

PEOPLE AND PLACES IN THE NOVELS OF MARTIN WICKRAMASINGHE AND K. JAYATILAKE: A LITERARY-GEOGRAPHIC STUDY

by

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Introduction

In a broad sense, it can be said that literature deals with man and his interaction with the society and the environment. Hence, literary sources can be and have been utilized to extract information not only about man's social relations but also about every aspect of life including the regional landscape that surrounds him. More than any other literary genre, the novel can rightly be considered as dwelling on the concept of realism.

'Can we imagine a novel that was entirely false to historical and social reality and was yet a coherent and self-consistent work of art? No. If there were such a thing we should not call it a novel, but a fantasy or a romance'.¹

Therefore, in spite of the fictive quality, the novel remains a reliable source of information on man and everything that surrounds him. Among other features, characterization and the location of characters in time and space are significant qualities of the novel.

It is an accepted fact that the novelist functions with his experiences and imagination.

'In one way and another I have used in my writings whatever has happened to me in the course of my life. Sometimes an experience I have had has served as a theme and I have invented a series of incidents to illustrate it, more often I have slightly or intimately acquainted and used them as the foundation for characters of my invention'.²

These lines show how Somerset Maugham operated between fact and imagination in writing his fiction. An examination of the works of writers like Dickens, Balzac, Tolstoy, Mark Twain, Hemingway and Sholokov would reveal that their stories have been set on the soil in which they were most familiar. This is true of the Sinhala writers, too.

This brief introduction suffices to justify our subject, namely, a literary-geographic study of the people and the places that have been described in

the novels of Martin Wickramasinghe and K. Jayatilake. For the simple reason that the authors have been inclined to concentrate on their own home regions, we hope to pay special attention to their respective localities. In this exercise a certain work may reveal more information relevant to the subject while another may do less, but it has to be clearly said that the availability of such information does not reflect, by any means, the literary quality of the work. In other words our attempt is a literary-geographic examination and not a literary evaluation.³

Background of the Authors

Martin Wickramasinghe (1891-1967) was born in Koggala, a coastal village in the Southern Province, ten miles to the south of Galle. His father, a village-headman, died when Wickramasinghe was eight years old. He had his early education under the village teacher in the *Gurugedara* and in the village temple and later attended the Buonavista English School in Galle for a short period. When his father died, he rejoined the village school until he was fourteen. When the burden of his large family fell on him he left Koggala for Colombo and distant Batticaloa in search of employment until he finally settled down in Colombo. Nevertheless, Wickramasinghe did not sever the village ties. On the contrary he had an undiminishing love for his birth place and village life.

‘ගම, උපනගරය, මහානගරය, පවිත්‍රය, යන සතර පළමු ජීවත්වන මැද පංති ජනායාගේ අදිසි පොරයට අසු වූ මමද එහි හවුල් කාරයකු වී හෙමබත්වීමෙන් ලත් අත්දැකීම් ඇත්තෙමි.’⁴

I have experience as a participant and as a person tired of being entangled in the hidden struggle of the middle-class dwelling in the village, the town, the city and the educated world.⁵

As enunciated by himself, Wickramasinghe's imagination seems to revolve round the four centres mentioned above.

Martin Wickramasinghe has authored, among other works, twelve novels and over a hundred short stories. We confine our discussion, mainly to the following works : *Gamperaliya* (1944), *Yugāntaya* (1949), *Virāgaya* (1956), *Kali Yugaya* (1957) and *Karuwata Gedara* (1963).

K. Jayatilake, now aged 57, was born in Kannimahara of the Siyane Korale in the District of Colombo (now Gampaha). This is an interior village 25 miles to the East of Colombo. His parents owned ‘sufficient land, if well managed, to provide a good living’, but his father who by profession may be called a cultivator, had not managed affairs sufficiently well. Jayatilake attended the vernacular school at Radavana until he passed the Senior

School Certificate examination. After attempting various odd jobs in the locality he moved to Colombo at the age of eighteen and worked as a clerk until he started his own book enterprise. Even as a young man he had been interested in literary activities and had never lost contact with his place of birth.⁶ Later he obtained the Bachelor of Arts Degree from the London University.

K. Jayatilake has so far authored twelve novels, five collections of short stories, a large number of children's books and other literary works. We confine our discussion to the following novels : *Parājitayo* (1960), *Aprasanna Kathāvak* (1962), *Carita Tunak* (1963), *Delovāta Neti Aya* (1964), *Pitāmaha* (1966), *Kālo Ayan Te* (1968), and *Rājapaksha Valavva* (1980).

A remarkable feature about the two authors is that each of them had completely a different imaginary world of his own, particularly, in respect of the geographical location of their novels. The axis around which the characters revolve in the works of Wickramasinghe is Koggala, his birth place. Similarly, it is Kannimahara from where the major part of the action takes place in the works of Jayatilake. While Wickramasinghe's world extends mainly between Matara and Colombo, we see the imagination of Jayatilake covering mainly the area between Yakkala and Colombo.

For convenience of analysis we divide the geographical space covered by each author into three regions, namely, (a) Locality, (b) City and (c) Extended region. We give below the analysis of the areal distribution of places in each of their works.

(The main centre/centres of action is/are in dark type while places receiving passing mention are marked by asterisks).

Places mentioned in the novels of Wickramasinghe

Work	Locality	City	Extended Region
<i>Gamperaliya</i>	Koggala Galle Matara* Katukurunda* Paragoda Yatagoda* Piyadigama* Ahangama* Veligama* Ginivella*	Colombo Mutwal Slave Island Maradana Borella*	Bibile* Meegahakivula* Ekiriyankumbura* Bintenna* Badulla* Diyatalava* Pelmadulla* Ratnapura* Balangoda* Batticaloa* Kalmune* Monaragala* Vellavaya* Hambantota* Koslanda* Horana*

Work	Locality	City	Extended Region
			Panadura* Tangalla* Gandara* Dikvella* Beliatta* Lunava* Negombo*
<i>Kaliyugaya</i>	Koggala Paragoda* Galle* Veligama*	Colombo Mutwal Cinnamon Gardens*	Nuvaraaliya* Kandy* Ramboda* Bentota* Denipitiya*
<i>Yugāntaya</i>	Koggala Galle Matara Veligama	Colombo Cinnamon Gardens Slave Island Pancikavatta	Deniyaya Moratuwa Panadura Egodauyana Aluthgama Kosgoda Ambalangoda Bentota Balapitiya Akuressa Kataragama* Nuvaraaliya*
<i>Virāgaya</i>	Koggala (Implied) Ginpataliya* Getamanna* Galle*		
<i>Karuwala Gedara</i>	Koggala Galle Kamburugamuva Katukurunda* Talpe* Maraduvela* Malapalava*	Colombo Bambalapitiya Cinnamon Gardens Pettah*	

Locality of Wickramasinghe

An examination of the above table shows that Koggala is given sufficient attention even in works where a major part of the action lies elsewhere. Among his novels, *Gamperaliya* and *Karuwala Gedara* contain a wealth of information about Koggala and its surroundings.

