

# Sasanka Perera

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Summary Statement

Having been trained as a cultural anthropologist, at present I am with the Department of Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi. Prior to that, I served the Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo for a period of 19 years. In my teaching career, I have straddled subject areas that are considered both Sociology and Anthropology in the general parlance, despite the debates that surround these titles and disciplinary divides. In that sense, I have been fortunate enough to be able to cross boundaries and draw from developments in these disciplines quite liberally in both my own intellectual pursuits and in my endeavors to teach and guide students.

My research interests are varied and have evolved over the years. Broadly speaking, I am interested in contemporary social theory with an emphasis on the idea of culture and its politics. More specifically, I focus on the rhetoric of 'development', politics of civil society organizations in governance and democratization and issues of devolution of power in Sri Lanka, and problems of urbanization, space and dynamics of urban experience in South Asia/ Sri Lanka. I have also had an enduring interest in cross-cultural communication, the role of education and socialization in eradicating or promoting sectarian conflicts, role of teachers and dynamics of teacher training in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies within my broader interest in the politics of education in multi-ethnic societies. I have also paid attention to the problems and politics of refugee proliferation, political violence, nationalism and post-violence trauma, transformation and politicization of religion in Sri Lanka and Nepal and politics of memory, interpretation of culture and the politics of visual arts, and the significance of biased interpretations of history and myth. My research interests have enabled me to work in Sri Lanka, USA, Cambodia, Pakistan and Nepal. I have written extensively and published both locally and internationally in the English and Sinhala languages while some of my work has also been published in Tamil, Japanese and Spanish. At present, I am working on a book on the politics of violence and memory in Sri Lanka.

The courses I have taught at PhD, MA, MPhil and BA levels *include Social Theory, Society and Modes of Thinking (MPhil/PhD); Photography and Method in Sociology and Social Anthropology (MPhil/PhD) Critique of Everyday Culture, Sociology of the Arts and the Politics of Social Transformation (MA); Sociology of South Asia (MA); South Asian Ethnography (BA); Structure of Sri Lankan Society (BA); Sociology of Religion (BA); Sociology of Political Violence(BA); Advanced Sociological Theory (BA); Sociology of Sports and Leisure (BA).* The dissertation and thesis projects I have supervised cover the gamut of my research interests and have included some areas that are pioneering and challenging to the advancement of the discipline.

An interest in photography, poetry, blogging, art, music and journalism has kept me in touch with both my own creative drives as well as the changing world of thought and expression. These worlds constantly merge and split, paving the way for growth and fulfillment.

08 January 2024

## Detailed Curriculum Vitae of Sasanka Perera

Present office address:  
Department of Sociology  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
South Asian University  
Rajpur Road  
Maidangarhi, New Delhi 110068  
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[sasankaperera@soc.sau.ac.in](mailto:sasankaperera@soc.sau.ac.in)

### **EDUCATION**

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1998 – Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden  
*Diploma in Conflict Resolution (Advanced International Programme in Conflict Resolution)*

1986 – 1991: University of California, Santa Barbara, California, USA  
*Ph. D in Anthropology* (July 1991)  
*M.A. in Anthropology* (December 1989)

1985 – 1986: Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Sri Lanka  
*Diploma in International Affairs*

1981 – 1984: University of Colombo, Sri Lanka  
*B.A in Political Science, Sociology and English Literature and Language*

### **CAREER HISTORY**

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#### *CURRENT POSITIONS (ACADEMIC):*

01 November 2011 to-date; Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, New Delhi, India  
*Professor of Sociology*

#### *PREVIOUS POSITIONS (ACADEMIC and MANAGERIAL):*

23 February 2016 – 10 January 2019; South Asian University, New Delhi, India  
*Vice President*

01 December 2011– 2018 and 2021; Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, New Delhi, India  
*Dean of Social Sciences*

