the class of individuals and their socio-economic impact on people's lives. Goonewardene seems oblivious to such subtle factors.

In *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene's characterization lacks depth as it is limited to basic, surface level information on the characters. This drawback can be seen in his depiction of the village physician who is merely described as "an amateur astronomer. He was called Punchi Gurunase, which people abbreviated to Punchi Gura. Some people called him vedamahataya"²²⁴ as a form of respect. Aravinda, in Wickramasinghe's *Yuganthaya*, as was discussed in the previous chapter, too, was a physician who was highly respected by the villagers. However, unlike Goonewardene, Wickramasinghe skilfully delineates the character of Aravinda and presents his readers with much information on his family background, personality and socio-economic and political beliefs. Another contrasting factor between Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene is the fact that the former makes the villagers the protagonists in his novels. In *Gamperaliya*, for example, the two lead protagonists, Piyal and Nanda, are from the village. The writer gives prominence to these characters in order to better understand the workings of village life. In Goonewardene's *Call of the Kirala* and *A Quiet Place*, on the other hand, both protagonists are outsiders. If Goonewardene portrayed a villager as the protagonist of a novel written in English during a time when there was resentment towards this language in Sri Lanka, it would have been an exemplary project.

While Goonewardene provides very little information on the characters in his novels, he offers detailed accounts of the work they perform. In *A Quiet Place*, the author presents a

²²⁴ Ibid., 47.

four-page-long description, explaining every detail of the process carried out by the katadiya. This report seems to be meant for an audience that is unaware of such particularly Sri Lankan experiences. Goonewardene attempts to demystify these rituals and his position as a stranger can be analysed in the way he depicts the casting of the charm by the katadiya: “He [The katadiya] continued, the meanwhile, to chant in a low voice and to throw incense into the brazier which, now, due to some chemical reaction, produced a sudden burst of flames.”²²⁵ From his position as an educated visitor to the village context, Goonewardene offers scientific explanations for the magical appearance of fire and contemptuously refers to this practice as “the weird performance,”²²⁶ distancing himself from what he sees to be primitive and uneducated. Wickramasinghe, on the other hand, does not attempt to give such rational explanations to the beliefs and practices of the villagers. This can be seen in the following description from *Gamperaliya*:

The belief that there are divine powers that transcend their understanding is not confined to ignorant villagers. Even educated people acknowledge such powers, although they may reason that these are the result of planetary influences, or the workings of the laws of karma. Villagers, who see the Devalgala as the steadfast witness from the dim past, to their grief and joy, tears and lamentations, are guided more by what they see and feel, than such abstract reasons.²²⁷

Nor does Wickramasinghe give lengthy descriptions of the “Yantra-mantra-gurukam”²²⁸ and the “thovil”²²⁹ in *Gamperaliya*. He does not exoticise the practice or position himself at a distance from the villagers. On the contrary, he notes how the feudal work ethic operates during such village functions (see p.41). Unlike Goonewardene who gives a touristic view, Wickramasinghe provides an insider’s perspective that goes beyond what is seen on the surface.

²²⁵ Ibid., 75.

²²⁶ Ibid., 78.

²²⁷ Wickramasinghe, *Uprooted: Gamperaliya - The Village*, 2.

²²⁸ Wickramasinghe, *Gamperaliya* (Dehiwela: Thisara Prakasakayo, 1997), 41.

²²⁹ Ibid., 42.

Another profession that Goonewardene finds fascinating in *A Quiet Place* is that of the trappers. As a stranger to the village context, Goonewardene seems to be captivated by the work carried out by them. He describes their work in great detail, similar to the description of the katadiya's work. Goonewardene dedicates a whole chapter of six pages to describe each and every detail of the trapping process. His description is similar to what a traveller would record in a journal, having come across an "authentic" rural experience. By doing so, the author seems to make an attempt to distinguish his gaze from that of a tourist. Goonewardene's admiration for the trappers is evident when he says "Their work was dangerous and they did not want to anger the spirits of the jungle."²³⁰ The trappers execute their work with a sense of dignity and respect and the author is aware of the importance of their trade. The author's description of this procedure indicates the value he places on the work carried out by the trappers.

The trappers then looked at their handiwork, at the end of their hazardous operation, and satisfied, they sank to the ground and rested. The most dangerous part of their work, however, was yet to come. The elephant had to be led into an adjoining coconut plantation, loaded on a truck and taken away to be released in a large jungle further north.²³¹

As the author notes, the trappers get satisfaction out of the work they perform. Even though Goonewardene fails to mention the generational nature of other village professions, he indicates that trapping is carried out by a tribe, and that they have trade secrets that are passed on from generation to generation within the tribe. This is an example of a traditional or *paramparika* village profession that was considered to be sacred in the village social system and Goonewardene acknowledges this fact through his representation.

²³⁰ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 97.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

Another instance where Goonewardene engages with the traditional *paramparika* work ethic in *A Quiet Place* can be analysed in his description of the “priest, a bronze complexioned middle aged slouch-shouldered man [who] stood by the temple wall supervising the mounting of a new bell in the temple compound.”²³² This important village work tradition is explained by W. I. Siriweera in the following manner:

Service in relation to temple lands involved such *duties* as the supply of provisions and commodities, *maintenance and improvement of temple buildings*, assistance at festivals and rituals, performance of services such as washing robes and assistance in administrative duties such as the maintenance of the accounts of the temple.²³³

Goonewardene attempts to realistically represent the traditional *rajakariya* and *paramparika* tradition. What must be highlighted in this village work relationship between the villager and the temple priest is that it was seen more as a “duty” and not as paid labour that one finds in the city work context. The main reason for this is the deep religious nature of the Sinhalese Buddhist villagers and the respect and adoration they had towards the temple and the priest. Therefore they would consider it a duty, and even an honour, to be able to provide their labour for such a cause. Goonewardene seems to admire this rural work tradition.

However, Goonewardene’s attempt at realistically depicting the traditional work relationship is marred by his touristic gaze. The *OED* defines the noun *priest* as “3. a clergyman, a cleric; a minister of the Christian religion.”²³⁴ Goonewardene’s use of the term “priest”, which has Christian connotations, instead of the term “monk” that is generally used in the Sinhala Buddhist setting, indicates the author’s position as an outsider in this context. The *OED* also defines the noun *priest* as “2.b. In ancient Hebrew religion: a member of a

²³² Ibid., 106.

²³³ Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka*, 164; my italics.

²³⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s. v. “priest,” accessed May 20, 2015, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/view/Entry/151200?rskey=rWEHtw&result=1#eid>

hereditary order of ministers having the function of offering sacrifices”²³⁵ and “5.b. A priestess of an ancient pagan religion.”²³⁶ Goonewardene seems to attribute pagan connotations to Buddhism by choosing this term, whereas Buddhism is a form of asceticism.

Goonewardene’s choice of the adjective “bronze” to describe the priest can be seen as a form of Orientalism as the author is drawing out the exotic by stressing on the colour complexion of the rural priest. This is the author’s point of view, and not merely the protagonist’s. By representing the priest in this manner, he creates a difference in the appearance between the “self” and the “other”.