With regard to time, Wickramasinghe's first account of Koggala begins in the month of April 1904 (*Gam.*⁷ p. 7) and is continued until its evacuation by the villagers to be converted into an airforce base during the Second World War. In fact *Karuwala Gedara* records that when Sirimal went back to Koggala after one year of its abandonment by the military authorities, he could find only the dilapidated walls of their house (*Karug.*⁸ pp. 210-11).

'කොළඹ දැන් පාළුයි. ගමේ කවුරුන් දැන් එහේ නෑ.' (*Karug.* p. 216)

Now, Koggala is desolate. No one from the village lives there now.

Karuwala Gedara ends with this lamentable note.

Going back to Koggala of the first decade of this century, as depicted in *Gamperaliya* it was a stretch of low-lying land, without mountains or steeps, bordering the sea on one side and the Koggala Oya on the other. Through this stretch of land ran the road connecting Galle and Matara. Parallel to the road, at a higher elevation, was the railway line. The *Hirigal Devāle* also called *Devāle Gāta*, the coral-limestone rock by the side of the railway line was a significant landmark. Like unto a giant it had withstood the ravages of the sun, rain and wind in addition to the attempts of destruction by man (*Gam.* pp. 1-2).

The soil was alluvial and damp and the vegetation evergreen. Coconut constituted the main crop. There grew other trees such as breadfruit, jak and cashewnut. Behind the solitary coral-limestone rock was a thicket where trees and shrubs such as *bovitiyā*, *andanahiriyā*, *gandapānā*, *burulla*, *baludan*, *mādan*, *pera* and *kaduru* grew (*Gam.* p. 3). *Kirala*, a special fruit tree of the area, along with *kadol* grew on river banks. Along the sea-shore grew thickets of *tolaba* and *vātakeyyā* (*Karug.* p. 56). Different varieties of yams such as *ala* and *batala* (sweet-potatoes) and fruits were grown and were often sold in the market-place.

The Koggala Oya, not just a river but one of the largest natural lakes in the country has been the subject of vivid description by the author. There was a *gamsabhā pāra* (meaning a road maintained by the Village Council, usually not tarred) leading to the ferry on the bank of the lake. This road was sheltered by trees, shrubs and creepers that grew on either side (*Karug.* p. 72). Apart from the *gamsabhā pāra* there was at least one narrow footpath leading to the ferry. Because of the thick shelter of trees and creepers, the soil was always damp. There were many water-courses, too. A person trudging the footpath had to be cautious of the leeches that abound the area (*Gam.* p. 125).

Koggala on the whole was a marshy plain and leeches were in plenty even in the thickets (*Karug.* p. 107). The thicket was full of varieties of birds with feathers of diverse hues (*Karug.* p. 73).

‘පළින් පල පිහිටි දූපත් රාශියක් හා දියෙන් උඩට නැගී සිටින මහා ගල්කුළු ද දැනී කොළඹල සිය සමබ්බක අතුළ මහා තුන්තනාගම් තහඩුවක් වැන්න’.
(*Karug.* p. 73)

The scattering of islands and the huge rocks rising above the waters of the Koggala Oya have been compared to a (corrugated) sheet of zinc spread on a flat land.⁹

We cannot expect a local writer to give descriptions of climatic conditions or drastic seasonal changes, for such phenomena do not affect the life of the people as much as in European countries. However, references have been made to periods of rain and drought. During the dry season the tiled roofs of houses get so heated that the males prefer to be naked above the waist (*Vir.*¹⁰ pp. 38-39). Wickramasinghe makes mention of the months of *Mādin* (February-March), *Bak* (March-April), and *Vesak* (April-May) as the dry period of the year. There was neither rain nor storm but there were dry winds during these months according to the author. This was the season when Jak, Mango and Cashew trees bore fruit (*Kali.*¹¹ p. 142). February, coming within the North-East Monsoonal season is a dry month in the South-Western region where Koggala is situated. However, March and April are associated with inter-monsoonal rains. We have no reason to consider the drought during the above months as an aberration of the normal pattern, for, according to the author this period had been dry successively for over six years (*Kali.* p. 142). This may be a misperception of meteorological reality on the part of the author. References have been made to periods of rain accompanied by strong winds. October was such a month with heavy inter-monsoonal rains.

Places mentioned in the Novels of Jayatilake

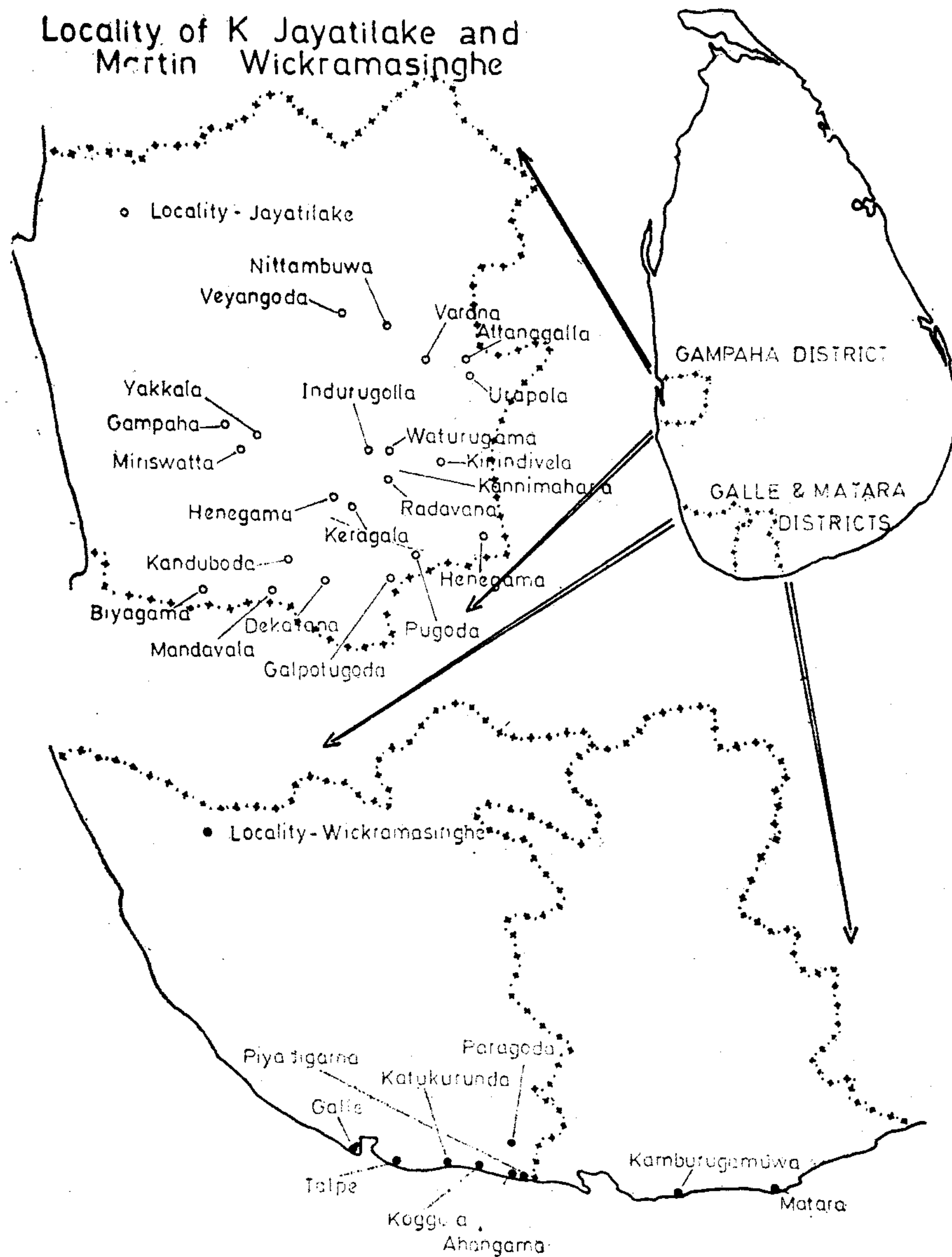
Work	Locality	City	Extended Region
<i>Parājitayo</i>	Kannimahara (Implied) Gampaha*	Colombo Ketavalamulla Maradana Aluthkade* Kuppriyavatta* Pancikavatta*	Kelaniya Navala
<i>Aprasanna Kathāvak</i>	Kannimahara Radavana Batalavatta* Gampaha* Vaturugama Pinvatta* Dekatana* Mandavala* Urapola* Henegama* Biyagama* Bogahavatta* Indurugolla* Varana* Maligatenna* Attanagalla* Keragala* Danavkanda* Valgama* Yakkala* Kirindivela* Amitirigala*	Colombo* Pettah* Maradana* Wellawatta*	Lunava* Negombo* Dambulla* Aranayaka* Peliyagoda* Belunmahara*
<i>Carita Tunak</i>	Kannimahara (Kokilana)		

