

POLITICS & SERVICE

| The Experiences of
| Banting Jaya

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C O N T E N T S

Foreword by
Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu
4

Introduction
6

Chapter 1
Indians in Malaya
A Historical Background
11

Chapter 2
A Life Remembered
21

Chapter 3
An Outstanding Life of Service
48

Chapter 4
A Life Well-Lived
60

Chapter 5
Speeches & Articles
66

Brief Bio-data of
Daniel Jayaratnam
79

References
80

Foreword

what impressed
me was
Jayaratnam's
simplicity,
frankness
and openness



It gives me great honour to pen a few words about the late Mr Daniel Jayaratnam, the MIC man of Banting, Kuala Langat.

I first met him at one of the Selangor MIC meetings, during my early years in MIC. At the meeting, he raised a question on a point of order. He was eloquent in speech but what impressed me was his simplicity, frankness and openness in speech and action.

The efforts by his son Denison and family to document the life and works of Daniel Jayaratnam is timely. We in MIC have many members who have toiled and worked sacrificially for party, community and nation.

The theme developed in this book, namely Politics & Service, is relevant today. The political culture of service before self is being challenged by a quest for self-gain from socio-economic involvement. It is therefore a timely reminder of the need to return to the basics in political

thought and action. This is about going to the grassroots, knowing the people and their struggles, voicing their concerns to relevant authorities and extending effective remedies.

The story of Daniel Jayaratnam leaves us a legacy of service through political action. In so doing, he exemplified the true essence of exercising democratic rights and responsibilities.

I commend this book for your reading and reflection and hope that this attempt will motivate other community leaders of MIC to recapture history and relevance for contemporary Malaysian society.

Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu
President,
Malaysian Indian Congress
June 17, 2002

Introduction



My interest to rediscover my dad's political thought and action was a recent development in the last five years. It emerged in my quest to understand politics and Malaysian society with specific reference to defining politics and political involvement for Malaysian Indians today.

Capturing the relevance and model for political action

The reflections centred on what factors and issues influence and mould a person's political views. Are these issues and concerns similar today as they were during the formative years of our nation? What strategies and approaches

were adopted then and are there relevance for us today? Further what made a Jaffna Tamil Christian to be actively involved in the independence struggle for India and mobilise support through the Malaysian Indian Congress and its related institutions for the upliftment of Malaysian Indians

The attempt here in this book entitled Politics and Services: The experiences of Banting Jaya is to rediscover the critical concerns that facilitated political action through a review of history, family experience, recollection of political experiences in capturing the relevance and model for political action in contemporary Malaysia. The main themes that marked his time and life were the war, independence, socio-economic disruption, fragmentation of estates, labour disputes, founding of the major political parties, communist insurgency, confrontation with Indonesia and formation of Malaysia.

It would have been almost impossible for someone like him,

fired by the ideals of freedom and independence from a young age, to have remained unmoved and untouched by the events of the day. He lived in an exciting era with several major movements of history taking place in such a short period of time. In many ways, he was well-suited to live in such times as these. He was young and idealistic, caught up with issues of freedom and justice.

My dad believed and lived out his ideals for a better society through the various organisations he belonged to. The first formal organisation he joined was the INA of Nethaji. During World War II, he saw and experienced the arrival of the Japanese who easily defeated the British. The colonial powers were proven to be fallible and seeds of freedom and being in charge of our own destiny were planted in many hearts.

He also belonged to the Malayan Indian Congress, NLFCS, groups promoting Tamil culture and language and the Methodist Church, believing that these organisations could advance the

cause of its members, community and the wider interests of the nation.

His life as a politician, community leader and church leader brought with it some amount of attention and he seemed to take it well without letting it go to his head. At the end of his life, he remained essentially the person he was - without arrogance, but just a simple desire to serve and make a mark in society.

In capturing my dad's world and experience, the hope is that it will challenge us to review the politics of today and that we will be challenged to return to the basics: politics of conviction with personal character and integrity.

Dr Denison Jayasooria
Executive Director
Yayasan Strategik Sosial
June 17, 2002

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D E D I C A T I O N



TO MUM

For your **sacrifice**,
your **untiring role**
in managing the home,
and **being there** for dad
in both his victories and defeats.

Acknowledgments

I take this opportunity to thank a number of people who in the background have played a significant role in ensuring that this publication is completed.

Appreciation is due to Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu, Minister of Works and President of the Malaysian Indian Congress for the foreword to this book and also for launching the book on June 17, 2002.

Special thanks to my dad's close friends, Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan, Tan Sri Devaki Krishan, Mr Chinnayah of Telok, Mr Malayalam of Morib and my two uncles, Mr David Gunaratnam and Mr Robert Selvaratnam for their reflections on my dad's political thought and action.

To my friends - Lim Ming Haw for undertaking the interviews and writing the major portion of this book, without your valuable talent it would have been impossible to complete this task. - To Maniam and Gandhi of Ingara Promotions for your artistic input in making the text creative through the use of photos and layout designs.

To mum for encouraging me in undertaking this endeavor and to my wife Rose for ensuring my interest is sustained and enabling me to complete the task.

Dr. Denison Jayasooria

CHAPTER 1

Indians in Malaya : A Historical Background

Early Arrivals

The links between peoples of the great Indian sub-continent and the Malayan peninsula have long existed, taking place much earlier than the migration of Indians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There is much evidence of the Indian-Hindu influence on local culture and practices in the South-East Asian region. The early Indians were mainly attracted by trade and those who came were mainly merchants and labourers. Following these men and their ships were the religious figures and others.

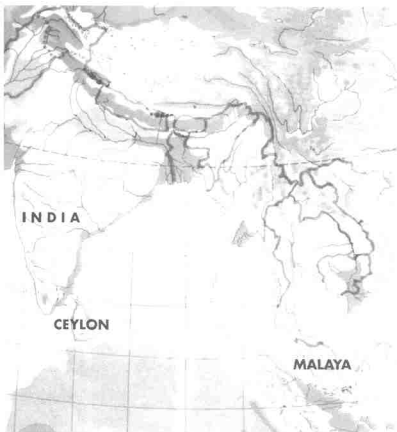
Indians came to Malaya from various regions and many stayed behind, starting families with women who followed later or with the local population. It has been documented that some of these Indians went on to play key roles in the early Malay empires and royal courts. So over time, the arrivals from India settled down to life in Malaya

and many never returned. Their immediate and extended families often followed them and intermarriage with locals and others took place.

The Indian-Hindu influence was substantial and took hold in places like Indonesia (especially the island of Bali) and Cambodia. In Malaya, this influence was curtailed with the arrival of the European powers to the region. The search for spices and trade, prime location of the region, and European rivalry brought the new powers to South-East Asia. The Europeans competed with each other and against local forces to gain supremacy and to control trade and other links. The influence and rule of the colonial powers were to last several centuries.

But in the late 1800s, the situation changed when the British encouraged large-scale migration of mainly labourers and others who were higher skilled to

The early Indians were mainly attracted by trade and those who came were mainly merchants



Malaya. They came mainly from China and also mainland India but there were also significant numbers from Ceylon, particularly the Tamils from Jaffna.

Later Arrivals

In contrast to the merchant and trading classes of an earlier era, the more recent Indian migrants comprised mainly the working and labour classes. They came mainly for employment in the plantations, railways or civil services. Several factors made this mass movement of people possible. The colonial government in

Malaya needed labour to develop the agricultural and mining industries and to man the growing civil and public service sectors. The powers in India were also receptive to the idea, as were the plantation owners, employers and their labour agents who made the commissions.

Ultimately the migration was on such a scale as to have profound impact on Malaya then and even now as the Indians make up about 10 percent of the population and play a significant role in the nation. But the means by which many of the migrants were enticed, recruited and brought to Malaya were indeed tragic. Many illiterate labourers did not know what they were getting into. Propaganda, misleading information and dubious tactics were often used to attract labourers to go to Malaya. Both the government and employers resorted to such measures, including distributing information about cheap toddy in Malaya.

Many of these labourers ended up treated little better than slave labour and were consigned to work under harsh conditions. The effects of this can still be felt today as a significant section of the community has been marginalised, neglected and adversely affected by social ills and economic problems.

The Tamils of southern India ended up being the largest group of migrants who



came from the 1870s onwards. They were recruited mostly as labourers for estates and public works projects. But there were also significant numbers who were professionals, administrators and clerical staff, traders, merchants, money-lenders and policemen. Some researchers say that the British found the Tamils of south India, especially from the poorer groups, ideal as labourers. They were thought to be easily managed and ideal for the lowly-paid and regimented estate life. Many of the European estate owners and managers in Malaya had come from India and Ceylon and were thus experienced with dealing with Tamil labourers. The climate in both areas was also similar and adjustment by the migrants was not too difficult.



The poverty and tough conditions in India helped many to decide to go to Malaya. In addition, there were offers of work, money, security and a better future. Many dreamt of a secure life and a comfortable retirement in their home villages. The Tamils from Ceylon and India, while possessing a common heritage and roots, are basically two distinct groups in terms of culture and social practices. The British brought in two groups of

The Tamils of southern India were recruited mostly as labourers for estates and public works projects. But there were also significant numbers who were professionals, administrators and clerical staff.

The British brought in two groups of Indian migrants, from two places, perhaps as part of a divide and rule policy.

Indian migrants, from two places, perhaps as part of a divide and rule policy. Many of the Tamil migrants from south India were labourers while the Ceylonese Tamils were mainly from the supervisory and clerical groups.

The Ceylonese Tamil migrant was usually qualified and suited for supervisory and administrative work in the estates, railways and public services. The lack of such jobs in Ceylon by the end of the 19th century meant the prospects in Malaya looked better and many came over. Ceylonese workers were recruited as the European estate managers who had worked there were familiar with them as a workforce. Many Ceylonese Tamils were hired as clerks, supervisors and conductors while the labourers were mainly Tamils from south India.

The Ceylonese Tamils were especially disinterested in politics and community affairs initially.

Once here, the new arrivals would send money home to support their families. Eventually, many Ceylonese Tamils would bring over their families or start families in the new land. The educated Ceylonese Tamils were mainly found in the developing areas like Selangor, Perak and Negri Sembilan. Soon they came to dominate the civil services and estates. It is estimated that in 1919 some 45 percent of the clerical staff in the Federated Malay States were Tamils from Ceylon. Later, changing economic conditions and recruitment of locals led to the decrease in the number of Ceylonese Tamils in this sector.

1920s and Pre-WWII

The Indian migrants, particularly those from Ceylon, were not much interested or involved in organised political or social movements. Their limited involvement was initially confined to the regional and caste organisations that were set up mainly to ensure the welfare of members. For the more educated urban migrants, there were social and recreational groups. Between 1920-40, the outlook of the Indian migrants was still towards India and Ceylon and dreams of retirement at home. Many travelled home to visit their families and returned to Malaya to continue working. Many of the Indian migrants were also divided among themselves by caste, regional and occupational interests.

The Ceylonese Tamils were especially disinterested in politics and community affairs initially. They did not have a vested interest and their consideration was towards the homeland. Relations with those from India were sometimes strained and both groups maintained separate identities. The educated Ceylonese Tamils found favour with the colonial authorities and some were even appointed to senior positions and even went on to represent the Indian community. This did not go well with those who had come from mainland India. Another difference was that a significant section of Ceylonese Tamils were Christians, although the majority



was Hindu. Many of these Ceylonese Tamil Christians, driven by the puritan work ethic and good educational foundation, became successful as professionals, including as educationists and teachers. Much of their social life also centred around religious programmes or groups like the Selangor Ceylon Tamil Association.

Another characteristic of the Tamils from Jaffna was their strong savings habit and thriftiness. They formed the Jaffnese Cooperative Society Limited in 1924. While proud of their roots and distinctiveness, the Ceylonese Tamils soon became committed to community service. This arose from various factors, including increasing social awareness and also personal recognition and status. They became involved in religious, cultural, welfare and trade union bodies while several became prominent society leaders. In time, as the environment changed as well, many Ceylonese Tamils also became more politically aware and conscious.

World War II & Indian Independence

The war years were terrible in terms of the devastation and havoc to the economy and social life of the people of Malaya. As estates became idle, thousands were thrown off work and lost not only jobs but also the housing and other amenities that came with the estate jobs. The impact hit harder when some 60,000 Indians were forced to work on the Thai-Burma railway line. It is estimated that only a third returned from the Death Railway project.

Many in the Indian community were left exposed to the effects of the war because of their low status and dependence on jobs in the estates and civil services. Many young Indian men turned to join the Indian National Army (INA) which was fighting British rule in India. The INA was supported by the Japanese. The presence and ideology of the INA and promotion of Indian nationalism and independence would have a profound

Many young Indian men turned to join the Indian National Army (INA) which was fighting British rule in India

Nethaji influenced many Indians to become active in politics, unions, left-wing and independence activities:



effect on many Indians in Malaya. There would arise a sense of idealism, nationalism and longing for independence not only for India but Malaya.

The war, it has been argued, marked a turning point in the minds and worldview of the Indians in Malaya. Differences were set aside and political consciousness grew, fuelled by the cause of Indian freedom and encouraged by leaders like INA chief Subhas Chandra Bose, who was also popularly known as Nethaji. Among the Tamils, those from Ceylon were less interested in the freedom of India. The greatest enthusiasm was shown by the labour and working classes who had more to gain and less to lose with freedom and independence.

Nethaji failed in his immediate goal of freedom for India and the INA was

shortlived and he himself died tragically in a plane crash. But his legacy lived on and it led to the Indians in Malaya becoming more politically aware and conscious. The impact of Nethaji was tremendous and he was treated like a national hero. He managed to recruit many volunteers and raised much funds for the struggle.

The Japanese conquest of Malaya and defeat of the colonial masters and the fervour raised by the INA led many Indians into active political involvement. The war changed not only the fortunes of many but led to profound changes and caused many working class Indians into union, left-wing and independence activities. The Asians and the colonised would now have a different attitude and outlook towards the colonial masters who returned after the war ended.