In *Call of the Kirala*, too, Goonewardene’s depictions of village workers can be analysed as alienated from rural life. Here, he notes that a “naked toddy tapper [...] started to climb a coconut tree.”²³⁷ The fact that the author describes the toddy tapper as naked is noteworthy. Generally, in the Sri Lankan context, toddy tappers, or villagers in general, would not go about their work naked. It is customary to have the upper body uncovered as a result of the hot climate, but they would wear at least a loin cloth in order to cover their lower body. Goonewardene’s description, therefore, could be seen as Orientalist and through a distanced gaze. As John Urry points out, the tourist gaze is constructed through difference, “in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. What makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with.”²³⁸ Here, Goonewardene portrays the toddy tapper in a manner that would seem alien and even “primitive” to his westernised readership, the middleclass of Sri Lanka. Such depictions pose the question as to whether Goonewardene is sincerely engaging with the villagers or whether it is a form of patronizing. Michael Ondaatje, who is as westernised as James Goonewardene,

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ James Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala* (Colombo: Hansa Publishers, 1971), 81.

²³⁸ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 1.

paints a more sympathetic and realistic picture of Sri Lankan toddy tappers in the poem “High Flowers” in his fictionalised memoir *Running in the Family* (1983).

his dreams of walking
from tree to tree without ropes.
It is not vanity which allows him this freedom
but skill and habit, the curved knife
his father gave him.²³⁹

Ondaatje presents the amazing skill with which the toddy tapper carries out his work and the service he thereby provides to society. Unlike Goonewardene, Ondaatje indicates that this is a traditional occupation that has been passed on from generation to generation through the *paramparika* work order and that there is dignity attached to this inherited work. Unlike Goonewardene, Ondaatje is an expatriate writer and left Sri Lanka at a very young age. His audience includes a wider range of non-Sri Lankan, English-speaking readers. Therefore it can be questioned whether Ondaatje is a more sensitive writer than Goonewardene or whether he, too, views the toddy tapper through the eyes of a tourist and uses the image of this traditional rural worker merely for exoticising purposes, so that it would appeal to his international readership.

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Towards the end of *Call of the Kirala*, Goonewardene clearly states that the kirala is “the symbol now of his [Vijaya’s] liberation.”²⁴⁰ “The call” is more a symbolic and metaphoric calling for Vijaya to reach spiritual harmony by engaging in work in the village, than a mere birdcall: “Listening to the cry of the kirala he felt contented and happy, and there

²³⁹ Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family* (London: Picador, 1984), 88-89.

²⁴⁰ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 127.

was suddenly no hate, no rancour in him.”²⁴¹ He is at harmony with himself and the natural surroundings. It is not difficult to assume that it is to the village that Goonewardene is referring in the title of *Call of the Kirala* as Vijaya hears this birdcall in the village. Here, “call” is not merely the audible sound of the bird, but a metaphorical summoning that seems to entice Vijaya to move from the city to the village in search of a more peaceful work atmosphere.²⁴² He leaves the city as he is discontented with the oppressive work atmosphere of the film studio (which is discussed in detail in Section III of this chapter).

“Kirala” is the Sinhala term for lapwing. It is a resident of dry zone lowlands and inhabits coastal mudflats, lagoons, marshes and inland tanks. The close association this bird has with water and water-related habitats perhaps implies the deep connection village agricultural work has with irrigation and water management. As W.I. Siriweera points out, the “small village tanks laid the foundation for an agrarian society based on a ‘one tank-one village’ ecological pattern”²⁴³ in the Sri Lankan context. The kirala bird also evokes the calm and quiet village work atmosphere where birdcalls can be heard unlike in the noisy city.²⁴⁴ In the city, on the other hand, the call of the kirala would be suppressed and never heard as a result of the noisy city work atmosphere and also during the hours when people rush to and from work.²⁴⁵

However, according to Sinhala Buddhist belief, the Kirala bird is associated with misconception. It is believed that this bird “lies on his back with his feet up, in the wrong belief that if the sky were to fall he would be safe in that position.”²⁴⁶ In the English language, the phrase “To act the lapwing” means “to mislead someone deliberately [...] and

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., 46.

²⁴³ Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka*, 168.

²⁴⁴ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 41.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁴⁶ Dharmasena, *Jewels of the Doctrine: Stories of the Saddharma Ratnavaliya*, trans. Ranjini Obeyesekere (State University of New York Press, 1991), 4.

comes from the bird's habit of luring dangerous intruders away."²⁴⁷ Therefore, Sinhala and English interpretations of the nature of this bird are different. Which of these interpretations is important to Goonewardene? Does he attempt to resolve this tension between the two cultures through his representation? Can the calling of a bird that also has such negative connotations of folly and deception be trusted? Is Goonewardene suggesting that the belief that one can find spiritual harmony in the village context, away from the city, is also full of complexities? The dystopic nature of village work is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

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In *Call of the Kirala*, Vijaya, disillusioned with the hectic life of the city, moves to a remote village in Matara that is untouched by western influences, located to the South of the capital Colombo. The main occupation of the villagers in this coastal village is fishing and this is established in a flashback scene at the beginning of the novel.²⁴⁸ In comparison to the fisherman who fishes in the river, the fishermen who go out to sea have more work cut out for them. So much so that Goonewardene compares them to the Spanish fleets returning from war.²⁴⁹ Vijaya's act of fishing is in complete contrast to that of these fishermen. The fishermen go to sea on a daily basis as it is their profession and their way of earning a living. Fishing in the sea is also a dangerous occupation; for most it is nothing less than dystopic. For Vijaya, on the other hand, who, like the author himself, is more a tourist on vacation, fishing is not work but merely an occasional pastime.²⁵⁰ Here, too, as in *A Quiet Place*,

²⁴⁷ "To act the lapwing" in *Oxford Index*, accessed May 08, 2015, <http://oxfordindex.oup.com/search?q=to+act+the+lapwing>

²⁴⁸ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 3.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

reading is presented by Goonewardene as an idyllic occupation of city dwellers that is in contrast with the physical work of the villagers.²⁵¹

For Vijaya, utopia is associated with the past and his childhood. He is nostalgic for the carefree life he had lived during the time he spent in the village as a young boy. “He was thinking back to a time which could never be brought back again”²⁵² and,

Vijaya remembered the time the parrots built their nest on the tree and he would sit in the verandah and watch them feed their young, but the magic of it all was gone. Growing up into manhood did strange things to a man.²⁵³

This is a return to the innocence of childhood. In the pastoral past, Vijaya had lived a life of leisure, watching birds, going fishing and reading. It is when he becomes an adult that it becomes necessary to enter the world of work. In Wickramasinghe’s *Gamperaliya*, Tissa rebels against entering the world of adults by prolonging his childhood days of play and adventure with his friends in the village. However, with the death of his father, Tissa is thrust into the world of adults as he must shoulder responsibility of his mother and two sisters as the “man of the house.” This stepping into adulthood is indicated by his entering the world of work in the city of Colombo. The nostalgia for the unrecoverable childhood can also be seen in Martin Wickramasinghe’s *Madol Doova* (1947).

Romantic poets like Blake and Wordsworth saw the nostalgia for childhood as an aspect of the pastoral. Marinelli, speaking of the pastoral, states that “the emphasis on childhood is essentially a Romantic innovation based on the notion that the clear natural vision of the child is somehow superior to that of the man.”²⁵⁴ In *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Blake associates innocence with childhood and experience with adulthood. In

²⁵¹ Ibid., 7.

²⁵² Ibid., 1.

²⁵³ Ibid., 5.

²⁵⁴ Marinelli, *Pastoral*, 77.

Blake's poetry, there is an idyllic sense of life as dreamy in the relaxed life of children. He criticises the practice of child labour in nineteenth century Britain through poems such as "The Chimney Sweeper" where the innocence of childhood is lost as a result of being prematurely pushed into the adult world of work. The protagonist of Goonewardene's *Call of the Kirala* is nostalgic of this freedom of childhood and attempts to recapture it by moving to the pastoral village which he sees as carefree compared to the city.

