

THE POLITICAL NOVEL IN SINHALESE

I will examine in this paper the Sinhalese novel written since about 1950 with special reference to political themes. It is rarely that political issues are treated as main themes in Sinhalese fiction in the early decades of the present century. Some writers of fiction who belong to that time such as Piyadasa Sirisena, W.A. Silva and Martin Wickramasinghe, were well aware of the contemporary political scene. However, they were more concerned about developing their plots so as to depict the religious and cultural degeneration with a view to prescribe precautionary and preventive measures. We find even in some of the Sinhalese works of fiction in the early period sporadic allusions to political affairs together with frequent comments and discussions on religious and cultural matters.

This situation with regard to themes in the Sinhalese novel takes a new turn toward the middle of the century. Some of the major Sinhalese novelists gaining popularity since the '50s focussed their attention more on the politics in the country, and furthermore, writers like Gunadasa Amarasekera and K. Jayatilleke have built up some of their plots entirely on political themes. At that time in Sri Lanka politics had permeated almost every aspect of society, religion, culture, education, employment, etc. Hence whatever the theme that an author selected for his work, he had inevitably to concentrate on political connections and implications as well. In the 1960s, in most Sinhalese novels, we find politics assuming a more important and vital role either as the main theme or as a sub-theme. In some of the novels published during 1960-1980, we come across general political issues that affect the whole country, politics in university campuses, elections, trade union activities, the rise and fall of some political leaders, the leftist political movement, the emergence and establishment of some political parties such as the S.L.F.P., the emergence of the J.V.P. since 1971, and the insurgency organized by this revolutionary group. It was at this time that a literary movement based on socialist criticism was launched in this country as a result of which young poets and writers produced a number of literary and dramatic works following the prescriptions of socialist critics and social realism as against the capitalist literary criticism and traditions that were in vogue in the '50s and '60s. Some leading novelists such as K. Jayatilaka, Ediriweera Sarachchandra, H.A. Seneviratne, Gunasena Vitana and Simon Navagattagama have created novels with political themes presented against the background of the J.V.P. insurrection.

Piyadasa Sirisena (1875-1946) more than any of his contemporaries has been conscious of the current political situation, especially of British colonial administration in the island. He was critical of its disastrous impact on Buddhism and Sinhalese culture. He must have made a deliberate attempt to criticise and attack British rule as he was an active member in the national movement for independence. Together with other national leaders and reformists such as Valisinghe Harischandra and Anagarika Dharmapala, he worked for the revival of Buddhism and Sinhalese culture. Most of the destructive and unhealthy customs and habits to which the Sinhalese people were addicted, according to Sirisena, were introduced by Europeans. In all of his works of fiction Sirisena repeatedly expressed similar ideas and instructed his readers to revive and protect the great and sublime customs and habits of the ancient Sinhalese and to prevent Buddhism from being wiped out of their land by Christians.

Martin Wickramasinghe did not aim any obvious and straightforward attack at the British rulers except in a few of his stories written as an inexperienced amateur. In *Miringuva* (Mirage) (1929) he satirises the vanity and dissoluteness of the life of some Sinhalese who were blindly imitating western manners and customs. In his trilogy of novels, *Gamperaliya* (1942), *Kaliyugaya*, (1957) and *Yugāntaya* (1949), Wickramasinghe deals with the theme of cultural conflict, especially the emergence of a new social class, the disappearance of the old feudal system, and the establishment of the new urban middle class as well as the emergence of a new leftist political movement in Sri Lanka. At the end of *Yugāntaya*, the author shows how politics began to play an important role in our society. Malin, a young intellectual with a British degree returns home and revolts against his rich father, gets involved in left-wing politics, and wins a seat in a parliamentary election as a representative of the workers. Wickramasinghe had observed carefully the political situation in the country in 1940s when Marxist parties established themselves and almost at the same time formed trade unions. Some of the leading leftists who were born into upper middle class families posed a real threat to the new-rich business class as well to the government.

The political history of Sri Lanka has shown that Martin Wickramasinghe's prediction of the collapse of the capitalist class and the victory of the proletariat as suggested at the end of *Yugāntaya* has not come true. In 1956, when the coalition under the leadership of Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike came into power with a landslide victory defeating the U.N.P. government of Sir John Kotalawala, most people thought that Sri Lanka was going to have a socialist government marking a definite end of the capitalist system. But it was soon proved to be only a dream. Mr. Bandaranaike was assassinated by some of his associates. A political turmoil followed the death of Mr. Bandaranaike. It became clear that the capitalist class and their agents were still alive and strong. These factors as well as the activities of some leftist parties, particularly the L.S.S.P., has been discussed by K. Jayatilaka in his novels, *Parājitayo* (1960) (The Defeated) and *Delovata Nāti Aya* (1964) (Stranded Between Two Worlds). In *Parājitayo*, the hero Udeni was first attracted to left-wing politics as a young law-student. His best friend Asoka too is active in the party organization. In the portrayal of these characters the author exposes some weak points in socialist parties. Among the leaders themselves a proper understanding did not exist. They are shown as trying to undercut their own comrades to secure nomination. When Udeni realizes the hypocrisy of his comrades, he decided to give up 'active politics' and concentrate on his career as a lawyer. As lawyers have played an important and an active role right throughout the history of politics in Sri Lanka, the novelist is using Udeni here to show the questionable role of certain lawyers in Marxist parties. Like many other intelligent people this author too is doubtful as to the genuineness of the motives of lawyers like Udeni who participated in politics declaring themselves to be saviours of the poor and the downtrodden. Another popular novelist, Sugatapala de Silva too has depicted similar characters.

In *Delovata Nāti Aya* (Stranded Between Two worlds) we find the story of a political leader who reminds us of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the founder of the S.L.F.P. who led the leftist coalition to victory over U.N.P. in 1956. In the novel this leader is portrayed as an ambitious politician, well-educated, with an aristocratic upbringing, kind, fond of socialism and resorting to any means to achieve his political objectives. Under his charismatic leadership the coalition wins at the election. Suriyabandara, the new leader, forms a coalition government but faces problems right from the beginning as he has the impossible task of pleasing a number of parties. One of his powerful supporters is a Buddhist monk named Dhammadinna who tries to amend Suriyabandara's principles in accordance with his personal whims and fancies. He strongly objects to some of the socialist and progressive policies of the new leader. When Suriyabandara is not willing to change his decision on a very important policy of the new government Dhammadinna himself shoots Suriyabandara while the latter is leading a procession. Here the author's intention is to show us how religion was used for political purposes. Suriyabandara builds up a force consisting of five components: i.e., *Sanga, Veda, Guru, Govi* and *Kamkaru*. (Buddhist monks, Ayurvedic doctors, Teachers, Farmers and Workers) Among these five sections, the first place is given to the Sanga (The Buddhist monks) who contribute a great deal for the rise and fall of Suriyabandara. K. Jayatilaka shows not only religion but also the caste system as important factors in the politics of Sri Lanka.