01 November 2011– 15 January 2014; Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, New Delhi, India  
*Chairman*

01 November 2011– to 31 September 2012; Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, New Delhi, India  
*Chairman*

Feb 2008 to 31 October 2011; Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

*Professor*

2003 to 2010; Colombo Institute for the Advanced Study of Society and Culture, Sri Lanka

*Chairman (Honorary)*

October 2009 – Feb 2011; Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

*Head of Department*

Nov 1999 – Feb 2001; South Asia Sector for Social Development, The World Bank Colombo Office

*Senior Social Development Specialist*

July 1993 – Jan 2008; Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

*Senior Lecturer*

Aug 1992 – June 1993 (full-time); June 1993 – Nov 1999 (part-time); International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

*Research Associate*

1993; Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka.

*Course Author* (Authored a textbook for the sociology/anthropology course in the Degree Programme in Nursing at the Open University of Sri Lanka)

1991-1992; Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, USA

*Post-Doctoral Researcher* (Was the primary researcher in charge of collection and analysis of data on cannibalism in 19th Century Polynesia in a research project coordinated by Professor Gananath Obeyesekere)

1990; University of California, Santa Barbara, California, USA

*Lecturer* in Summer Sessions (Designed and taught a course titled *Anthropology of Political Violence* during the Summer Sessions)

## ***PUBLICATIONS***

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Books/Monographs in English:

- *Fear of the Visual? Photography, Anthropology and the Anxieties of Seeing*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan (2020).
- *Warzone Tourism in Sri Lanka: Tales from Darker Places in Paradise*. New Delhi: Sage (2016)
- *Violence and the Burden of Memory: Remembrance and Erasure in Sinhala Consciousness*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan (2015).
- *Artists Remember; Artists Narrate: Memory and Representation in Sri Lankan Visual Arts*. Colombo; Colombo Institute and Theertha International Artists' Collective (2012).
- *Talking Across Languages: Current Status, Dynamics and Politics of Translation and Interpretation in Sri Lanka* (With a Focus on Tamil and Sinhala Languages). Colombo; FLICT (2008).
- *Politics of Memory: Political Violence, Remembrance and Erasure in Southern Sri Lanka*. Colombo; ICES (2007).
- *Alternate Space: Trivial Writings of an Academic*. Colombo: Yellow House Publications in association with Colombo Institute for the Advanced Study of Society and Culture (2005).

- *Stories of Survivors: The Socio-Political Contexts of Female Headed Households in Post Terror Southern Sri Lanka*. Delhi: Vikas (1999).
- *The World According to Me: An Interpretation of the Mundane, the Ordinary and the Common*. Colombo: ICES (1999).
- *New Evangelical Movements and Conflict in South Asia: Sri Lanka and Nepal in Perspective*. Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (1998).
- *National Human Development Report, Sri Lanka 1998: Regional Dimensions of Human Development*. Colombo: UNDP [with H. Athurupane, Y. Rasanayagam, K.A.P. Siddhisena, D. Gunawardena, and Susantha Perera] (1998).
- *Political Violence in Sri Lanka: Dynamics, Consequences, and Issues of Democratization*. Colombo: CENWOR (1998).
- *Newton Gunasinghe: Selected Essays*. Edited by Sasanka Perera. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association (1996).
- *Living with Torturers and Other Essays of Intervention: Sri Lankan Society, Politics and Culture in Perspective*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies (1995).
- *Introduction to Anthropology and Sociology* (introductory textbook). Nawala: Open University Press (1994).

Co-written books in English:

- *Against the Nation: Thinking Like South Asians* (co-written with Dev Nath Pathak and Ravi Kumar). New Delhi: Bloomsbury India (2019).