MIC, Merdeka & Malaysia

In the post-war period, the Ceylon Tamil community became more active in public life. In contrast, the Indian Tamils, who formed the main workforce in the estates and railroads, were becoming involved in labour unrest and union militancy in the years between 1945 and 1948. This period was marked by hardship and economic uncertainty for workers and labourers and many Tamils were involved in militant union and labour activities. Tamils made up nearly three-quarters of





▲ *Delegates of the 6th annual MIC Conference in Klang (1952)*

the Indian population in Malaya in 1947. The years between 1945 and 1947 were times of dramatic change and transformation. Centuries of European colonial rule were ended with the coming of the Japanese, only to be followed by the return of the British. But by the time the British returned, the country had changed and many locals were joining the struggle for nationalism and freedom. Change had also come to the Indian community. From being a community with a migrant mindset and little political and social involvement in local affairs, many Indians were now awakened to their political rights and destiny. In the post-war period, the community was exposed and influenced by various movements like nationalism, unionism and extremism.

The approach adopted by the Indian community differed and was split along class and professional lines. The more educated and professional middle-classes were more inclined towards democratic ideals and a liberal non-communal approach. Others took on a more radical or even a narrower communal stance. Several organisations were set up and this reflected the community's divisions. There was the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), Malayan Indian Association, and Federation of Indian Organisations. Many who had been in the INA and fighting for Indian independence joined the MIC and played key roles in establishing this new party.

The MIC saw its future in the Alliance system which Umno and the MCA had forged.

From a migrant mindset ... now awakened to their political rights

John Thivy was the first leader of the MIC. After release from prison for his involvement with the INA, he set out to form a single organisation to represent the interests of the community. The idea of a single Indian-based organisation was well-received and many signed up to join the MIC which was formed in August 1946 at Chettiar's Hall in Sentul, Kuala Lumpur. The MIC was the first political party to be formed in Malaya. Thivy proved to be a leader with foresight and wisdom and the party soon had 60,000 members during his tenure as president. But the party was handicapped by its dependence on a mainly middle-class membership and non-communal outlook. The Indian working class was being targeted by left-wing elements.

The late 1940s and early 1950s were unsettling and turbulent times. Many people were concerned about the future of Malaya and the question of Malay rights, citizenship and future representation in government. The British Malayan Union plan was opposed by the Malays as it eroded the powers and influence of the Sultans and would lead to the loss of Malay rights. Onn Jaafar formed UMNO and led the opposition to the plan which was eventually dropped. In 1948, the Federation of Malaya agreement came into effect. Malay rights were protected while the Indians and Chinese were eligible for citizenship. The major groups were

willing to compromise and make the agreement work and this would lead to eventual freedom and independence from the British.

Then came the communist rebellion and the Emergency years. Life, especially for rural dwellers in the estates, tin mines and villages - was disrupted. In 1949, the Malayan Chinese Association was formed to represent the community. And in 1951, Onn Jaafar left UMNO to form the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) which was open to all races. But Umno members and the MCA did not back the IMP while the MIC did.

The MIC had hoped to help form a political system that would be non-communal. But the IMP experiment failed and it lost in the 1951 and 1953 elections. The MIC was left without political representation in government. The MIC decided to cease cooperating with the IMP in late 1953 and by the next year, a new leadership was in place. The MIC saw its future in the Alliance system which Umno and the MCA had forged. The MIC joined the Alliance and its candidates won in the polls. This political alignment would last till today in the expanded Barisan Nasional coalition.

Under the new system, the MIC president was appointed to the Cabinet. Joining the Alliance made some members unhappy and they left the party. But the



◀ *Tunku's visit to
Banting*

party grew as the leadership attracted members from rural areas, estates and from among the Tamil-educated. In time, the MIC became part to the dominant political alliance of the three major racial groups. The MIC would eventually be the main voice and representation of the community, even till this day.

The post-war period also saw other competing ideologies for the Indian community, including Tamil nationalism, militancy and language and cultural issues. The MIC would end up being dominated by the forces of Tamil nationalism. The MIC had a balanced line-up of personalities as party presidents. The first was John Thivy and he was followed by Sardar Budh Singh. Next came Sri K Ramaratnam,

he was followed by KL Devasei (1951-55), Tun V.T. Sambanthan (1955-73), Tan Sri V. Manickavasagam (1973-79) and the incumbent, Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu.

The Ceylonese Tamils realised that having a non-communal approach and hoping for separate representation from Indian Tamils was not viable. In the 1955 Federal elections, the Alliance of Umno, MCA and MIC swept all except one seat. The Ceylonese Tamil community would be marginalised unless it changed as the non-communal approach had failed. Ceylonese Tamils were left to join the MIC, Peoples' Progressive Party, Labour Party or smaller Ceylonese Tamil-based groups while many stopped being politically affiliated.

MIC ... a single organisation to represent the interests of the community.



▲ MIC Kuala Lumpur 4th AGM, December 1956 was attended by Dato & Datin V.T. Sambanthan. Also present was V. Manikavasagam.

Meanwhile, the yearnings for independence continue to be stirred and Merdeka would soon be reality. Independence for Malaya would be proclaimed on August 31, 1957. At that time, the majority of Indians was classified as plantation labour while a smaller group was from the professional middle class. The dominance of the Ceylonese Tamils in certain ranks of the civil service would decline over time, because of their decreasing numbers and intake from other communities.

Even shortly after independence, the young nation would face formidable challenges. With the formation of Malaysia in 1963 also came the Confrontation with Indonesia.

Indians have played a major role in the development of Malaya economically, socially and politically. And this despite their small numbers numerically and relatively recent arrival. They may have

started off as immigrant labour brought in to develop the estates and man the civil and public services and had little interest politically in the early years. But World War II and the end of colonialism were major factors that pushed many in the community to frontline roles in various socio-political movements. The community has been able to contribute substantially to the growth, stability and success of Malaya and Malaysia. The Indian and Ceylonese Tamil communities have contributed much in terms of political development, unions, education, professional bodies, civil service, plantations and nation-building.

We now move on to the next section and it deals with the life of Daniel Jayaratnam. It covers his family background, growing up years, formative influences, career, community service, nation-building, cultural and citizenship issues, political involvement, and devotion to family and faith.

Indians have played a major role in the development of Malaya economically, socially and politically.

CHAPTER 2

A Life Remembered

From Jaffna to Malaya

In 1910, on board a ship that set sail from Ceylon to Malaya was Alfred Kuttythamby, a Tamil from the northern district of Jaffna. He had embarked on a journey thousands of fellow Ceylonese and Indians had gone on before or would do so in coming decades. He was sailing to the British colony of Malaya to work in an estate.

For several decades from the mid-1880s, the British recruited Indian and Ceylonese labour to meet the demands in the civil and public services, and in the vast plantations that were being opened. The movement of people from the great Indian sub-continent to the Malayan peninsula beginning from 1885 till the middle of the last century was due to both 'push' and 'pull' factors. A major factor was the availability of jobs in the government, railroads,

plantations and trading opportunities in Malaya. There were also periods of decline in the plantation industry in Ceylon and the resulting lack of work opportunities. Many Ceylonese were attracted to go to Malaya and material incentives and official propaganda helped them decide to do so.

The growth and development of Malaya's agricultural and tin mining sectors led to the need for labour and this was met by immigrants from mainly China and India, including Ceylon. There were also other factors that led many Indians and Ceylonese to venture away to a faraway land in search of better wages and an opportunity to retire more comfortably. For many who came, the goal was not to settle in the new land but to earn enough money to support the family and then to retire at home. But many immigrants did put down roots and stayed on in the new land, while maintaining ties with relatives

Alfred
Kuttythamby



and their home villages back in India or Ceylon.

The majority of Indians were brought in to provide the manpower in the plantation and public works sectors. The colonial policy saw the Chinese recruited to work in the mining industry. The boom in the Malayan rubber industry led to many to come over from southern India and Ceylon. This migration of people was eventually regulated and controlled by the authorities. By the middle of that century, the Indian population comprised some 11 percent of the total population of Malaya. By the 1960s, a new generation of Malaya-born Tamils of Ceylonese descent had emerged, with many having a distinctly Malayan worldview and outlook.

The Tamils from Ceylon's Jaffna region were particularly suited to come here to work in the plantations because the Jaffna area had basically an agricultural economy. This was also the background of Alfred Kuttythamby. For the next 33 years of his life from 1910, he worked as an estate conductor in Telok Estate in Selangor. He never returned to Ceylon to retire, unlike many Ceylonese who had come to Malaya to work with the intention of retiring in their home villages. He had been raised as a Hindu, but Alfred Kuttythamby became a Christian as a result of his brother's influence. Alfred Kuttythamby had come from a farming community in Jaffna, the northern

part of the island which was dominated by Ceylonese Tamils. Like many Ceylonese Tamils who came to Malaya for work, he became an estate conductor, which was a supervisory position among the tappers and general workers.

Alfred Kuttythamby's first wife died during childbirth. His second wife, Anpuammah, had lived in Malaya for a long time before she met him. They were married at St Mary's Church. Anpuammah came from a family which had been Christian for at least two generations. Her family belonged to the Anglican branch of the Christian faith.

The couple had two girls and three boys. Mary Thavamany, who was born in 1919 and now lives in Banting, was from Alfred's first marriage. Daniel Jayaratnam was the eldest boy and he was born on June 17, 1926. Next was Alice Pushpamany, who was born in 1927 and now lives in Singapore. David Gunaratnam was born in 1929 and lives in retirement in Seremban. The youngest was Robert Selvaratnam, born in 1932 and now living in retirement in Petaling Jaya.

Early Life & Growing Up

Daniel Jayaratnam grew up in Telok Estate in the district of Kuala Langat in

By the 1960s, a new generation of Malaya-born Tamils of Ceylonese descent had emerged, with many having a distinctly Malayan worldview and outlook.



Selangor, a mainly agricultural area. His life and vacation would later be closely tied to the estate, the workers and their families, and the poor conditions which labourers and workers faced daily.

Kutythamby and wife spent their last years living with their eldest son. Daniel Jayaratnam's father died at the age of 78 while his mother died 20 years later. Daniel Jayaratnam's childhood was as normal and active as those of children who grew up in rubber plantations. He had four siblings and played well with his two brothers. He was an active boy and soon grew to enjoy public speaking and debating. He grew more confident and extroverted and participated in the debates at his school, the Anglo-Chinese. Each morning, he would go to school which was located in nearby Klang town. The children would take the bus for the 10-mile ride to school. In the afternoons, he would attend the estate Tamil school where he would learn his mother tongue.

Going to a Government school with English as the medium of instruction and then picking up Tamil would serve him well in his later years in helping all types of people. He would become fluent in both and also spoke Malay and some Chinese. He continued to study in both schools till he reached Standard Seven (or the present Secondary Form Three). The family lived in Telok Estate which was halfway between Klang and Banting towns. The estate, like many others of that time, was owned by the British. Life was however better for the family compared to those of the labourers like rubber tappers and general workers. Having an estate conductor for a father helped ensure the family had a better life than many others in the estates.

Daniel Jayaratnam's interests did not point towards great academic achievement or a professional career like law or medicine. He did not lack intelligence but was simply more interested in other things than academic success. Instead

▲ Allied Kutythamby and family with Telok Estate workers

Daniel Jayaratnam's childhood was as normal and active as those of children who grew up in rubber plantations.



▲ Alfred Kuttythamby and family in Telok, 1946

he would choose to pursue his passion of promoting the rights and welfare of the ordinary worker who struggled with poor wages, difficult living conditions and little future prospects. This was done primarily through his position as a local party leader and community figure. As the eldest boy, he matured quickly and took on his responsibilities assigned to him. He was full of energy and had the ability to achieve what he set out to do. He would channel this energy to serve others less privileged than him. As a brother, he showed care and concern for his siblings. They grew up in a close-knit family and he took an interest in what happened to his siblings.

Robert Selvaratnam recalls his brother as a "simple man who was easy to get along with." Daniel is remembered as open-minded, frank and outspoken. "Although he was my elder brother, he became more than just a brother. Despite

the six years' difference in our ages, he became a friend and confidant and we could talk about anything," says Robert.

As a boy, Daniel pushed himself to the forefront. As the eldest son, he was mature and often represented his father at functions like weddings and funerals. "He was also a go-getter and could have been anybody he wanted. He did not lack intelligence. While three of his siblings chose careers in teaching, Daniel chose an independent path and one which would lead him to serve the Indian people, especially the poor and estate folks, and the wider community," says David.

The three brothers had their usual childhood fights but they found in their eldest brother a confidant and friend. "As an elder brother, he showed care and concern for us. We could confide in him. When I wanted to get married, he was the one who told our parents the news. We were brothers and also friends," David recalls.

Their brother was not the academic type. David and Robert went into teaching while Daniel, mainly working in an estate setting, became involved in community service, politics and public issues. "As a boy he was not as serious about his studies. We were more conscientious when it came to studying. Our parents did not push us in education and basically allowed us to develop our

Daniel chose a path which would lead him to serve the Indian people, the poor and estate folks.

personal drive to succeed. They had a relaxed attitude to our education. We were more reserved when it came to mixing with people. But Daniel was able to mix easily with the common people. The ordinary folks attracted him, people like hawkers, barbers and the man in the street," Robert says.

Although he was outgoing and extrovert, Daniel remained a gentle and soft person. Soon after he turned 14, a change came over him, his younger brother David recalls. "Up till the age of 13 or 14, Daniel was like any other schoolboy. But at 14 plus, he changed. This was when he was in Standard 7. He became more extrovert in personality, stood up for his rights and took part in debates," David says.

Perhaps the change was hastened by the times - the Second World War was to break out and the world would soon be in turmoil. The fervour of Indian nationalism and yearning for independence had also spread to the Indian communities in Malaya and nearby.

Second World War & Nethaji

Some historians record that among the Ceylonese Tamils in the pre-war period, there was little political activity. The community, it was noted, was more inclined towards cultural, language and

some union activities. But this period was also a time of growing political and communal consciousness. It was also during this time that there arose some initial efforts to get political representation for the community as a distinct group from those who hailed from mainland India.

The pre-war years were a formative period in the young Daniel's life. While others pursued their studies or other interests, Daniel became interested in the growing Indian independence movement. He came under the influence of this movement and its leadership. The war wreaked havoc among many communities, including the close-knit communities in the estates. Many plantations were abandoned by the British owners and managers. Workers were left jobless and had to struggle to feed their families. Those who depended on regular work and wages were hard hit by the turmoil.

It was during this time that many Indian men joined the fight against British colonial rule by signing up with the Indian National Army (INA). The Japanese had provided support to the INA. The war also changed the attitudes of many towards the colonial powers and this grew with the spread of Indian nationalist ideals to Malaya and the region. These were days of idealism and the struggle to free the Asian colonies from the rule of the European powers.