	Nittambuva* Mandavala* Paranagama* Gampaha* Radavana* Mirisvatta*		
<i>Delvata Neli Aya</i> +	Kannimahara Kirindivela* Gampaha* Radavana* Pinvatta* Indurugolla* Yakkala* Veyangoda*	Colombo Cinnamon Gardens Borella Maradana Aluthkade Bambalapitiya* Wellawatta* Galkisas*	Angoda* Nugegoda* Panadura* Kalutara* Ambalangoda* Balapitiya* Hiniduma* Galle* Veligama* Matara* Ambalantota* Mulkirigala* Tissa* Dumbara* Kandy* Anuradhapura* Polonnaruva* Jaffna* Puttalam* Chilaw* Negombo* Wattala* Kandana* Jaela*
<i>Pitamaha</i>	Kannimahara Radavana* Kirindivela* Gampaha* Batadole*		Vaharaka
<i>Kalo Ayan Te</i>	Kannimahara (Implied) Yakkala Gampaha* Pugoda* Galpotugoda* Kanduboda* Maligatenna*	Colombo*	Vaharaka Anuradhapura*
<i>Rajapaksha Valuva</i>	Kannimahara Radavana* Mandavala* Dompe* Valgampola*	Colombo*	Anuradhapura* Polonnaruva*

(+Note : *Delvata Neli Aya* being a political novel involving an Election campaign, passing mention is made of numerous places. We have not taken these places into consideration in our discussion)

Locality of Jayatilake

It is evident from the above analysis that the centre of action in the majority of his works is Kannimahara. Even in certain instances where the characters have not been given a specific home as in *Puncirala*, the author seems to be thinking in terms of his locality.



As mentioned earlier, Jayatilake published his first novel in 1960. Hence, it is likely that he is dealing with contemporary events. In other words his stories depict the home region of the latter half of this century while Wickramasinghe was concentrating on the first half.

To reach Kannimahara, one has to go along the Yakkala-Radavana bus route, on either side of which were large coconut estates (*Delova*.¹² p. 1).

Driving along the Colombo-Kandy road and turning off from Belummahara was a short-cut (*Apras*.¹³ p. 177). The large coconut estates, during the period under consideration, were owned by European or local landed proprietors. Much of the other available land was owned by two or three families (*Apras*. p. 25). The ordinary peasant owned very small extents or no land at all.

Situated within a distance of a few miles from the low country-up country boundary (*Apras*. p. 36), Jayatilake's locality is an area of undulating land with hills and plains. In the uplands coconuts were grown. There were also patches of uncleared jungle and stretches of paddy fields. A newly cleared jungle was called a *chena*.¹⁴ Dry grains like *kurakkan* and sesame were grown in addition to yams such as manioc and sweet-potatoes (*Carita*¹⁵ p. 40). Vegetables such as *Vātakolu*, *Patōla* and *Bandakka* were also grown in the *chena*.

Apart from Jak, Breadfruit, Mango, Cashew and other common trees, *Rambuṭan* was a special fruit tree in the locality (*Kālo*.¹⁶ pp. 123, 128 etc.). This area was suitable for the cultivation of Betel (*Carita*. p. 12). *Rambuṭan* and betel were good sources of income to the peasant. Pineapples were also grown (*Carita*. p. 117). In the jungle described by Jayatilake, such large trees as *Kahata*, *Godapara*, *Lunumidella*, *Hal*, *Mūnamal*, *Davaṭa* and wild breadfruit grew only intermittently. A good part of the jungle was covered with low shrubs such as *Kebella*, *Dan*, *Veraniya*, *Bombu*, *Kīna*, *Keppetiya*, *Eraminiya*, *Malkera* and *Pinna* (*Carita*. p. 34).

There was abundant rain during certain months. The channels overflowed the banks and sometimes breached thereby destroying the paddy fields during heavy rains (*Carita*. pp. 1-3). However, after the floods, paddy plants grew well due to sediments being deposited in the field. The fields were sown twice a year during *Maha* and *Yala* seasons (*Carita*. p. 4).

The soil was gravelly in the uplands and during the hot season it was hard to till but the soil in the lowlands was different. There was water in the fields, almost throughout the year.

‘කාස්ට්‍රය පොළොව කෙටීමෙන් වෙහෙසට පත් වන මේ උදුල්ල අතු පිංඤ් නැත්පත් කොට ඇලට ගොස් ඇඟ සෝදා ගනිමි. එහෙය ගොඩින් මෙහෙය ගොඩින් ගස් වැල් හේබා ගොස් පසුවත් පැහැගෙන ඇත. එහෙත් ඇල දිගේ ගලා යන දිය පහරින් කෙතමනෙකු ලබන කුඹුරුවල ගොයම...’ (*Kālo*. p. 6).

According to this passage, water seeping from the channel give sufficient moisture to the paddy fields and keep the plants green. However, there were occasional droughts with a terrible scarcity of water when even the fields got parched up and the water levels of both bathing and drinking wells dropped to the very bottom (*Carita*. pp. 68-69). February is mentioned as a dry month

(*Carita*, p. 68). During that particular year rains had come in the second week of April. April being a period of convectional activity the author has mentioned that rain was accompanied by thunder and lightning (*Carita*, p. 69). It is of interest to note that the month of April is traditionally associated with thunder (Bak maha akunu).