Co-edited books in English:

- *Humour and the Performance of Power in South Asia: Anxiety, Laughter and Politics in Unstable Times* (co-edited with dev Nath Pathak). London and New Delhi: Routledge (2022).
- *Intersections of Contemporary Art, Anthropology and Art History in South Asia: Decoding Visual Worlds* (co-edited with Dev Nath Pathak). New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2019).
- *Sociology and Social Anthropology in South Asia: Histories and Practices* (co-edited with Ravi Kumar and Dev Nath Pathak). New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan (2018).
- *Culture and Politics in South Asia Performative Communication* (edited with Dev Pathak). London and New Delhi: Routledge (2017).

Translations from English to the Sinhala language:

- *Delowak Athara Kathaawak* (translation of Hisashi Inoue's play, *Jizo Face*). Colombo: Ahasaa Media Works (2016)
- *Kusaumakin Upan Hasunak* (translation of Jostein Gaarder's novel, *Vita Brevis: A Letter to St Augustine*). Colombo: Ahasaa Media Works (2019)
- *Thutin Pirigiya Ek Mohothak* (translation of Jalal ad-din Muhammed Rumi's selected poems with Indu Gamage). Colombo Tambapanni Academic Publishers (2022)

Books in Sinhala:

- *Nibandhanayak Liyanne Keseda* (A Manual for Writing Academic Prose; edited and expanded by Chandra Lekamaarchchi). Colombo: Ahasa Media Works (2017).

- *Sanskritiya Ha Denuma Pilibanda* Deshapalanaya (Politics of Culture and Knowledge, edited by Chandra Lekamarchchi), Volume 1 and 2. Colombo: Theertha International Artists Collective (2017)
- *Reading Sri Lankan Society and Culture: Essays in Sri Lankan Social Sciences, 1960 – 1983*, Volume 1 (In Sinhala /Co-editor). Colombo: Colombo Institute (2007).
- *Reading Sri Lankan Society and Culture: Essays in Sri Lankan Social Sciences, 1980 – 1999*, Volume 2 (In Sinhala /Co-editor). Colombo: Colombo Institute (2007).
- *Reading Sri Lankan Society and Culture: Essays in Sri Lankan Social Sciences, 2000 – 2006*, Volume 3 (In Sinhala /Co-editor). Colombo: Colombo Institute (2007).
- *Narratives of Violence and Memory in Sri Lankan Visual Arts*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies (2007).
- *The Death of Common Sense: Essays on Social, Cultural and Political Trends in Sri Lankan Society*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies (1997).
- *Writing Social Sciences: A Brief Introduction to Traditions and Ethics of Writing*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies (1996).

#### Glossary:

- *Patitha Sinhala – English and English – Sinhala Glossary for Cultural Studies*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Co-edited with Harindra Dassanayake. Colombo: Colombo Institute for the Advanced Study of Society and Culture (2006).

#### Academic essays in English:

- 'Introduction: Cultural Politics of Humour in South Asia' (with Dev Nath Pathak), pp. 1-22. In, Sasanka Perera and Dev Nath Pathak eds., *Humour and the Performance of Power in South Asia: Anxiety, Laughter and Politics in Unstable Times* (co-edited with dev Nath Pathak). London and New Delhi: Routledge (2022).
- 'Humour, Criticality and the Performance of Anonymous Power: Internet Memes as Political Commentaries in Sinhala Society,' pp. 107-138. In, Sasanka Perera and Dev Nath Pathak eds., *Humour and the Performance of Power in South Asia: Anxiety, Laughter and Politics in Unstable Times* (co-edited with dev Nath Pathak). London and New Delhi: Routledge (2022).
- 'An Initial Cartography of Post-War Art in Sri Lanka,' pp. 181-204. In, Samarth Singhal and Amrita Ajay eds, *South Asian Ways of Seeing: Contemporary Visual Cultures*. New Delhi: Primus (2022)
- 'Victimhood as an asset?', pp 2-5. *Seminar* No. 727, March 2020.
- 'Photography and the Ethnographic Method.' In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford University Press. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.379> (2019)
- 'Space as Political Text.' In, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 53, Issue No. 50, 22 Dec, 2018.
- 'In Defense of Liminal Borders: Blurring the Divisions between Sociology and Social Anthropology in Practice,' In, *Prathimana: Journal of the Department of Sociology, University of Ruhuna*, Vol. 11, 2017/2018, pp. 230-256.
- 'Introduction: Towards a Regional Framework in Disciplinary History and Practices' (with Ravi Kumar and Dev Nath Pathak), pp. 1-30. In, Ravi Kumar, Dev Nath Pathak and Sasanka Perera eds., *Sociology and Social Anthropology in South Asia: Histories and Practices*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan (2018).
- 'Deciphering Anthropology, Reckoning with Sociology: A Critical Self-assessment of the Practice of 'Sociology' in/on Sri Lanka', pp. 109-145. In, Ravi Kumar, Dev Nath Pathak and Sasanka Perera eds.,