Becoming disillusioned with city life and considering moving to the village, Vijaya in *Call of the Kirala* proposes to Premadasa: "How would you like to grow vegetables in a place like this?"²⁵⁵ This is a repetition of the move that Abhaya makes in *A Quiet Place*. Like Abhaya, Vijaya, too, is naive and idealistic in making this decision. He is an outsider to the rural context and is ignorant of the practical matters that need to be arranged before one can "grow vegetables in the village." It is Premadasa, the man from the village, who points out to Vijaya that in order to cultivate, one needs money to buy land and manure. Goonewardene recognises that the villagers have more practical knowledge when it comes to village work, such as agriculture.

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According to the author of the utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, William Morris (1834-1896), "it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful and happy labour is and must be *pleasure* in the work itself."²⁵⁶ As a recipient of an Anglophone education under British colonisation in the early twentieth century, Goonewardene may have been influenced by the works of such writers. In *Call of the Kirala*, he portrays a return to the pastoral and how village work, unlike work in the city, gives pleasure and satisfaction. Like

²⁵⁵ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 38.

²⁵⁶ William Morris, "Looking Backward," in *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A. L. Morton (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973), 152; emphasis mine.

Abhaya in *A Quiet Place*, Vijaya is initially not that concerned about working in the village. His idea of utopia is to enjoy the peace and quiet of village life, devoid of work and the desire to acquire possessions. According to him, “a wanderer had no need of possessions.”²⁵⁷ However, Vijaya is gradually transformed into “a man of the earth”²⁵⁸ like Abhaya and works alongside Premadasa, pulling up the weeds on their property. Goonewardene’s use of language persuades his readers of the pleasure Vijaya gets by working on the fields: “he tasted a joy and a peace he had never known in his life [...] the life on his property was wonderful [...] He had the smell of the sun in his nostrils and the feel of the grass on his body, and the noise of the winds and the trees in his ears.”²⁵⁹ This description is full of gustatory, olfactory, tactile, auditory and visual images that are used as persuasive measures by the author. Some of the expressions used, such as “tasted a joy and a peace” and “smell of the sun,” have a powerful effect of defamiliarisation. Here, Goonewardene looks behind the template of reality and tries to interpret it in new ways as a serious literary artist. This depiction makes the readers feel as if they are sharing this exhilarating experience with the protagonist. Getting satisfaction out of physical effort by working in the fields is an image that is idealised universally. A similar depiction can be found, for instance, in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*. Here, the character of Konstantin Levin, like Abhaya, is an outsider to the village context. He is an aristocratic landowner who is not accustomed to village work, but like Goonewardene’s protagonist, he, too, gets pleasure out of working shoulder to shoulder with the peasants in the fields: “In spite of the large drops of sweat that rolled down his face [...] he felt very happy.”²⁶⁰ The exhilaration felt by Levin’s involvement in this rigorous activity is captured in the author’s and translator’s use of auditory and visual images: “He heard nothing save the swish of the knives [...] the crescent curve of the cut grass, the grass and

²⁵⁷ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 89.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 88.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), 271.

flower-heads slowly and rhythmically falling about the blade of his scythe.”²⁶¹ The description seems more similar to that of a dance than the cutting of grass. In such depictions, the outsider is given the opportunity to feel a sense of belonging with the alien culture with which they engage, albeit temporarily.

According to Goonewardene, a worker’s life in the village is different from that of the city. In the village you measured “the day by sunrise and nightfall, not by a work schedule which some machine fashioned company director had planned.”²⁶² In Goonewardene’s opinion, the work life of the village seems to be more connected with nature, governed by the natural occurrence of sunrise and sunset. For the author, the work life of the city is more mechanical and unnatural, as we will see in Section III of this chapter. Therefore Goonewardene is drawn to village work as opposed to city work when it comes to achieving utopia. However, according to Goonewardene, village work is not always idyllic. There is a dystopic side to the work environment of the village and this will be discussed in the next section.

II –Village Work and Dystopia

If many still represent Sri Lanka as a ‘paradise island’, it is based on nostalgia for an imagined pre-colonial, pre-capitalist Sri Lanka of small-owners and producers living harmoniously with nature and each other. Such views, of course, are far from the reality of underdevelopment, authoritarian rule, caste consciousness, patriarchy and women’s subordination that prevail.

Kumari Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka*

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 89.

In the above quotation, “small-owners and producers” refers to the pre-colonial, pre-capitalist, feudal agricultural mode of food production that was carried out in Sri Lankan villages on a small scale. Here, Jayawardena points out in relation to Sri Lanka that work life in the village is not as desirable as it is generally depicted in fictional representations of the island.

Even though James Goonewardene, too, has been criticised for presenting work in the village as a way into utopia, there are hidden dystopic tendencies to the life of work that he investigates. In relation to *A Quiet Place* and *Call of the Kirala*, Nihal Fernando points out that “the village is seen to have its own shortcomings – jealousy, superstition, and intrigue, among others.”²⁶³ In *A Quiet Place*, the reader is warned of this negative side of village life from the very beginning: “Perhaps you will not have peace here. [...] In this village there are bad ones. Where people live together you will find both good people and bad people.”²⁶⁴ Therefore, Goonewardene is aware of the complexities of village life. The author seems to change his idyllic view of the rural context after his encounters with the village, and this learning experience is shown through his protagonist, Abhaya. Gradually, the utopia he hoped to find in the village turns to dystopia. It is a clear case of expectation versus reality.

He had come into the village in order to simplify his life, to reduce it to a round of ordinary happenings and basic needs [...] He had believed he could come into the village, find a patch of land to cultivate, a hut to live in and a woman to cohabit with.²⁶⁵

Goonewardene’s perception of the peaceful village takes a dystopic twist: “The strange, mysterious quiet began to come upon the village as the night deepened. The jungle

²⁶³ Nihal Fernando, “Goonewardene, James (1921-),” in *Encyclopedia of post-colonial literature in English*, ed. Eugene Benson & L.W. Conolly (London: Routledge, 2004), 596.

²⁶⁴ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 4.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 36.

gradually transformed itself into an indistinguishable black, silent mass.”²⁶⁶ The jungle here is represented through the grammar as an animal or an agent that is sinisterly alive, a threatening predator.

In this section, my focus is on how village life turns into dystopia as a result of work. As in the city, the villagers, too, get involved in professions that are not socially acceptable. They are not exempt from taking part in work that disrupts the social network of the village. In *A Quiet Place*, Abhaya’s utopia is turned into dystopia mainly by Piyadasa, “a migrant from the city, like himself, but his manners and techniques were those of the toughs in the dock [...] from Pettah or Kochchikade [...] hiding behind the veneer was a nasty streak, like the toughs in the city.”²⁶⁷ By this description Goonewardene seems to suggest that evil has come to the village from outside, from the city, and not from within the village itself. The village katadiya and his assistants are paid by Piyadasa to conjure up evil spirits such as “the *Hooniyam Yakka*, the *Sanni Yakka*, [and] the *Gara Yakka*”²⁶⁸ in order to bring harm upon Abhaya. Even the village headman was “in the pay of or received various considerations”²⁶⁹ from Piyadasa, so that the latter could carry out his illicit work without hindrance. A shortcoming of Goonewardene’s representation of these villagers is that he depicts them as black and white characters with no nuance in their personalities. Piyadasa, his henchmen, the headman and the kattadiya are portrayed as negative figures throughout the novel. In contrast, Abhaya and his followers are shown to be the positive characters that bring peace and harmony to the village. This characterization also displays Goonewardene’s view that city dwellers are more sophisticated than villagers. In Wickramasinghe’s trilogy, on the other hand, the characters are represented with more depth, with grey area in their personalities.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 39.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 77.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 47.