Village Life and People

Even a cursory glance at their works would show that the village life and the people depicted by our two authors are not identical. Of course, there is the difference of time. But the dissimilarity seems mainly due to the geographical location and other allied factors. Koggala is a coastal village while Kannimahara is a village in the interior. Further, Kannimahara of Jayatilake has not felt the influence of Western civilization to the extent that Koggala did.

Koggala being a coastal village, the inhabitants of which had been exposed to European influences for a long time, their outlook and the way of life were conditioned accordingly. Agriculture occupied a secondary place in the life of the people.

On the other hand, the mainstay of the people of Kannimahara was agriculture. A family which produced sufficient rice for its own consumption was considered well off. It goes without saying that such a family had other means to bring them sufficient money. Working in the paddy field has been considered as quite respectable. Even certain well to do men in the *Valavas* worked their paddy fields along with other cultivators. However, it appears that there had been a different attitude with regard to leasing out of *Rambutan* trees. A person who held *Rambutan* trees on lease was spoken of disparagingly even though it provided a good income (*Kālo* p. 124).

People in Koggala had a different outlook on life. Holding a lease on coconut trees was quite a respectable job as opposed to fishing which was a disrespectful pursuit (*Karug*, p. 13). Paddy cultivation does not come within their range of activities. The discussion that took place between Jamis, the match-broker and Kaisaruvatte amply illustrates the point.

“නවමත් සන්නෙ කුඹුරුවලින් ලැබෙන වීමයි. රට හාල් ඇටයක් ගෙදරට ගන්නේ නැහැ.”

‘වී විකක් ලැබුණාම ඔය හැටි කාරියක්ය ජේමිස්? හාල් දිය කරන්න තවත් භූහක් දේ ඕනැ. ඒවාට නොව වියදම් යන්නේ.’ (*Gam*, p. 66)

“Even today they consume the paddy obtained from their own fields Not a grain of imported rice do they take into the house,” (said Jamis).

“Oh is it so important that one gets some paddy from the fields. Jamis? Lot of other things are required to prepare a rice meal. Isn't it for these items that one has to spend money?”

It is possible to give examples of direct Western influence on the life of the people of Koggala. One was the bridal dress. Nanda's dress consisting of a gown, shoes, a fan, hand gloves etc. was a localized imitation of the Dutch lady's attire. In fact she was dressed by a Dutch woman invited for the occasion from Colombo. Nanda, the bride 'easily surpassed a pretty Dutch young lady from the city' (*Gam.* p. 197). This kind of bridal dress was not confined to the rich families alone for, the wedding dress of Laisa was much the same even though the items were hired or borrowed (*Gam.* p. 210). The custom of a bestman accompanying the groom was also followed. On the other hand, the people in Kannimahara do not seem to be aware of these new customs. In spite of the fact that Jayatilake was dealing with more recent times, Kannimahara appears to be a more rural locality than Koggala depicted by Wickramasinghe.

It is possible to gather further information about clothing from the novels of Wickramasinghe. The full dress of a young man with at least a little English education consisted of a pair of trousers, shirt, tie, coat, pair of shoes and hat. The cost of such a suit excluding the hat was in the region of Rs. 30.00 (*Gam.* p. 114). The wedding dress of Jinadasa consisted of a tweed cloth round the waist, shirt, tie, a tweed coat and a pair of shoes. (*Gam.* p. 70). The less affluent bridegroom of Laisa, too, wore a similar dress (*Gam.* p. 211). The description of the wedding photograph of Aravinda's parents gives an indication of the attire of the well to do people during the first half of this century. The bridegroom wore a cloth over the trousers and a coat stretching up to the knees. The dress also consisted of a tie, socks and shoes. The hair was tied in a knot and on the teapoy by a side was a black top-hat. The bride was dressed in a gown. She wore hand gloves and on one hand held a fan (*Vir.* p. 28). In contrast, the wedding attire of Aravinda's sister and brother-in-law seemed modern and simple. The sister wore a sari and blouse and held a bouquet of flowers in her hands while the bridegroom wore a coat and trousers (*Vir.* p. 28). The older people were in the habit of combing the hair into a knot at the back of the head in addition to wearing a crescent-shaped comb on the head (*Gam.* p. 63). Tinan, the fisherman wore a loin-cloth and a sarong (*Karug.* p. 10). The dress of a peasant in Kannimahara, the locality of Jayatilake, appears to be much the same. It is said that when Isa's father visited his relatives living a few miles away, he had to borrow/hire a shirt from the washerman (*Carita.* p. 12). The dress of Ranjit, the school master consisted of a shirt, coat, a tweed cloth and of course shoes (*Carita.*

p. 81). Older women in Koggala as well as in Kannimahara wore the *Kambāya* while the younger ones preferred the chintz cloth. Working women wore no jacket but only a cloth up to the breasts (*Gam.* p. 125).

With regard to housing, the well to do people, both in Koggala and Kannimahara built houses of brick walls and tile roofs. Other houses were built of mud (*māṭi*) walls and tiled or cadjan roofs. The original home of Tinan had mud walls while the new house was built of bricks. Wickremasinghe in *Gamperaliya* gives a vivid picture of *Mahagedara*, home of Kaisaruwatte Muhandiram and also of the more recent house built by Piyal. Jayatilake gives a similar picture of the *Rājapaksha valavva*. This being the residence of a traditional aristocrat, was a massive two-storeyed building, now in the process of decay. It consisted of a middle compound (*Mādamidula*) behind the two-storeyed main building. On the other three sides were rows of rooms and the kitchen (*Rājap.*¹⁷ pp. 27-30). Not far from the *valavva* were other buildings including the stable, the store-house for paddy, servants' quarters etc.

Jayatilake gives more information with regard to material used for building walls of houses. The walls of the village temple were built of *kabook*. The wall, about two feet wide was plastered with *kiri-māṭi* (a kind of white mud available in the locality; kaolin) From the description this temple appears to be an old building (*Kālo.* p. 158). Jayatilake also gives a vivid picture of the houses belonging to those of lesser affluence.

‘අපේ ගේ ගමේ වූ ගෙවලින් වැඩි හරියක් මෙන් ම මිටි ටහලකින් යුත් දිගටි හැඩයේ එකක් විය. ටහල අද්දරට ම වන සේ තාප්ප නියා දෙමැටි ගසා වැලි කපරාරු කර ක්ෂු ඛිත්තිවල අම්මා සෑම අවුරුද්දක් ආසන්නයේදී ම කිරිමැටි උලන නමුත් නොබෝ දිනකින් ඒවා සේදී ගොස් පාඨ පැහැයක් ගෙන දෙමින් වැලි මැටිට මතු වෙයි’ (*Carita.* p. 37).

Like most other houses in the village our house, too, was low-roofed and elongated. The walls came right up to the roof. The *tāppa* walls were given a coating of mud and another of a mixture of mud and sand. On each new year's eve mother applies a coating of *kiri māṭi* (white mud) on the walls but in a few days the *kirimāṭi* washes off exposing the mud coating and giving a gloomy look.