K. Jayatilake has written another novel named *Matu Sambandhayi* (1975) (To be continued) with a political theme, i.e., the political atmosphere in Sri Lanka just before and after the 1971 insurrection. Here again we see a coalition government with leftist inclinations ruling the country. Two cabinet ministers, Rajanayaka and Wickramanayaka, vie for the premiership. The general political climate in the country as well as conflicts within the cabinet have been used in developing the story. It is not only the prime minister, but two of his powerful ministers viz., Rajanayake and Wickramanayaka, too are concerned about securing posts for their relatives rather than working for the benefit of the masses. These politicians conspire against one another, listen to gossip and try to win the favors of the prime minister. The story develops against the background of a revolution. Upul is the young hero who is minister Wickramanayaka's son. He is disgusted with his father's politics and retires into a remote village to work there as a teacher. There he is approached by a revolutionary who succeeds in indoctrinating Upul. The insurrection fails and the government wins. The forces react by killing and arresting large numbers of young activists. A curfew is imposed. Minister Wickramanayaka hears of the arrest of his son Upul and goes alone to Polonnaruwa at once defying the dangers of travelling at such a time. He gets his son released and brings him back to Colombo.

In *Matu Sambandhayi* K. Jayatilaka expresses his own views on the emergence of a revolutionary movement like the J.V.P.. Upul, in whom his father had high hopes as his successor, turns revolutionary against the very system that his father was trying to safeguard. Upul becoming a regional leader in the revolution may seem unacceptable as it was the children of the masses who were leaders and ardent supporters of the movement. However, we can assume that this is what the author endorsed, viz; young intellectuals from the capitalist classes joining hands with the youths of peasants to bring in a new era spearheaded by a socialist system of government.

Rajapaksa Walawwa (1980) is another interesting novel by K. Jayatilaka, in which he deals with the theme of democratic system of government in Sri Lanka. The author looks into the present electoral system in which one of the two major political parties is elected to rule the country. Both these major political parties are led by a Walawwa representing that of Senanayakes' and Bandaranaiques'. Since independence in 1948, it was a member of one of these Walawwas that became the prime minister until J.R. Jayawardane came into power in 1977.

At the beginning of the story we find the protagonist, Kamalasiri, a young civil servant, remembering his past. He thinks of the difficulties he had undergone as a young scholar due to discrimination against caste and financial problems, etc. Those of high castes were opposed to the children of low caste families attending the same school with their children. They would even go as far as killing secretly a low caste child if he happened to be exceptionally good in his studies. Kamalasiri and his relatives had suffered much at the hands of the inmates of Rajapaksa Walawwa. Mahendra, the present incumbent of the Walawwa, has been recently defeated at the election by his rival Jayawickrama. Mahendra as a progressive politician had been trying to compensate for the crimes of his father by befriending Kamalasiri. One day Mahendra calls Kamalasiri into the Walawwa, treats him as an equal, and makes him rest in his father's chamber. Kamalasiri and his relatives were not allowed even to step into the Walawwa when the old gentleman was alive. The present member of parliament for that electorate, Jayawickrama was also trying to win Kamalasiri over to his side. To climb up the social and political ladder politicians and civil servants needed mutual support. Some of the dirty tricks found in the present political and administrative systems are exposed in *Rajapaksa Walawwa*.

The two Walawwas in this novel are the family houses of Rajapaksas and Jayawickramas. Rajapaksa had built a new road, when he was in parliament, through his family property for the development of that backward village. This was only one of the numerous services rendered by him to his electorate. He is nevertheless defeated at the next election. Later he confesses to Kamalasiri that despite the fact of his birth in a Walawwa, he genuinely intended to work for the benefit of the masses. He further says that even his forefathers had helped the poor in their own way, although they did not talk about their services from political platforms. In this novel the progressive aristocrat Mahendra bears some resemblance to Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike who sacrificed part of his ancestral property to build up his party with the intention of creating a new era in the country for the redemption of the masses. Mahendra Rajapaksa too has similar ideas but those who benefitted from his sacrifice now support his opponent Jayawickrama. Jayawickrama and some other members in his family as politicians had opposed all the progressive policies. Kamalasiri thinks that a person of low-caste like himself could receive higher education to become a high ranking civil servant because of the reforms and welfare measures introduced by Mahendra Rajapaksa.

In this novel as in his previous ones, Jayatilaka criticises the leftist parties in Sri Lanka although he agrees in principle with the socialist system propagated by these parties. It is revealed in some conversations in which Kamalasiri takes part that none of the leftist parties was in a position to pose a real threat to the capitalist government. Although he is not an active politician Jayatilaka has observed closely the current events and trends in Sri Lankan politics and has made use of that knowledge in writing his political novels.

Ediriweera Sarachchandra is another major novelist who has made use of the contemporary political situation in some of his novels. He uses the indefinite curfew declared by the government during the 1971 insurgency to examine the mental condition of a university teacher in his novel '*Heta Echchura Kaluwaru Ne*' (1971) (This novel was later translated into English by the author as "Curfew and a Full Moon") Unlike in the earlier novels by Sarachchandra the political theme is quite prominent in this work. This novel was published at a time when the J.V.P. insurgency and its effects were still fresh in the minds of the people. Peradeniya campus which was known as one of the centres of revolutionary activities has been selected as the background. Some readers expected this novel to be a full account of the insurgency. However, upon reading it such readers were disappointed. The protagonist, Prof. Amaradasa is a sympathetic teacher who is always ready to help his students. He does not believe that there was any truth in the rumours that the students were getting organized for an armed revolution. When a bomb explodes at one of the halls of residence Prof. Amaradasa does not think that the bomb must have been brought in by the students; he believes that this is the work of outsiders.

Prof. Amaradasa knows that some of his students have extreme and false political ideas. Their political advisers had taught them to consider all teachers as belonging to the bourgeois class. In his reminiscences he recalls how difficult it was for him to reach his present status. He tries at times to argue with his colleagues as well as with students about political issues and the responsibilities of university teachers. Among his colleagues there are some who preached socialism, but prefer to live bourgeois lives. At the faculty club Amaradasa learns that some of these 'socialist' dons would not even sign for over time payments of the club attendants. Hence, he thinks that there is some truth in the allegations made by students. Injustice in the social and economic systems existed, Prof. Amaradasa realized, but could that be remedied by means of a bloody revolution? Will the hatred toward people like university teachers serve any purpose? During students' clashes with the police on the campus they used to insult the police shouting that they were uneducated fools who had studied only upto grade 8 in school. Is not this an indication of the class consciousness of the undergraduates?, Prof. Amaradasa argued.