*Sociology and Social Anthropology in South Asia: Histories and Practices*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan (2018).

- 'Reimagining and Re-narrating South Asia: Artists' Travel and the Practice of Visual Art as a New Experiential Cartography.' In Dev Nath Pathak ed., *Another South Asia!* New Delhi: Primus Books (2018).
- 'Photography's Methodological Absence in Social Anthropology in South Asia: Some Preliminary Thoughts for Consideration,' pp. 299-319. In. N. Jayaram ed., *Knowing the Social World: Perspectives and Possibilities*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan (2017)
- 'Scripting Violence, Performing Terror: A Discourse Siloquy,' pp. 29-49. In, Sasanka Perera and Dev Nath Pathak eds., *Culture and Politics in South Asia Performative Communication*. London and New Delhi: Routledge (2017).
- 'Introduction: Towards an Inconclusive Scheme of Performative Communication,' pp. 1-26 (with Dev Nath Pathak). In, Sasanka Perera and Dev Nath Pathak eds., *Culture and Politics in South Asia Performative Communication*. London and New Delhi: Routledge (2017).
- 'Anxieties of SAARC: An Experiential Reading through South Asian University.' In, Rajiv Kumar and Omita Goyal eds., *Thirty Years of SAARC: Society, Culture and Development*. New Delhi: Sage, pp. 153-162 (2016)
- 'Reflections on Issues of Language in Sri Lanka: Power, Exclusion and Inclusion.' In, Hywel Coleman ed., *Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World*. Colombo: British Council and GIZ, pp 55-74 (2015).
- 'Exploring Possibilities of Transcending Beyond Art History towards a Sociology of Visual Arts.' In, *Prabhava: The Journal of Art History, Visual Arts and Culture* (in Sinhala). Vol. 1. Colombo: Department of History and Theory of Art, University of the Visual and Performing Arts (2015)
- 'Anxieties of SAARC: An Experiential Reading through South Asian University.' In, *IIC Review*, Winter 2014–Spring 2015, Volume 41, Numbers 3 & 4, pp. 193-202 (2015).
- 'Beyond History; Against the Present: Preliminary Thoughts on Reimagining 'South Asia.'" In, *India + Sri Lanka - Sethu Samudram: Sethu Book Art Project*. Colombo and Bangalore: Theertha International Artists' Collective and 1 Shanti Road (2014).
- 'Notes from an Anthropological Wilderness: A Critical Self-assessment of Sri Lankan 'Anthropology'' In, Ajit K Danda and Rajat K. Das, eds., *Alternative Voices in Anthropology*. Calcutta: Indian Anthropological Association (2012).
- 'Gated Communities as Packaged Fantasies: The Meeting of the Local and the Global and the Standardization of Taste in Urban Sri Lanka'. In, Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria and Colin McFarlane eds., *Urban Navigations: Politics, Space and the City in South Asia*. New Delhi: Routledge (2011).
- 'Remembering and Contested Patriotism: Embodied Practices of the Sri Lankan Nation State'. In, Meenakshi Thapan ed., *Contested Spaces: Citizenship and Belonging Contemporary Times*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan (2010).
- 'Politics of Showing, Seeing and Remembering: Dynamics of Historiography in Contemporary Sri Lankan Visual Arts'. In, Sylvia S. Kasprzycki and Doris I. Stambaru eds., *Artful Resistance: Contemporary Art from Sri Lanka*. Altenstadt: ZKF Publishers (2010).
- 'Institutionalization of Violence in the Politics of Sri Lanka'. In, Ana Pararajasingham ed., *Sri Lanka: 60 Years of Independence and Beyond*. Emmenbrucke: CJPD (2009).
- 'Public Space and Monuments: Politics of Sanctioned and Contested Memory.' In, *South Asia Journal for Culture, Volume 1*. Colombo: Colombo Institute for the Advanced Study of Society and Culture (2007).

