

BY SANDADAS COPERAHEWA

Helabas mini - Kalaa bhushana

Viduru nana Abhinandana pranaama hara saraniya

This Cryptic system literal or verbal proceed by rearrangement, replacement or by both in combination with or without deceptive interpolations. This type of riddle poetry reached a very high level specially during the scholastic - sway of the Kotte period, when the Intellectual and recreative aspect of the literary tradition in Sri Lanka. Gira Sandesa which was composed by one of the sure-footed poet illustrates well how the people assembled in a Rest house enjoyed themselves in various riddles:-

Samaharu	udāra
Ununata demin	vāra
Basin - basa	sāra
Kiyathi Sithnāma bānda	thōra

month of September; and the sign of the Zodiac is Virgo, Virgin or Kanya, a virgin a maiden the asterism which signifies this month. Vesak is the month of May, and the sign of the Zodiac Taurus, the Bull or (Vrashabha) is the asterism which stands for this month. Here, Vrashabha is used as an honourific form of endearment or as a word placed after a noun in apposition to it denoted excellence as Muni vahap. Here Muni, 'Reverend' implies a Sami a Rishi a noble person. Here Vahap refers to a person who behaves like a Bull, a wild, or ignorant person. Posen Masaya the sixth month, June, is symbolically presented by the sign of the Zodiac Gemini (Twins) or Mayiyhuna (sk) implies the meaning 'Union' a connection of a couple, but here it means sexual union. Now let us get at the literary translation of the verse. Having taken rest on the Bak tree, and while arising and looking around I espied the month of February going towards the way of comfort (suwatha). The Sanskrit word 'Shrawantha' and the Pali word 'Suwantha' giving a double meaning as Comforts way 'or the river holding the month of

Rajasingha (1780-1798) excelled in enigma and conundrum. Once he started to pine for the lover, and in his pathetic plight he wrote the verse in the form of a riddle.

Siyapath siya se gima deyi nibanda konda - siya

Thiya Neth Sathuru dada bānda yudata pivisiya

Siduhath-kanaka - pilikul namāthi diasiya

Ada vath ma wetha nā duka no hāka ivāsiya!

Matarā Experts of Cryptic Poetry

Illustrious ones who have assembled there giving an opportunity to each other and having gone through each and every word discriminatively compose riddles quite spontaneously and elucidate them. Even during the Matarā period, there were many poets who exhibited much talent and ingenuity in diverse type of Cryptic poetry. Ven. Karathota Dharmarama, Baranacharya the Astrologer, Samarajeeva are some of them. Ven. Karathota Dharmarama who lived during the reign of Rajadhi Rajasingha (1780-1798) composed the most popular Cryptogrammatic poem called 'Bara-nama-gaba saka' which he presented to the king endowed with a poetic talent. The king failed to understand it and inquired his scholars who failed to elucidate it. At the royal assembly where a Royal Welcome was given to the priest, he explained how the content of the poem could be converted into twelve verses. Taking into account the extraordinary expertness of the Thera, the king donated to the Ven. Thera the gift of the village called Pallebadda. Baranacharya, the Astrologer, who lived during the same period, earned a widespread popularity as an Astrologer, and a poet who excelled in benefactor verses and imprecatory verses (Seth kavi and Vas kavi) In this particularly riddle, he has made good use of the Astrological knowledge to represent an incident which took place in a village called Ambana. Note the indirect reference, and the subtle usage of the sign of the Zodiac in a symbolic form to suggest the idea, as follows.

Note carefully symbolic presentation of astrological forms, and the cryptic poem composed to test the ingenuity of the readers.

Bak gaha mudune sathapī indalā mandak nāgi bālu kala	ivathā
Navam masak surathin āraganimini Binare yanava dāka	surathā
Vesak masata nisi kenaku āvith la Binare allagena	duvathā
Balanna Viyathini Ambana gamadi Posen - masak yedinayi	puvathā

Here Bak masaya is the month of April. The sign of the Zodiac, arises in the asteria which symbolizes the month of April. Though it suggests a ram the poet has taken it as Maasaya. Maasaya in Sinhala and Mensa in Latin suggests a table. Navam masak is the month of February. The sign of the Zodiac is Aquarius, and it is symbolized as Kumbha (sk) a pot Kumbu in Sinhala. Binara in Sinhala stands for the

February with her right hand, when an opportunity person for the month of May appeared, and while running away seizing September. Behold learned men the news had

spread that. In the village called Ambana the month of June, Posen (Prasuna, SK which signifies the flowering, or the fruit - bearing time) has been used to bring out the meaning combined formed or raped.

Now let us find the correct meaning evoked in this verse. The poet and Astrologer Barana was one of the most famous poets of the Matarā period. Just conceive how he has represented the peculiar incident in the Cryptic form.