One day at Polonnaruwa, where the professor had gone on an educational trip with a group of undergraduates, troubles break out with insurgent attacks on police stations. Some students in his group too had joined the insurgents. With the others Prof. Amaradasa was trapped in the guest house where they spend a sleepless night. In the morning they were questioned and harassed by the army. After a long ordeal, with the help of the Government Agent of Polonnaruwa, they obtain a permit to leave that town and return to Peradeniya.

Prof. Amaradasa's entries in his diary show how deeply he is affected by the prolonged curfew and news of killings and bodies dumped in the vicinity. Although he is by nature sympathetic towards students, he criticises their involvement in the insurrection. He expresses his views on the measures adopted by the administration to crush the uprising. In such a violent and uncertain time the professor finds it difficult to live peacefully concentrating on his academic work. He is further disturbed by news brought by Heennilame, who is one of his faithful associates. The insurgents have burnt his father's shop in the village and assaulted both his father and younger brother threatening to kill them. The next day the police had gone to their village and taken away his brother. Now Heennilame pleads with the professor for help to get his brother released.

Somarathne, another undergraduate writes to the professor from jail. In his letter he explains how he was dragged into the movement. Some young men had joined out of curiosity to learn about the new movement. They first attend the political classes. Although they did not like to take part in the attacks on police stations, they were not allowed to keep away. Those who tried to run away were suspected both by the movement and the police. Somarathne says that he too had been trapped like that. When he wished to leave the movement and escape it was too late. After reading his letter the professor becomes deeply moved but hesitates to visit his student in prison.

As the story progresses we see the rising fear in the mind of Prof. Amaradasa. At this time a number of people were being taken into custody for questioning. Official residences of certain university academics too were being searched. Rumours reached Prof. Amaradasa that he too is being watched as a suspect because he was known as a friend of undergraduates directly or indirectly involved in the insurrection. The police was in possession of a list of contributors to funds supporting the illegal movement. Students had asked him to make donations for various purposes on a number of occasions, and now he fears that his name might be on that list. However respected he might be, they would come for him one day. As the days dragged on, with the extended curfew the professor suffers the hidden fears and apprehensions in his mind. And he does not have to wait for long. The Vice-Chancellor calls him one day and in a diplomatic tone, tells him to report to the police station. The superintendent of police had made the request through the Vice-Chancellor to avoid embarrassment. The professor complies with the request and is taken to Colombo for further questioning. While leaving his house to go to Colombo with the police officers he asks his wife to inform their family lawyer.

In *Heta Echchara Kaluvara Ne*, the author's objective has not been to present a deep analysis of the J.V.P. and its political ideology, but to look into the mental crisis of the elderly professor. This character is portrayed against a background of a dreadful political chaos from the point of view of an independent observer. At a time like that any person, regardless of his social status or age could be taken in as a suspect and no one could be trusted. This is revealed by the author through his characters. Rumours and gossip spread faster than correct news at such times,

causing a great deal of damage to innocent and honest citizens. It is not only the political issues that Sarachchandra discusses in this novel but also the teacher-student relationship in the university as well as other aspects of campus-life. For the political-minded readers Sarachchandra's ideas on the insurrection and students' involvement may not be acceptable, as the author has looked at them as an academic but not as an expert in politics. The bitter and repulsive experience of the insurgency is presented in this novel in an emotional style interspersed with poetic descriptions.

Incidental allusions to political themes are to be seen in some of Gunadasa Amarasekera's novels such as *Kurumakkārayo* (1955) (The Miserable) *Gandabba Apadānaya* (1964) (The Story of a Gandhabba), '*Asatya Kathāvak*' (1977) (A false story) and '*Premaye Satya Kathāva*' (1978) (The True story of Love). In *Kurumakkārayo* there are some incidents connected with politics at the village level in the '40s. Local government elections and the inevitable clashes among rival parties including post-election violence, have been used to build up this story. Similar incidents from the local political situation prior to independence are presented once again by this author in such later novels of his as *Gamanaka Mula and Gamdori Eliyata* ('Beginning of a Journey, 'Beyond the Portal of the Village').

The novel of Amarasekera most relevant to our discussion is *Premaye Satya Kathāva* (A True story of Love) which is the sequel to *Asiya Kathāvak* (A false Story). Both these novels are set in the Peradeniya university campus and their plots are centred on the political activities of the undergraduates. *Asatya Kathāvak* is a short novel based on the death of an undergraduate during a clash with the police. This incident reminds us of the famous Weerasuriya case which occurred in 1979 on Peradeniya Campus. But Amarasekera does not place the death of Nimal in his story in the same circumstances. In this novel, Nimal dies mysteriously on a day when students were engaged in a violent conflict with the police, but unlike Weerasuriya Nimal is not shot dead. However, the government and the police officers conspire to hide the truth about his death. Nimal's elder brother Somaweera is an ordinary police constable who is first brought in for this purpose with a promise for promotion. Somaweera had been dreaming of such a promotion for a long time but as he did not have any political support he was unable to obtain it. Somaweera is brought to Kandy from Colombo that night. He attends the post mortem of his brother and later helps in arranging the funeral according to the instructions of his superiors. Somaweera is thus shown to be acting inhumanly, disregarding his duty towards his brother out of ambition for promotion. But the author shows later on in the story the humane side in his life. The despicable scheming of the authorities to save face is presented with a proper understanding of the state mechanism.

In *Premaye Satya Kathāva*, some hidden aspects in Nimal's life are exposed. How he died has been reported in a number of ways. The report of shooting by the police has been forgotten. According to another he was thrown out of a window. The female protagonist in this novel is Indira, who is the daughter of a university teacher. She has been conducting classes to teach socialism on the campus as well as in neighbouring villages. Nimal had been earnestly participating in her classes.

Another important figure in this novel is Upali, a young civil servant and a friend of Indira and her father. It is revealed at one stage that Upali had been thinking of marrying Indira. Now he acts as the agent of the administration conducting investigations into Nimal's death. He has got hold of Nimal's diaries which he takes to Indira's house and persuades her to read. First she did not even want to touch them, but reads them later and learns that Nimal had been deeply in love with her. Upali was trying to prove Nimal committed suicide because of his unsuccessful love for Indira.

In *Asatya Kathāvak* the author expresses some views on the 1971 insurgency. He seems to be thinking that a tragic event like that takes place as a result of the planting of hatred by force in the minds of the younger generation. These young converts repeat like parrots what they learn from their leaders. At the trial in connection with Nimal's death one of his comrades whose nick name is 'Ravula' speaks emotionally while giving evidence. He talks in such a hot temper that the Vice-Chancellor's lawyer intervenes to stop him, but the judge allows him to continue. The novelist seems to be thinking that radicals like Ravula must be listened to impartially as they have been 'misled' by their political 'Gurus'. This is how Ravula speaks at the trial: "Comrade Nimal sacrificed his life for the benefit of thousands of suffering masses in this country. We are not surprised at the death of comrade Nimal at the hands of those thugs who are only the watch dogs of the ruling class; such things are bound to happen in this battle".

