

LATE GENERAL RANJAN WIJERATNE
“KAPATI ARAKSHAKAYA” GURU – 1947 – Sisira Nanayakkara

Lest we forget him I thought I will bring back memories of the capabilities and **Lighter Side** of the **General** in his College days – writer and he both around 17 years of age – 1947!

His decision to produce the play “Kapati Arakshakaya” of Eddie Jayamanne & B A W Jayamanne – not the **tragedy** of the main story but the **comedy part**.

He roped in a few of us – Warnekulasuriya (Banneji) who was Jacob (Eddie.J. role of night School Master), Piyasena Obey as Supina (Jemini Kantha’s role of an adult pupil, your truly as the Manager of the School (Played by Mark Samaranayeka) who got his just **desserts** trying to put a break to Supina (School Masters “Catch”), S J M Gunasekera, Rex Wanigasekera (Nakia) and a few others whom I can’t quite remember.! “Ranjan” did not take part but played the role of producer.

Next we walked in to Dr.Hayman’s Office and Ranjan broached the subject and asked for the College Van (A Blue Bradford) to go to Badulla and watch the film running to packed houses. Dr. Hayman not only responded but even gave the money for our trip – a princely sum of Rs.25/-?

I can now recall how Ranjan while watching the film pulled out a torch and note book and took down salient points in the dialogue. Thereafter on our return he wrote to B A W J., got his okay for us to proceed with the play and even sent the script and all the songs in the comedy part.

Now we stated the rehearsals under Mr. Kularatne (Kulta), his **out of tune Serapina** providing the music and after about two weeks the great day arrived. Stage setting and all arrangements were supervised by Ranjan and each one of us arranged to get our respective costumes from our homes.

Curtain opened at 6.30 p.m – Dining Hall packed to capacity with Dr.& Mars.Hayman and the entire staff in the 1st Class. For the cast to be displayed Ranjan did a Novel thing to put all the names (In one foot letters) and the role played by each one of us on a large white bed sheet and devised a way for the sheet to be drawn across the stage from left to right!.

Once the applause and **Cat Calls** came to a halt the action started and the entire hall enjoyed the performance and at Curtain fall it was continues applause.

I think Warnekulasuriya (Jacob) did Eddie J's part to perfection and Piyasena Obey (Supina) did a difficult role of a village dame very well. After that for days we used to sing the duets of Eddie and Jemini Kantha whenever we met of an evening and upto now I can remember most of them. Later on in life I might mention that Eddie – the King of Comedy and Rukmani – the Queen of melody – were very close family friends of ours and I even got Eddie to perform at one of our shows “Thomian Review” at Ladies College Hall which was a roaring success!

Of this cast I am sad to say Ranjan and Warnekulasuriya are no more, Piyasena Obey is in U K, living in retirement and Rex (Nakiya) in Akuressa on his estate. May be some sweet day we might meet again and act “Kapati Arakshakaya” in some other place.

This is sent to recall to memory the wonderful times at Guru, and as a tribute to a friend who was my Classmate and Cricket Team Buddy along with his brother Jagath.

Sisira Nanayakkara (Nana as I was called at Guru)
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