- 'Sinhala Only: Consequences for Social Sciences and Humanities Education at the University Level.' In, *The Politics of Language: A Spectrum of Perspectives in Fifty Years of Sinhala Only in Sri Lanka, 1956-2006* (Dialogue (NS) Vol. xxxiv) Colombo: Ecumenical Institute (2007).
- 'Christian Evangelical Activity and the Reemergence of Militant Buddhism: Concerns for Internal Security'. In, Mufleh R. Osmany and Shaheen Afroze eds., *Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia*. Dhaka: Academic Press and Publishers Library. (2006).
- 'Dealing with Dinosaurs and Reclaiming Sociology: A Personal Narrative on the (non) Existence of Critical Sociological Knowledge Production in Sri Lanka. In, *Sociological Bulletin: Journal of the Indian Sociological Society*, Vol. 54, Number 3, (Sept-Dec 2005).
- 'Media Practice as a problem of Representation.' In, *Post Tsunami Media Coverage: The Sri Lankan Experience - A Study of the Media Behaviour*. Colombo: Transparency International (2005).
- 'Sri Lankan Education System as a Reflection of Society's Ruptures: A Conceptual and Theoretical Exploration'. Narahenpita: National Education Commission (2004).
- 'Spirit Possessions and Avenging Ghosts: Stories of Supernatural Activity as Narratives of Terror and Mechanisms of Coping and Remembering'. In, Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret Lock, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds eds., *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery*. Los Angeles and Berkley: University of California Press (2001).
- 'Non Government Organizations in Sri Lanka: The Dynamics, the Impact, the Rhetoric and the Politics'. In A. Peries ed., *Dialogue* Vol. 25 1998 and 1999 (double issue). Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue (1999)
- 'The Other Victims'. In Mithran Tiruchelvam and C.S. Dattathreya eds., *Culture and Politics of Identity in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies (1998).
- 'Beyond the Margins of a Failed Insurrection: The Experiences of Women in Post-Terror Southern Sri Lanka.' *Edinburgh Papers in South Asian Studies*, Number 11. Edinburgh: Centre for South Asian Studies, Department of Sociology, University of Edinburgh (1998).
- 'The Reality and the Rejection of the Plural Society in Sri Lanka'. In Tissa Kariyawasam ed., *Multi - Culturalism: The U.S and Sri Lankan Experience*. Colombo: American Studies Association of Sri Lanka (1997).
- 'Human Rights and the Buddhist Ethics of Sri Lanka'. In Jefferson R. Plantilla and Sebasti L. Raj eds., *Human Rights in Asian Cultures: Continuity and Change*. Osaka: Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (1997).
- 'The Social and Cultural Construction of Female sexuality and Gender Roles in Sinhala Society'. In Centre for Women's Research ed., *Changing Gender Roles and Relations: Women in Traditional, Colonial and Contemporary Times*. Colombo: CENWOR (1997)
- 'The Structure and Content of Education: Policy Choices and Problems of Implementation in the Context of the Devolution Proposals'. In *Sri Lanka: The Devolution Debate*. Colombo: ICES (1996).
- 'In Search of a Sri Lankan Sociological and Anthropological Tradition'. In *Lanka Guardian*, Vol. 19, # 2 (May 15, 1996) and Vol. 19 # 3 (June 1, 1996). Colombo: Guardian Publications.
- 'Dreaming of a Sri Lankan Wonderland?: Dimensions of Socio-Cultural Change in Year 2000'. Published as 'Chapter Five: Social and Cultural Dimensions'. In *Sri Lanka Year 2000: Towards the 21st Century*. Colombo: Centre for Regional Development Studies (1995).
- 'Formation of Ethnocentrism and the Perpetuation of Hatred: The Role of Socialization and Media in the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict'. In *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences*, 1995, 18 (1 and 2). Colombo: NARESA.