Ravula's ideas are similar to those expressed by the revolutionaries during the insurrections. With reference to the insurgency led by the J.V.P. and grievances of the students the writer focusses attention on some chronic ailments affecting this society. He has made use of Somaweera's character to show how some politicians interfere even in matters such as promotions and transfers of government employees. The member of Parliament in Somaweera's area does not recommend promotion for any officer if he had been appointed by the former M.P.

For a deep analysis of the socialist party system in these novels the author has made use of his observations and experiences both as a university student as well as a teacher. Nimal represents the rural radical youth while Indira represents the young socialist born into wealthy and privileged classes. It was the members of the latter classes who founded the Marxist parties in the island. These two groups have been planning a socialist revolution in vain. Amarasekera must have used Nimal and Indira as symbols of the revolutionary youth from the peasantry and from the urban bourgeoisie respectively. They could not continue their relationship to a successful union. This is exactly what happened to the attempts at bringing the rural and urban forces together for a political revolution in the country. Nimal was first attracted to left-wing politics as to a fashion but subsequently he began to follow ardently the political classes conducted by Indira. He falls in love with Indira before long, but she does not respond.

Indira's father is a professor of medicine, a teacher, and a strong advocate of Marxism who had married a European woman. It was from him that Indira had first learnt Marxism. Quite ironically he had lately given up his belief in Marxism, instead devoting his time to studying Abhidhamma. Indira thinks hard to find out the reason for nearly half of the young men to drop out of her political classes. Then she discovers that they liked to live in a romantic world. Teaching Marxism to such persons may be easier through literature. She observes further that young men from the village like Nimal nurture petit-bourgeois aspirations. Nimal in the meantime begins to think more of Indira's family background and other particulars about her personal life rather than about what he was learning in her classes. He expects that if he marries her it would be possible for him to share her social status as well as her property. Concealing such secret aspirations he behaves as a true revolutionary. His true nature could only be learnt by reading his diaries. Indira believes that Nimal is genuine and that he had been killed. She wants to prove that Nimal had not committed suicide as the government was trying to prove. The reader of this novel might wonder whether the author is trying to make a generalisation through Nimal's character about all the radical young men with a proletarian origin. What is his opinion of Indira? Why did she want to teach Marxism to undergraduates? Questions like these remain unanswered in the novel. There was a time when young intellectuals from privileged classes turned Marxists and joined Socialist parties, actively participating in politics as Martin Wickramasinghe and K. Jayatilake have shown in some of their novels. But it seems impossible to accept the reality of a character like Indira because such students, specially girls, were not to be seen among undergraduates in recent times. Except for the weakness in the portrayal of Indira's character and some repetitions of ideas, *Premaye Satya Kathava* can be taken as an interesting novel with a political theme.

Ballō Bat Kati (1976) (Dogs Eat Rice) is a novel by Sugatapala de Silva with a political aim as well as a political theme. In this novel the author develops a plot to depict how the capitalist class continues to exploit the masses and abuse power. Among the significant characters in *Ballō Bat Kati*, Kavudangolla is the prime minister and Pusati Menike, his mistress who had been for some time the sweetheart of Ratnasekera, the ardent Marxist are noteworthy. Kavudangolla is a crafty politician who abuses his power and resorts to any mean device to gain his aims by ruining his enemies. Through this character the novelist exposes the selfish and fraudulent behaviour of many politicians in Sri Lanka. Soon after coming into power they forget their election promises and the people who voted for them. Then they begin to work to please the rich and the privileged. Businessmen become their advisers. The author shows how a by-election was held in a certain electorate. Kavudangolla is the contestant of the government. All his ministers and powerful M.P.s work for him in the election campaign. His rival is not even allowed to hold a meeting. Kavudangolla's supporters put up all sort of obstacles. When they use violence and thuggery the police cannot take any action as they are aware that the prime minister's supporters were behind such illegal activities. In the meantime Ratnasekera is trying to re-organize the left. From experience he says that the leftist parties have committed many grave mistakes by concentrating solely on trade union activities and not working according to a plan to capture power. A lawyer named Valisundara refutes Ratnasekera.

The leftist movement in Sri Lanka, according to Ratnasekera, is almost inactive now as a result of its relying more on trade union actions. Lawyers like Valisundara, he further observes, make money in the courts, and engage in politics only as a pastime. Involvement of such people in the movement is another cause for its failure. Hypocritical lawyers like Valisundara who are selfish and attached to worldly pleasures, Ratnasekera argues, have done damage to the revolutionary feelings of the masses and failed to lead them in the right direction.

Pusati Menike says that she joined the capitalist party because she was disgusted with the dishonest leaders in the left. As the left was divided into a number of splinter groups, she could not make out which group represented the correct left. She further reveals that her own father had been a devoted leftist. But when he had some difficulties, his comrades failed to help him although he had sacrificed his time and wealth to the movement. Although Sugatapala de Silva criticizes the left he does not praise the right-wing either. He says that the capitalist party, which is on the verge of collapse, is going to sink like an old boat. Nevertheless the socialist parties have failed to present themselves as a viable alternative.

T.B. Illangaratne who was an active as well as an influential politician in the S.L.F.P. government has produced several popular novels among which there are some works with political themes. *Tilaka Saha Tilaka* (1963) (Tilaka and Tilaka) is written to show the contribution of the working class to social and political reforms during the mid-decades of this century. As a veteran politician the author has been interested mainly in the welfare activities and the new policies adopted by his party. Tilaka as a representative of a government trade union addresses rallies and expresses ideas approved by the S.L.F.P. He attacks the U.N.P. government for continuing with the policies of the British Colonial rulers. British policies and traditions may be beneficial only to the rich, but not to the poor. Through this character of a clerk, Illangaratne succeeds in expressing his anti-imperialistic views.

Peraliya (1972) (Revolution) is another novel by the same author in which he traces the history of the S.L.F.P. from its beginnings in 1951 to 1980. He looks at the Ups and Downs of the party together with various conflicts within the party, and its coalition with other left-wing parties. According to the novelist, the S.L.F.P. was the only 'national party', founded on a genuine national necessity for regaining the rights of the masses in political, economic and educational arenas. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike left the U.N.P. mainly on the language issue and formed a new party which sought its power from the 'five fold forces i.e., the Buddhist clergy, Ayurvedic Physicians, Teachers, Farmers, and Workers. It was these forces or social groups who rallied around Mr. Bandaranaike and helped him win in 1956. The story in *Peraliya* is centred around the changes introduced by the S.L.F.P. into a village named Medagama. He shows through some conversations of the villagers how they welcomed new measures such as the abolition of discrimination against caste and religion, nationalisation of privately owned estates and bus companies, the legislation to make Sinhalese the official language and the nationalisation of private schools.

