

# Saturday Magazine

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It was in the year 1910. Large crowds rushed to the roads leading to the "Richmond Castle" from the early hours to witness an unforgettable event that was to remain in their minds for years to come ... The Streets were gaily decorated with pandals. The drinks and sweetmeat were served under a canopy of 'rally palam', to the waiting crowd to quench their thirst under a bright sun. A light breeze from the Kaluganga soothed their weary hearts from time to time..... it was the arrival of a bride and a groom whose fame and name were much respected by the residents of Palatota in Kalutara South.

The groom Padikara Muhandiram Arthur Silva Wijeyasinghe Siriwardena was held in high esteem for his position similar to that of a government agent, who had twelve Mudliyar serving under him at the time with forty sentinels in attendance. He was the son of Paulis Silva a renter from Galle better known as the "plumbago king" and his mother was Isabella de Silva from Baddegama who moved to Colpetty, where they built a mansion "Isabella court" at Colpetty junction, where the present sales room for carnival ice cream and the National Savings Bank stand.

Arthur being the youngest of their two sons was eager to pursue his studies after his primary education at a Colombo school and hence he was sent abroad for higher education. Padikara Muhandiram was an honour bestowed to him by the British government for his immeasurable services to his community. Besides his services were internationally acclaimed. He was an unsung hero as he played a major role in securing independence for India and in turn for Sri Lanka.

The bride Clarice Maud Sooriya Bandara was the daughter of an eminent lawyer whose three beautiful daughters who is said to have married three famous men whose surname ended with the word 'Singha' much to the pride of their father who is said to have claimed that the three of them were given away to lions.

The bridal couple were drawn in a carriage drawn by four white horses (A privilege given to only one other Sri Lankan, the other being Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike of Horogolla Walawa)

As the bride stepped out of the carriage royal guests the Prince and Princess of Wales waited to greet them. The princess is said to have hugged this fairy queen like bride, with much sentiment as an admiring prince stood silently unable to believe that such beauties existed in Sri Lanka. The Maharajah of Raman whose castle inspired the building of 'Richmond castle' was also their to share the happy event.

Richmond castle stands on a mountain top overlooking the beautiful Kaluganga to the west and Geekiyange Kanda to the east. The entire building stands on one acre of land. The estate



## The Mudaliyar of Richmond Castle

covers forty two acres of rich arable land., on which grew 60 varieties of fruit trees at one time. The Mudaliyar is said to have maintained a museum on one side of this massive house entrance to which was free of charge for the benefit of his village people.

The entire house is said to have had 99 door frames made of teak from Burma with a double winged stair way these are some of the remnants that speak its past glory.

### Dance Hall

The floor is of teak. A ventilator system on the floor boards catch the breezes of the Kaluganga which filter directly to the hall. The small balcony, a projection from the upper floor is a device for the location of the orchestra. The dining hall

opens out to a corridor that has coloured floor tiles from Italy and then to a closed meda midula of which the remnants of a porcelain bird bath, and a fountain could be found even up to now.

### The master bed room

The master bed room upstairs had a special sound proofing device.

A cross section of the wall in the photograph gives a clear view of a cross section where the plaster encloses a rib cage made out of wooden strips. This device had been copied from the cold countries, the mudliyar had visited. The entire room sans furniture still boasts of an intricately carved cage where a mosquito net was held in place. Attached baths with two approach doors from inside the bed room and outside were special fea-

tures of this bed room.

### Fanlight

These had tinted glass with designs done in Italy the corridor upstairs opening into a broad balcony which gives a kaleidoscopic view of the front garden.

A special staircase for the domestic staff is seen at the back of the house leading to the kitchen and the servants quarters.

### The Pope

The mudaliyar besides his yeoman services to his people is also said to have done much for his religion.

A staunch Roman Catholic he is said to have been a close associate of the Pope. He is also said to have donated

large sums of money for the development of Lady Ridgeway hospital and also donated an estate of 81 acres known as 'Ira Handa Yawa estate' for the benefit of destitute children.

The Mudaliyar was the recipients of many honours bestowed on him by the United States, Britain, Italy, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal. He was the Papal knight of for the east of the Roman catholic church, loved and adored by all who knew him.

Given below are some of his honours granted him in appreciation of his services to the people religion and country.

1. Knight of the grand cross of the order of Holy sepulchre.
2. Knight grand of the order of St: Silvester.
3. Knight grand office of the crown of Italy.
4. Knight commander of the order of Leopold 2nd
5. Knight Commander of the order of black eagle.
6. President Association Ceylon Chiefs 1921-1928
7. Gold cross of merits of the society of arts science and letters of France.
8. Member of the pontifical Academy of Rome.

Fellow of the royal society of Art Great Britain.