Daniel became interested in the growing Indian independence movement.





▲ *Jayarathnam with friend at the INA camp in Singapore 1944*

The war played a key role in influencing the hearts and minds of the Indian community.

The war played a key role in influencing the hearts and minds of the Indian community. Many Indians were more ready to discard notions of class and caste within the community and embrace the ideals of freedom, brotherhood and independence for the colonised peoples of Asia. The Indian Independence League and INA spread the cause of nationalism and independence. In Malaya, the Indian Tamils, in contrast to those from Ceylon, were more ready to

embrace the new cause. Ceylonese Tamils, with many being middle class with good jobs and security, were more reluctant to join in. But Daniel Jayarathnam was not among them and he wholeheartedly enlisted in the growing movement at the age of 17 in 1943.

When still in his teens, Daniel became undoubtedly influenced by the on-going events in India. One reason for this youth's allegiance to such a cause as Indian independence was that he could be easily persuaded. He could also be emotional, like in his hero-worship of Indian leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose.

AK Chinnaiyah, who was born in 1922 and a childhood friend of Daniel Jayarathnam from Telok Estate, says, "There was a lot of propoganda, especially during the Japanese Occupation, on fighting the British to free India. Daniel Jayarathnam was engrossed in these discussions and he joined the INA. He was influential among his friends from Telok Estate." Daniel Jayarathnam's group of close friends were mainly fellow Tamils.

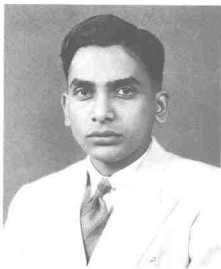
Subhas Chandra Bose became young Daniel's hero. Bose, who was sponsored by the Japanese, drew a large following among Indians in Malaya, much like a cult figure. The movement would awaken the political awareness of the Malayan Indian community. Daniel Jayarathnam

signed up with the INA, together with thousands of others who were drawn by Bose's charisma and oratory skills during the turbulent days of war and upheaval. David recounts that when the war broke out, Daniel had been influenced and was caught up in the Indian nationalist movement. When the time came for him to follow his convictions and join the INA during the war, it was difficult for the family to accept this move. Things took an uncertain turn.

"When he got involved in the INA, our parents were concerned. And when he left for Singapore to train with the INA, there was a physical absence and the family did not know if he would come back," Robert remembers. "Against the family's wishes he went ahead to join the INA and was sent to Singapore."

Daniel Jayaratnam might have perished like many others in Burma but he was never called to go to Burma because of his asthma. He remained and served in Singapore, holding the rank of sergeant, and was based at Seletar Camp. He would return to Banting occasionally during the war.

"When the war ended, the family kept our fingers crossed. One evening, during family devotions and prayer, Daniel walked into the house," David recounts. Many Indians from Malaya who went to Burma were killed when the INA suffered losses. With the Japanese



◀ Jayaratnam in his first suit - June 17, 1949

surrender, the INA was weakened. Although the INA had a short-lived existence, the defeat of the colonial power by the Japanese in Malaya and INA activities led many Indians to participate in the independence struggle. The impact of Netaji and nationalism cannot be underestimated in the development of Indian involvement in the post-war union and political movements in Malaya.

Estate Career & Community Service

Academically, Daniel Jayaratnam suffered because of the war as he did not go to school during that time. It interrupted his education and he did not pursue education later. His studies had been neglected and when peace came, he set out to work in the same estate his father worked in. He started as a clerk and worked his way up but eventually

Subhas Chandra Bose became young Daniel's hero... much like a cult figure. The INA movement would awaken the political awareness of the Malayan Indian community.



▲ *Jayaratham extends a helping hand to needy families.*

Daniel Jayaratnam's strong sense of public service can be explained by his background as a Ceylonese Tamil.

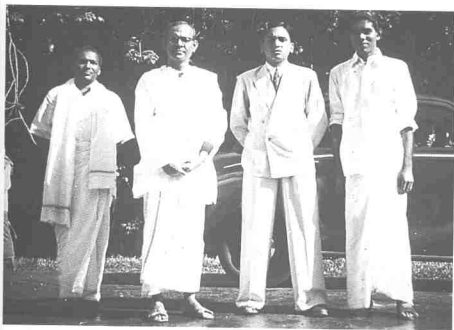
went on to be involved in championing the rights of ordinary workers and the poor.

Much of his time in the years of public service and politics would be spent on party matters, community affairs, promotion of culture and language, and on issues like citizenship and independence.

Part of Daniel Jayaratnam's strong sense of public service can be explained by his background as a Ceylonese Tamil. Many were professionals in Government service or plantations and business and involvement in community service gave them a sense of balance and also status and influence. Quite a number of people from the community rose to important and prestigious positions in society and many

were active and influential in cultural bodies, religious groups, welfare societies and trade unions. A few also rose to prominence in politics and the community found itself generally in favour with the colonial authorities.

His active service on behalf of needy individuals and marginalised groups was witnessed closely by his wife Flora. She recalls that among the first acts of service he rendered was among tuberculosis (TB) patients. TB was a major problem during those years then and there was a TB Sanatorium located at nearby Marib. The Malaysian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis (MAPTB) had been set up to educate the public about prevention, to foster support for patients; and to care for them. Daniel Jayaratnam was soon in the committee of the



MIC President,
K.Ramanathan's
visit to Telok
Estate in 1950

Sanatorium and helped to arrange for patients to receive monetary aid from the Welfare Department. The Sanatorium has since been closed down due to the success in tackling the problem.

Careerwise, after some years, he left his job as chief clerk in the estate and started a venture as a petition writer in Banting town. This allowed him to meet and network with all sorts of people. The family settled in Banting town where they built a three-room house on lot number 563, Jalan Besar. This was formerly estate land which was subdivided for development. The house and plot were only recently sold.

Daniel Jayaratnam's philosophy was a simple one - to help the needy. In his case, it was often the less fortunate

members of the Indian community that he served faithfully for many years. "He believed in what he was doing and always tried to help the Indians," Flora recalls.

From close-up, his son Denison Jayasooria could see that his father had the natural ability to communicate with the masses and spent much time working with the grassroots. "As a local politician, he was well-known and able to liaise with grassroots workers and also with the District Officer and Government agencies and officers. He knew everyone in Banting and most people knew him," Denison recalls.

Through his voluntary work, petition writing and political involvement, he became popular in Banting. Soon, he

Daniel
Jayaratnam's
philosophy was a
simple one - to
help the needy.

He became known as Banting Jaya:

became known simply as Banting Jaya. His petition writing gave him an advantage in allowing him to meet and help many people requiring his services. He also sat on the Banting Town Board. As he went about his business, his language skills and warm personality helped him make friends and contacts easily. He knew the Tamil language well and it was an important tool to help him communicate with the Tamils living in the area. He also knew Hindi.

Daniel and Flora also readily opened up their home and hearts to people in need and it soon became busy with visitors coming and going.

Daniel and Flora also readily opened up their home and hearts to people in need and it soon became busy with visitors coming and going. The various communities in Banting knew and respected Daniel Jayaratnam, mainly because of his sincerity and readiness to help people. He always tried to help and monetary compensation was never a motivating factor.

MIC & General Elections

"He had a natural flair for politics and mixed easily and well with the common folk. He had no airs about him and was able to mix with anyone. Furthermore, he was honest and had no ulterior motives in his involvement in politics or the MIC," his brother David says.

Daniel Jayaratnam's interests from a young age were people, government,

politics and society. He made friends with those who were in politics. "So he decided to make this his career choice. He saw people move up in politics from the rank and file, including leaders like Manickavasagam. He had a keen political mind and was very well informed about current affairs through his contacts with people," Robert says.

Robert was privileged to observe his brother's political career closely. It came about simply because he acted as driver and volunteer. "He used to ask me to drive his Morris Minor and I volunteered. We drove to meetings."

But there was one trait in the budding politician that troubled Robert. What concerned him was that his brother was very frank and would proceed to tell people what he thought of them. He also did not like the hidden agenda of some people and would reprimand those who did not do things the proper way. "I once asked him why he had to be so frank and open but this was just his way of doing things," Robert says.

With an outgoing personality and ability to mix well with almost anyone, Daniel Jayaratnam had a flair for politics but not the stomach for the intrigue and more negative aspects. His outlook was like that of many of that generation which held public service, honesty and humility in high regard.



His son Denison Jayasooria remembers starting his political involvement rather young, going with his father to 'work' when he was 10 or 12 years of age. "In the 1960s, I accompanied my father and helped in the election campaigns. I saw that he had the determination to be involved politically. His ability to communicate in three languages was an asset and he knew Tamil, Malay and English."

Daniel Jayaratnam joined the Malayan Indian Congress in the early years and would prove to be an active and loyal member. He started by being active in the Kuala Langat area where he was founding chairman of the Kuala Langat branch (now a division). At that time, the branches yielded much power, and the equivalent of the divisions of today. He was also the Alliance (the forerunner

of the Barisan Nasional coalition) chief in Kuala Langat in the 1950s and at that time, was better suited than others for the role. He was educated, held a job with status in an estate and had the enthusiasm for political and other work. In the MIC, the party branches covered large geographical areas. The Klang branch covered the areas between Kuala Selangor and Sepang. Among the earliest members of the Klang branch was Daniel Jayaratnam who was the representative of Banting. The Banting branch had been established from the Klang branch in 1952. The Klang branch chairman was one V. Manickavasagam who would become party president.

In the formative period, Daniel Jayaratnam was the secretary of Selangor MIC and between 1950-52,

▲ MIC Banting
Kuala Langat 6th
AGM
(28.12.1958)



▲ *Campaigning in Sg. Rawang during the 1959 General Elections which Jayaratnam, an Alliance candidate, lost by 481 votes.*

he was secretary of the Klang branch. He was also a Selangor MIC Vice-President for a year. In the party, it was evident that he could relate to both the ordinary party members and the top leaders.

"He knew personally MIC leaders like Sambanthan, Manickavasagam and Athi Nahappan. He played a key role in the Selangor MIC for some years and was a member of the party's Central Working Committee as well. Most weekends we would see him going to KL for Selangor MIC meetings and party functions. He was accessible to people and was comfortable with both the poor and rich," recalls Flora.

Undoubtedly, a major event in his life was the elections of 1959. Daniel Jayaratnam was chosen by the Alliance to stand for a seat in Selangor. At that time, he and Flora were expecting their youngest child and it meant that his wife Flora could not accompany him on campaigning. It was also financially draining on them and he had to take a loan of \$1,000 to help pay for elections expenses.

However the election campaign turned bitter, with him being attacked on account of being Indian! Although he was Indian, he had a relatively light complexion and was tall, handsome and also usually well-groomed. There were also some indications that those who were jealous of his position and advancement tried to disrupt his campaign. He was of Ceylonese origin and a Christian in a mainly Indian Tamil-based party with the majority being Hindu. This was perhaps a factor for some opposition to him in the party.

He lost in his first outing at the polls. The main cause of his defeat was the split in the Indian votes. His friend and close associate, Malayalam, put it down to the internal rivalry in the party. One of those who contested the same seat of Sungei Rawang was a former MIC official, K.V. Nadarajah, who had been secretary when the MIC Banting Kuala Langat branch was formed.

Nadarajah, who was Sepang MIC chairman, decided to sign up as a PPP candidate when he was not chosen by the leadership to be the Alliance candidate. The results showed that Daniel Jayaratnam and Nadarajah each secured about the same number of votes – 1,383 and 1,353 votes respectively. The PAS candidate, Mohd Shahid Hj Arshad got 892 votes.

Lim Tuan Siong [Ind] won the seat, having garnered 1,864 votes. The seat had 6,594 registered voters and 85 % of voters turned out. Lim himself was also an Alliance and MCA local leader who quit to run as an independent. So three candidates with Alliance links joined the race for the seat. The votes were split and so being a Christian and Ceylonese Tamil were not the main factors in his electoral loss. The split of the votes between two Indian candidates allowed the independent candidate to win.

Malayalam also notes that in 1959, Daniel Jayaratnam was the Selangor MIC vice-chairman while the chairman was V. Manickavasagam. The latter won in the elections that year and went on to be appointed to a Federal post and political prominence. He feels that his friend Jayaratnam would have gone on to play a significant role in MIC politics and other responsibilities if he had won in the elections.



▲ MCA tea party for Kuala Langkat's newly elected MP, Aziz Ishak on October 4, 1959.

If there were any regrets in Daniel Jayaratnam's life, it would probably be over this defeat. "Although he had some regrets, he did not feel bitter about the loss. If he had won, he might have had a very different political career. His potential in politics was not fully developed because of his loss. But his career took another path and he concentrated on work at grassroots level and with issues like the Tamil language and culture," says Malayalam.

Daniel Jayaratnam himself felt badly about the defeat. But true to his nature as a person who served rather than someone who strove for personal gain and glory, he continued serving in the MIC despite the setback. The experience would reveal his true character and he continued as usual, because it was something that he wanted to do. The election had been an uphill struggle for him but it was also a turning point.

A major event in his life was the elections of 1959. Daniel Jayaratnam was chosen by the Alliance to stand for a seat in Selangor.



▲ *Jenarum MIC
opening on
November 19, 1962*



▶ *At the 13th MIC
General Assembly,
November 11, 1959.*

After the defeat, he had to decide what he really wanted to do. "It was clear that he was a man who just wanted to serve. And he served till the very end. He continued serving in and through the MIC. He was happy in the party and felt part of its struggle for the Indian community. It was never in his mind to make money through service and politics," David recalls.

Serving The People Through MIC

In the period prior to achieving independence for Malaya, the question

of citizenship for the Chinese and Indians was an important issue and Daniel Jayaratnam went on a mission on this. He moved from estate to estate with like-minded co-workers and they filled in the citizenship application forms for people for free. After independence, citizenship continued to be a major point of concern and debate among those whose families had migrated from China and the Indian sub-continent. He dedicated himself to encouraging members of the Indian community to become naturalised and take up citizenship.

During the communist threat, he became involved in the Good Citizens Committee which had been formed as an initiative to win over the hearts and minds of the Chinese against communism. The committees were set up to instill patriotism among the Chinese residents. One of his tasks was to serve as an examiner on the Malay proficiency of citizenship



candidates. He made good friends with those in the Chinese community, including members of the MCA and office-bearers, who were in the Good Citizens Committee.