These acts of the S.L.F.P. were considered a great blessing to the ordinary people. One of the biggest achievements of the S.L.F.P. was promoting the two Pirivenas, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara to university status. Instead of establishing two Buddhist universities, what actually happened was the creation of two new universities with the names of those two institutions. Ilangaratne refers to this event in *Peraliya* as a great achievement in the field of education in Sri Lanka as well as a positive step taken towards defeating the defenders of the remnants of British colonialism. At the end of the story the emergence of the J.V.P. has been incorporated with details of its insurrection and defeat at the hands of the forces. How the insurgency was crushed, the mass surrenders of the militants, the measures introduced by the government to rehabilitate those who surrendered and who were captured, is depicted in detail making this more of a political document than a novel.

Asvanna (1971) (*The Harvest*) and *Ran Dahadiya* (1974) (*The Golden Drops of Sweat*) written by Jayasena Jayakody, *Niyan Kobeyyo* (1975) (*Birds of Drought*) by Chandrasena Mallawaarachchi are some other novels with political implications. They are written to support campaigns such as 'grow more food' launched by the government. Self sufficiency in food has been a slogan of all Sri Lankan governments since independence. Legislation for land reform and acquisition introduced by minister Kobbekaduwa of the United Front government during 1970-77 was a much discussed and highly commended issue which affected a number of social groups. Mallawaarachchi treats this subject in *Niyan Kobeyyo*. Bandhu, the hero returns to his village initiating new enthusiasm among all the young men.

H.A. Seneviratne is another contemporary novelist who has written some novels with political themes. He displays in his work a strong belief in a socialist system of government. In *Elivenava Nodune* (1978) (*Morning Comes Unnoticed*) Seneviratne treats the election promise for acquisition of land for distributing among the landless by the coalition government as his main theme. His purpose is not to show its positive side but to expose how some politicians cheated the poor villagers with the promise of giving them land from nearby estates owned by companies.

Immediately after winning the election with such tempting promises, the politicians forget them, making the poor voters disappointed. This story reveals the social consciousness of the author as well as his concern with the plight of the masses. He focuses attention on a number of chronic problems of the up-country peasantry. This story is centred on two families in Marassana and Menikdivela. Bisomenika, a poor mother, lives with her daughters in Menikdivela while Dingirimenika lives in Marassana with her son Jayasumana. Swarna, the second daughter of Bisomenika goes to Marassana to stay at her uncle's house seeking employment on a tea estate there. Jayasumana who has passed his O'levels works as a labourer on the same estate. After a brief encounter Jayasumana marries Swarna. But they face hardships as their income is not sufficient even for living a simple life. Swarna's mother Bisomenika is worried about not being able to marry off her elder daughter Hemalatha. Valisundara,

a rowdy villager, succeeds in making both mother and daughter obey him, and robs them of their only property with the promise of marrying Hemalatha. After marriage, Valisundara makes a futile attempt for some time to live a decent life but reverts to his former pattern of life before long. He quarrels with his mother-in-law and kicks both mother and daughter out of their home. Afflicted with severe physical and mental agony they go to Marassana seeking help from Swarna and Jayasumana. The old lady dies there after some time. Valisundara is killed in post-election violence and his wife Hemalatha returns to Manikdiwela to try to retrieve her land. She befriends the postman with whose help she tries to earn a living by dealing in illicit liquor.

Communal riots break out in several parts of the country including the estates. Sinhalese workers on the tea estate at Marassana are getting ready to attack the Tamil workers. Jayasumana intervenes in time and stops the assault. Now it is revealed that Swarna's younger sister is having an affair with Velusumana, a Tamil labourer in the same estate. On that night of trouble, confusion, and tension, Swarna gives birth to a son.

H.A. Seneviratne concentrates mainly on real social and economic problems of the peasants. He possesses a deep understanding of the life of the villagers and their perennial problems. He sympathises with the poor, uneducated peasants who are repeatedly illtreated and cheated by politicians. In this novel, Valisundara makes a living by illegal and anti-social ways owing to the unfavourable economic system and faces an untimely death as he was misled by some politicians. Believing in the promise made by a minister about distributing land to the landless, poor villagers like Bisomenika go on suffering until death.

Avasānaya Meyā Novē (1976) (This Is Not The End) by the same author is also based on a political theme. Here the setting is the post insurgency (1971) period. In this story we meet a number of undergraduates who are disillusioned with the traditional left. They are disappointed once again by the J.V.P. on which they had pinned much hope. The author probes several acute problems in contemporary society, and expresses at the same time his disappointment with the existing social and economic order. Characters in this novel consist of some Colombo university undergraduates and also some young men employed in Colombo. In the first part of the story Rohita emerges as the protagonist, but in the latter part it is Nimal who is the hero. Rohita lives in a boarding house with Nimal, Jayasekera, Weerakoon and Upananda, each one doing a different job. Vijitha, Kusum and Amara are three female undergraduates who come from the same rural background, and they also live together in one boarding house. In the beginning, the love affairs of Rohita, and Vijitha, and that of Amara and Ajitsena are given some prominence. All these young students come from poor families with a lot of financial difficulties. Whichever the political party that comes into power, none can find a lasting solution to their problems. Rohita, Upananda and many others, disgusted with the old left, concentrate on finding an alternative. They are not satisfied with tentative solutions. Nimal, who always finds strange and practical solutions to his personal problems, impresses the reader as an unusually interesting person. He is separated from his first wife and now has a highly sentimental relationship with a prostitute. Presently he meets a young woman from a village whose husband had disappeared during the insurgency. This young woman, Padmini is later brought to Colombo by a politician on a false promise where he seduces and abandons her.

On hearing Padmini's story Nimal is deeply moved and offers to help her. After some time Nimal marries her and invites his friends in Colombo to visit him in the village where he is living happily with Padmini. Although Rohita declines, Amara and Ajitsena accept Nimal's invitation. Rohita's expectations are too high and seem unattainable, but his girl friend Ajita gradually understands him and makes up her mind to help him. More than in any other contemporary novel, in *Avasānaya Meva Novē* the author has successfully criticized and attacked the current political system of the country. He gives a deep insight into the problems of the undergraduates, campus politics, and the reasons for the failure of the traditional left and the quick popularity of the extremist group called the J.V.P. Seneviratne raises a number of questions about these problems through the portrayal of his characters who are drawn from a wide range of social strata. In the development of the story he describes from time to time the atrocities committed by the forces in dealing with the captured rebels and suspects. As in *Heta Echchara Kuluwara Ne* by Sarachchandra, in this novel too the background is the 1971 insurrection. However Seneviratne's work deals with a more diverse range of characters and provides a better analysis of the J.V.P. insurrection.