It is of interest to note that Jayatilake makes mention of two kinds of mud walls, *viz.* *tāppa* and *varicci* (*Carita.* p. 48; *Apras.* p. 125.) Wickramasinghe, too, speaks of houses with mud walls (*Karug.* p. 8). He has also mentioned *varicci* walls¹⁸ but it is not clear whether he really meant a differentiation because the sandy soil in Koggala, we know, is not really suitable for the construction of *tāppa* walls.¹⁹

The people in Wickramasinghe's locality, on the whole, have been depicted as a commercially and business oriented group. Although paddy cultivation was not unfamiliar to them, Koggala itself had no paddy fields. One had to go a few miles inland to come across paddy fields. Perhaps, this explains why they were not agriculturally but commercially inclined. It is significant that Wickramasinghe does not make any description of paddy cultivation or any other agricultural pursuit. Coconut trees are mentioned as grown in all available highland including the sea shore but there is hardly any evidence of any of his characters taking to planting. However, the author has given a vivid description of how Vimal, the second son of Tinan, gets the best produce out of the trees that he holds on lease. Cattle are tethered to each and every coconut tree so as to loosen the soil around the trees by being trampled underfoot. Cow dung and urine are added to the soil in this process. This serves as a valuable but inexpensive fertilizer (*Karug.* p. 108). Another coconut fertilizer available at no cost was *kohubat* (coir-dust) (*Karug.* p. 44).

The coconut tree offered the people in Koggala a variety of occupations. One was holding them on lease. Vimal earned a substantial income this way. Later he switched over to the copra business. Making coir-yarn was a popular cottage industry. The shallow waters of the Koggala Oya and man-made ditches were used to soak coconut husks. These soaked husks were pounded, dried and turned into coir-yarn. Tinan went from house to house collecting coconut husks. He also bought coir-yarn and took them to the market place for sale. Piyal's mother employed women to make coir-yarn on a large scale.

Certain well-to-do men kept *chekkus* to extract coconut oil out of copra. *Karuwala Gedara* gives a vivid picture of the *chekku* owned by Tinan. From time to time he took a cart-load of barrels of coconut oil or poonac to Galle for sale.

There is evidence to believe that a good number of men and women engaged themselves in occupations associated with the coconut tree. In addition, certain people, mainly women made good money as petty pawn-brokers. Piyal's mother and Tinan's wife were clever pawn-brokers. Wickramasinghe gives a vivid picture of how certain young women occupy themselves in *Beeralu* (lace) knitting during the day and in making coir-yarn by hand at night (*Karug.* p. 39).

The other major occupation of the people in Koggala was fishing. However, fishing does not seem to have been considered a respectable job. When Tinan advanced in age and showed signs of success in other trades his wife and relatives requested him to give up fishing on the ground that it was sinful, though in fact what they meant was 'fishing is a disrespectful job' (*Karug.* pp. 12-13). Nevertheless, it appears that a large section of the people en-

gaged themselves in fishing for their livelihood. Hence, Wickramasinghe's novels abound with detailed and realistic descriptions of inland and coastal fishing, boat riding, net weaving and allied activities. It is of interest to note that his novels do not contain information on off-sea fishing. However, he has given a good account of off-shore fishing in his childhood memories, *Madolduva*.²⁰

The following passage is an account of coastal fishing:

'වෙරළට ප්‍රභාවන තිනන් සරම ගලවා හිසෙහි දවවා ගනියි. අමුධය ඇති ඔහු දූල කරින් ගෙන දණට ප්‍රභවන කරමට දියට බැස ඇවිදියි. විදුරු දියාරුවක් වැනි කරිප්පෙහි පිනන මාළුවන් දකින විගස ඔහු දූල කරින් ගෙන විදහා තුන්හුලස් කොට, නමාගන්නා දකුණු අතෙහි එල්ලෙන දූල්පට අල්ලා ගනියි. ඔහු මුවකුට පිදිනු පිණිස දුනුදිය අදින වැද්දකුගේ විලාසය ගන්නේ මේ අවස්ථාවෙහිය. ඔහුගේ අතින් විහිදෙන දූල මහා වට්ටියක් සේ විසිරී අහසට නැග 'කරාස්' හඬින් මුහුදෙහි වැටෙයි. ඔහු දූල බරුවැල ප්‍රහින්ම අල්ලා එක්කොටගෙන වෙරළට යයි. දූල් කොණ හිසට උඩින් අල්ලා සොලවයි. දූලෙහි බැඳුණු මාලුවෝ බිම වැටෙති. තිනන් උන් අල්ලා මල්ලෙහි දමයි. මල්ල ඉනෙහි බැඳගෙන ඔහු යළිත් මුහුදට බසියි.' (*Karug*, pp. 10-11).

Arriving on the beach Tinan removes his sarong and wraps it round his head. Wearing only a loin-cloth, he takes the net on his shoulder and wades knee high into the water. The moment he sees the roaming fish in the liquid glass like sea water, the net is removed from the shoulder and held in a triangular form in his right hand. Now he resembles a hunter drawing his bow at a deer. The net when released from his hand spreads out in a circle and rises in the sky to fall on sea water making a 'kraas' sound. Holding the net folded at its ends he walks back to the beach. Then he raises the end of the net head-high and empties it for the fish to fall on the sand. Next he collects them in his bag and tucking it in at the waist goes back again to the water.

Such older men like Tinan, through long years of experience could predict the weather by looking at the sky. As Tinan was once rowing a canoe, the sky was bright and the heat excessive. He spotted a hawk flying high up in the sky. Tinan soon turned the canoe back predicting a storm and rain. Within a quarter of an hour heavy rain fell accompanied by strong winds (*Karug*, p. 17).

High and low tides, so familiar to those in the coastal areas have often been mentioned by Wickramasinghe.

The author has described at least three methods of inland fishing in detail. One is fishing with a net (*Gam*, p. 88), very likely in the manner that

Tinan did on the beach. The other method is the use of the *Bilipitta* where the fisherman uses a rod tied to a line, at the end of which is a fish-hook with bait. The rod fishing is done from the river bank itself or sometimes the fisherman would do so in the lake on a boat. Two or more rods are sometimes used simultaneously (*Gam.* p. 44). The third method is the use of the *Atanguva* (hand-net). Here the fisherman fixes a fence across or half way through the river. Small branches of trees and creepers are fixed to the fence so as to prevent the fish from escaping. This is done many months in advance, sometimes seven or eight. On the morning of an appointed day, the fence is carefully lifted and the sides brought together, thus making the area smaller and smaller for the fish to get trapped in. Then a fisherman gets in and catches the fish with the *Atanguva*. The fish thus caught are passed on to a boat. Such a fishing operation provides entertainment even to the onlookers (*Gam.* p. 126). Wickramasinghe also records children catching small fish in the beach using a cloth as the net (*Karug.* p. 10).