Another issue was the problem of estate fragmentation and its impact on the socio-economic fabric of the traditional Indian communities in rural areas. The MIC became involved in resolving the plight of these estate communities who were left in the lurch by the companies they have worked under for years and even generations.

The National Land & Finance Cooperative Society (NLFCs) - a brainchild of then MIC president V.T. Sambanthan - emerged from the fragmentation of the estates. He had the foresight to start this cooperative which recruited members and raised funds to

buy up estates. Daniel Jayaratnam dedicated himself to enlisting members to the cooperative. "I remember the time that he was involved in collecting money for NLFCs," says Denison.

The NLFCs project became a mission for Daniel Jayaratnam. One of his close friends, C. Muniandy, in a newspaper report, said that the cooperative leadership had asked them to raise the sum of \$50,000 to buy up the estates that were being fragmented. This was in October 1964.

Muniandy said, "Jayaratnam toiled day and night, paying little attention to his family and employment in his endeavour to serve."

In a ceremony on November 22, 1964, Jayaratnam handed over the sum of \$50,000 to Sambanthan. Daniel

▲ Jayaratnam seated by the side of a young Samy Vellu at a meeting in Banting in the early 1960s.

After independence, citizenship continued to be a major point of concern and debate.



▲ Campaign team recruiting members for NLFCS in Kuala Langat.



► Cheque presentation ceremony on November 22, 1964.

Jayaratnam said that he had been unable to achieve this in 1959, which was also the year that he had lost in his bid for elected office. Yet this had not deterred him and he continued to serve the people. Five years later, he was able to raise the huge sum with his friends and handed over the money. The \$50,000 was to be used to buy estates and help the 41 workers and their families affected by the estate fragmentation. The feat was all the more amazing because it took only one month and it was during the Deepavali period.

During meetings and fund-raising for NLFCS, Daniel Jayaratnam would speak

and address the crowds. In one such event, a wedding ceremony, he used the occasion to enrol members to NLFCS and urged them to buy the cooperative's shares. On one occasion he spoke at a MIC-MCA joint wedding feast between an Indian man and a Chinese woman. He suggested that such mixed marriages could help promote unity and harmony among the different races.

He added the couple were role models and suggested the couple and those present buy NLFCS shares. The couple bought \$52 worth of shares while those present paid \$1,002 in total purchases. Little did Daniel Jayaratnam know that in the years to come, he would preside over two similar 'coalition weddings' in his own family when two of his five children married Chinese. In time, the NLFCS became the largest and most successful Indian-based cooperative.

Daniel Jayaratnam was also involved in another new entity - the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) schemes - which was set up to enable the poor to work and own small tracts of land in rural areas. As recognition for his contributions, Sambanthan appointed him a director of Felda. He was to be the party representative in Felda, which was responsible for opening up large tracts of land for agricultural development.



*Malayalam, the
Kuala Langat MIC
Treasurer, garlands
Dato V.T.
Sambanthan as
Muniandy looks on.*

Much of Daniel Jayaratnam's life was devoted to helping the downtrodden in the community. He worked hard for the ordinary worker. He was popular with the other Indian leaders and Government officers and was also acceptable to the Chinese and Malays. He went out a lot, attending meetings and mobilising people on various programmes. While some politicians in the past and even now play the racial card and appeal to their own community for support, Daniel Jayaratnam did not resort to such methods. He regarded himself primarily as a Malaysian first.

He played a unique role in Malaysian Indian politics because of his religious faith and Ceylonese background that differed much from the traditional MIC masses and leadership. But he generally faced no discrimination and was accepted by most in the party.

Notes from NLFCS Inaugural General Meeting on May 14, 1960:

**".... the need to form a co-operative society to
combat fragmentation of rubber estates."**

Daniel Jayaratnam served with NLFCS from 1964 till 1972. He raised several matters at the 4th AGM held on October 18, 1964 and the minutes recorded:

"Taking into consideration the great role the society has to play in future, the society sends a few of its executive overseas for a year's special study of the cooperative movement. The expenses will not be met by the society but worked out as study awards granted by world agencies such as USIS, Asia Foundation etc. It was decided that the matter be left for the consideration of the Board."

"Mr Jayaratnam referred to an estate of 240 acres which was being offered for sale. He stated that the employees on the estate were willing to repay the cost within one year and enquired if the society would be prepared to buy. Mr Jayaratnam appealed to members to give the society their full support in every practical way."

Federal Land Development Authority (Felda)

Felda was established in 1956 with several aims:

- to promote and assist in the investigation, formulation and carrying out of projects for the development and settlement of land in the Federation of Malaya;
- to increase the well-being of Malaysia's rural inhabitants and other low-income groups, primarily by raising their productivity and thus their income-earning capacity;
- to open for development sufficient new land to keep pace with the formation of new farmer families and reduce the number of landless people desiring land for agricultural purposes.

From 1958 till 1972, the MIC had a representative on the Felda Board. In 1958, V. Manickavasagam was appointed a Director of Felda and he served until 1960. Daniel Jayaratnam took over and served for 12 years till 1972. After his tenure, the MIC has not had a representative in Felda since.

Of the 103,000 Felda settler families, only 1 per cent were Chinese and another 1 percent Indian. Several Ministers have been responsible for Felda and they include Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (Minister of Rural Development 1959-70), Tun Ghafar Baba (Minister of National & Rural Development 1970-72), and Datuk Haji Mohamad Asri Muda (Minister of National & Rural Development 1973-77). The chairmen of Felda have included Tan Sri Taib Haji Andak (1958-71) and Datuk Musa Hitam (1971-72).

Denison remembers his father as a friendly and easy-going man who was multi-ethnic in his outlook and views. The other strong impression was that he was very much part of the local community. For Robert, his brother's 'greatness' lay in his service for the community and

people. "His legacy is that he did not strive for power or personal gain or money. He had a genuine interest in people and in the welfare of the poor. He was like a faithful servant who sacrificed his time and energy to serve others." But the manoeuvrings in politics disheartened Robert as he saw others manipulate Daniel's simplicity and generosity: "For his honesty, some took advantage of him," Robert adds.

But Daniel Jayaratnam was appreciated by the top party leaders and party president V.T. Sambanthan appointed him to positions of service and responsibility. He also showed that he could mix with a rough and less-refined kind of crowd and also those who were more cultured and educated. He was an active social worker and church leader and sat on the Boards of both the Primary and Secondary Methodist Schools in Telok Datuk, Banting.

It is remarkable that Robert can only recall one negative trait in his brother: "I can't think of any bad quality he had except that he could not keep quiet. But he was not malicious and he did things for the good of the community."

Many remember him as a friendly and easy-going man. He made friends easily, was fair-minded and had good intentions. He mixed freely with everybody and spoke well in Tamil, Malay and English.



A frequent speaker at public gatherings, Jayaratnam addresses the public at a field visit by Dato V.T. & Datin Sambanthan at Highlands Estate in 1960.

"He was not a racist and even two of his children had Chinese spouses. He accepted them as he considered them fellow Malaysians," Robert says.

Tamil Language & Letter-Writing

Even though he had a heavy schedule, Daniel Jayaratnam developed a great love for the Tamil language and cultural issues. Once he even went to attend a conference in India on the language. Malayalam, who was also a founding member of the Kuala Langat MIC, says that while there was an emphasis on the Tamil language and cultural consciousness-raising, it served as a preparatory ground for training future leaders in public speaking, stage management etc.

There were Tamil Day, stage shows, drama performances and other events organised and these helped train speakers and leaders.

Tamil was Daniel Jayaratnam's forte and combined with his self-confidence, he made his mark as a spontaneous speaker who could handle just about any topic or occasion in that language. He was often in the limelight and easily made speeches in Tamil off-the-cuff. He was often invited to speak at functions.

"He had the gift of the gab and could speak on any topic, even impromptu. They say that getting him to speak at weddings and funerals was easy ... the problem was getting him to stop! He would sometimes become so emotional when it came to politics and his speech might go astray a little," adds Robert.

Daniel Jayaratnam developed a great love for the Tamil language and cultural issues.

Tamil cultural music band members with Jayaratnam in 1958.



Daniel Jayaratnam also turned his attention to cultural issues later in life. For him, the Tamil New Year celebration was of great significance and would be a point of resurgence for Tamil language and culture.

"He felt the plays, musicals, drama, poetry and open theatre would unite the people. So he played an instrumental role in bringing people from India to Malaya to speak and perform drama. This was to inspire people to get involved politically," Denison recalls.

At that time, Saragapani of Singapore founded the Tamil Day celebrations and was also the editor of the Tamil Murasu daily newspaper. He became a champion of the Tamil language. Daniel Jayaratnam worked closely with him and Saragapani was a main speaker at many events. The level of consciousness among the Indians about the Tamil language was high.

Daniel Jayaratnam was also the Board chairman for the Jenjarom Tamil School. Another interest was his newspaper-reading. He was a voracious reader and he would faithfully buy and read the Tamil and English dailies. This would be followed by meticulous record-keeping and numerous letters and articles for the papers, bulletins and magazines.

He liked to write on issues affecting the public and enjoyed seeing his name appear in the newspapers. Some friends say he liked to see his name in print. As a budding writer, he wrote stories for the Tamil Nesan newspaper and also contributed to the English daily, The Malay Mail. He maintained copies of his articles and letters to the editors. The Malay Mail once honoured him for his freelance contributions to the paper.

His daily routine was to be up 7am to send the kids to school and then read three newspapers – Tamil Nesan, The

The Tamil Day programmes served as preparatory ground for training future leaders in public speaking & stage management.

Malay Mail and Straits Times before breakfast. He could often be observed working till late at night, typing away, as he developed a keen interest in journalism. He also enjoyed writing speeches. He had other interests like collecting photos, records and letters of correspondence. Daniel Jayaratnam was also fond of collecting photos and left behind 20 albums and scrapbooks.

For his political contributions, community services and work on behalf of tuberculosis sufferers, he was awarded the Pingat Pangkuan Negara (PPN) in June 1966. This award, he acknowledged, was possible through the assistance and support of the MIC leadership and members.

Devotion to Family

Their marriage was, like many of their time and generation, a traditional one and was arranged by a friend of his parents. This friend had come over from Ceylon to Malaya and Daniel Jayaratnam's parents asked him to arrange a match with a "good Christian girl" from the homeland. Prior to this, there were already several options for marriage for him but none were confirmed.

So in 1951 Daniel Jayaratnam headed out to Ceylon for a month to meet this young woman who might become his

wife. The matchmaker friend happened to be a neighbour of Flora Ariamalar's. "I was 19 and studying in a boarding school. When Daniel came to Ceylon, my father met him and liked him. He approved of Daniel and later we were married at the American Mission Church," Flora recalls fondly.

The newly-marrieds returned to Malaya on July 12 that year by P & O steamship, a trip that took three days. Their union produced three daughters and two sons. The first, a girl, was named Angelina and she was born in 1952. The second was also a girl, Molly (1953) who had three sons. Denison, born in 1954, also has three children while Edwin (1957) has two. The youngest child, Rita was born in 1959 and has four children.

As a father, Daniel Jayaratnam doted on his children and they loved him. He kept a heavy schedule and workload and would be off to work early and often came home late at night, sometimes at midnight. In between, he would return at 5pm for a bath and shower and would be off again for meetings and party work.

"As his wife, I only attended the important functions as our children were young and needed me at home. His schedule was to send the children to school, do the marketing, come home for a short while and go off to work. He fetched the



The Tamil Day celebrations raised the level of Tamil language consciousness.

*10th Wedding
anniversary June
30, 1966*



children from school and came home for lunch," Flora says.

As a busy husband and provider, he depended on his wife to run the household. One particular trait she remembers is that he did not like the children to cry or scream. And when he returned home from work, there would often be goodies like chocolates and sweets for the children. His heavy commitments in church life, politics and community service did not mean he neglected his role as father and husband. "He was a good father and a devoted husband. He did everything for me and the children," she recalls.

His love for their children extended to their spouses and he had no objections to his children who married outside the race. Nonie married someone from the

small Ceylonese Tamil community. Of his five children, two married Chinese but this was never an issue for Daniel Jayaratnam, being an open-minded man who was at ease with people from all races and backgrounds.

Flora devoted herself to raising the children and ensuring they received a good education. "My father sent us to school daily and picked us up. This went on till we reached secondary school and we had bicycles. He also opened files for each of his children and in my case, my files were handed over to me when I returned from studies in India in 1981. The files contained documents like school leaving certificates, and birth and school records," says Denison.

Daniel Jayaratnam was a devoted father and made sure he was present at the

His heavy commitments in church life, politics and community service did not mean he neglected his role as father and husband.

children's major functions, like school sports day. He was quite proud of them and their achievements. But the illness and death of his eldest daughter at a young age had a deep effect on him. He often played with his children when they were young.

Even as they reached adulthood, he continued to care for them. When the youngest two children – Edwin at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi and Rita at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur – come home for breaks, he would drive them back at the end of their brief stays.

In the Jayaratnam family, Flora had the freedom to run the household and handle finances for groceries and other expenses. Like men of his generation, he would not be found doing household chores. The husband and wife basically had traditional roles at work and home, although he did have some interest in gardening.

"Towards the end of his life, he did not have any regrets. The children were married and successful and he had also seen our grandchildren," Flora says.

He was also close to his brothers, sisters and relatives. In 1980 he decided to make a trip to India and Ceylon where he visited his home village and met his relatives. There were no scandals about



him and he is described by friends and family as a faithful Christian, devoted family man, and a loyal party member who had compassion for the needy and working class.

Daniel Jayaratnam was also a practical man and would dress and act appropriate for the occasion. At home, the children would see him simply clad or put on a shirt when he went for estate-related work. For formal occasions, he would be dressed in a smart-looking suit. As can be seen in photographs of him, he was usually well-dressed and well-groomed for official functions. He made it a point to attend weddings, funerals and other major functions and if he was indisposed, a representative would be sent.

Daniel Jayaratnam was meticulous about keeping his affairs in order and kept records, files, clippings and letters. He had an office in the house and had cupboards full of files and materials. He

There were no scandals about him ... a faithful Christian, devoted family man, loyal party member.

was a keen letter-writer and also sent out the family's annual Christmas cards and birthday greetings ahead of time. This efficiency and orderliness might be attributed to his work as the chief clerk in an estate. With these and other organisational skills, his career as a petition writer suited him well. It also enabled him to establish links with the public. He managed his finances well and became very careful about this, especially after his marriage and the family grew.