- 'Messengers of Peace or Creators of Chaos: The Role of Teachers in the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict'. In, *Pravada*, Vol. 1, # 11 and # 12. Colombo: Pravada Publications (November & December 1992).

Recent academic essays in Sinhala (Selected):

- 'Knowledge Production, Epistemic Breaks and the Limits of Academic Freedom.' In, *Sanskriti*, Vol. 21, # 01 and # 12. Colombo: Sanskruti Publications (August 2010).
- 'Reflections on an Epistemic Break: A Limited Reading on the Creative Works of Siri Gunasinghe.' In, Jayantha Amarasinghe ed., *Siri Gunasinghe Felicitation Volume*. Galle: University of Ruhuna (2010).
- 'The Representation of the Female Body in Sri Lankan Visual Art and Issues of Agency.' In, *Art Lab*, Vol. 03 and 04. Colombo: Art Lab Publications (2007).
- 'Politics of Art: A Reading of the Emergence and Destruction of the Murals at Navamuni Temple in Kataluwa.' In, *Art Lab*, Vol. 02. Colombo: Art Lab Publications (2005).

### ***ACADEMIC AWARDS AND OTHER HONORS***

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- National Award for the Best Translation of Poetry (from English to Sinhala), Ministry of Culture, Sri Lanka, July 2023.
- National Award of the Best Translation of Theatre (from English to Sinhala), Ministry of Culture, Sri Lanka, December 2023.
- Visiting Professor, Institute for the Study of Global Issues, Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo, April – September 2011;
- Fellow of the Asia Leadership Fellow Program offered by the Japan Foundation, September – November 2010;
- Visiting Fellow at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, New Delhi, February - March, 2007;
- South Asia Fellowship Award for Research from the Social Science Research Council, New York, 2004;
- Spot Award for Performance from the World Bank's South Asia Sector for Social Development (December 2000) for the paper 'The Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: A Historical and Sociopolitical Outline' and for task-managing on behalf of the World Bank the development of the Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation, and Reconciliation of the government of Sri Lanka;
- Kodikara Award for South Asian Strategic Studies (to conduct field research in Nepal and Sri Lanka), Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, 1997;
- University of California General Affiliates Graduate Dissertation Fellowship, 1990;
- Regents' Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1989-90/ 1990-91;
- Award from the James D. Kline Fund for International Studies, 1987.

### ***PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS***

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- Indian Sociological Association (Life Member)
- Royal Asiatic Society, Sri Lanka Branch (Life Member)
- Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, Section F – Social Sciences (Life Member)
- Association for Asian Studies (Member)

### ***LANGUAGE ABILITIES***

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- Fluent in writing, comprehension, speaking and reading in English.
- Fluent in writing, comprehension, speaking and reading in Sinhala.



### ***EXPERIENCE IN JOURNALISM***

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- Feature writer for *Himal South Asia*, Katmandu, 1996-2002.
- Weekly columnist for *The Island*, Colombo, 2002 – 2003, 2004, 2005, 2018 and intermittently at present
- Bi-weekly columnist for the *Sunday Observer*, Colombo 2021-2022 and intermittently at present