

**THE RISE OF THE SINHALA NOVEL AND THE
CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE**

Hema Goonatilake
(University of Kelaniya)

The rise of the Sinhala novel occurred in the first decade of the 20th century. This paper examines the relationship of the rise of the Sinhala novel to the changing socio-economic structure of Sri Lanka at the time. The first Sinhala novelists were Albert Silva, A. Simon de Silva, Piyadasa Sirisena, M. C. F. Perera, W. A. Silva and Martin Wickramasinghe. The social origins, careers and social aspirations of these novelists are analysed, in relation to the socio-economic changes that were taking place in the country at the time, specially along the Southern coastline, where all these writers originated. The socio-economic changes are identified and discussed.

SECTION F

The study reveals that these novelists belonged to the rural middle class. (Their fathers were Sinhala school teachers, ayurvedic physicians, village headmen and the like). They obtained their primary education in village schools and studied Sinhala classical literature under the guidance of Buddhist monks. They later migrated into the city for English education and clerical jobs. It is suggested that their marginal position between town and countryside, between a traditional Sinhala background and a colonially derived job which used English, provided the motive, the themes as well as the opportunity for the rise of the new genre.