Church Leader

While his family roots were in the Anglican branch of Protestant Christianity, Daniel Jayaratnam moved on to the Methodist Church that had a strong presence in Banting. He even preached from the pulpit although he was not theologically trained, being a self-taught preacher.

In 1953, Daniel was a founder-member of the Methodist Church in Banting and sat on the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC), serving as secretary, chairman and treasurer on different occasions. His was a strong Christian faith and he and Flora ensured their children would receive a sound Christian upbringing. So the children's schedule would include Sunday School classes, Methodist Youth Fellowship programmes and other church activities.

His brother David notes that his brother took his Christian faith seriously and was not a hypocrite. "He was bound by church canons (rules and practices) and active in the church programmes and activities. He was honest and God-fearing and didn't mix religion with politics."

While some Ceylonese Tamil fathers might be disappointed when the eldest son chose to answer the religious calling and enrol at a seminary, Daniel Jayaratnam was pleased when Denison decided to study theology in India to prepare to be a pastor with the Tamil Methodist Church of Malaysia.

One aspect of his faith that stood out clearly and observed by several persons was his honesty and integrity. His family recall him as one who took his faith seriously and friends describe him as God-fearing. There was little about him that turned to scandal. "His honesty and integrity came from his religious faith. He did not have a crooked mind. He did not corrupt others nor was he corrupted," Flora says.

His brother Robert remembers Daniel as faithful and committed. "He held leadership positions and was regular in church attendance. They also brought the children up in the faith. He was a good example as a father."

One aspect of his faith that stood out clearly and observed by several persons was his honesty and integrity.



▲ After the dedication service of the Banting Tamil Methodist Church, on February 4, 1962

Retirement & Sudden Illness

While he was relatively healthy, his asthmatic condition was still a worrisome factor. He had this condition from a young age. In 1989, at a relatively young age of 62 years, he had a severe asthmatic attack and he was hospitalised. While there, he suffered a fall as he was making his way to the bathroom and died of a heart attack soon after. It had come suddenly and was a great shock to the family and friends.

In their later years, his two brothers David and Robert would meet up with Daniel. But these times of reminiscing and getting together were suddenly cut short by his demise.



Robert would feel the loss of meeting up with his dear brother and friend. "As Banting Jaya, everyone knew him and when he died, his funeral was packed with people. He commanded the love and respect of those he came in touch with, in his own simple way. Today, many people still have good things to tell about him."

▲ After the baptism service of Angelina at the Tamil Methodist Church, Klang on August 24, 1952



▲ 'Jaya Illam'
house warming
function
(22.11.1964)



Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu presented a MIC flag and spoke words of appreciation at the funeral service.

While illness had slowed Daniel Jayaratnam down a little after retirement, the family felt his death was premature. He had been active in the community but at a reduced pace due partly to asthma.

"I met him a month before his death. Then I was informed he was hospitalised. He had a severe attack of asthma and shortly after I was told he had died," David says.

During his funeral, the custom of showing appreciation to a person who had contributed immensely to the community was observed. The MIC president Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu presented a MIC flag and spoke words of appreciation in the church about Daniel Jayaratnam's service to the community and party. The party flag symbolised the esteem and

appreciation of the party which Daniel Jayaratnam loved and served.

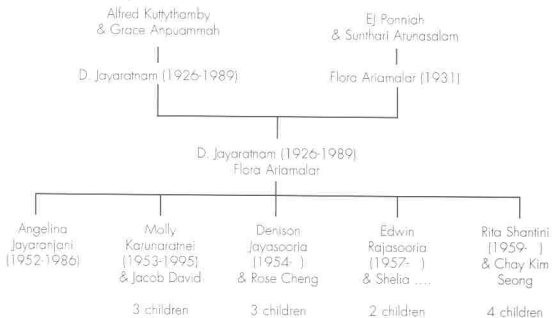
His sudden death shocked many and hundreds turned up for the funeral. As most of his life was spent in the Telok and Banting areas, he was laid to rest at the Banting Christian cemetery at Sungai Sudu.

David remembers his brother as a man who stood for his convictions. "Till the end, he didn't have any regrets. He was not envious of others. When we his siblings achieved success in our careers, he was proud of us. I have good and positive memories of him.

"He was someone with zest for life and who enjoyed living and what he was doing. He did not have self-doubts and held the conviction that he was doing the right thing. He did his best and was accepted as a leader of the Indian community in Banting."

Politics was in his blood from young and this interest did not decline even when ill health slowed him down. "Till the end of his days, he had a great interest in politics and followed the news closely. Politics was in him; He was a staunch MIC and Barisan Nasional man and didn't divert from his beliefs," Denison recalls.

FAMILY TREE



▲ Family gathering at Baring home on October 31, 1988 to celebrate birthdays of mum and Jochebed.

CHAPTER

3

An Outstanding Life of Service

A Different Path

In some ways, you could have been able to predict the path Daniel Jayaratnam would take in life. Several of his siblings excelled in the teaching professions, rising to the highest levels in their vocations. They took the route taken by countless others with similar backgrounds. Middle-class Christian and Ceylonese Tamil families are often marked by academic and professional excellence and high achievements among the later generations. With an emphasis on hard work, education and extra-curricular activities, many children from such families have made their mark in various professions, careers and public life. Giving back to society and contributing to a better world are also marks of the small and close-knit community.

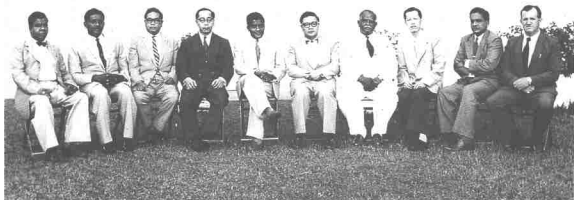
But Daniel Jayaratnam did not stay along this path and instead went on to blaze

a trail that few have managed to do. While he may not have made a mark as a top professional or rose high in the civil service, the eldest son of plantation-based Ceylonese Tamil immigrants did well in the world of community service, politics and nation-building at grassroots level.

His early childhood in the 1930s had been an uneventful one. It consisted mainly of school and play, and centred around his family and friends. Like many others whose families hailed from the Indian sub-continent, he grew up in an estate environment. But his father was not among the thousands who were ordinary labourers - the rubber tappers and manual workers. Alfred Kuttythamby had come from Ceylon and was among the better off as he worked in the estate office as a clerk.

Daniel's schooldays would be taken up attending the English-medium school in

Not academic and professional excellence but community service, politics and nation-building



▲ *Methodist English School, Telok Anson's Board of Governors. (1962)*

the mornings and which were followed by attendance in Tamil school in the afternoons. Logically, he would have ended up going for further study and qualified to be a teacher or a professional. His life would have been fairly predictable and stable, with a good career, status, family and comfortable retirement. But the interaction in the estate environment had an influence on him. Surrounded by the labourers and families and their hardship in life left its mark on him. He would later take up their cause and help to organise and mobilise them and other poor and needy persons towards a better future.

Estate life was hard, and still is, for the tappers and workers who had little monetary compensation although they had accommodation and health facilities and schools for their children. But the facilities were often sub-standard and when the estate sector underwent

tremendous changes after independence, many estate families faced even greater hardship. Raised and dependent on the fragile security offered by an estate job, many manual workers in estates that were later fragmented and developed for oil palm plantations, housing and industry, had to fend for themselves. Without housing and alternative jobs in the rural areas, thousands migrated to cities and towns. They settled mainly in squatter areas and still form a significant portion of the urban poor. Now, many among the younger generations of such displaced workers have been marginalised and afflicted by social problems.

Yet there are many others who have been able to rise above the setbacks, obstacles and problems and escape the cycle of poverty and marginalisation that afflict many estate families and urban squatters.

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Nethaji influenced a whole generation of young men and women with the cause of freedom and independence.

Daniel Jayaratnam had an above average upbringing. His parents were educated and ensured the children received a good basic education. His childhood was normal, and as his siblings recall, he was a happy and easy-going boy who enjoyed play and fun.

He may not have had a particular interest in academic excellence but was intelligent and mature. Being the eldest son had its privileges and challenges. He was close to his parents and fond of his siblings.

His intelligence, he chose to put to good use in later life when he would serve the community, church, party and stand up for the causes he believed in.

War & Freedom

But the 1930s were not normal times and his young world would be completely turned upside down when the cause of India's freedom and independence reached the shores of Malaya. By the time the Second World War began in Asia, he was just in his teens. Something then stirred deep within him which would mark out his career path, passion and mission in life.

In Daniel's own mind, the single event that transformed his life was his meeting with one man, Nethaji, as the Indian

independence fighter Subash Chandra Bose was affectionately known. This leader and his ideals and commitment to freedom for India from British rule influenced not only one young man from an obscure estate of Telok in Selangor, but thousands of others during the war years. They would be the recruits in Nethaji's army. While the army may have failed in its mission and was short-lived, the fires of independence and freedom had been kindled in thousands of young hearts and minds. Independence would follow naturally and colonies in Asia were soon to be granted freedom one after another.

Mahatma Gandhi had a tremendous impact and influence in India and also in Western society. But in South-East Asia, the person with possibly greater impact was Nethaji. Nethaji influenced a whole generation of young men and women with the cause of freedom and independence and helped to hasten the departure of the colonial powers and the granting of independence in several nations.

In his own words, Daniel Jayaratnam recalls that the "two most significant events in my life" were meeting Nethaji and being a sergeant in Nethaji's army.

"Being the son of an ordinary estate clerk, Nethaji's influence has transformed me into a social worker, politician, a

leader of a Christian organisation and district leader as well," he says in an article.

It may have caused some unhappiness and concern when Daniel Jayaratnam decided to leave home and enlist in Nethaji's army, but his mind and heart were set and he could not be persuaded to do otherwise. All his family could do was to pray for his safety. Fortunately, he never saw action and was stationed in Singapore. He came home safely one day when the family was at prayers. He also did not continue his studies but he was no longer a teenager but a young man. He decided to join the workforce and naturally went to work in the same estate, like his father.

The INA period between 1943-45 might have been just a short one in the span of history but its impact in the lives of young men like Daniel Jayaratnam was lifelong. Before it was the trend to look East and especially to Japan for its economic prowess after the devastation of World War II, Nethaji and his followers had looked East. Japan, in successfully defeating the British forces in South-East Asia, paved the way for others to fight for freedom from the colonial powers.

Nethaji and his followers in Malaya readily worked with Japan and the support it gave in a bid to win freedom for their beloved India. The effects would



▲ Jayaratnam being garlanded on his return from Indonesia on April 11, 1961.

spill over to Malaya and serve to strengthen the emerging independence movement in Malaya. Nethaji also used Malaya as a base for his army and operations and recruited thousands of Indians in Malaya to his cause. One factor that made so many young Indians join Nethaji's INA was the bitter plantation experience under the white man's colonialism. The poor conditions under which Indians worked in British-owned estates made many of them resent the colonial powers. The war presented an opportunity to ensure that the British did not return to rule India and Malaya as in the past.

Faith & Service

Another major influence on his character was his Christian faith. While most Ceylonese Tamils were Hindus, a section had converted to the Christian faith, mainly through the efforts of missionaries who came to Ceylon. His parents were Christian and his wife too and their children would be raised in the faith.

One factor that made so many young Indians join Nethaji's INA was the bitter plantation experience under the white man's colonialism.

"Being a Christian and Ceylonese didn't affect his work and involvement in the MIC."

Tan Sri Devaki
Krishnan

►
A visit to Batu
Caves
(December 15,
1962)

Did his Christian upbringing help mould him towards the acts of charity and welfare that he would become known for? What would cause him to work hard, for no monetary reward, to serve the poor and needy through the MIC? Why would he spend time, energy and effort to encourage the poor to join a cooperative and to help them register to become citizens in a new land?

He played a leading role in local church matters and was chairman of the local governing body for many years. Although without formal theological training, he was a preacher as well, gifted with public-speaking skills. Daniel Jayaratnam remained steadfast in his faith and friends and MIC party colleagues still remember him for his integrity, honesty and commitment to the party and its mission. His religious life did govern his public and private life and he managed to live out his Christian faith to the best of his ability. He was a loyal servant of his God and the church.

Although he was distinctly different in cultural and religious background and upbringing from the majority mainland India Tamils in the MIC, this did not adversely affect his role and contribution.

While being a Christian Jayaratnam networked well with his Hindu friends. Some may be surprised but he played an active role in the Banting Hindu Burial Committee.

"Being a Christian and Ceylonese didn't affect his work and involvement in the MIC. His race was not a factor. Others can learn from him. He did not portray himself as a Ceylonese and mixed well with the Tamils from India. As far as I could see, as a Christian he maintained a Christian way of family life. He was a faithful Christian and took care of his wife and family. As a family, I observed that he and his wife were united," his friend and party colleague Tan Sri Devaki Krishnan says.



She recalls his personality as that of a quiet, sincere man who was honest and trustworthy. "Being a Christian, he practised what he believed. He did not go about boasting about himself. He would mix with the common people and ordinary folks. He was a good mixer who liked to help and would attend to the needs of people immediately. In this way, he became very popular."

The turbulent and exciting times Daniel Jayaratnam experienced in the era of the World War II and independence movements seemed to complement well his idealistic nature. He had discovered the world of debating and public speaking in school and was caught up with it. It would naturally serve him well in a career and vocation where he would interact with people constantly, address public meetings, help ordinary folks, and comment on public issues.

His life as a politician, church leader and community leader brought with it some amount of attention and he seemed to take it well without letting it go to his head. At the end of his life, Daniel Jayaratnam remained essentially the person he was - without arrogance, but just a simple desire to serve and make a mark in society.

The main themes that marked his time and life were the war, independence, socioeconomic disruption, fragmentation of estates, labour disputes, founding of the major political parties, communist insurgency, Confrontation with Indonesia and formation of Malaysia.

It would have been almost impossible for someone like him, fired by the ideals of freedom and independence from a young age, to have remained unmoved and untouched by the events of the day. He lived in an exciting era with several major movements of history taking place

in such a short period of time. In many ways, he was well-suited to live in such times as these. He was young and idealistic, caught up with issues of freedom and justice.