In *Mehema Novīyan Kisidāka* (1973) (May this not happen, ever again), Seneviratne depicts the character of a young lawyer living in Colombo who reminds us of some characters in the novels of Amarasekera and Sarachchandra. This is the character of a young educated person from the urban middle class who is entirely different from the characters found in his other novels. The theme in this novel is not explicitly political, but the political atmosphere, especially the curfew that was imposed during the 1971 insurgency, is a factor that affects the mind of the protagonist. The young lawyer has just spent a night with one of his mistresses while his wife had gone to her parent's place for the day. The chief character, Prematilaka is shown first as facing an imaginary trial against himself. He is now addressing the jury in self defence, but what he actually does is confess his crimes, mostly adultery and seduction of other's wives. He says that he got used to that way of life owing to his animosity to his father to avenge the many different vices of the latter.

Prematilaka is not allowed to marry the girl he loves; instead he is forced to marry Champani, his present wife with whom he is not happy. She behaves like many other modern ladies in the city, experimenting with recipes for exotic dishes and learning methods of family planning. His relationship with Champani deteriorates, and he begins to enjoy the company of other women. For the background of this story too, Seneviratne uses the curfew and the uncertain situation in the country, in 1971. During the insurrection while Prematilaka is engaged in his imaginary trial or, in an argument with his wife he is startled by the echo of a siren or by the sound of a gunshot. Like Prof. Amaradasa in Sarachchandra's novel, Prematilaka listens to the radio for the latest news of the fighting and announcements on the curfew. In *Mehema Novīyan Kisidāka* the political situation is used only as the backdrop for the main events in the story. The theme may be taken as the psychological crisis of a young intellectual in urban society who cannot live in harmony either with this social system or with his wife.

Gunasena Vitana has contributed a great deal to developing a socialist literary tradition in Sri Lanka. During the '70s, together with A.V. Suraweera, he succeeded in converting a large number of young writers and poets to the concept of "Socialist Realism". They attacked the established literary tradition branding it as the 'Peradeniya school' and also condemned the 'Art for Art's Sake' theory wherever possible.

In addition to his critical writing, Vitana has published a few novels which have a direct relevance to our subject. Among his novels *Pamā Novī Vāhāpan Vāhi Valāve* (O! Cloud, Send Rain without delay) (1974) and *Viplavaye Kerali Kārayo* (1975) (The Rebels of a Rebellion) may be taken as more important for this study than his other works. In *Pamā Novī Vāhāpan Vāhi Valāve*, the political history of Sri Lanka from 1940 to 1965 is reviewed. According to the author, immediately after independence, the political power of the country fell into the hands of the indigenous capitalist class. They have been ruling the country in the name of democracy in such a way that the needs of their own class were met and guaranteed. In order to express such ideas Vitana has constructed his plot within a rural setting.

Opisara is a powerful person in the village who happens to be the agent of the capitalists. Diyonis is a poor villager who represents the oppressed and exploited peasantry. Even if the government adopts a good policy such as distributing land among the poor, the local representative would not allow it to be implemented properly. Ariyadasa is another character in the novel who now serves the capitalist class despite his proletarian origins. Siripala represents the political group that challenges the local bourgeoisie. The political scene in this village typifies the politics of the whole country. When there is a split at upper levels in the political field those at the lower levels in the village inevitably follow suit. Breakaway groups put forward new policies to convince the people that they are different from the government. They wish to form a stronger coalition of leftist parties, depending less on capitalist countries and seeking more support from socialist countries. Vitana discusses in this novel the origins and principles of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, and how this new party had to rely on other Marxist parties to contest the elections. As a member of the Communist Party Vitana seems to be trying to justify the decision of his party to support the S.L.F.P. He indicates further that the Marxists hailed the formation of this new party despite its policy of the "middle path" because it opposed the U.N.P.

With the help of the character of Siripala the author examines the famous 'hartal' in 1953 which is considered to be a landmark in the history of the working class in this country. This general strike, popularly known as the 'hartal,' shocked the government. Vitana indicates that the S.L.F.P. too joined with other leftist parties to organize the 'hartal'. But there are some political historians who disagree with this idea. The S.L.F.P. came into power in 1956 with the support of the major leftist parties except the C.P. which, nevertheless decided to support this new 'progressive' government without joining it directly. The Communist Party had supported and approved, the novelist claims, all the progressive acts such as nationalisation of bus companies and private schools.

Ariyadasa is another character in *Pamā Novī Vāhūpan...* representing the new-rich class in the post-election period who are the right-wing elements within the progressive government. Ariyadasa, who began his life as a school teacher, has ended up as a rich land-owner. Siripala, who is a close relative of Ariyadasa, organizes a strike of the workers on the estate owned by Ariyadasa. After a tense struggle, Ariyadasa realises that he was at the losing end, and appeals to Siripala in a letter reminding him of their relationship. But Siripala in the spirit of a true socialist replies him thus. :

"The only relationship a man could have is the relationship based on class. You happened to be a brother of mine, a long time ago. But now I consider only the poor who cannot even have at least one meal a day, as my relatives. Labourers like Wilbert, Maggie and Sediris etc., who work like slaves on your estate are my real blood relatives. (*Pamā Novī*.....(1974) (p.35).

As the sequel to this novel, which reads like a document on the political history of Sri Lanka, full of slogans and ideas of political propaganda, Vitana has written '*Viplavaye Kerali Kārayo*' (The Rebels of a Rebellion). This story is cast in the form of a confession of a young rebel named Nimal. He is thinking of his experiences in 'flash back'. Nimal's father and uncle had worked devotedly as leftists to form a united-front of all socialist parties. When that united-front comes into power, Nimal's father has to keep away as a result of a clash with the local member of parliament. Subsequently he is sent to prison on false charges of burglarising the Co-op shop in the village. One of their neighbours prospers quickly, earning money through illegal means. He is not scared of the law as he has the blessings of the progressive' government. Nimal's uncle Ariyadasa amassed his wealth during the Bandaranaike regime. Thus the author implies that the 'united-front' too failed in establishing a true socialist government and in fulfilling the expectations of its genuine supporters. Because of the failure of that government to abolish corruption, bribery, and misappropriation of public funds, many young men, both educated and uneducated, were easily attracted toward a movement like the J.V.P. The C.P. and other leftist parties did not approve the revolutionary strategy of the J.V.P. They thought of the 1971 insurrection as a futile uprising of emotional young men.