There are no “good” or “bad” characters, but rounded personalities with positive traits as well as flaws.

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Even though Goonewardene is an outsider to the village context, he realistically captures in his novels many of the troubles actually faced by Sri Lankan villagers. In *A Quiet Place*, the first sign of cracks in the utopic village appears in the form of elephant attacks on the village crops. The villagers’ hard work is in vain in this instance: “Several times, within the last week, the herd had come across the river, in the night, and destroyed their vegetables, and not three days back they had even wrecked a chena mud-hut. The villagers had borne their losses patiently.”²⁷⁰ The patient attitude of the villagers is a result of the Sinhala Buddhist approach towards life that guides its followers to accept karma and the cycle of life. This depiction shows the author’s insight into the mindset of Sinhala Buddhist villagers.

As Goonewardene shows his readers, the villagers depend substantially on physical labour to help them with their economic problems and thereby gain happiness. However it is clear that things are not always paradisiacal in the village atmosphere and much of the unhappiness of the villagers occurs due to work not going as planned. In addition to elephant attacks, the author notes that the villagers’ hard work and labour go unpaid as a result of bad weather as well. This can be seen in *A Quiet Place* where the villagers are troubled with a drought. Sederis Appuhamy voices out his troubles in this manner to the village priest: “It is a worry. I have half an acre of rice land myself. The crop is already ruined. It is six months since it rained. We can save something of the vegetables if the rains come.”²⁷¹ Here, too, Goonewardene captures the villagers’ attitude towards life where they are not disheartened at the face of adversity but accept it as their fate and carry on with their lives.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 107.

As was pointed out in relation to *A Quiet Place*, work life in the village as depicted by Goonewardene is by no means carefree and simple. However, men of the city, like Abhaya and Vijaya, expect it to be effortless and it is the villagers who make them realise that it is in fact quite the opposite. In *Call of the Kirala*, it is the woman Menike who explains the harsh side of village work life to Vijaya, the outsider.

There is a hardness and cruelty in this wilderness which you [Vijaya] will not understand unless you yourself have lived here [...] You have not the capacity and the knowledge how to live here. There is a mode of living here which others know not, least of all one like you.²⁷²

What Goonewardene thus hopes to achieve in his fiction is to avoid presenting the village as a mere paradise, but to capture a realistic view of the rural setting. As was shown in this section, the author attempts to achieve this by presenting the negative side of village life.

III – The City as a Worker’s Dystopia

Having studied the hidden dystopic tendencies of village life in the previous section, I will now move on to an analysis of the negative work conditions of the city that are criticised by Goonewardene. As will be analysed in this section, Goonewardene sees the city as dystopic in relation to work.

In *A Quiet Place*, when Abhaya is asked as to why he came to live in the village, his response is “It is because I have not found peace and satisfaction in my life in the city.”²⁷³ He had lost interest in the work he had carried out “in the newspaper office, in the tutoring lectures.”²⁷⁴ Goonewardene draws a parallel between Abhaya’s city life and the life of the

²⁷² Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 42.

²⁷³ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 4.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

wild elephants.²⁷⁵ The elephants, trapped in the small jungle near the village, are symbolic of Abhaya's entrapment in the city. Abhaya's escape into the village is symbolised through the release of the elephants to a freer environment. Goonewardene's attitude towards work in the city is expressed when he states that Abhaya "had come to the village to run away from the rat race of the city."²⁷⁶ However, Goonewardene notes that the city, too, has its own forms of distractions and leisure activities that permit its dwellers to enjoy the time away from work, and Abhaya gradually starts to miss all this.²⁷⁷ The author's subjective position as a city-dweller makes it difficult for him to be completely cut off from the city and to adopt the village as his own. It seems that no matter how hard he tries, he cannot dismiss the fact that he is alienated from the rural setting.

In *Call of the Kirala*, the main dystopic work relationship in the city is between Vijaya and Sunil, who had once been friends, but are now merely "partners in business."²⁷⁸ Through this relationship, Goonewardene criticises the city work ethic which he sees to be impersonal and devoid of respect and dignity, unlike the village work system. The dystopic nature of their work relationship is summarised in the expression: "the great mistake."²⁷⁹ This description is in complete contrast with the work relationship that Goonewardene analyses between the village priest and the labourers in *A Quiet Place*.

Goonewardene is critical of Sunil who is a workaholic and whose family life suffers as a result of his over-working. His depiction is similar to Wickramasinghe's of Piyal and Kabalana in the *Koggala Trilogy*. Goonewardene also criticises the exploitation of workers in the city work system through the character of Sunil. In the case of the oil mill "he had pushed the other share holders into selling their shares to him. It was child's play to him. He was the

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 42.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 43.

²⁷⁸ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 6.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 47.

master of manoeuvre, subterfuge and bluff.”²⁸⁰ Goonewardene also contrasts Sunil with Vijaya, his spokesperson in *Call of the Kirala*. Sunil is the proud owner of a “gleaming, red Opel Reckord” while Vijaya only has a “battered Hillman.”²⁸¹ Sunil’s work ethic is contrasted with that of Vijaya. “Sunil had mastered the art of subjugating people who worked for him.”²⁸² For Vijaya, “aesthetic and moral principles” and the quality of the work they produce are more important: “Of course Vijaya prefers the cultural things, art and that sort of things.”²⁸³ For Vijaya, the “business venture”²⁸⁴ proposed by Sunil is plain robbery. Sunil’s pure concern for making money leads Vijaya to compare his work to “making padded brassiers [sic] and men’s suspenders.”²⁸⁵ Through his protagonist Vijaya, Goonewardene expresses his displeasure with the city work ethic.

The author also criticises the work system of the city through his descriptions of the city and its work places. According to him, “illness is often the result of the tensions of modern town living.”²⁸⁶ “It was hell to be back [...] back into the tangle of city life [...] in the crowded cities, insect, beast and man preying one on the other.”²⁸⁷ Here, by listing man alongside insect and beast, the author seems to suggest that in the city, humans, too, have turned into animals.

In *Call of the Kirala*, Goonewardene portrays Vijaya as discontented with the disorganised work atmosphere of the studio: “In the office everything was in confusion – papers strewn about the place, letters unopened.”²⁸⁸ The work process is presented as mechanical and uninteresting: “He returned to his desk, opened a pile of letters, made pencil

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 77.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 47.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid., 73/58.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 72.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 37.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 45.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 91.

notes on some and tossed them into a tray. Next he rang the bell for the clerk and dictated several letters. At the end of it he suddenly felt tired.”²⁸⁹ Goonewardene’s representation of Vijaya *tossing* the letters into a tray shows that Vijaya did not attach much importance to them. The unpleasantness of the studio is further highlighted with olfactory images that capture the stifling and suffocating nature of Vijaya’s place of employment: “It was as if the atmosphere was suddenly contaminated with the foul, acrid air of a public convenience. There it was now, suddenly – the smell of drying urine, blowing into his nostrils with all its horrible pungency.”²⁹⁰ The author’s skilful use of imagery is further demonstrated when he compares the studio to a “prostitute” and describes it as “the Frankenstein he had helped to bring into being.”²⁹¹ Goonewardene’s condemnation of work in the city is clearly captured in Vijaya’s conversation with Bala, the studio manager.²⁹² Bala’s response to Vijaya’s long indictment of work at the studio is “But its [sic] my job.”²⁹³ For him, work is a routine of his life that he performs to earn his livelihood. He does not seem to get any pleasure out of this work that he performs. Goonewardene is critical of this robotic attitude towards work and life.