He believed and lived out his ideals for a better society through the various organisations he belonged to. The first formal organisation he joined was the INA of Nethaji. During World War II, he saw and experienced the arrival of the Japanese who easily defeated the British. The colonial powers were proven to be fallible and seeds of freedom and being in charge of our own destiny were planted in many hearts.

He also belonged to the Methodist Church, the Malayan Indian Congress, NLFCS and groups promoting Tamil culture and language. Daniel Jayaratnam believed that these organisations could advance the cause of its members and community and also the wider interests of society and the nation.

Party & Politics

In the MIC, he was the Kuala Langat branch chairman for a decade between 1952-62 and played a major role in the local politics of that time. He was respected by successive national leaders for his organisational abilities and oratory skills. He worked hard to recruit members at a time when the MIC was trying to establish its credentials.

Banting Jaya was always available for people, whether party members or non-members, who needed help.



▲ Jayaratnam with class friend Harmat Rafiq (later Menteri Besar of Selangor) together with young Danson in 1964.

Jayaratham: ...
"helped my husband build up the base and philosophy of the party in the early years"

Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan

He made a name for himself in the party and among the Alliance partners. For many years, there was only one Jayaratnam in the MIC – the one they called Banting Jaya. Locally, he was always available for people, whether party members or non-members, who needed help. And he maintained good rapport with local government officers, colleagues in the Alliance and other community leaders to ensure that matters would be resolved and the people's problems overcome.

Among the people whom the young Daniel Jayaratnam grew close to were none other than former MIC president Tun VT Sambanthan and his wife, Toh Puan Uma. She describes him as a party comrade and family friend who was humble and a close associate of her husband. "He helped my husband build up the base and philosophy of the party in the early years. This was all part of the wave of nationalism that had swept

through the area in the 1940s and 1950s."

They met nearly a half-century ago, back in the mid-1950s. Even then, she fondly remembers, he was a "nice person". Her husband was party chief and also Minister of Labour at that time. "We met him at the MIC General Assembly in 1957 where he was a delegate. Daniel Jayaratnam was friendly and young at heart. We noticed he had time for people and also the time to do things for them."

Over the years, the young man grew to become a local and regional leader and went on to be part of the MIC leadership. He was based in the important state and party base of Selangor.

"He was one of the few Sri Lankan Tamils in the MIC at that time. He was also a man for the people and we were happy to have him in the party. He eventually built up the leadership in his area." Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan says.

"His heart was always focused on the welfare of the Indian community. Whatever improvements my husband proposed and brought to the Indians, Daniel Jayaratnam cooperated. He took a non-racial approach to issues and problems. Personally, whenever we went to visit him in Banting, he was always kind and warm to us. We also found his wife quiet but nice. We were fond of

him and shared things in common. We saw him not just as a party worker but as part of the family."

Politically, Daniel Jayaratnam played a key part in Selangor state which was not the easiest region to handle because of its strategic importance and ambitious and aspiring leaders. "He played an important role in the formation of district MIC chapters and state branches. His approach to politics was never a short-term one and he genuinely liked people and served them. During the party annual general assemblies, Daniel Jayaratnam was sedate and positive in his contributions. I don't ever remember him being sensationalistic. He was always a responsible person," adds Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan.

Daniel Jayaratnam's attitude seemed to be one of "not what we could get out of politics but what we could contribute."

V.T. Sambanthan's vision was to help the Indian come up to par as regular citizens and he had high hopes for Indians. At that time of Independence, many in the community were not educated and the party leaders and workers had to work hard to convince them of the benefits of citizenship. "We would keep on asking for our rights and planned to bring them up to development through training and other programmes. Daniel Jayaratnam supported the idea," says Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan.

Daniel Jayaratnam was undoubtedly popular among the common folk and this was mainly through the services he rendered faithfully to the estate workers and other ordinary folks. In the transition period after Independence, it was a time the ordinary workers needed something to aim for. This was where Daniel Jayaratnam found his call and he involved himself in a lot of grassroots' and peoples' work.

The MIC found in him someone who could be depended on. "We were quite satisfied with his work and he touched the people. Getting people to participate in politics and the programmes was difficult. But Daniel Jayaratnam had the skills and used his command of Tamil to get more people involved."

Like many others, Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan found his personality a warm and friendly one. "He could always be found smiling and did not condemn others. He was very positive in his outlook."

But the association with Sambanthan was cut short when the party president died in 1973, having served as party head for nearly 20 years. The late Tun VT Sambanthan was a founding father of the nation and was a signatory of the Merdeka Agreement.

In the party, he also met and worked well with Tan Sri Devaki Krishnan, who

The MIC found in him someone who could be depended on. Getting people to participate in politics and the programmes was difficult. But Daniel Jayaratnam had the skills and used his command of Tamil to get more people involved."

became a prominent figure in the MIC women's wing and also national leadership. "I first met him through our involvement in the Selangor MIC. This was in 1954 when I was in Selangor MIC and helped form its women's section in that year. We gathered 70 women to form the section. Prior to this, there were only one or two women involved at this level.

"So together with Daniel Jayaratnam we went around the estates, through dirt tracks and on board ferries and boats to cross rivers. We started branches and spoke at these meetings. We had a lot of explaining to do with the people and to encourage them to sign up with the MIC," she recalls.

Over the years, she and her husband began to know Daniel Jayaratnam and wife better and often visited each other, either in Kuala Lumpur or Banting.

Tan Sri Devaki Krishnan started as a teacher and had joined the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) which was formed in 1951. In 1952, she made history as the first woman to win in the municipal elections and thus became a Municipal Commissioner. Early in her political career, she often went to Banting for functions and would meet Daniel Jayaratnam. He frequently invited her to address the meetings. Their paths would also cross at party assemblies and conferences. She found

Daniel Jayaratnam both a loyal party worker and leader.

Tan Sri Devaki Krishnan says, "He was a willing helper all the time. As the party chief in the area, he got the work done. He had great contacts on the phone and knew everybody. He was well-known because everyone would know who you were referring to if you mentioned the name Jayaratnam."

In time, he soon became known simply as 'Banting Jaya'. The two also found themselves selected as candidates in the 1959 elections. There were three candidates from the MIC who stood on the Alliance ticket in the State-level elections. She had moved from the Bangsar ward to contest in Sentul. She had a record of having won the municipal elections for the Bangsar area on two occasions. But like Daniel Jayaratnam, she lost narrowly by some 500 votes in the elections.

She had felt that it was only a matter of time before he would be selected to stand for elections. "We were all not very well-off then and we had to raise our own funds for campaigning and party work. In contrast, among many of today's politicians, you cannot be sure of their intentions and motives. Many people today are afraid of being manipulated or being played out by others."

Among many of today's politicians, you cannot be sure of their intentions and motives.

"Daniel Jayaratnam as a politician was hard-working and well-known. He helped everybody ... like a social worker who went out to help the less fortunate. He was a frank person who was open. But he was also well-respected. In a way, he started a trend in the party by serving as a good party worker. Many other good workers and leaders have joined now," Tan Sri Devaki Krishnan says

In time, Daniel Jayaratnam became the information officer in the party, mainly because he had the time and contacts for this. He had good general knowledge and knew many people. "We became family friends and my husband and I would visit his family in Banting and vice-versa."

Daniel Jayaratnam also believed that the poor and needy could be extended a helping hand to ease their burdens and hardship. Once he believed in something, he would pour his energy and effort into it. For example, when citizenship was open to those who had come from India and China, he went round the estates to help many to sign up. He even filled in the forms for those who could not and in the process, helped many to be eligible for citizenship.

The National Land & Finance Cooperative Society was another pet project and with others, he visited many estates and villages to raise funds for the cooperative. One such effort

garnered a sum of \$50,000 for the cooperative.

Three Strategies

He basically had three broad strategies, although they were probably not part of a grand plan for his life, in his approach to the issues and problems facing the community and nation at that time. On a basic level, he adopted a grassroots approach and performed the role of a local or neighbourhood leader. The focus was on grassroots activities, helping people with daily concerns like legal matters, licences, education and housing. This was widened to include a citizenship campaign later.

Another approach involved political representation and this he did through the MIC for which he was a loyal local leader, activist and member. Unfortunately for Daniel Jayaratnam, he was not able to win public office and so was confined to being a party leader in Selangor state, one of the party's power bases.

Although he lost in the elections, he continued to serve in a quiet manner. For his loyalty and commitment to the party and its cause, there were rewards, not of the monetary kind, but appointments to positions of service, for example, in Felda and NLFCS.

Three broad strategies

- Grassroots approach
- Political representation
- Self-help initiatives



▲ *Mardaka* celebrations on August 31, 1959. UMNO, MCA and MIC chiefs of Banting cutting the cake.

He adopted a multi-ethnic approach in his service although his primary concern was with the members of the Indian community who were poor and marginalised.

He developed good rapport and trust with the party leadership and was given important roles to play. The leadership found him to be an honest and trustworthy member. Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan says, "He also did not get anything tangible for his efforts. He was not a 'yes' man but instead he tried to give something back to society and people. In contrast, many leaders now don't know how to handle power. There are many negative practices and jostling for seats in the party.

"The party leaders promoted him as here was a man who had a dream for the people. We found him very consistent and he was not power crazy. Although he was qualified to be an elected representative, he did not push for such a position."

His style of working was inclusive and he drew people into what he was doing.

Daniel Jayaratnam took on a logical approach to things. In the party, he avoided choosing sides in disputes. Although there were some party problems in his home state of Selangor but in the end he held no resentment or bitterness towards anyone there.

Daniel Jayaratnam's possessed a frankness about him and his attitude was that if you didn't want him on your side, that was fine with him. "In the party, he was known as a person with a calm head, even during difficult moments. He did not lose his temper even during heated MIC meetings," Tan Sri Devaki Krishnan says.

He had a powerful voice. "We merely had to use our voices when addressing meetings. There was no need for microphones," she says.

Thirdly, he found that self-help initiatives were important vehicles by which the people's lives could be uplifted. Two examples of this were the NLFCS and Tamil cultural programmes he helped organise. He spent much time and labour trying to get ordinary estate folks to sign up to join the cooperative and he wrote and spoke much about the need to maintain a Tamil identity and culture.

Toh Puan Uma Sambanthan recalls, "He played an important role in recruiting members to the NLFCS, which was

started by my husband. During the early stages of the NLFCS and the development of the cooperative, he worked hard and brought out the better part of people. He had a clear consistency in the principles he believed in."

He adopted a multi-ethnic approach in his service although his primary concern was with the members of the Indian community who were poor and marginalised. Daniel Jayaratnam worked well with Chinese and Malays, the Government officers with whom he had many dealings, the ordinary worker and also the rich businessmen. Although he was associated with the dominant Indian group in the country and he championed the cause of Tamilian culture, he was not an extremist nor a racist.

He was deeply involved in the Good Citizens Movement which brought people of all races together. In many of the photographs he kept, he appeared to be the only Indian in MCA-organised events and other Chinese-dominated functions. This was during the time of the communist insurgency.

And when confronted by Indonesia during the early years of independence, he was also involved in this struggle to ensure the nation's sovereignty and freedom.

In his dealings with people and institutions, he always acted on principles and strove to be fair and just. As he tried to advance the cause of estate workers and labourers, he chose to do so as a member of the establishment. He was loyal to the MIC and Alliance partnership and worked to promote the coalition system. He was not a radical and did not pursue extremist means but worked within the system to make it better for the ordinary worker and the disadvantaged in life.

The problems he dealt with are very different from the issues today like religious extremism, corruption, race relations, globalisation and social ills. But his approach are still applicable in today's environment—honesty, hard work, dedication, commitment, putting interests of others first, teamwork and cooperation.

While much of what is done and said today have a racial basis, this does not seem to have been the emphasis in Daniel Jayaratnam's life and service to society. While he actively promoted the interests of the Indian community and Tamil culture, this was not at the expense of other races and communities. On the other hand, he worked well with other communities and was helpful to all who needed his assistance, irrespective of race, religion and status in life.



Jayaratnam was not a radical and did not pursue extremist means but worked within the system to make it better for the ordinary worker and the disadvantaged in life.



CHAPTER 4

A Life Well-Lived

Public Service, Family Devotion

To remember Daniel Jayaratnam as just another politician would be a disservice to him and his legacy. In his own words and those of others, he was much more - social worker, community leader, active Christian and advocate of nation-building and Tamil culture. He led an active public life, starting from a young age, and touched many individuals and communities through the MIC, church and other organisations he belonged to. Many still remember his service and assistance rendered to them personally, and to various organisations and communities.

But in his private life, he did accomplish much - not so much in terms of material success or career achievements but, in the words of family and close friends, by his humility and honesty; simplicity

and dedication. He was a loving husband and doting father, a true brother and loyal friend. He is also described, by those who knew him well, as a warm and kind person who was generous and always willing to help.

Today some politicians give the political process a tarnished name through their misdeeds, abuse of power and neglect of duty and service. And even when service is rendered, there is often a hidden agenda. Daniel Jayaratnam lived in an era which is very different from what Malaysia is today. He grew up and blossomed in a time where words and the practice of honour, integrity, trust, loyalty, accountability, commitment, hard work, dedication and incorruptibility were lived out.

Many people today often hold the view politicians and public figures are open to corrupt practices and favouritism and a lack of transparency and

accountability. Commentators and observers lament that too many people enter politics today in search of position, power and patronage and see their rise up the political ladder as a way to quick riches.

There are more political parties and members than ever but the services rendered pale in comparison to a previous era. Today money politics, character assassination and rumour-mongering are common, perhaps reflecting the times we live in. Competition for position has made aspiring politicians compromise their values and ethics. On the other hand, the expectations of people have also changed. Politicians and political leaders are seen as sources of money and patronage. Followers expect to be rewarded with gifts, donations and even contracts. The politician has to have access to vast amounts of money and other resources in order to win posts and elections and to stay in office.

Good Character, Honest Deeds

During the times of leaders like Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun Sambanthan, who served without hint of corruption, leaders and ordinary party members then were driven by ideals, dreams and pursuit of freedom, independence, development and a better life for the people. Daniel

Jayarajam thrived in such an environment.