The author too seems to be endorsing the same view on the insurrection. In this novel Vitana gives an account of the famous "five lessons" conducted by the J.V.P. for their cadres. Nimal remembers the 1st lesson explaining the economic crisis of Sri Lanka to which he listened at Rumassala. Other classes were on 'Freedom', "Indian Expansionism," 'the Leftist movement of Sri Lanka' and the 'Right way for the Revolutionary movement'. On learning some of these lessons Nimal remembers how some racist ideas were planted in his mind. The author considers racism as being incompatible with the concept of the proletariat revolution. Like some other novelists such as Sarachchandra, Suraweera and K. Jayatilake, this author also seems to believe that a bloody revolution does not suit the culture of this country.

other writers of fiction with political inclinations Sugatmuni Gnanasiri deserves to be mentioned. His novels such as *Pipāsaya* (1965) (Thirst) *Sihina Lovin Āda Vātunemi* (1967) (I Fell off My Dream World) are written with political aims. For instance in *Pipāsaya* through the vicissitude of a poor family he probes the economic and social problems of the whole working class in this country.

Prematilaka Magammana in *Sinhala Navakatave Nava Nāmna* (p. 113) observes that the protagonists in S. Gnanasiri's novels give long lectures on capitalism and the workers' struggle against it. He further points to the numerous slogans as another defect in Gnanasiri's novels. Because of these slogans and lectures, Magammana observes, these characters appear more like political propagandists rather than genuine revolutionaries. The main character in Gnanasiri's *Sihina Lovin Ādavātunemi* may be cited as a good example. In this story which has been described as a 'Political love story' the protagonist is Sudath, who utters Marxist slogans at every possible instance. The political ideology reflected in these novels is the same as that preached by prominent Marxist politicians in this country in the middle-decades of the twentieth century. Like most other Sinhalese novelists who selected political themes Gnanasiri too has failed to create an artistically successful novel.

In the Sinhalese political novel, there are two types of revolutionary leaders. The first type is the young intellectual educated in Europe who is born into the upper-middle classes. The prototype is Malin in Wickramasinghe's *Yugantaya*. The second type is the young revolutionary born either into a poor or a middle class family who is educated in Sri Lanka or in a Communist country. Such characters are found in the novels of A.V. Suraweera, G. Vitana, Oruvala Bandu and S. Gnanasiri. Intellectuals involved in politics in university campuses or in the politics of the country in general are found in the novels of K. Jayatilake, G. Amarasekera and Ediriweera Sarachchandra. As Magammana has observed, among all these novels with political themes it is rarely that we find a successful work. "It is only a few Sinhalese novels depicting the life of the working class that have been successful as works of fiction while those written about the political leaders working in peaceful conditions have not been so successful as political novels." (*Sinhala Navakatave Nava*p. 142).

Sunanda Mahendra's *Idōraya* and Rahubaddha's *Kelimandala*, may be mentioned as two novels which are different from the average political novel in Sinhalese. In *Idōraya* (The drought) (1978) Sunanda Mahendra reveals the corruption, favouritism, harassments, revenge etc., in contemporary politics. The story is about a clerk who finds it difficult to overcome his personal as well as family problems. He suffers from both personal financial difficulties as well as from problems created by his political enemies in the village. Upasena's father had worked for the party which lost at the elections. The party which came into power is now supporting its members in villages to 'avenge their opponents. Thus Upasena's family falls victim to their rivals who succeed eventually in building a road through Upasena's land.

In *Keli Mandala*, Rahubaddha depicts the character of a cabinet minister, Pujita Gunaratne, who has a secret affair with a woman whom he visits on happy occasions as at times of crisis. The minister is unable to satisfy all his supporters in the electorate as most of them expect powerful and profitable posts and has to deal with his rivals in the cabinet too. In addition to these political problems there is a crisis in his family. His son, using the power of his father, gets involved in dubious and illegal affairs and is finally caught dealing in drugs. His daughter who is an undergraduate, is interested in radical politics and works for a feminist movement.

This brief analysis of the novels of Sunanda Mahendra and Sumitra Rahubaddha shows that unlike some other writers using political themes, they have not been interested in political propaganda. Instead they have used the political situation in the country to depict some problems in contemporary society. They are also disappointed with the political system of the country which has not yet been able to cleanse our society of corruption and injustice. There are some writers who continue to use fiction to propagate their political ideas. Simon Navagattegama is the latest novelist who may be placed in this category. His novel, *Kshīra Sāgaraya kelambevi* (1989) (Milky Ocean is Churned) is centred on a political theme, but with a difference in the presentation of the ideas as well as the story. In *Kshīra Sāgaraya Kelambevi*, Nawagattegama builds his plot around the activities of a revolutionary group in allegorical form. The hero is an imaginary emperor in ancient Sri Lanka. The story opens with a bacchanalic cum orgy at the royal palace at the end of which the king is disgusted with his way of life. Then he goes away ordering that no one should search for him.

After wandering through villages in disguise he meets a girl in a forest who has been abandoned there by her parents as she was afflicted with an infectious disease. The emperor is not afraid of the plague and lives with the girl. A cordial friendship begins to grow between them and in the meantime they come across a group of insurgents. The emperor learns that they were preparing to overthrow his regime. In his wandering the emperor has seen how his regional officers were exploiting the people in his name. The emperor decides to support the revolutionaries who were fighting against his own regime. In the capital, the ministers discuss the security situation with the military leaders. Government forces are losing and the chief minister proposes as their last strategic move that they should pretend to surrender to the insurgents and then assassinate their leader. The chief minister's plan works, but he realizes that the revolutionary leader was their king himself. It was too late for him to prevent the assassination.

The last scene and many other scenes in this novel are implied to be dreams of the king. Some of the scenes exist in a state in between reality and dream. Events of this nature woven into the plot as well as some incidents surpassing the boundaries of reality and trespassing into fantasy give some universal and special effects to this novel. In one such scene Kali appears and crushes a minister at the palace into pieces; and on another occasion, some wounds on the emperor's body are healed miraculously by a monk who had been living for a century entangled in the roots of a Bo tree. This monk regains health and vitality in a mysterious way,

helps the emperor renovate a tank and paddy cultivation in a remote village, and passes away suddenly. These aspects in *Kshīra Sāgaraya*... makes it a unique work as a neo-realistic novel.

Simon Navagattegama has used a political theme which is not very different from other contemporary novels having the J.V.P. insurgency as their main subject or in the background. This author indicates that it was due to some real grievances of the masses and due to corruption and various extremities of the rulers that people gathered round such revolutionary movements. While giving a realistic picture of the political issues he makes it unbelievable by making the ruler of the country join and support of the peoples' war against himself and his rule.

In the foregoing discussion of political themes in the Sinhalese novel I have examined the work of a number of prominent and contemporary novelists. Among hundreds of Sinhalese novels published during 1950-1990, I have selected only some works which I consider relevant to this study. I have not discussed in detail some other Sinhalese novels with political themes as the scope of this paper does not permit a long discussion of all such material. The novels I have selected, I believe, serve the purpose quite well, showing the extent to which political themes are used in the modern Sinhalese novel, what aspects of politics are depicted, and what the aims of the authors who write on such themes are.