He donated his castle to the destitute

1. Educate poor children with foreign languages
2. To impart technical education.
3. To give shelter to destitute children in the form of a pre school.
4. To open children's parks for use of tiny tots

The beautiful castle with all its pomp and glory was said to be at one time the abode of foreign soldiers after this presentation, and had been led to rough use by them. According to M. Ariyadasa the O.I.C. of this building there had been a court case pending for several years which paved the way for vandalism theft for several years. The valuables such as tiles from India Statues from Italy and flower pots are said to have been robbed or damaged by treasure hunters and vandals, but the beauty of the castle cannot be erased easily as it remains a monument to the and a tribute to one of the great Philanthropists who ever lived in our country.

After the donation the Mudliyar is said to have lived in a room of a leading hotel in Kandy for nearly six years till he passed away after an attack of Thrombosis in 1947.

**Text and pic.  
by Indira Perera.  
Courtesy Public Trustee  
Weerasinghe Chief  
Accountant (Trustee Office)  
M. Ariyadasa O.I.C. of the  
'Richmond Castle'**

## Toddler's heart-warming journey

**NEW DELHI** — Noor Fatima, a toddler from Pakistan, is the new star for thousands of Indians. She has opened up the hearts of people in the two countries.

The 30-month-old girl, who suffers from a heart condition, rolled into India on the New Delhi Lahore bus on July 11 for surgery which promises to extend her life beyond the 10 years that doctors were giving her if she did not get treatment.

Her parents Nadeem Sajjad and Tayyaba were among the passengers on the first bus that entered New Delhi after India and Pakistan decided to resume the service as part of ongoing peace efforts.

From New Delhi, their daughter, afflicted by holes and defective valves in her heart since her birth, was flown to the Narayana Hrudalaya hospital in Bangalore in the southern Indian state of Karnataka the following day.

The hospital, which specialises in cardiac care for children, is the only one of its kind in South Asia.

Little Noor is now recovering in the intensive care unit after a six-hour complicated procedure last Tuesday to patch up the two gaping holes in her heart.

Mr. Sajjad, a scientist at a multinational fertiliser company in Karachi, told The Sunday Times: "We came to know of her heart condition soon after her birth. We found out when we took her for tests because her heart was beating very fast."

But the toddler, whose name Noor means light in Urdu, was not weighed down by her problem.

Active and naughty, she is the third child in the family after her brother Tehsin, six, and

**Pakistani girl is star of revived Delhi-Lahore bus link**



**Sick Child Noor Fatima, who suffers from a heart condition, took the bus from Lahore to New Delhi to seek critical surgery. Her family was among the first users of the newly reinstated service.**

sister Mahruf, four, now living with their maternal grandmother in Lahore.

Mr. Sajjad remembers the times when she would be lying in bed with her bottle of milk and how she would go running to him for a big kiss and a tight hug when he waved at her.

Even in New Delhi and Bangalore, she was not intimidated by all the attention she was getting from strangers.

She skipped about with a bouquet of roses in her hand, pausing now and then with wide-eyed curiosity as television reporters talked to her parents.

Mrs. Sajjad, a housewife, said: "When we

set out from Pakistan, we did not know what would happen.

"Now everything seems to be all right and the doctors have taken Noor off the ventilator though she continues to remain in the intensive care unit."

But for the family, relief came only after a long, sleepless night before the surgery and a tense vigil outside the operating theatre from 6 a.m. the following day, when their toddler was wheeled away for the surgery.

The moment Dr. Rajesh Sharma, the paediatric cardiac surgeon who operated on the child walked out with a smile on his face, they

knew it was going to be all right.

Now the happy father wants his daughter to be a heart surgeon.

"Everyone's prayers have worked," he told reporters in Bangalore, relief of the spontaneous outpouring of love and concern from Indians who prayed and sent get-well messages and bouquets for his little girl's recovery and good health.

In fact, children lined the streets with placards saying "Get well soon" as the family drove up to the hospital in Bangalore on July 12.

Even the policemen who usually demanded

bribes from foreigners going to them to register their presence in any Indian city, as required by the law, were very courteous and wished little Noor a speedy recovery.

Others, including the Karnataka government, offered to contribute to her surgery. The hospital also waived its 140,000 rupee (\$55,300) fee.

But Mr. Sajjad declined the monetary offers, saying that he had "no financial problems".

Now all the money including an extra 50,000 rupees from Mr. Sajjad and the offers still coming in, will go into a fund to help poor Pakistani children who cannot afford the trip and treatment in India.

Mr. K. S. Vasuki, the hospital's corporate relations manager, told The Sunday Times: "There are more children in Pakistan waiting to come to our hospital."

"The Pakistani doctors, who came into contact with our surgeon, Dr. Rajesh Sharma, at international conferences, have been sending their patients to us."

Hospital chief Devi Shetty told The Sunday Times: "We have conducted similar surgery on 60 children from Pakistan in the past two years."

A comparable surgery in the United States would cost nearly US\$70,000 (\$123,000), according to Dr. Shetty.

This is 25 times more than the fee for little Noor's surgery.

But for the Sajjads, it is much more than the money they had saved by going to India.

They have found "a new home 4,000km away from home" and more importantly, "the light of their lives" will continue to shine for them.