Today's elected representatives fall short of the expectations of people and the high standards of yesteryear. Political parties and elected reps seem to work and meet the people only during elections and by-elections. Setting up service centres has become a pre-election gimmick and few representatives maintain such services during normal times. Daniel Jayaratnam had a good service record without having to open a service centre. He was the service centre and did not have to employ officers to serve the people. He had the advantage of being a petition writer where he could meet and help the common man with his applications; official letters to Government agencies, legal matters and social problems as well.

His estate upbringing and work in an estate office helped him understand the struggles and poor conditions which manual workers endured. His work with the MIC allowed him to visit many people and help them solve their problems. Many of today's unionists are so well-paid compared to the members they represent that they have become far removed from the problems and struggles of ordinary members.

In contrast, leaders like Daniel Jayaratnam had his office and house open at all times to those who needed

Leaders and ordinary party members then were driven by ideals, dreams and pursuit of freedom, independence, development and a better life for the people.

'Conviction
politics' versus
'Convenience
politics'

his help and advice. And this was done with little monetary compensation but was 'rewarded' with more work and responsibility.

He had the ability to mix well with people and could relate to both rich and poor and was comfortable in the presence of either. As someone with an education and ability to write and speak well, he commanded respect. As the chief clerk in an estate, it put him above the labourers in terms of status and responsibility. But there was nothing to suggest he abused this position. Instead, he was an easy-going person who was willing to serve the welfare of others. He was involved among tuberculosis patients early in his vocation as a community leader.

Daniel Jayaratnam was also not adverse to travelling to small villages and estate communities to recruit members into a cooperative or help ordinary folk apply for citizenship. His writings and actions depict a man with a great concern and compassion for those who were suffering or living in hardship. He sought to provide relief and a solution through his work with the MIC, cooperative, cultural groups and self-help initiatives.

For sure, even in his time, there were those who went into politics for the positions and money that could be gained. In Daniel Jayaratnam's bid for

public office, in 1959, there were even indications that people he knew tried to disrupt his campaign. His background as a Ceylanese Tamil and a Christian made him an easy target among the more narrow-minded within society.

But the character of the man can be attested to the fact that he continued to serve the community and party even after his defeat. He did not take the loss well initially but he was able to bounce back and continue serving like he used to.

An Example To Follow

The early pioneers of modern politics of Malaya and then Malaysia seem to have been imbued with a different set of values, priorities and motives. It is generally accepted that the leaders and politicians of yesterday were more motivated by ideals, principles and a grand plan than selfish gain.

The style and practice of politics then could be described as 'conviction' politics. On the other hand, much of politics today can be termed 'convenience' politics. Today many of those involved in politics seem to be motivated by self-gain and advancement in rank and position. Yesterday's pursuit of ideals and principles can be contrasted to the self-gain and attitude of 'what is in it for me?' of today.

Coupled with this is the fact that the challenges of today are quite different from the problems and issues of the previous generation. How should today's young leaders and politicians respond to issues like globalisation, terrorism and a free market economy system? The threats and challenges are more subtle now compared to colonialism, communism or the Indonesian confrontation. In the past, nationalistic fervour could come to the fore easily because the threats and challenges were direct and easily understood. But today's challenges are more subtle and seem less threatening.

But the example of Daniel Jayaratnam can be a guiding post for today's aspiring politicians and community leaders. He was loyal to the organisation he served; he did not put self-gain and promotion ahead of his service; the interests of the poor and needy came first for him; and he did his work without malice or ulterior motives. He was not only the local MIC chief for more than a decade but also headed the Alliance committee in the area. His loyalty to the party and the leadership was rewarded by appointments, not for patronage, but for service and in recognition of his standing. He held positions in Felda and the National Finance & Land Cooperative Society, courtesy of the MIC leadership.



▲ *Assisting a family in need.*

An avid reader and writer, he was also a good public speaker, something which worked well for him in his work and relationships with MIC members and the public. He was a simple local leader who let his work and performance do the talking for him. His was a life well lived in service to the people and community and without compromise to his faith and principles.



▲ 1958
*Merdeka
celebrations at
Kuala Langat.*

He certainly lived life to the full which was tragically cut short by illness. Who knows what might have been? What if he had won in the elections? He would have moved up the party hierarchy and perhaps appointed to a higher position in Government. But that might not have had any effect on his basic character as a person of honesty and simplicity.

Daniel Jayaratnam had no regrets about the way he lived his life, friends and family say. If he had the chance, he would probably do the same. He put the interests of the community before self and sacrificed time and effort in pursuit of a better future for those less well-off. He did not leave riches and large assets behind when he died. Neither was he so poor he could not provide for his family.

What Jayaratnam left behind was an example to others to emulate and a life to give thanks to God for. In a time when social ills like juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, family breakdown, religious and racial polarisation etc threaten society and the nation, it is all the more urgent to have individuals and groups of people who will serve others in a spirit of goodwill and harmony.

There is a great need today for individuals like Daniel Jayaratnam and his colleagues who served voluntarily, with dedication and commitment to uplift the lives of the poor and marginalised and to ensure healthy development of society. The memories of him held by his family and friends are joyous ones and many are indeed privileged to have known such a man as him.



CHAPTER 5

Selected Speeches And Articles By & Of Daniel Jayaratnam



Daniel
Jayaratnam

My Meeting With Nethaji

If Nethaji Subash Chandra Bose had not been in East Asia 41 years ago, India, Ceylon, and Indonesia would not have acquired independence so easily. The Indian National Army launched by Nethaji in Singapore and Malaya and the Swadeshi Movement together instigated Britain to give freedom to India.

The two most significant events in my life are:

- Living in the era of the Revolutionary Bengal Tiger Nethaji
- Being a Sergeant for 2½ years in his army

Meeting Nethaji was the most important turning point in my life. Being the son of an ordinary estate clerk, Nethaji's influence has transformed me into a social worker, politician, a leader of a Christian organisation and district leader as well.

I thank my childhood friends A.K. Chinnaiyah (Tulloh), S. Thiruvengadam (Permas Estate), the late M. Gunasegaram (Kampar MIC leader). Had it not been for their support and effort, I would have neither had the opportunity at 17 years to climb the Penang Hill nor serve under the leadership of Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Tun Sambanthan and Tan Sri Manickavasagam.

It is not just I; it is my whole family that cannot forget Nethaji. I got my eldest son Rev Denison married to Ms Rose three years ago on January 23rd which is Nethaji's birthday. Through this gesture I have made all my family members to remember Nethaji every year. The memories of that day are still fresh in my mind. Dato' V.L. Karithan garlanded the newly-wed couple and blessed them. There were also talks given on Nethaji that day.

** Taken from
Jayaratnam's
collection but no
references to
source or year
were indicated in
the scrap book.*

Raising \$50,000 in 30 Days

The people in Banting, Telok Dato gave Dato' V.T. Sambanthan, Minister of Posts and Telegraph Department, and head of the National Land & Finance Cooperative Society a warm welcome on November 22, 1964. The Director of the Cooperative Society Mr D. Jayaratnam, on behalf of the people of Kuala Langat, Sepang, handed over \$50,000 in the form of cheques, cash and bank pay-in slips to Dato' V.T. Sambanthan, amidst great cheer and applause.

Community volunteer and headmaster of Sri Ganesho Vidhyasaki, Mr C. Muniandy, in his welcoming speech said, "During the Cooperative Society conference that took place on October 18, 1964 we prompted Dato' Sambanthan to buy the estates which had come up for fragmentation. Dato' in turn asked us to collect and hand over \$50,000 to him. We vouched to raise the required amount and to purchase the estate."

National Coalition Youth Council member D. Jayaratnam, who presided over the meeting, said, "We the people of Kuala Langat, Sepang, have gathered here unitedly, under the leadership of Dato' Sambanthan, the father of NLFCS. Today I have received the support of the sub-district of Sepang by rendering noble



service through the cooperative society, and this I was unable to achieve in 1959. I am handing over the \$50,000 to Dato' in your presence and I request that he rescue the 41 labourers affected by this fragmentation. This is the first time the district's affected people have given 10 percent in one instalment. My district will continue to give during the forthcoming months a considerable amount of one thousand dollars monthly.

"On October 18, 1964 the shareholders of the Cooperative Society gave me the post of director and together with that, the responsibility of raising the \$50,000. During this period, I got myself involved in this service with serious commitment. I did not care much about my family or myself but worked relentlessly towards the sacred goal which had in fact possessed me.

"I have been helped by many in this noble deed. There are a few names noteworthy, to whom I would like to

"Today I have received the support of the sub-district of Sepang which I was unable to achieve in 1959."

extend my profound thanks. I would like to thank Mr Suppiah (Sungai Blake); Mr M.S. Malayalam; Mr Kuzhandaivelu (teacher from the southern region); Mr A.K. Chinnaiyah; Mr R. Govindasamy (from the western region); Mr C.M. Somasamy; Mr K. Thomas George; and also Mr Koolu and Mr P.M. Palanisamy who safeguarded both me and the money.

"Four years ago, Dato' Sambanthan, pledging to defeat the fragmentation of land, formed the cooperative society. The purchase of the five to six estates and the able management of the society can be attributed to Dato' Sambanthan's perseverance.

"The MIC Conference in Seremban and this year's Cooperative Society Conference decided to honour such selfless leaders. But it was not available in the list of resolutions. Dato' Sambanthan will not accept resolutions that aim to honour him, at any point of time. He has said in many conferences "wrap the shawl around the Indian community and honour it. Wrap it around Tuanku Abdul Rahman, the father of Malaysia."

"I wish to declare at this historical moment that the 242-acre estate will be officially named 'Kampung Dato' Sambanthan'. The fact that the affected people themselves came forward with the \$50,000 requesting the Cooperative

Society to make the purchase should be entered with golden letters in the history of Malaya. The people have affectionately laid down two conditions binding Dato' Sambanthan.

"The Cooperative Society must purchase the 242-acre estate immediately. The Government had made arrangements to purchase four acres of land to promote the merging of Sri Ganesha Vidhyasalai and Teluk Dato into a cooperative school. But this idea was given up due to the opposition by Indonesia. Fortunately this four acres fall under the estate which we are going to purchase. We want the merged school to be located near the Malay-English high schools. Since Kampung Dato' Sambanthan is just a village, a magnificent structure such as the Sungei Siput Mahatma Gandhi School should be raised by the efforts of Dato' Sambanthan."

National Estate Labour Secretary, Mr S.M. Samy, in his vote of thanks, said: "We thank Mr Jaya for collecting the money, headmaster Mr C. Muniandy; and staff of the cooperative society Mr V. Ramadass and Mr R. Paramasivam. If not for these key persons, 41 labourers would have been unfairly victimised."

The Ankiat Valarmathi Orchestra provided music for the crowd. The Telok Dato' English School Choir sang the national anthem and the meeting

"We thank Mr Jaya for collecting the money, headmaster Mr C. Muniandy; and staff of the cooperative society
If not for these key persons, 41 labourers would have been unfairly victimised."
- Dato V.T. Sambanthan

concluded with "Berjaya Malaysia! Berjaya NLFCS" cheers echoing all around the place.

Tun VT Sambanthan on the NLFCS (November 1964)

"Four years ago, the Cooperative Society was established. At that time land fragmentation was at its worst. People resorted to the Cooperative Society during that period with immediate faith. "A poor community like ours is receiving crores every month. If one lakh members save \$10 per month, in five years' time, our finance department will be in an excellent position. Each one must be prepared to save for themselves as well as the society. Our community has 10 lakhs of people. If one lakh of the members cannot contribute \$10 every month, we cannot call ourselves a successful community. On the last day of Integration Week, we are lucky to have the opportunity to gather here. When the motives are sincere and noble nothing will go amiss. All is well that ends well!"

"The demon of modern times, Sukarno, will not be able to harm Malaya as long as the people here have their own land and houses. In order for democracy to be successful, the common man must be successful.

"Clerks, shopkeepers, teachers and labourers must come together and purchase the fragmented lands. These "golden estates" will enable each one to lead a comfortable life. NLFCS is a blessing in disguise for the labourers of this country. It has the power to transform a poor worker into an astute owner. The people of this district are seriously involved in this society.

"My friends Jaya and Muniandy have put their strength in action. We congratulate all the others who have given their support to these two men. Major Lawrence, the estate manager from Sungei Seed, and I came from Madras by the same ship. He now wishes to join the NLFCS.

"We can hear the cry for freedom in many places. My good friend Jaya is taking efforts to make it reverberate in your district as well."

Integration Week - November 1964

Daniel Jayaratnam, in his address, said, "We have gathered here on the last day of Integration Week. We, who have strived for these acres of land, will surely not fail to protect our motherland. Many of us who have undergone training from Nethaji are prepared to raise weapons in order to protect Malaysia.

"General Subash Chandra Bose is not here today, but we have 'Dato' Sambanthan ... resembling features that make him appear to be Nethaji's heir."

The Tamil people must work hard for the development of their culture. If we do not respect our culture and language, there is no way others would."

"General Subash Chandra Bose is not here today, but we have Dato' Sambanthan who has similar aspirations and nationalistic feelings, and also resembling features that make him appear to be Nehaji's heir.

"There are many like myself who are willing to wear the uniform in General Sambanthan's brigade and raise arms."

Banting Gathering on Republic of India Day & Prayer for Success of Merdeka London Talks

The Kuala Langat District Indians very cheerfully celebrated the Republic of India Day this evening at the Golden City stage. More than 500 Indians and Malays participated in this festival. Prominent leaders who attended the function were Works Minister and MIC President Sri V.T. Sambanthan; District Officer Syed Abdullah and Banting MIC leader D. Jayaratnam. Mr Jayaratnam garlanded the guests.

Sri Sambanthan first spoke in Tamil and later switched to English. He said, "Since the people of Malaya are heading towards self-government, it is apt to celebrate the Indian Republic Day. It was only after the independence of India that the East Asian countries obtained their freedom. As soon as Indian became a self-governing country, it helped Indonesia to follow suit. Let us pray for

the coalition representatives committee headed by Tuanku Abdul Rahman which is holding talks in London on self-government. This dialogue will help Malaya achieve freedom soon.

"Indian labourers who have come to Malaya many many years ago are still in the same position. Our people do not have the time to think about self-development. The people's party, after its inception, has been striving for the upliftment of the labourers. The Tamil people must work hard for the development of their culture. If we do not respect our culture and language, there is no way others would."