K. Jayatilake on the other hand does not seem to be familiar in this area. In one place he gives an account of catching fish in a mud-hole by the side of a paddy field during a drought. Here the water is emptied before catching the fish. The varieties of fish caught are *Madakanaya*, *Magura* and *Ankutta* (*Pitā.*²¹ p. 27). These fish are called *velmālu* (fish from the paddy field) as opposed to *mūdumālu* (sea-fish) or *gammālu* (river-fish) available in Koggala. Wickramasinghe mentions many kinds of fish, of both varieties, such as *Vekku*, *Korali*, *Katumessa*, *penna*, *godaya*, *beella*, *badora* (*Gam.* p. 126), *olaya*, *parātiya*, *ranna* etc. (*Karug.* p. 54). This list includes both sea-water and fresh-water fish. Incidentally, the Koggala Oya is a common ground for both varieties of fish.

The above discussion shows that in Koggala people engage themselves in two main occupations. One is fishing, the other being a variety of trades associated with coconuts. Some people used to go up-country (*Udarata*) to become *mudalalis* (petty-businessmen). Jinadasa opted to go to *Sinhale* and not to the up-country because he thought that the money he had was not sufficient to open up a boutique there (*Gam.* p. 151). With his English education and skill, Piyal became a large-scale businessman in Colombo. Thus we see that Wickramasinghe was dealing, mainly, with a commercially oriented group of people in his locality.

The locality of Jayatilake is, on the whole, an agricultural one. His works are full of detailed accounts of paddy cultivation from ploughing to harvesting and threshing as well as other activities linked to agriculture.

‘කිරි වැදුණු ගොයම් ද දැන් පැසිගෙන එයි. කොළහට පැහැල්ලු ගොයම් කරලේල වී ඇට ක්‍රමයෙන් පිරි බරවී දැකැති මෙන් නැමී යයි. නැමී ගිය ගොයම්

කරලේ රන්වන් පැහැයක් ගනිමින් පැසෙයි. රන්වන් ගොයම් කරලේ වෙල්යාය දිගේ හමාගෙන එන සුළං පහරට නැමී සෙලවෙන්නේ කාලයකට අනුවය. මම නොයෙක් විට දවල් කාලයේත් සවසත් එහි ගොස් ඉහළ අහසේ වළාකුළුවල සෙවණැලි එකිනෙක පැසුණු කුඹුරු දිගේ පාවී යන සැටි බලා සිටිමි.' (*Carita* pp. 21-22)

The tender, sappy ears of paddy are now ripening. The pale green eared grains of paddy, light as they are, gradually mature and bend like sickles due to their weight. The bent ears of paddy ripen in a golden hue and sway rhythmically in the breeze that blow across the paddy fields. Quite often, during day and in the evening, I watch the shadows of clouds, one by one, passing over the ripened field.

The paddy fields are sown twice a year during *Maha* and *Yala* seasons. Sometimes, at the time of ripening the fields get infested with pest-flies. Jayatilake gives a vivid description of how the cultivator gets rid of flies. Old rags are torn into thin strips and fixed loosely to a long coir-yarn. This is then soaked in resin oil. Two men holding either end of the yarn walk along the bunds of the field so that the strips of rag soaked in oil pass through the ripening ears (*Carita*. p. 16). This process, continued for a couple of days, twice daily, would drive away the flies due to the smell of resin oil.²²

In *Carita Tunak* there is an interesting account of the traditional *Tattumāru* system of paddy cultivation by co-parceners. The English version of the relevant passage is as follows :

The paddy field of Pallekade is cultivated by co-parceners under the *tattumāru* system. We owned only a one-eighth of the field. Hence we get the chance of cultivating it only once in eight years. Since the ownership rotated among these eight owners from year to year, no one took the trouble to fertilize it. Every single co-parcener thought that if he were to use fertilizers this year, someone else too would obtain a good harvest the following year. For this reason the harvest from the field as usual remains very poor. (*Carita*. p. 4).

We see that life in the locality of Jayatilake is dominated by paddy cultivation. Both rich and poor alike engaged themselves in other agricultural pursuits, too. There were the landed proprietors who owned large coconut plantations. The Saram Estate which had a European superintendent by the name of Martinus has been mentioned (*Delova*. p. 7). Then there were the well-to-do families living in *valavvas*, viz. the *valavva* of Patakada Ralahamy, the Batadolē *valavva* and the Rājapaksha *valavva*. They consisted of the traditional aristocracy. By virtue of their ancestry, land ownership and wealth, they commanded respect and authority. They got the poor people to work their lands for wages or other benefits. The typical cultivator was the person

who owned and worked lesser extents of land. In the cultivator families, men and women and even grown up children worked the lands, particularly the fields. After the harvesting season, they were inclined to spend the time leisurely. Some engaged themselves in gambling (*Carita*. p. 33). That was the time they devoted for the cultivation of vegetables, yams, betel, etc. Meanwhile some would work as masons, carpenters, etc. or as labourers. The tapping of *Kitul* trees for toddy, treacle or jaggery gave them an additional income. However, toddy-tapping, being illegal, was a risk.

A typical village such as Kannimahara according to Jayatilake consisted of a temple, a tea boutique, a boutique where medicinal herbs and household requisites were sold and a stretch of paddy fields. Every village or a group of villages, essentially, had a school teacher, a village headman, a registrar of marriages births and deaths, a native physician, a thief, a ruffian, an *upāsaka* and a Buddhist monk (*Delova*. p. 7). The womenfolk help the men in working the paddy fields particularly during harvesting time.

Divisions of caste exist among the Sinhalese. Wickramasinghe's works are reticent about caste although it can be surmised that his characters belong, mainly, to one particular caste. In fact this is evident from *Gamperaliya* (*Gam*. p. 12). Jayatilake, on the other hand, has not been shy of exposing this social stratification. His village consists of people of different castes. Being aware of their position they live in harmony. The *Rājapaksha Valavva* deals with the experiences of an educated young man, belonging to a so-called low caste who by virtue of his education reaches a higher position.