For Vijaya, Goonewardene’s spokesperson in *Call of the Kirala*, the city gradually starts to represent a form of bondage while the village is representative of freedom: “There was unfortunately the film studio standing between him and freedom.”²⁹⁴ Vijaya is contrasted with Sunil, who, on the other hand “decided to turn the studio into another instrument for the furthering of his enormous ambition.”²⁹⁵ For Vijaya, this project appeared to be a “disastrous

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 50.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 51.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 54/92.

²⁹² Ibid., 79.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 70.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

object.”²⁹⁶ The negativity associated with city work is further highlighted in the description of Sunil’s export offices. It is not a very pleasant work environment that Goonewardene describes here:

He [Vijaya] drove through the wooden gateway, past the copra drying in the mill yard and then past the aluminium building inside which there was the jangle of machinery, towards the concrete, square-shaped building in which Sunil’s export offices were housed. The air was thick with the smell of desiccated coconut.²⁹⁷

The phrase “jangle of machinery” indicates the noisy confusion of these offices. The noun *jangle* can be defined as a discordant sound, clang, altercation or bickering. Goonewardene uses this word to capture all these meanings, not just to indicate “noise.” The visual image of the drying copra and the olfactory image of the smell of desiccated coconut evoke an unpleasant work environment. The adjectives used, such as *wooden*, *aluminium*, *concrete* and *square-shaped*, makes the offices seem impersonal and devoid of human existence. In Marx’s critique of the political economy of capitalism, the expression “alienated labour”²⁹⁸ is used to describe the estrangement of the workers from the objects they produce. According to him, as a result of the capitalist mode of mass production, there is no personal relationship between the labourers and the products. We see this alienation depicted in Goonewardene’s *Call of the Kirala*. The workers in the export offices are represented like robots. They are “seated railway compartment fashion”²⁹⁹ which indicates the lack of sufficient work space in these offices. They were “bent over their tables”³⁰⁰ working like machines in a factory. “Sunil had modelled himself on a machine. You fed the raw material into one end and at the other turned up a lavatory bowl or an artificial limb.”³⁰¹ The

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 70-71.

²⁹⁸ Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” in *The Marx Reader*, ed. Christopher Pierson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 60-71.

²⁹⁹ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 71.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 71-72.

expressions “lavatory bowl” and “artificial limb” indicate that Sunil had no interest in the end result. All in all, this is a poor work environment and does not deserve the grand title of “empire.”³⁰²

In addition to the negative description of the export offices that was discussed above, Goonewardene gives his readers a glimpse of the dark work atmosphere in a film studio³⁰³ in *Call of the Kirala*. “Prospectors round a gem pit” indicates that the only thing they are after is money. “Maggots on a dung heap” suggests that the work produced by them is worthless debris. According to Goonewardene, the film isn’t a work of art anymore: “It was just a business venture, like making detergents or toilet paper or lavatory seats.”³⁰⁴

Many city professionals are indicated in *Call of the Kirala*, and for Goonewardene, they are all “tortured, pleasure hungry, sex hungry, money hungry people of the city.”³⁰⁵ As discussed in this thesis, the main reason for this is that the city was seen as an immoral place according to the Sri Lankan nationalist agenda at the time which idealised the village.

Other professionals we come across in the city include the doctor and nurses who treat Vijaya’s friend Manel at the hospital: “The doctor shook his head and looked at the nurse and he left, his shoulders rounded with the burden of his responsibility. The nurses stood around the bed for a moment longer. Then they went too, abandoning the dying woman.”³⁰⁶ The word “abandoning” indicates Goonewardene’s condemnation of the medical workers and it is further confirmed when he refers to them as “robots with stethoscopes.”³⁰⁷ The work ethic of the medical professionals described here is in contrast to that of the idealistic and moralistic

³⁰² Ibid., 71.

³⁰³ Ibid., 50.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 79.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 60.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 98.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 100.

Dr. Kirthi that Goonewardene examines in *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*. This novella will be discussed later on in this section.

As Goonewardene points out, Sunday is a “blessed day – blessed not only to the Christians but to the Buddhists as well, because it was the day they were liberated each week from their labour.”³⁰⁸ The author further describes “a bus load of picknickers [who] went by pulsing with the belly-joy of people liberated from their daily work life. It was Sunday and Vijaya had nothing to do. What did one do on a Sunday?”³⁰⁹ The choice of the word “liberated” is significant here as it suggests that these individuals are imprisoned in their work places. Interestingly, Goonewardene associates the pastimes and so-called attractions of the city³¹⁰ with words such as “lug” and “haul” that evoke strenuous physical work. The author’s final judgement of the city can be seen in the following lines: “In the city one could survive only by deadening one’s senses to the sight and sound of a bored humanity wallowing in its own excrement and having no will or desire to lift itself out of it.”³¹¹ Goonewardene is critical of this affliction brought about by the city work environment and proposes a cure to it by turning to the village.

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In “James Goonewardene and the English language novel,” Ajith Samaranayake points out:

Goonewardene’s fiction swings like a pendulum between the sweet memories of a pastoral past and the harsh actualities of the present [...] the writer cannot afford the self-indulgence of wallowing in pastoral luxuriance. The Big City tugs at him and he must needs return to the megalopolis even to mock its meretricious manners.”³¹²

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 65.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 61.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid., 65.

³¹² Samaranayake, “James Goonewardene and the English language novel.”

“The sweet memories of a pastoral past” to which Samaranayake refers can be found in novels such as *A Quiet Place* (1968) and *Call of the Kirala* (1971) as was discussed in section I of this chapter in relation to the village. In these two novels, Goonewardene depicts his protagonists as fleeing the negative work environment of the city with the hope of engaging in more pleasurable work in the rural setting. *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, which was published a few years later, in 1976, captures “the harsh actualities of the present”. In this novella, Goonewardene does not make his protagonist indulge in “pastoral luxuriance” of village work but makes him remain in the Big City and challenge the dystopic nature of city work.

In *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, according to Ryhana Raheem, “the writer never once drops the professional title ‘Doctor’ of his main character.”³¹³ This claim is an exaggeration as Goonewardene refers to the protagonist simply as “Kirthi” on several occasions. However, on the whole, the writer uses the abbreviated title “Dr” when speaking of him. Goonewardene immediately indicates to the reader that this novella is directly related to the work environment by using the professional designation “Doctor” in the title to the novella. The title could have read “The Awakening of Kirthi” or “The Awakening of Dr Kirthi,” but the author insists on using the full professional title in it. Spelling the title in full, rather than abbreviating it to “Dr” or leaving it out altogether, invests it with a certain irony, over-emphasising the character’s educational and professional qualifications at the expense of a more basic shrewdness about human behaviour. Even though Dr. Kirthi is skilled and well-educated in the field of medicine, he is naive and unaware of the exploitation that takes place in the very hospital in which he works.