Many Tamil children in urban areas are noted for calling their mothers 'Mummy' in English. This trend was criticised by Sri Sambanthan. He went on to say that when two Tamils meet they must always make it a point to converse in Tamil only. Jayaratnam, who presided over the function, said, "After John Thivy, the Indians in Malaya and the MIC have not found such an influential citizen of Malaya for a Tamil leader.

"Today we have Sri Sambanthan, who hails from the same district, Perak, as John Thivy, to take over his place. Sri Sambanthan got involved in politics and since then has progressed to attain this unique position. He has never neglected his society despite his status. The Indians of Malaya were extremely pleased when

he was chosen as Works Minister by Tunku Abdul Rahman.

"Sri Sambanthan is very down-to-earth, attires like a common man and mingles with the labourers very naturally. Thus we expect the Indians of Malaya and the MIC to progress under the leadership of Sri Sambanthan. The labourers here have been trying their best for the past three years to obtain land under the Tempier's Land Scheme, but in vain. The Indians here are involved in agriculture. Thus we have the support of our representative, the Minister of Agriculture. As labourers we are under the supervision of the Minister of Works.

"As residents of Kuala Langat we are under the jurisdiction of the District Officer. We are indeed very fortunate. The Minister of Agriculture is our representative, the Works Minister is the leader of our organisation. The District Officer is our friend! If these three members will, the implementation of the land scheme will surely materialise before the end of this year. Moreover the Indians are willing to accept the land wherever it is, provided that there is access to public roads."

Banting Chinese community leader and good citizen committee leader Mr Lim Yu Kok said that the three races must unite to overthrow the communists and bring about self-government.



Mixed Marriages Will Help Create Integration

"The unity among the communities of Malaya and the integration of the societies can be brought about by mixed marriages," Mr Daniel Jayaratnam said while presiding over the MIC-MCA joint wedding feast at Bukit Seeding Estate. The groom is of Indian descent and the bride Anne Mary Ong See is of Chinese descent. The wedding was termed a 'coalition marriage'. The bride, according to Tamil tradition, was draped in a saree and spoke fluently in Tamil. At the commencement of this function, the Bukit Seeding Tamil schoolteacher and an excellent artist Mr C. Muniandy, in his welcome address, invited Mr Jayaratnam to preside over the function.

▲ *Mixed marriage between C. Muniandy and Anne Mary Ong See at Bukit Seeding Estate held on November 20, 1964.*

"The unity among the communities of Malaya and the integration of the societies can be brought about by mixed marriage"

Mr Jayaratnam, who spoke in both Tamil and English, said, "Through this coalition wedding Chinnappan and Ong See should be regarded as role models by the rest. The couple could perhaps take one step forward, and buy one share from the cooperative society, which is actually a blessing for the Indian labourers of Malaya, set up by Data' Sambanthan, and set an example for other grooms to follow suit.

"This cooperative society which will help the offspring of such 'coalition cooperative' marriages, to pursue education, also helps the people by giving them land to build their own houses. We have come here to ask the Bukit Seeding people to join this powerful cooperative society as members."

After this, Mr Jayaratnam blessed the newly-weds. The next speaker, Bukit Seeding's European manager, said, "Mixed marriages like Mr Jayaratnam has mentioned will produce faithful good citizens in modern Malaya, and simultaneously create integration and harmony amongst the communities."

It is hoped that following the 'Chinappan-Ong See' coalition wedding, there will be more such weddings in Bukit Seeding Estate. The reason for this would be the lasting friendship of the three different communities.

The district community volunteer C. Muniandy, who is popularly called the 'Political Brother' by Data' Sambanthan, based his advice to the couple on the 'thirukural': "A good human being requires two eyes. Only those with both eyes can appreciate the beauty of this world. Today the people of Indian origin in Malaya have two eyes. One being the National Land Finance & Cooperative Society (NLFCS) and the other being the National Estate Workers Association. We cannot live without either one."

During the function, the newly-married couple bought shares in the cooperative for \$52. Estate assistant manager Mr Dorai Rathnam blessed the couple in the national language. The final speaker for the day was Mr V. Ramadass. At the end of the day, a total of \$1,002 was registered for the purchase of NLFCS shares.

Drama Performance in Estates by Information Department

The Information Department of the Government of Malaya has three different tasks to perform. They are:

- To give news and information about the present Government's achievements.

- To strengthen people for the war against terrorism.
- To educate a majority of the society in exercises suitable to the future independent Malaya.

It is well known that the Information Department has consumed a major portion of the public revenue in its effort to perform the above mentioned tasks. The Information Department of the Government of Malaya through four different languages is rendering its service to the community. Some of the services include propoganda through pamphlets, releasing news magazines, conducting training camps, screening movies, radio talks, rehabilitating people from the estates and helping them obtain citizenship etc.

This requires a lot of money. Hence the approach and expenditure of the Information Department are indeed important and necessary. One of the tasks of the Indian section of the department is to perform 'dramas against exploiters'.

The Information Department has had a drama troupe functioning for several months and it is headed by Mr Dharmadurai. The Indians from the estates have watched these dramas in various districts of Malaya and have benefited a good deal.



'Sangamani', which is an estate magazine, was asked to watch the dramas and give its opinion of the performance. So, a group from the magazine left for Kajang last week. At about 8pm, when the Information Department played music through the loudspeakers in the field opposite the Kajang police station, estate people from the surrounding areas gathered to watch the programme.

Before the start of the full-length drama "Punar Vazhru", the Kajang District Officer, Mr Michael Corrie, speaking in Malay, welcomed the public. He said that this beautiful country is suffering because of terrorists. He emphasised the necessity for all to be interested in providing information. Mr Corrie managed to capture the attention of one

◀
Tamil Day
Cultural
Programme at
Telok January
14, 1956

and all by his mastery of the Malay language.

Also present was the famous social volunteer of Banting District, Mr D. Jayaratnam, who is also secretary for the district Good Citizens Committee. He said, "Only estate workers have the power to remove the thorn fence-like restriction imposed by the Emergency rule. Help our Government with your full support and provide it with adequate information whenever possible."

Dramas successfully brought home essential principles and values in a very humorous and lively manner.

Before the commencement of the drama, Selvi Jaeswaris' dance performance, Kali Suppiah and Norton's "Siva Parvathi" dance and Xavier's dance performance took place. Following this the drama took place. "Punar Vazhva" has a beautiful plot which revolves around the estate environment.

Mr K. Perumal, who played the role of the militant chief Veerasingham, was very emotional. Mr Kali Suppiah skilfully played the part of a father and also of an estate lady. Norton, who played the role of Malliga was very natural. Chottabai and some others took part in the drama. Mr C. Kone, the author of the story 'Aval' appeared as the Inspector. Music was scored by Purushothiam's orchestra.

On the whole, the drama, without offending the feelings of the estate workers, successfully brought home

essential principles and values in a very humorous and lively manner. In order to invite this drama troupe, applications can be made to the Information Department. It will also be required of them to provide the venue and stage for the drama. Despite the curfew, many enthusiasts - Chinese, Malay and Indians - managed to obtain permits to watch this drama performance.

Heroes Who Registered 5,371 Citizens in 10 Days

Our heroes from March 3 till March 13, 1958 toured the whole district of Banting and helped 5,371 citizens to register, sit for the language test, and take the oath. This activity which was conducted over 10 days, helped increase the number of Chinese and Indian voters in Banting District.

Mr D. Jayaratnam, a leader in the National Land & Finance Cooperative Society, expressed his gratitude to all those who extended help for the 10 days in 10 stations, through the Tamil daily 'Murasu'. He thanked all the prominent members who provided breakfast voluntarily, managers who provided the venues and the police chief C. Krishnan for sending his staff to regulate the crowd. Implementation of 10 days of fulltime registration had initially run into problems due to the shortage of registrars. He regretted the



inconvenience cause to some in this regard.

Mr Jayaratnam stated that registration could be done on all days except Thursdays, on completion of the application forms. He further said that those who were born abroad and aged below 45 years were required to sit for a simple Malay test. There are a few, everyday, who fail the test. The results of the test will be recorded on temporary receipts given to them. Those who have failed can re-sit the language test after three months.

Mr Jayaratnam requested that this interim period of three months be used fruitfully to learn the language. He pointed out that some women did not even know a

single word in Malay. They just laughed and said 'theriyadhu' ['don't know'] in Tamil. Mr Jayaratnam was disappointed that the women were not able to comprehend the seriousness of the whole issue.

On March 13, 1958, at the office of the Batu Hulu penghulu, 599 persons from the estates at Kadang, Bedford, Kelang, Batu Untong and Batu Laut, had registered themselves. On the last day of this exercise, MIC Treasurer Mr S. Malayalam, Bedford secretary Mr Varadhan and teacher Mr P. Nadarajah offered their assistance.

▲ *Jayarathnam played an active role in enabling workers to enrol themselves as citizens. Submission of applications at Banking MIC citizenship drive during March 3-13, 1958.*

White Area Festival Celebrated Extravagantly by Indian Community

The Kuala Langat "White Area" festival was celebrated on a grand scale during the beginning of this month. The participants were District Officer Encik Mohamed Ismail bin Latiff, Regional Information Officer Mr Hekett and Indian Division Information Officer Mr V.T. Pitchai Pillai from the HQ of the Information Department.

About 5,000 Indians participated in this function. Staging of the drama "Lachlavathi" was a special feature of this function and was enjoyed by the crowd. The Indian Good Citizens Committee released a special magazine on the occasion of the festival. The committee president is Mr V. Mani, secretary is Mr D. Jayaratnam and treasurer Mr C. Chellaiyali. Abstracts of this special magazine are as follows:

• Perfect Example - by Mr E.J.F. Hekett (Selangor State Information Officer)

Wherever there is freedom, there is courage and determination. Where there is leadership, one will not back off from his duty to oppose the atrocities that surround him. This has been crystal clear in Kuala Langat. The residents of Kuala Langat have bravely risen against the seven-year communistic terrorism and wiped it out completely.

The conception of the Good Citizens Committee took place in Kuala Langat. Rather than using other methods, if we utilise the strength harnessed by this committee, in a proper way, we can surely overcome the crisis of 'Emergency Rule' in a comparatively lesser time. This is because the Good Citizens Committee represents the peoples' determination and desire to abolish the phobia of communistic terrorism. The Indians in Kuala Langat have played an important role in the development of this committee and have set an example to the rest of the Indians in the country. The Indians in Kuala Langat were not only involved in serving the community unitedly but also cooperating unitedly without any differences towards other communities. This is a perfect example of communal integration.

• Help To Protect - by Encik Ismail bin Abdul Latif (District Officer)

The Action Plan has been victorious due to the support and confidence of the people and has resulted in the formation of the white province. The Good Citizens Committee through their anti-communist demonstration has done its part well. We are now free from terrorism. I hope that the Indian good citizens will help to preserve this freedom.

• Long Live The Government - by Mr K.V. Nadarajah

(Sepang Omnibus Co Managing Director)

The people of Kuala Langat and Sepang districts are indebted to the Government and the security forces for being responsible in declaring these places 'white areas'. The vital responsibility of continuing to keep the place 'white' lies in the hands of the people of Kuala Langat and Sepang. Long Live Democracy! Long Live The Government!

• Our Duty – by Mr S.A. Perumal (Teacher, Sungei Poya Estate)

Each one of us is proud on this auspicious day which is being celebrated with gaiety by the Kuala Langat Indians on their place being declared a 'white area' and this was made possible by the enthusiastic and concerted efforts of Indians with the other communities.

We, who have worked with the Government to destroy terrorism, must consider it our duty to prevent the spreading on such anti-social organisations in our districts.

• Being Cautious – by Mr D. Jayaratnam (Secretary, Indian Good Citizens Committee)

The declaration of this place as 'White Area' must be entered in golden letters in the history of Kuala Langat District. The Indian community has performed its part along with the Government and

other communities in making this place a 'White Area'.

During the anti-communist war the battlefields have mostly been the estates. We have experienced enough problems for the past seven years caused by the minority communists. We have had enough. Be wary of communists and do our best to stop this intrusion into our society. Long live Kuala Langat and its people!

Remain Faithful To The Country You Live

Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman requested the MIC to work together with Malays and the Chinese who faithfully treat this country as their own.

During the 6th Anniversary celebration of the MIC Kuala Langat branch, which took place on December 28, 1958, the Prime Minister sent a special message which read as follows: "The world is watching every move we make in this country in which three different races live in harmony. Whatever we achieve unitedly will form the basis of their decision. MIC is one of the serious partners of the coalition government.

"Malaya has become amicably and legally independent. This is due to the joint efforts of all the races and not just the effort of one particular society. We all know what we have to do!"

Be wary of
communists and
do our best to
stop this intrusion
into our society.



Prime Minister,
Federation of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur

4th May, 1962.

Dear Uncle /aya abnana

Thank you very much for your account of your visit to Java and the stand you took in defence against the attack and criticism by Aidit. Your article made interesting reading and I hope many more will do as you have done. Unfortunately many have forgotten to do so on their return from their trip overseas on study tours. However I am told that they had enjoyed themselves and were able to see how the people in the other countries live and could compare it with the condition in this country which in turn serves the purpose of the visit, how much better Malaya is.

(TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN PUTRA)

Mr. Daniel Jayaratnam,
President,
Kuala Langat District Alliance Committee,
238, Jalan Pekan Sari,
Banting,
Selangor.

Brief Bio-data of Daniel Jayaratnam

- 1910 Father, Alfred Kuttythamby, arrives in Malaya from Ceylon by ship
- 1926 Born on June 17
- 1943 Enlists in Nethaji's Indian National Army and stationed in Singapore
- 1946 Becomes a member of MIC
- 1950-52 Serves as Secretary of MIC Klang Branch
- 1951 Marries Flora Ariamalar on June 30, in Ceylon and returns to Malaya
- 1952 Founding Chairman of MIC Banting, Kuala Langat
- 1953 Founder-member of Methodist Church in Banting
- 1958 Helps to register 5,371 citizens during 10-day campaign
- 1959 Stands for election for Sungai Rawang State Assembly seat under MIC-Alliance ticket
- 1960 Appointment to Felda Board and serves till 1972
- 1964 Appointment to Board of NLFCS and serves till 1972
Raised RM 50,000 for NLFCS
- 1966 Conferred PPN award on June 10
- 1980 Returns to Ceylon and India and visits home village and relatives
- 1989 Passes away on April 25 after short illness

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