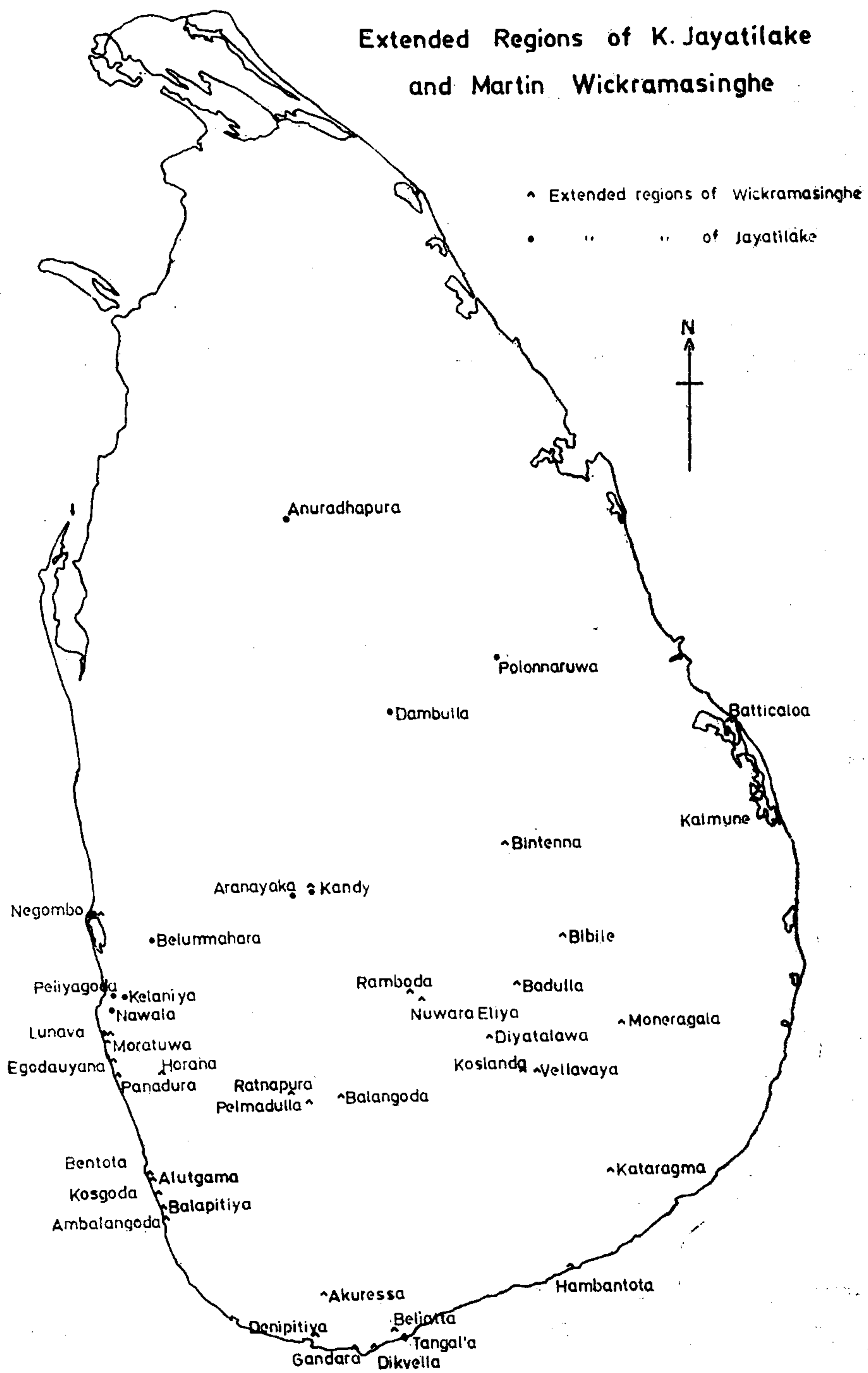
Extended Regions

The locality of Wickramasinghe with Koggala at its axis stretches along the coast between Galle and Matara. Jayatilake's locality with Kannimahara at the axis is limited to the area bounded by Gampaha, Yakkala, Veliveriya, Dompe, Nittambuva, Pasyala and Veyangoda. The novels of both our writers show their familiarity with the City of Colombo.

The extended region of Wickramasinghe lies, roughly, south of a line between Colombo and Batticaloa while that of Jayatilake, roughly, covers a triangle within Colombo, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura.

Wickramasinghe has made a differentiation between the Wet Zone and the Dry Zone. The Dry Zone has been referred to as *Sinhale*. In *Sinhale Jinadasa* frequents places such as Bibile, Meegahakivula, Ekiriyankumbura, Bintenna and Badulla. Hence, we have to assume that the author has taken these places as belonging to *Sinhale*. People dreaded to go to *Sinhale* because of the drought and the prevalence of malaria (*Gam*. p. 116).

Extended Regions of K. Jayatilake and Martin Wickramasinghe



Jayatilake also makes mention of the Northern Dry Zone and its susceptibility to drought and malaria. A teacher attached to a school in the Kurunegala District had died of malaria (*Carita*. p. 78).

Jayatilake's novels contain comparatively less information about his extended region, except perhaps in *Matu Sambandhai* where an account is given about the life in a colonization scheme off Hingurakgoda. What interests us in that account is, perhaps, the use of hand tractors used for ploughing (*Matu*.²⁴ p. 35). Vaharaka, not far from Kannimahara, to the east is hilly terrain where rubber is extensively grown (*Kalo*. pp. 23 and 41). Plumbago mining has been mentioned as another important industry in Vaharaka (*Kalo*. p. 37).

Going back to the extended region of Wickramasinghe, mention is made of large rubber plantations and paddy fields even within a few miles towards the interior from Koggala. The author also speaks of tea plantations in Deniyaya. Here again, more than the cultivation of tea, he has discussed the life of the people in that region. Deniyaya is depicted as a tea growing hilly country where Tamil labourers and Sinhalese villagers live. Tamil women pluck tea leaves. The villagers do the weeding round the bushes.

The majority of the villagers lived in small thatched houses with mud walls. Houses of brick walls and tiled roofs were rare but these houses, too, looked old and dilapidated (*Yuga*.²⁵ p. 74). The number of residents in each family, according to the author, varies from three to eight. The father was the chief bread-winner. Sometimes when the father was either unemployed or too lazy to work the mother worked for wages. These villagers suffered from malnutrition (*Yuga*. p. 75).

The *Yugāntaya* gives an account of all the townships and the important landmarks along the motor road from Colombo to Deniyaya. The Moratuwa bridge and the river has caught the attention of the author. At the river bends near the vicinity of the bridge one could see rows of fences fixed for the purpose of trapping fish. These fish-traps check the flow of water, thereby making the water muddy and discoloured. Along the upper banks of the river were seen logs of timber being floated down the river. These logs were meant for sawing (*Yuga* p. 47). The road from Egodaunya to Panadura was shady and lonely. On either side of the road grew trees such as coconut, breadfruit, jak, *suriya*, *valbeli*, *domba* and *kaduru*. Panadura with many new houses looked different from what it was a few years ago (*Yuga*. p. 48). Kalutara was an interesting sight with the four bridges and the wide stretch of sand at the mouth of the river. Mention is also made of the Clock Tower belonging to the Dutch period and the Bodhi tree (*Yuga*. p. 48). The Light House at Beruvala and the Bentota river have been mentioned. A few miles before reach-

ing Hikkaduwa the road was smoky because of the smoke emanating from the lime-kilns (*Yuga*. p. 51). Bounded by the old Dutch fort on one side and the Rūmassala hill on the other, the Port of Galle had been a striking sight. But the houses there were dilapidated (*Yuga*. pp. 54-52). The Light House in the Fort was another attraction.

In the novels of Jayatilake, we see his extended region located to the north of Colombo. *Parājitiyo* contains a description of the Kelani river and the people who live on either side of it. The exact limits extend about a mile away from the Colombo-Kandy motorway and along the Biyagama road. On both sides of the river bank were small houses where sometimes families with seven or eight individuals lived. They came to the city for employment daily. Some earned their living as potters. Some others engaged themselves in making bricks and tiles. At one bend of the river, was the ferry. This was a safe place for bathing and washing (*Para.*²⁶ pp. 27-28).