Dr Kirthi was so well disposed towards the world around him that he still believed in the natural goodness of man. Basically, he thought, there was nothing really wrong

³¹³ Ryhana Raheem, review of *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, by James Goonewardene, *Navasilu* 3 (December 1979), 119.

with people. This, he believed, was also true about the people nearest him, his own people.³¹⁴

In this description, Goonewardene distances himself from Dr. Kirthi by using the expressions “he thought” and “he believed”. The writer’s tone stresses that he does not share this naive idealism of his protagonist. In Sinhala, the word *Kirthi* can be translated as “reputation, glory.”³¹⁵ When Dr. Kirthi is finally made aware of the reality of the hospital practices and attempts to make positive changes, he is scorned by his immoral co-workers. Therefore, he does not receive glory or reputation as his name suggests. According to Yasmine Gooneratne, in *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, “a skilled, idealistic young surgeon becomes gradually convinced that the practice of his profession in Sri Lanka’s conditions of ‘mismanagement, hypocrisy, humbug...(and) nepotism’ in hospitals and outside them is tantamount to murder.”³¹⁶

At the beginning of *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, the title character is happy and content with his work and his work environment.

He had been so confident, so much in love with his work at the time that he would have, if it had been necessary, worked with a hacksaw and a carpenter’s bench. All he needed, in fact, were a pair of sterilized gloves, a few surgical instruments, a good anaesthetist and a couple of nurses, and here, in this hospital, he had a lot more than that. He had, by average standards a well-equipped hospital – heart-lung machines, gastroscopes, kidney machines, first-rate laboratory equipment and what have you. He had always dreamt of the things a man could do with the kind of collaboration there could exist between X-ray men, technicians, dieticians, physiotherapists and other auxiliary services – things that made a surgeon’s task appear quite simple and easy.³¹⁷

Through this description, Goonewardene makes his readers aware of the idealistic nature of Dr. Kirthi’s character. His work ethic is based on providing a service as he believes

³¹⁴ Goonewardene, *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, 1.

³¹⁵ *Sinhala-English Dictionary*, ed. Somapala Jayawardhana, s. v. “kirthiya”.

³¹⁶ Yasmine Gooneratne, review of *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, by James Goonewardene, *New Ceylon Writing* 4 (1979): 111.

³¹⁷ Goonewardene, *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, 2.

that his work is needed in his country. This also highlights his patriotic nature. In contrast to him, Goonewardene exposes other workers in his field who do not have this work ethic based on idealism and patriotism. It is his friend Kumar who initially helps him notice the irresponsible nature of other hospital employees and makes Dr. Kirthi awaken from his idealism and realise his dystopic work environment. Goonewardene seems to side with Kumar who is represented as more practical and as having insight into human nature.

‘Which includes the widely practiced art of cutting the other man’s throat,’ Kumar once added. He had been irritated; he [Dr Kirthi] will discover the truth for himself one day, he thought – better one showing than a thousand words was the old Chinese saying.³¹⁸

Dr. Kirthi is gradually disillusioned with the work environment at the hospital and is disappointed with the work ethic of other hospital employees. As Nihal Fernando states, the protagonist of *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi* is an honest and dedicated surgeon who fails to succeed in the Sri Lankan society where cunning and ruthlessness, and not righteousness and discipline, are necessary to survive.³¹⁹ The only option available to him is to leave the country for good. According to Ajith Samaranayake:

The exploration of the moral conscience of the eponymous Dr. Keerthi [sic] in this book which came out in the mid-1970s accorded well with those times when the experiments with socialism undertaken by the United Front Government of the time raised many troubling questions for urban professionals.³²⁰

Dr. Kirthi practises the same profession as Punchi Gura in Goonewardene’s *A Quiet Place* and Aravinda in Wickramasinghe’s *Yuganthaya*. However, Dr. Kirthi does not receive the same respect and admiration that Punchi Gura and Aravinda get from the villagers. Dr.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

³¹⁹ Fernando, “Goonewardene, James (1921-),” 602.

³²⁰ Samaranayake, “James Goonewardene and the English language novel.”

Kirithi's authority in the hospital is undermined by a hospital worker.³²¹ The employee in question fights for his rights and is backed up by a trade union. It is as a result of this conflict that Dr. Kirithi becomes disillusioned with work in the city, resigns from the hospital and eventually leaves the country in search of a more desirable work environment. In *The Awakening of Doctor Kirithi*, Goonewardene depicts Dr. Kirithi as a representative of the generation of academic migrants who left Sri Lanka as a result of being disillusioned with the immoral and lethargic work ethic they encountered in the Sri Lankan city context (see p.23-24).

As pointed out in the introduction, the sudden shift from the English language to the Sinhala language had many negative outcomes. In this novella, Goonewardene is critical of how this change discriminated against the lower classes that were cut off from an English education, but were expected to know English to gain entry into professions such as medicine:

‘Are you dumb or can’t you understand what I am saying’ he [Dr Kirithi] would shout at them. Only later would he realise that the students [,] handicapped by a language difficulty, were not responding as quickly as they did in his time as a student. This was a new generation of youth being forced into moulds of the making of the crudest forms of nationalism.³²²

The word “awakening” in the title of *The Awakening of Doctor Kirithi* is significant. Dr. Kirithi's awakening is from his pessimistic work life in the city. He migrates to a foreign land in search of a better work atmosphere unable to come to terms with the degrading work practices of the Sri Lankan city environment. This awakening can also be applied to Goonewardene as a writer, who moves closer to realistically depicting the Sri Lankan context through this novella. Rajiva Wijesinha, quoting D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, notes that this story

³²¹ Goonewardene, *The Awakening of Doctor Kirithi*, 23.

³²² Ibid., 8.

defends Sri Lankan writers in English against the criticism that “there is no sustained exploration of the world these writers know best – the world of the English-educated, English-speaking class from the inside.”³²³

Having looked at how the male protagonists of *A Quiet Place*, *Call of the Kirala* and *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi* search for happiness in the village and the city, I will next analyse the place of women in work-related utopia as represented by James Goonewardene.

IV – The Place of Women in Work-related Utopia

In this section, I will be focusing on the place given to women in relation to work and utopia in the Sri Lankan context as depicted in the selected fiction of James Goonewardene. As W. I. Siriweera points out, with reference to the Sri Lankan context, “the basic working unit in agricultural production was the family residing together in one house. Typically, this unit consisted of husband and wife and unmarried children.”³²⁴ In *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene depicts this working unit through Nandini’s family, while presenting Nandini in the role of dutiful daughter and perfect future wife who unquestioningly completes all the household work and chores. According to Nandini’s father, Sederis Appuhamy, “Her mother has taught her to cook well. She knows also her other household duties.”³²⁵ Bempi Singho confirms these facts to Abhaya, stressing on the girl’s ability and willingness to *work*: “Nandini has many good qualities. She is a sober girl who does not neglect her duties by her parents, nor is she ignorant of what is required of a woman in the household.”³²⁶ Unlike in the city, part of the traditional role of the village woman is to support her husband by working

³²³ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, introduction to *Modern Sri Lankan Stories* (New Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1986), quoted in Rajiva Wijesinha, “Sri Lankan Fiction in English,” 29.

³²⁴ Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka*, 188.

³²⁵ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 59.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

alongside him on the paddy and *chena* fields, complementing each other on the tasks that they perform. As Kithsiri Karunanayake points out,

In pre-colonial Sri Lanka, there was a clear division of labour in productive work. Sowing, ploughing and threshing were male tasks, and weeding and transplanting were women's work. Harvesting was a family activity.³²⁷

This pre-colonial division of labour continues to be used in the agricultural mode of production in the villages of Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that a villager finds a woman who is willing to share the work responsibilities with him. Goonewardene represents Nandini as the perfect wife and later on mother, according to village culture.

According to Edward Said, the Oriental woman “never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* [the Occidental] spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination.”³²⁸ Goonewardene, too, objectifies Nandini in a similar manner. The author, through Abhaya, gazes at Nandini through the eyes of an outsider, even that of a tourist.