When I was resting awhile on the table, I saw a damsel going towards the way of comfort, to the river, holding a pot in her right hand. She was on the way to the river to take a bath, and refresh herself. When a priest or a person who appeared like a restrained person, or in the guise of a wild or a violent person, carried her away by force, and in the village called Ambana, the news spread that he had sexual union. The poet invites the attention of the Elite learned ones to look into this matter:

Samarajeeva the gifted poet, known as Paththayame Lekam (as the Secretary of the granary) who lived during the reign of Rajadhi



At first it is necessary to go by the correct prose order to clear the riddle form-

Siyapath siya se gima deyi nibanda konda - siya Thiya Neth Sathuru dada bānda yudata pivisiya

Siduhath-kanaka - pilikul namāthi diasiya Ada vath ma wetha nā duka no hāka ivāsiya!

The Moon like the Sun incessantly issues forth heat. Inimical to the Three-eyed one Anaga on the path of war to beat. As the damsel named Mustard - golden - Loathsome (aba-ran-chi) Abaranchi, failed even today to arrive Oh!

How can I bear up the Woe!

Ananda Coomaraswamy thrown into Nelum Pokuna!

BY USVATTE-ARATCHI,
Board of Editors, Samskriti Journal,
Telephone 251 9201

It is regrettable that government decided to erase the name of Ananda Coomaraswamy to commemorate the opening of the new theatre on

Alexandra Place. Coomaraswamy was arguably the most eminent scholar from our country in the twentieth century. His name happily replaced Green Path as the thoroughfare where stood a collection of sites that had most to do with the arts in our country: John de Silva Rangahala, The National Art Gallery and the oldest surviving [and now lively] academic association in the country, The Royal Asiatic Society (Colombo Branch). There also has grown a small market place for arts and crafts on either side of the road. The name of Ananda Coomaraswamy was a fitting adornment to the city as is Munidasa Kumaratunge Mavata to the road where stands the Colombo University. [It is a different matter that the University continues to

ignore that scholar.] One is reminded of the wisdom and the civility in New Delhi where there are roads named in honour of Max Muller [Max Muller Marg] and Kautilya. If the honour and distinction or lack thereof that a government bestows on its wise men is an index of the rulers own intellectual credentials, the current government should have treated Coomaraswamy differently.

In a bibliography published in Samskriti Volume III, Number 3 [July-September

1955], {Volume

XXII, Number 3,

was published earlier this

month),

K.C.Perera one of the pioneer

editors of the Journal,

compiled a list of 360 papers

and books written by

Coomaraswamy in English and 13

written in French, German and Italian.

He was an accomplished linguist.

Coomaraswamy wrote authoritatively on a

wide range of subjects: arts and crafts [mostly

in Ceylon and India], music and musicology [I

specially recall his paper

The Burmese Harp in

JRAS 1937(?), mythology,

especially Indian and Ceylonese, religion, culture

in general and many others.

Many are quite familiar with his monumental work, Medieval Sinhalese Art. Coomaraswamy's special field of scientific investigation was geology and his is probably the seminal work on this subject in our country.

Samskriti Quarterly was launched in March 1953 by a small group of young university graduates freshly minted at the University of Ceylon, led by Amaradasa Virasinha, Gananath Obeyesekere [yet undergraduate], K.C.Perera and S.G.Samarasinghe. But their maturity was precocious. The Special Number of Samskriti [the first Special Number to

be followed by many others] to celebrate the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy on his ninth death anniversary, was brought out in September 1955. Let us recall the wisdom of those young men now to give the great man his due.

For those who look for a summary indication of the highest respect in which he was held, here are a few short extracts from eminent people which Samskriti published in that issue. C. Rajagopalachari, scholar, leader in the independence struggle and Governor-General of India wrote, 'Sir Ananda Comaraswamy is one of the front rank Savants of the East. It gives me great pleasure to know that a Sinhalese Journal, the quarterly, Samskriti will honour the scholar and art critic with a special issue.' Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, renowned philosopher and later Vice-president of the Republic of India wrote, 'Dr. Coomaraswamy was undoubtedly one of the greatest scholars of our time and his works are marked by philosophical penetration and religious feeling.' The Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford University and Editor of the Brahma Sutra, The Principal Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita knew a thing or two about what he wrote. O.H.De A Wijesekera, the distinguished Professor of Samskrit in Peradeniya wrote, 'Coomaraswamy's life constantly stands as a noble example of the new path he carved out for us.' [Translation mine.] Martin Wickremasinghe wrote, 'It was a time when so many of our educated people derided our language, literature, religion, cultural practices, painting and sculpture and worshipped everything Western. It was a time when our schools encouraged them and the government dominated everything. It is little wonder that Ananda Coomaraswamy who wrote such a book had to leave Ceylon.' [Translation mine.] [It is not clear what publication Wickremasinghe referred to.] Is it meet now that we erase his memory among the public by removing his name from the name of a street in Colombo?

Nelum Pokuna is a monument to the munificence of the people of China to the public of this country and not to a particular person. Poet Ariyawansa Ranaweera, the other day, recalled for us the names of those who participated in bringing this task to fruition. The present government had the good fortune to see it completed. I suggest that we name a stretch of road on Alexandra Place immediately in front of the theatre as Nelum Pokuna Place or Parade [a la King's Parade opposite King's College in Cambridge] and bring back the name Ananda Coomaraswamy to where it belongs with such befitting luster.