I have pointed out that Sinhalese novelists were mostly interested in left-wing politics, the J.V.P. and the unsuccessful insurrection led by it. It is very rarely that novels were written to praise or promote the U.N.P. and its policies. Nevertheless a few novels have been written depicting the life and the problems of the farmers in the settlements under the new irrigation projects initiated by both the U.N.P. and S.L.F.P. governments. Some popular novelists have published a few novels supporting and promoting the "grow more food" campaign of the united front government as well as endorsing such projects as the 'Community or co-operative Farms' on the models found in communist countries. '*Ran Dahadiya*' by Jayasena Jayakody, '*Heyyanmaruva*' by A.V. Suraweera and '*Aluta Gena Manamali*', by Madawala S. Ratnayake are few examples of this category.

Some modern novelists such as Sunanda Mahendra, Jayasena Jayakody, Kalusena Fonseka, Aravvala Nandimitra, Somaweera Senanayake, Sumitra Rahubaddha and Somaratna Balasuriya have produced a number of novels directly or indirectly reflecting the current political situation of the country. Among the issues thus reflected, the leftist movement, trade union activities, election campaigns, pre- and post election violence, illeffects of party politics, corruption among politicians, the consequences of the "open economy", the communal riots, the J.V.P. movement and the plight of the poor peasantry, may be mentioned as the most prominent and popular ones. Thus these novelists of the new wave in modern Sinhalese fiction have deviated from the intellectual or elite novel of the fifties and concentrated on creating novels following the rules of 'social realism'.

Gunasena Vitana has contributed a great deal to developing a socialist literary tradition in Sri Lanka. During the '70s, together with A.V. Suraweera, he succeeded in converting a large number of young writers and poets to the concept of "Socialist Realism". They attacked the established literary tradition branding it as the 'Peradeniya school' and also condemned the 'Art for Art's Sake' theory wherever possible.

In addition to his critical writing, Vitana has published a few novels which have a direct relevance to our subject. Among his novels *Pamā Novī Vāhāpan Vāhi Valāve* (O! Cloud, Send Rain without delay) (1974) and *Viplavaye Kerali Kārayo* (1975) (The Rebels of a Rebellion) may be taken as more important for this study than his other works. In *Pamā Novī Vāhāpan Vāhi Valāve*, the political history of Sri Lanka from 1940 to 1965 is reviewed. According to the author, immediately after independence, the political power of the country fell into the hands of the indigenous capitalist class. They have been ruling the country in the name of democracy in such a way that the needs of their own class were met and guaranteed. In order to express such ideas Vitana has constructed his plot within a rural setting.

Opisara is a powerful person in the village who happens to be the agent of the capitalists. Diyonis is a poor villager who represents the oppressed and exploited peasantry. Even if the government adopts a good policy such as distributing land among the poor, the local representative would not allow it to be implemented properly. Ariyadasa is another character in the novel who now serves the capitalist class despite his proletarian origins. Siripala represents the political group that challenges the local bourgeoisie. The political scene in this village typifies the politics of the whole country. When there is a split at upper levels in the political field those at the lower levels in the village inevitably follow suit. Breakaway groups put forward new policies to convince the people that they are different from the government. They wish to form a stronger coalition of leftist parties, depending less on capitalist countries and seeking more support from socialist countries. Vitana discusses in this novel the origins and principles of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, and how this new party had to rely on other Marxist parties to contest the elections. As a member of the Communist Party Vitana seems to be trying to justify the decision of his party to support the S.L.F.P. He indicates further that the Marxists hailed the formation of this new party despite its policy of the "middle path" because it opposed the U.N.P.

With the help of the character of Siripala the author examines the famous 'hartal' in 1953 which is considered to be a landmark in the history of the working class in this country. This general strike, popularly known as the 'hartal,' shocked the government. Vitana indicates that the S.L.F.P. too joined with other leftist parties to organize the 'hartal'. But there are some political historians who disagree with this idea. The S.L.F.P. came into power in 1956 with the support of the major leftist parties except the C.P. which, nevertheless decided to support this new 'progressive' government without joining it directly. The Communist Party had supported and approved, the novelist claims, all the progressive acts such as nationalisation of bus companies and private schools.

After working for the movement for some time, Nimal wishes to argue with the leadership on the ban imposed on love affairs. He wonders about the fairness of such an inhuman principle. The party punished those members who had love affairs. Nimal wanted to tell his leaders that while fighting against injustice in society it was necessary to preserve the beautiful aspects in life.

In *Viplavaye Kerali Kārayo*, the character of Jayasena Master has been used to express the author's views. Through this narrator the author suggests that although a revolution is necessary, it must not be an armed, bloody and a violent one. To get rid of the capitalist class the working class must be properly organized. Thus Vitana endorses the policy of the traditional leftist parties in Sri Lanka. The story in this novel begins with the defeat of the revolutionaries by the government forces. Nimal fights as an area leader. The revolution first seems to be victorious, but before long the insurgents are surrounded by the military; they run out of supplies and ammunition and finally when Nimal is left alone, failing in all his attempts to escape into the Sinharaja forest, he too surrenders.

Oruvela Bandu is a novelist who is unique among contemporary writers of fiction in Sinhala. Although he was never acclaimed either as a serious novelist or as a popular writer, he has been publishing works of fiction and poetry for a long time. All of his work has a socialist colouring, with stories either set in Soviet Russia or Sri Lanka with plots and ideas based on personal experiences. We will examine here only one of Bandu's political novels. *Vāne* (Steel) is a story in which we find a Sinhalese youth named Wimal, who has just returned from the U.S.S.R. after his studies there. Upon his return he becomes a revolutionary leader in a militant political group. He joins the trade union movement and organizes a strike of the workers at the steel plant at Oruwela for which action he is later taken into custody. In the meantime he has an affair with a girl named Rupa and marries her in the end. The significance of this marriage is that the girl's father was a rich land owner, who once clashed with Wimal to break up his affair with Rupa, thus indicating the typical conflict of the wealthy class with the working class. The action takes place in a village near the steel plant. The eternal conflict of the rich with the poor is depicted humorously at times. Characters are divided into two categories: i.e., owners and the poor workers. At the end of the story we see Wimal engaging with fresh enthusiasm in political activities. Acting as a leader of the workers he goes on organizing demonstrations and strikes. Some of the scenes in the novel, such as the steps taken by the government to sabotage protest movements are similar to such scenes in Wickramasinghe's *Yugantaya*. Wimal's character in some aspects is similar to the former leader of the J.V.P.

Bandu's next novel *Ginikandu* (Volcanoes) is the sequel to *Vāne* in which he continues the story of Wimal in his struggle against the capitalist rulers in this country. Through this story Bandu treats once again a political theme which is not very different from other contemporary novels written by authors believing in socialism. In most of these political novels we see the struggle of the radical youth against the existing political systems in order to establish a socialist government either by means of an armed revolution or with the support of the working class. Among