*Abhaya's eyes first went to her legs and then up over the rest of the body [...] Abhaya watched them move down to the edge of what was now the river [...] Abhaya watched the girl move down slowly.*³²⁹

*He watched the swirl of water where she had gone in [...] Abhaya looking at the smooth flow of neck and arms and shoulder [...] He scrutinised her face for the first time. [...] He looked at her steadily for some moments.*³³⁰

Goonewardene's insistent use of verbs such as *look*, *watch* and *scrutinise* highlights the voyeuristic nature of the scene and makes the reader an accomplice in the act of gazing. Graham Huggan, quoting Deborah Root, suggests that “exoticism is self-empowering; self-

³²⁷ Karunanayake, "Unskilled Women Labourers," 125.

³²⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 6; italics in original.

³²⁹ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 2; emphasis throughout mine.

³³⁰ Ibid., 5; emphasis throughout mine.

referential even, insofar as the objects of its gaze are not supposed to look back.”³³¹ In contrast to Abhaya, Nandini’s actions are represented as passive and powerless in the encounter between the two characters. While Abhaya observes her intently, Nandini is described as merely “glancing self-consciously at him and turning away from him.”³³² Unlike Abhaya, she is not given the power to gaze.

As John Urry observes, “the gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs.”³³³ When Abhaya looks at Nandini, her image signifies ‘typical rural Sri Lankan beauty.’ To the city-bred Abhaya, what is most appealing about Nandini is her physical appearance. Goonewardene orientalises Nandini as a beautiful, exotic woman of the village to be gazed at and possessed by Abhaya. “The girl was well proportioned, with long, bare shapely legs. [...] Abhaya’s eyes first went to her legs and then up over the rest of the body, admiring without lust the balance, symmetry and suppleness of it.”³³⁴ There is also a sense of superiority expressed when Goonewardene states that “Nandini was unschooled and untrained in romantic love.”³³⁵ When Abhaya sees Nandini for the first time, “he was convinced now that he wanted this girl, wanted her to be his woman.”³³⁶ Abhaya’s initial description of Nandini is that “Sediris Appuhamy has an attractive daughter.”³³⁷ His response to the fact that Nandini is a woman who knows household work is “Yes, I believe these also are true of her.”³³⁸ This matter-of-fact response shows that to him, it is not of primary importance whether she knows how to carry out household chores or not. His interest is in her physical appearance.

³³¹ Deborah Root, quoted in Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 14.

³³² Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 2.

³³³ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 3.

³³⁴ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 2.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

As a novelist, Goonewardene merely describes Nandini, but doesn't give her any agency. While Abhaya makes assumptions and decisions about her, Nandini remains passive and mysterious. We see this in the scenes where Abhaya and Bempi Singho discuss her as a prospective wife and also when Abhaya makes the marriage proposal to Nandini's father, Sedaris Appuhamy. Nandini has no voice in this marriage proposal. It is the father, the prospective husband and other males who decide her future.

Not many moments later Nandini herself appeared, dressed in a pale pink sari and carrying a tray of local sweet meats. She smiled with him and turned away with embarrassment. Abhaya noticed that she had done an inexpert job of draping the sari. Yet he felt the impact of her wonderful youth and beauty. She stood before him, holding the tray of refreshment to him trembling with excitement. She made up for what she lacked in her knowledge of sophisticated sari styles with the glow of her face like that of an excited actress standing in the blaze of the footlights.³³⁹

*

Similar to the men in the village, the women, too, are portrayed by Goonewardene as deeply committed to completing their duties and work, and as having less time for other activities. According to Sedaris Appuhamy, in *A Quiet Place* Nandini has learned the work expected of a village woman from her mother, Sophia Hamy, the only other female figure that Goonewardene analyses with detail in the village context of this novel. Predictably, she, too, gives prominence to work. When Abhaya states that it is too late to bathe in the river, her response is: "Yes, for us too it is too late, but when there is work to be done one cannot leave it to come."³⁴⁰ Therefore, for her, the household work and duties are more important than going to the river on time and "she wouldn't be hurried"³⁴¹ as she would have wanted to complete the work properly. Here, Goonewardene portrays a woman who is so obsessed with household chores that she does not even have the time for a bath. Goonewardene contrasts the laid back attitude of the city-bred Abhaya with the industrious villagers in this instance.

³³⁹ Ibid., 60.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 63.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

Therefore, Goonewardene's description reveals that villagers, too, can be driven and that the village is not as idyllic as he envisioned it to be.

As Sirima Kiribamune points out, women face many work-related problems in the village:

For the poorer segments of society access to water, electricity and gas can make all the difference to their ability to cope. In village settings and even certain semi-urban areas [,] fetching water and fuel-wood is a major burden which women have to grapple with.³⁴²

Even though he is an outsider to the village context, Goonewardene notices the intricacies of village work practices and the hardship faced by women. For the women in *A Quiet Place*, a trip to the river or the well is not merely a chance to have a bath and relax after a hard day's work in the household. It is a place that triggers more work opportunities as they wash their laundry at these places while bathing. In one scene, "Nandini stood rinsing out a garment"³⁴³ at the well while her future husband "perched himself on the wall."³⁴⁴ This sight further illustrates that doing the laundry is women's work and Goonewardene establishes typical gender roles related to work in this scene. Goonewardene also portrays this aspect of women at work in a scene where Sophia Hamy "was scrubbing her linen on a rock and talking to the brick-maker's wife."³⁴⁵ Here, through the expression "brick-maker's wife," Goonewardene captures the patriarchal nature of the village. Men engage in what are considered important trades by the villagers while the women assist them and take care of the household work which is given less value. Therefore, the "the brick-maker" is given more importance in the village by identifying him by his trade. The woman, on the other hand, is identified through the husband as her identity is linked to his. Here, the woman has no identity of her own, but is only someone's wife. By stating that Sophia Hamy was talking to

³⁴² Sirima Kiribamune, introduction to *Reconciliation of Roles: Women, Work and Family in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1992), xxiii.

³⁴³ Goonewardene, *A Quiet Place*, 89.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 65.

the brick-maker's wife while washing the clothes, Goonewardene captures an element of women's work in the village. Typically it is women who do the laundry, and since there is no indoor plumbing in the village, the women must go either to the river or to the well to do the laundry and to fetch water for other household needs. Therefore the village well and river are commonly identified as places associated with women. In Sinhala the expression *linda langa sangamaya* is a humorous and somewhat derogatory reference to women and its direct English translation reads "community by the well". It can be read as a sexist expression as it implies that women gather at the well (or river) merely to chat and gossip about happenings in the village. What must be highlighted is that for village women, the river and the well are places where work and leisure come hand in hand, making their work more satisfying. Work becomes a social activity in the village, unlike in the city where it is seen as drudgery. Here, Goonewardene skilfully portrays this aspect of the work carried out by women in the village.

*

To conclude, in *A Quiet Place* and *Call of the Kirala* Goonewardene attempts to discover happiness through work in the village, but it is far from what he experiences. His protagonists attempt to escape the life of work by leaving the city, but they cannot completely liberate themselves from work in the village either. Work is seen by Goonewardene as an inevitable part of survival, whether we take pleasure in it or not. For Abhaya and Vijaya, the move from the city to the village only means a change of the *type* of work they engage in, not an absolute elimination of work. In addition to the need to work, the village also has its own work-related problems. I have dealt with these in section II and IV of this chapter.

