

Cricket Encounter between Jaffna Hindu College and Ananda College

The inaugural cricket match between Jaffna Hindu College and Ananda College, Colombo will be played on Friday 7 and Saturday 8 September at the Ananda playground.

Can the history of an event be written before the event has started? In this instance it can and should be.

For the past two years Old Boys of Ananda College have been engaged in writing the history of the school as one of the key activities to commemorate the 125 years that it completed in November 2011. The Editorial Board chaired by the incumbent President of the Ananda College Old Boys' Association, Thilak Karunaratne, unable to curb the enthusiasm to dig deeper and deeper into the rich heritage of the school or contain the excitement of unravelling its unique history are still engaged in writing that story, seven months after the celebration of the 125th year. We were all inspired by the multi-cultural and multi-religious ethos of Ananda and the composition of students and staff of the school in its first 70 years or so; until Swabasha replaced English as the medium of instruction.

It was at one of the Editorial Board meetings that Sanjiva Senanayake, a past cricket captain of Ananda, proposed that a cricket encounter between a College in Jaffna and Ananda College be started and to make it an event beyond a mere contest in sports, with the venue alternating between Jaffna and Colombo. Everyone in the Editorial Board saw the value of the project as a catalyst to promote the bonds that so steadfastly existed between the Tamil and Sinhala speaking communities of the country from the beginning and undoubtedly helped Ananda to become a premier national institution.

Ananda College was established in 1886 as the Buddhist English High School under the guidance of the great American Theosophist and servant of Buddhism, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott. The aim was to redress the injustices inflicted on Buddhists due to the foreign occupation of the country for nearly 400 years, by affording them the opportunity to obtain a good modern education in English in a Buddhist environment. The school soon became a place of learning for all Ceylonese including Hindus, Muslims and even some Christians who were marginalised and unable to find a place in the missionary schools or the state owned Royal College. Ananda became the centre of national revival and pride and attracted benefactors, teachers and students from different communities.

Why was Jaffna Hindu College singled out, one may ask. The answer is Sivagurunathan.

One of the early stalwarts at Ananda was Mr. V T S Sivagurunathan, a product of Jaffna Hindu College, who was a teacher and head master at Ananda for 25 years from 1916 to 1941. He was an important contributor to the phenomenal growth that took place at Ananda during that period. So important that he was invited to be Chief Guest at Ananda's prize-giving in 1958 - the only teacher, who was not a Principal as well, to be so honoured.

There were at the time many other Tamil as well as Burgher and Muslim teachers, such as Prof. C Sunthalingam, Mr. Sivagurunathan, Mr. Strange and Mr. T B Jayah who later revolutionized Zahira College with some initial help from Ananda. They have been honoured by Ananda in many ways, are held in the highest esteem and treated with deep affection by Anandians. The great contribution Sivagurunathan had made to the school for 25 years under Principal Kularatne surfaced as the Editorial Board surveyed the prize day reports and articles written by students past and present, teachers and Principals of Ananda. It was therefore decided that the proposed cricket match should be played with JHC for the Sivagurunathan Trophy, named after this remarkable educationist and humanist who made such an impression on the many hundred students that he taught.

Both Ananda College and Jaffna Hindu College were formed around 125 years ago to uplift the children of Ceylonese parents who could not provide a modern education in English to their sons, either due to social circumstances or financial limitations. It was clear to the founders of the two schools that if the deprived Ceylonese were to rise up to hold positions of responsibility in the Colonial Government, the academia, the professions or the mercantile sector, they should be afforded the opportunity to study and excel in English. The articles on the history of the two schools in this souvenir provide the background in which the two institutions had to survive and work towards the common purpose of the founders.

Immediately after the Ananda College OBA unanimously approved the idea, its President got in touch with the President of the JHC OBA Colombo Branch, S. Raghavan and appointed a committee comprising Old Anandians' Sports Club President, Lal Hewagama; President of the Cricket Wing, Saliya Senanayake; Deputy President of the ACOBA, Deva Rodrigo; Vice Presidents Pani Ranwela and Chaminda Egodawatte; Joint Secretaries Amitha Munasinghe and Samitha Seneviratne; Sanjiva Senanayake and Prashanthlal De Alwis to organize the event. Soon S. Raghavan and M. N. Asokan of JHC, Jaliya Ekanayake of the OASC, Achala Lamasuriya and the Treasurer of the ACOBA, Ruwin De Alwis joined the Organizing Committee.

A team headed by Chaminda Egodawatte and Achala Lamasooriya took charge of publishing a souvenir to which this account of the historic event is being written. The souvenir will be a valuable memento of the inaugural cricket match between Jaffna Hindu College and Ananda College Colombo.

The Principal of Ananda, Mr. L M D Dharmasena, has urged the pupils to take part in the Opening Ceremony of the Inaugural Encounter at 12.00 noon on Friday 7th September. He has also agreed to address the gathering in Tamil and the Principal of Jaffna Hindu College will make his speech in Sinhala.

Each cricketer will be presented with a replica of the Sivagurunathan Trophy to keep as a token of appreciation by the ACOBA and to remember the historical event. On the day after the match, Sunday 9th September the members of the two teams will be entertained

at Leisure World in Kosgama to enable the young cricketers to get to know each other better.

Not satisfied with merely playing a cricket match, it was decided by this enthusiastic band of Old Boys to organize a dinner on Friday 7 September, 2012 at the Upper Crystal Ballroom, The Taj Samudra Hotel, to celebrate the inaugural encounter.

Supreme Court Justice K. Sripavan, an alumnus of Jaffna Hindu College, will be the Chief Guest at the dinner. Priyalal Kurukulasuriya, a distinguished alumnus of Ananda, former Legal Officer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and former Head of Legal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to Sweeden will speak on behalf of Ananda.

The Principal of Jaffna Hindu College Mr V. Ganesharajah and the Principal of Ananda College Mr. L. M. D. Dharmasena, Masters in Charge of Cricket, Coaches and cricketers from the two schools will be special invitees. We expect past national cricket captains Arjuna Ranatunga and Marvan Atapattu, leading batsman and cricket personality Sidath Wettimuny, Brendon Kuruppu, Nalandian Mahela Jayawardena, the present captain of the Sri Lanka team and the Nalanda College Principal to grace the occasion.

The annual cricket encounter, along with associated events will, we are sure, contribute to building and strengthening the bonds of friendship between Sri Lankans in the North and the South of the country enabling all to reap the harvest of harmony.

Deva Rodrigo

Convenor of the Match Organizing Committee

24 July, 2012