

The Island LeisureLAND

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Sporting champions pass on mental toughness to their children

by Caroline Gammell

Sporting champions are more likely to have children who go on to succeed in their own right because mental toughness is inherited, new research suggests.

English cricket captain Colin Cowdrey, who played in more than 100 Test matches, had two sons who carved out careers in the sport - the eldest, Christopher, playing for England.

Stuart Broad, a member of the current national cricket team, followed in the footsteps of his father Chris, who represented his country as a batsman in the 1980s.

Zara Phillips also absorbed her mother's skill when it comes to equestrianism and is the reigning Event World Champion. Princess Anne competed at the 1976 Olympics.

In study published yesterday, scientists studied 219 sets of twins to work out the influence of genetics and environment on four character traits associated with mental toughness.

They were control over life, commitment, confidence and the ability to face new challenges.

Author Dr Tony Vernon at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, concluded that genetics played a more important role - 52 per cent - than environmental factors - 48 per cent.

The results, published in the *New Scientist*, also found that the more extravert a person was, the more mentally resilient they were. In contrast, those who tended to be neurotic or anxious were less likely to be so mentally tough.

The study was based on a detailed questionnaire designed by Dr Peter Clough, head of psychology at the University of Hull. He said: "Are people born tough or do they develop it? The simple answer is that they are born tough."

"In the cricketing world, or in any elite sport, you have got to be mentally strong because it is a lot harder than a lot of occupations - you don't get many second chances."

"Most people at the elite level are as tough as old boots because they have been tested since the age of seven."

"You would expect that if someone was mentally tough, at least one parent would be the same."

"It is nice to see a completely independent study in another country come to the same conclusion as we did."

But Dr Clough said a person could also inherit sensitivity - just as much as mental strength - from their parents which may make it harder for them to recover from setbacks.

"Some people cannot deal with rejection, they naturally find it difficult and they have to learn how to overcome setbacks if they want to get on and succeed," he said.

The Canadian findings came as research from Australia showed bad habits could be inherited as well.

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poetry
is a
mystery

George Keyt



From *Navasilu (December 1987)* edited by DCRA Goonethilleke, the *Journal of the English Association of Sri Lanka and The Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies Sri Lanka*.

by Jean Arasanayagam

Q: Mr. Keyt, are there connections between your poetry and your painting? I am talking specifically of the poems written between 1936/37, contained in three volumes *Poems* (1936), *The Darkness Disrobed* (1937) and *Image In Absence* (1937).

A: There are parallels in my painting.

Q: I find that these poems, written between 36/37 which belong to the colonial era, unique in the way you use language to express moods, feelings and emotions which are both personal and subjective.

We have in this collection one of the first authentic Lankan poetic voices writing in English. Written before the emergence of the New Englishes of the post-colonial set up, they nevertheless mark a radical departure from a particular style and mode of writing which was popular at that time. You use, like other Lankan writers of that era, the standard English that was prevalent in that specific English-speaking socio-linguistic group. Yet the poetry of that period 1936/37 does not imitate nor is it derivative. The metaphor and imagery possess remarkable originality. Your verse forms moreover are unrestricted by a rigid metrical structure but follows rather the form and structure of the Indian ragas.

linguistic backdrop to an unrealistic and unsullied Paradise. The indigenous landscape, mirrored through the etiolate language of that period lacked reality. The genuinely felt experience appeared to be lacking.

A: Ludowyk complained that you look in vain for derivations. In European poetry the word is important. You could find parallels in Mallarme. I notice he was very interested in the word. I wrote down words, lines that derived from a single word and all that the word suggests. Jayantha Padmanatha has a good review of my poetry. Lionel Wendt described him as a sad young man who had just come from Oxford. He was eager to edit and bring out a publication. He used to come with his translations of Baudelaire which were better than any translation of Baudelaire. One section of my poetry was influenced by Baudelaire.

Q: Besides European poetry, had you

classical and folk.

Q: And of the European and of the English writers, what have you read that has been of major significance in your experience?

A: I have read Classical Greek and Latin drama and poetry, Early English or Anglo Saxon such as Bcowlf and Piers Ploughman. Then Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Pope and Dryden, Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Dante, D'Annunzio, Goothe, Schiller, Holderlin etc. Then I have read Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Ezra Pound, Mallarme, Neruda, Paul Eluard, Leger etc.

Q: At the same time you were writing poetry using language in an entirely new way both stylistically and linguistically. You explore the words with all its connotations so that it becomes richly subjective and personal. Reading your poetry the style is both innovative and unique as no other Lankan poet belonging to that particular milieu had written. Yet it was only a small exclusive group of English readers who perhaps read your poetry, a poetry which I find has relevance even today forming part of the important mainstream of English writing in Sri Lanka. One reason is perhaps that you were better known as a painter.

A: The twenties and thirties are always calling me back. That world is shattered. It has disappeared. The art world, the aesthetic world. It was a kind of private world. Myself and my circle.

Q: Has your poetry anything to do with your painting.

A: Consciously not.

Q: I find your poems strongly visual. As if you were painting with your eyes. In *Music In The Hindu Temple*. The Nageweram you create a landscape out of words which in turn emerge out of music - it takes you along a path - this I must say is a recurring metaphor in your poetry, of exploration of your self and your journeying through both the physical world and world of your senses in the image of the labyrinth my path the tortuous path a bewildering avenue dark channels. There is also a tremendous sense of movement in your poetry, parallels which are found in your painting. In paintings like "Dreaming in the Sun", "The Balm of Absence", "Dead Love in the Sunlight", titles which are in themselves evocative of your poetic imagery, the lines are smooth, fluid. The movement changes in paintings like 'Vibhatsa Rasa' and 'Maheshvara' where the lines rage with a violence of movement as in poems which echo the violence of nature.

"The wind throwing into turmoil of forgetfulness
The foliage of longings and the cobwebs
The helpless shreds of despair."
Colours too find parallels between your poetry and paintings.

"The fleshy purple of grapes/deep black/deep colours golden/" echo the sensuousness and voluptuous of form and colour in paintings like "Sri Krishna and the Gopis" and 'Jalaja'. Yet in certain other poems we have a sense of almost non-colour; we have a rather mutations and gradations of light and dark.

A: That is also rasa - the mood created through rasa.

There is the mood known as *bhayanakarasa*, the horrific, because of the emotional crisis I was going through at that time. This is seen in paintings of that period in "*Maheshvara*" and "*Yama and Savitri*". My poetry is authentic poetry. Poetry, like real art or real music, cannot be understood. It is meant to be entrancing and transporting - it takes you to the antipodes of the mind. Picasso said that he who tries to understand art is barking up the wrong tree.

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Wild Life photo exhibition
by Sarath Gunasena



Nilanthi, the
dancing star