A question that seems to be posed at the end of both *A Quiet Place* and *Call of the Kirala* is whether the village is a permanent escape for these recluses from the city. In *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene depicts the village merely as a temporary salvation for Abhaya:

“He had pulled up his roots in the city and come here not because he wanted to lay down fresh roots elsewhere. Perhaps, some day he might want to go from the village.”³⁴⁶ Abhaya eventually realises that “Life was never simple anywhere.”³⁴⁷ At the end of the novel, it is ambiguous as to whether Abhaya and Nandini will stay on in the village or move to the city:

“Do you still want to go, Nandini, from your village?” asked Abhaya.

“Do you?”

“Let us think of it when there is time. Now there is this rain and it is a good rain.”³⁴⁸

At the end of *Call of the Kirala*, Vijaya has no choice but to leave the village as he is taken into custody for burning down the studio. However, Goonewardene’s words at the end of the novel hint that Vijaya will be returning to the village at some point: “All one can do is to find a quiet little niche somewhere. Its [sic] what everyone gets in the end, a niche.”³⁴⁹ This peaceful space seems to be Goonewardene’s vision of contentment. The question as to whether the realities of their city life will eventually make Abhaya and Vijaya return to their former work life of the city is left unanswered.

In *Call of the Kirala* and *A Quiet Place*, Goonewardene makes a genuine attempt to capture the rural Sinhala Buddhist background in his writing and to shed the title of “outsider.” However, he fails for the most part as a result of his subject position as an English-educated, westernised, urban writer. Most of the time, the concept of the tourist gaze can be applied to his descriptions of the village and its inhabitants.

Goonewardene’s depiction of the city, in contrast to that of the village, is more nuanced as he is representing his own socio-economic milieu. The protagonist of *The*

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 29.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 131.

³⁴⁹ Goonewardene, *Call of the Kirala*, 141.

Awakening of Doctor Kirthi, similar to Abhaya and Vijaya in the two novels, is disillusioned with city work. However, Goonewardene does not allow him to leave behind his worldly possessions in the city and naively escape to a pastoral environment. By this point, Goonewardene's protagonists are more mature and are not of the immature belief that they can find happiness merely by moving to the village and engaging in rural work.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the representation of the achievement of utopia through work in the colonial and postcolonial contexts of Sri Lanka. Particular attention was paid to location by contrasting the search for utopia through work in the village and the city. For this purpose I analysed selected fiction of Martin Wickramasinghe and James Goonewardene in relation to theories of utopia, Arcadia, the pastoral and postcolonial theories of representation such as Orientalism and the tourist gaze. I also focused on the place of women in work-related utopia.

In the opening chapter, I presented definitions and a socio, political and historical background to the development of concepts of utopia and work, both in the western context and more particularly in the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist context. It was shown that the Sri Lankan concept of utopia has specific cultural and religious connotations that are different to the western idea, while the concept of work underwent great changes due to British colonisation in Sri Lanka. Work, which was an integral part of the feudal *rajakariya* system of ancient pre-colonial Sri Lanka, took on a different form as a result of the influence of western concepts such as capitalism, modernisation and individualism.

In the second chapter, Martin Wickramasinghe's *Koggala Trilogy* was analysed in relation to my thesis. I explored how the achievement of utopia through work in the city was represented in his Sinhala fiction. More significantly, the socio-political and economic changes of pre-colonial and colonial Sri Lanka and how they had an impact on the novels of this author were analysed. Particular attention was paid to class and gender aspects and how they have an impact on each individual's experience of achieving utopia through work. The novels were analysed against the contexts of the rise of the bourgeois capitalist class and the feminist movement in colonial Sri Lanka. Such socio political and economic reforms

awarded greater freedom to subaltern groups of society such as women and individuals of lower class backgrounds. These groups who were subjugated under the pre-colonial social hierarchical and patriarchal systems of Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka were able to liberate themselves and thereby achieve utopia, mainly through work. This autonomy was possible as a result of the relatively less class and gender restrictions applied in the city with the new work ethic of post-independence and post-colonial Sri Lanka. It was also analysed that Wickramasinghe does not fail to depict the dystopic nature of city work in his trilogy. According to him, the money-centred work ethic found in the city leads to exploitation of workers, overwork and breakup of personal relationships. Wickramasinghe, himself a man of the village and therefore an insider of the rural milieu, sympathises with village values and traditions. While demonstrating the opportunities for economic prosperity and social prestige available in the city as a result of the new work ethic, Wickramasinghe highlights the cultural and traditional value of the feudal work ethic of the village. Each individual was sustained in this previous order because they were all part of one system that they worked together to maintain. The thesis discussed that Wickramasinghe's fiction analyses the positives and negatives of both the feudal *rajakariya* work ethic and the westernised capitalist work ethic as means of achieving happiness.

In the third chapter, selected fiction of Sri Lankan English writer James Goonewardene was studied in contrast to that of Martin Wickramasinghe. While Wickramasinghe sought utopia through work in the *city* where more avenues for employment were available, Goonewardene's quest for fulfilment led him back to the village. Therefore, in this chapter, the focus was on how the search for happiness through work in the *village* is represented in Goonewardene's writing. It was shown how the move from the city to the village as a means of achieving satisfaction through work had a direct connection to the nationalist agenda of the time. Goonewardene has been criticised excessively for orientalisering

the rural backdrop of Sri Lanka through his novels by representing the village as a mere paradise. The theory of the tourist gaze was applied to his representation of the rural milieu. However, I have pointed out in my analysis that Goonewardene does not uniquely focus on the idyllic nature of the village, but also explores the dystopic tendencies of rural Sri Lanka, particularly in the context of work. The thesis examined how in contrast to the village, the city is represented as a complete dystopia in relation to work in the early fiction of Goonewardene. However, as was pointed out through the writer's own non-fictional work, Goonewardene gradually comes to terms with representing the city more realistically. In his later fiction, as I have analysed through his novella *The Awakening of Doctor Kirthi*, Goonewardene refrains from idealising the village in contrast to the city and focuses more deeply on the causes and consequences of the harmful nature of city work.

A common factor that was discussed in relation to the representation of utopia and work in both authors was the impermanence of happiness. These novelists' depiction of achieving success through work in the Sri Lankan context is cyclical and never-ending, similar to the cycle of Samsara described in Buddhism. What we find in the novels of Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene is a never-ending cycle of dystopia-utopia-dystopia in relation to work. For both writers, fulfilment achieved through work is impermanent. For Wickramasinghe, the material happiness that it achieved through work in the city is not satisfying. What he seeks is fulfilment through equality based on Socialism, at the same time holding on to the values of the village. Goonewardene, who seeks contentment through village work, too, discovers the impermanence of utopia. His protagonists return to the city, disillusioned with the village. The main reason for this is Goonewardene's strong attachment to the city and its ways. It is perhaps for this reason why the novelist bases his later novels in the city context.

A final question that can be posed in relation to the representation of utopia and work in the village and city contexts in the fiction of Martin Wickramasinghe and James Goonewardene is whether these writers are looking for the kind of Third Space that Homi Bhabha expounded. Are these writers perpetually stuck in the binaries of village and city or are they hoping to find a peaceful space between the village and the city where there is a balance between the kinds of work ethics they propound? I propose it is the latter and that these writers are searching for this utopic space through their writing. As writers with direct colonial and post-colonial experiences, Wickramasinghe and Goonewardene were caught in the state of transition that the nation was experiencing. It is the changes in the social, economic and political background of the Sri Lankan work ethic that led these writers to search for a third space or utopia of work through their writing.

In the writing of this thesis several avenues for further research have opened up. Areas of study for a doctoral thesis could include more of Wickramasinghe's and Goonewardene's fiction. Also, while the prescribed length of the Master's thesis forced me to focus on two writers, further research could focus on a wider range of writers.

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