The City

The city of Colombo, referred to in several works, remains quite a familiar place to both our writers. It is the main centre of action in Wickramasinghe's *Yugāntaya* and Jayatilake's *Parājitiyo*. The other novels, too, make frequent references.

Martin Wickramasinghe, dealing with the life of capitalist businessmen and their families, on the whole, implies the hollowness, frustration and worthlessness of city life as opposed to the simple village life that he values so much. Piyal's son who went to England after marrying a Burgher girl against the wishes of the parents, ruthlessly criticises the values upheld by his mother and father. Malin, son of the Kabalanas, revolts against the parents and joins the workers in his own father's factories. He goes to the extent of discarding the comforts of the palatial residence to live in a simple rented out apartment. Tissa, an important character created by Wickramasinghe depicts the follies of high-class city life.

Jayatilake draws his attention, not so much to the upper class, but to the people of lesser affluence. Incidentally, Jayatilake does not show an open aversion to city life although he does portray its complexities.

Wickramasinghe and Jayatilake both speak of slums in the vicinity of Maradana and Pancikavatta. This was a congested, stinking place with rows of small houses where large families of labourers, pavement hawkers and even prostitutes lived (*Gam*. pp. 189-190). Jayatilake gives a similar picture of the slum area. Walking a short distance along the Pancikavatta road, Udeni turned to a narrow lane, two to three feet wide. On one side was a tall wall

and on the other a row of small houses. Along the lane was a narrow open trench for the dirty water to flow. The small apartments in rows resembled pig styes. The residents fill the trench with used water and all sorts of dirt. Children use the trench to answer their calls of nature. This narrow trench fell into a larger one at the main road (*Parā*. pp. 14-15).

The reference to Kompanaveediya (Slave Island) in *Gamperaliya* shows that it was a different place from the present Slave Island. One had to cross the Beira Lake by boat to reach Kompanaveediya. The boat fare he paid was ten cents. It was a desolate place then—about the year 1915—at least during the night (*Gam*. p. 133).²⁷

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NOTES

1. Graham Hough, *An Essay on Criticism*, W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., New York, 1966, p. 118.
2. W. Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up*, Heinemann, London, Reprint 1961, p. 1.
3. Since Literary-Geography is a new area of study in Sri Lanka, we list a few books and articles relevant to the subject :
 - (a) C. L. Salter and W. J. Lloyd, *Landscape in Literature : A Geographical Analysis : Resource Paper for College Geography*, No. 76-8, Association of American Geographers, 1977.
 - (b) C. D. Gunn, *The Non-Western Novel as Geography Text*, *Journal of Geography*, 73, 1974.
 - (c) Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City*, Granada Publishing, Ltd. 1975.
 - (d) A. G. Noble, *The Emergence and Evolution of Malgudi : An Interpretation of South Indian Townscapes from the fictional writings of R. K. Narayan*, *Proceedings of the Association of American Geographers*, 8, 1976.
4. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, උපන්ද සිට, සමන් මුද්‍රණාලය, මහරගම, දෙවන මුද්‍රණය, 1962, 68 පි.
5. The translation of Sinhala passages into English have been done by the present writer, unless otherwise stated.
6. කේ. ජයතිලක, පුංචි පැලේ ගස වෙනා, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ කොළඹ 1977.
7. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, ගම්පෙරළිය, ගුණසේන සහ සමාගම, කොළඹ, 11 වන මුද්‍රණය (*Gamperaliya*)
8. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, කරුවල ගෙදර, නිසර පොත් ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, දෙහිවල, 1963, (*Karuvala Gedara*)
9. A vivid picture of the islands in the lake is given in *Madoldūva*. See also its English translation, *Lay Bare the Roots*, M. D. Gunasena Ltd., Colombo, Reprint, 1963.
10. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, විරාගය, මවුන්ට් යන්ත්‍රාලය, කොළඹ, 1956 (*Virāgaya*)
11. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, කලියුගය, සමන් මුද්‍රණාලය, මහරගම, 2 වන මුද්‍රණය, 1957 (*Kaliyugaya*)
12. කේ. ජයතිලක, දෙලොවට නැති අය, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, කොළඹ, 2 වන මුද්‍රණය, (*Delovata Nāti Ay.*)
13. කේ. ජයතිලක, අප්‍රසන්න කතාවක්, ගුණසේන සහ සමාගම, කොළඹ, 2 වන මුද්‍රණය, 1973. (*Aprasanna Kathāvak*)
14. The concept of the *chena* in this locality is different from that of the Dry Zone. Here, a few acres of jungle cleared is called a *chena*. Initially dry grains are sown in addition to the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, etc. This land is often not abandoned but continued to be cultivated and called a *chena*. Kokilana cleared by Isā in *Carita Tunak* is such a *chena*.
15. කේ. ජයතිලක, වර්ත තුනක්, සරසවි ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, ගම්පහ, 1963 (*Carita Tunak*).
16. කේ. ජයතිලක, කාලෝ අයං තෙ, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, කොළඹ, 1968, (*Kālo Ayan Te*).
17. කේ. ජයතිලක, රාජපක්ෂ වලව්ව, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, කොළඹ, 1980 (*Rājapaksha Valavva*)
18. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, මඩොල් දූව, සමන් ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, මහරගම, 17, වන මුද්‍රණය, 1963, 16 පි.
19. *Tāppa* wall is built by fixing together balls of mud. Sometimes wood-planks are placed for support on either side before filling in with mud. The planks are removed when the mud gets dried. In *Varicci* (wattle and daub) the wall structure is made out of bamboo or other inexpensive wood planks in a skeleton form and filled with mud. *Tāppa* walls take a longer time to build but are stronger and last longer.
20. English translation, *Lay Bare the Roots*, M. D. Gunasena Ltd., Colombo, 1968.
21. කේ. ජයතිලක, පිතාමහ, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, 1966, (*Pitāmaha*).
22. Jayatilake does not speak of the other method, the more effective one, of getting rid of flies. In this case a winnowing-fan, both sides of which are applied with the sticky substance of the Jak fruit (*Kohalle*) fixed to a long pole, is used. The flies that get stuck in the winnowing-fan are destroyed. Jayatilake's cultivators, being Buddhists, perhaps did not employ this method.
23. For further information on *taṭṭumāru* see Ralph Peiris, *Sinhalese Social Organization*, Ceylon University Press, Colombo, 1956, pp. 53-54 and 224.
24. කේ. ජයතිලක, මතුසම්බන්ධයි, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, කොළඹ 1975 (*Matu Sambandhai*).
25. මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ, යුගාන්තය, සමන් මුද්‍රණාලය, මහරගම, 1958. (*Yugāntaya*).
26. කේ. ජයතිලක, පරාජිතයෝ, ප්‍රදීප ප්‍රකාශකයෝ, කොළඹ, 4 වන මුද්‍රණය, 1974, (*Parājitayo*).
27. See: *Vidyodaya*, *Journal of Arts, Science and Letters*, 6-2, July 1978— 'මාර්ටින් වික්‍රමසිංහ ගේ නවකථා ශිල්පධර්ම', ඒ. ඩී. සුරවීර, 48 පි.