

Leisure LAND



by Aisha Edris

Pic by Dharmasena Welipitiya

Namel Weerawani, veteran thespian and producer, is an amazing individual and the young generation of theatre artists are privileged lot to be learn from his life's experiences.

I met Namel Weerawani at his tiny palace, Puchi Theatre few days ago to rekindle his life's journey. It is a wonderful story that began in Ahungalla.

As a young boy he had to struggle through the emotional backlog of losing both his parents, but, he took the setback to achieve his goals. Today, he is not only a leading thespian and a producer, he is also a well accomplished lawyer in England. Namel Weerawani is married to Manel Weerawani and he has three children.

Tell us about your childhood?

I was a very poor boy. I lost my father before I started school and my mother died when I was 14. I have a sister, who lives in our village, Ahungalla.

Fortunately for me, I was able to complete my education since my two uncles stood beside me at my hour of need. My eldest uncle was a prominent Mahanayaka. He always encouraged us to complete our studies, and so did my second uncle. I used to live with him. He worked for the government and so I got the opportunity to roam around the country whenever he was transferred.

I have been to more than three schools before I entered Nalanda College. I lived in Ratnapura, Kandy, Peradeniya, Colombo and also Ahungalla.

I was involved in literature, and that helped me to broaden my perspective on literature. A lot changed when I came to Colombo as I was able to learn many things after I came here.

Tell us about yourself.

After my parents demise, my uncles are the ones who stood besides me. I am a self-made man. There was no one to guide me. I have lots of friends. As a young man, along



Wickrama Bogoda, Prema Ganegoda

Scene from Nettukkari: Wickrama Bogoda and Prema Ganegoda playing leading roles. The play is being produced again by Namel and Malini

school and most of my school life was spent at boarding houses. So the communication between me and my sister was very less. My sister is younger to me and she grew up in the village. She still lives there. So we never had sibling rivalry as such.

Is there anything in life that you regret?

Yes. When I went abroad. Had I practice as a lawyer in Sri Lanka I would have been famous and would have been able to serve my country.

Why did you decide to go abroad?

I was attached to the Legal Draftsmen's Department in Sri Lanka. I had a very lucrative career. I had

to go to England for three months to do research on behalf of the government. After I finished my research. I went to America where I got an opportunity to meet the lawmakers there. I was offered to be an observer at the Congress and also a grant of about US Dollars 4000.

The Department informed me that I have to return to Sri Lanka immediately since there was an overwhelming amount of documents that were waiting to be completed. I decided to return to Sri Lanka.

I informed my wife, Malini, that I was coming back but she had bad news for me. The Department had sent a letter saying I was dismissed from my job. Up to date I do not know why I was sacked from the job.

Then I decided to stay back in England. I did odd jobs to survive. I informed the law circles that I was

practicing law. I did my exams and began my career in practicing law.

I established my own law firm and expanded it into a consultancy company. When I decided to return to Sri Lanka, I sold my firm and remained as a consultant.

What was your childhood ambition?

As a child, I always wanted to enter the theatre, but during our times theatre was not a career option that everyone looked up to. I used to act as child in school.

Did you have another career?

Yes. I am a lawyer and while I was sitting for my University entrance examination I taught school students

What made you give up law practice and enter the theatre arena?

I have always wanted to enter theatre. That has always been my passion. My dream was to own a theatre hall which I have accomplished. When my three children were small I took a decision that I would leave England when they complete their studies. In 1995, I decided to leave England and return to serve my motherland.

What are your hobbies?

My hobbies are reading, writing and also theatre, which has always been my passion.

What do you think about the young generation of theatre artists?

The new generation of theatre artists is well informed. They are more knowledgeable than my generation. But there are so many negative points in some of the young artist. They lack the habit of reading, which is an important element for an artist or to any individual. They have lost values. Some of the dramatists are not Sinhala culture bound. They feel disgraced when they are invited to act in a Sinhala drama. They should be able to act in both Sinhala and as well as a English plays.

What do you think of today's theatre world compared to the past?

Our generation is totally different from today's generation. We did not work for money. For us theatre was a passion and an addiction. There was only handful of people who were involved in theatre during our time.

But, today, we see so many artists enter the world of theatre, which is a good sign. Some of today's dramatists not to produce original plays scripts or they do not even translate a play correctly.

Are you engaged in any new work?

Puchi Theatre is launching two short plays; one is Anton Chekhov's Proposal and Prof. Wimal Dissanayaka's Golu Birinda. We are also hoping to revive Nettukkari which became a hit in the 1960s



Research has found that men are less likely to divorce their partner if they work for between 40 to 50 hours a week.

Long working hours 'good for marriages'

by Bonnie Malkin in Sydney

The research has found that men are less likely to divorce their partner if they work for between 40 to 50 hours a week. About one in five Australian workers report logging 50 hours or more a week.

And if the extra hours are bringing in more money, it may be helping to keep the marriage together, Melbourne Institute economist Mark Wooden said.

The optimal work arrangement appears to be where the man works a 41- to 49-hour week, Professor Wooden told the Australian newspaper. Beyond this, the risk of separation does rise, but it is still lower than for couples where the male works a 35- to 40-hour work week.

Professor Wooden used data which tracked Australian families between 2002 and 2006, to conclude that long work hours do not result in higher divorce rates.

While surveys have consistently found people believe long hours are detrimental for personal relationships there are few, if any, studies providing evidence of clear causal links between long work weeks, especially when worked by the husband, and subsequent marital separation or divorce, the report notes. Indeed, recent studies conducted in both the US and The Netherlands suggest that, if anything, the probability of divorce falls with the number of hours worked by the husband.

Professor Wooden said income played a part in the chances of divorce, with the probability of separation falling the higher the income level of the male.

Roaming producer

with my friends I used to go to the cinema four or five times a week. We never missed a movie that came to Colombo. We did not have the tuition menace and no one forced me to do anything that I despised.

I was the only direct entrant to the University of Ceylon (University of Peradeniya). It was there that I got involved in theatre and also writing. I used to write to magazines and newspapers. My first article appeared in the Dina dina. Later I joined Lake House as a journalist.

What about school life?

I really enjoyed my school life. I was a very boisterous child in school. I was expelled from two schools. In my primary school in Ahungalla, I was expelled after I was caned by the headmaster. I had a fight with a friend and injured his head during the fight. After that incident, for one year I didn't go to school. During that period, my thirst for literature began.

The first Sinhala novel I read was Sunethra. The story still haunts me.

I was a hardworking student and was determined to complete my studies, but I was never a bookworm. I did participate in sports activities and also in literature programmes during my school days.

Was there sibling rivalry?

I used to go home very rarely since I had



A rehearsal