

# **READING MAKETH A FULL MAN, PATRICIAN STYE**

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**“Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.”**

**At an early age, we were taught that ‘Reading is a habit’. Like any habit, the habit of reading can be developed, by repetition, repetition and more repetition. Voracious readers can never be lonely. Accomplished readers always surround themselves with books galore, at all times. Books can be great companions for life. It can become an addiction.**

**“Reading Maketh a Full Man; and Writing an Exact Man”. Reading makes you a better Writer. And, therefore, if a man writes little, he need have a present wit; and if he read a little, he need have much cunning to seem to know which he doth not”. What did Sir Francis Bacon have in mind, when he quoted the above piece?**

**This article is a tribute to all those who influenced my life, courtesy of the ‘majesty’ and ‘grandeur’ of the English Language. Firstly, my Alma Mater St. Patrick’s College and to ‘all the English teachers that I loved before’; my friends who lent me materials and support; my wife, my daughter and my son; my sister & all my brothers, especially my brother Anton; and finally my father Abraham Arulanandam, all of whom continue to boost my passion for this Language. While writing this article, I am constantly reminded of our great Cambridge educated Rector Fr. Timothy Long, who influenced me to think big and do anything great with ‘a single minded obsession’. He did so himself. Dr. David Schwartz, who wrote his book ‘The Magic of Thinking Big’, must have had the likes of Fr.**

Long in his mind. Dr. Schwartz advocates that the main thing holding people back, is the relative smallness of their thoughts, and explains to ‘Think positively toward oneself’. I shall indulge myself in doing just that, in sharing my experiences of those who influenced me so far – to set my goals high and to think positively to achieve them, banishing any small minded attitude, remembering that humility is also one’s virtue. Those who think otherwise – it might help to inculcate this wonderful habit of ‘reading’ in you!

I remember reading my first big hardcover book in English. It was Dale Carnegie’s ‘How to Win Friends and Influence People’ when I was barely thirteen. And what an impact it made on me. My late brother Dr. Anton Arulanandam was an avid reader and a great teacher of English. Consequently he was a great influence on me during my adolescence. However, what impacted me most was a casual meeting of our former Botany teacher Mr. Y. Johnson from India, had with our father at the ‘Small Bazaar/Sinna Kadai’. I must have been still 13 years old at that time. He congratulated our father on Anton’s success in his Senior School Certificate S.S.C. and especially him getting a Distinction in English Language. He added that Anton had made St. Patrick’s College and Fr. Long very proud, since anyone getting a Distinction in English Language was a rarity in the North in those days and he advised my father to send him to India to do his Bachelor’s degree. Hearing this conversation about ‘Distinction’ and so on was a positive awakening for me!

Anton never went to India, since our father could not afford to do so. Instead, Anton decided to chart his own course. When Anton came home for his holidays from his first teaching job at St. Patrick’s College, Talawakelle, he brought home several books. His passion to read voraciously was already set in motion. It took ‘a day and a half’ of train ride between our home in Jaffna and his school that was located in the hill country, close to Nuwara Eliya in Ceylon. Hence, it made sense to read books galore all along that journey.

When he unpacked his suitcases at home, I noticed that he casually tossed all the books that he brought home, either deliberately or purposely, on our large study table, so that we could see them askance. Was it his tactical way of getting us interested in these books? I remember looking at three of them, which were staring at me: The first one that I quickly grabbed had the most enticing title - “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dale Carnegie and the other book by the same author bore the title “Lincoln the Unknown” – it was all about the rags to riches story of a once poor ugly U.S President Lincoln who eventually achieved super stardom. The third one was titled “Life is Worth Living” by the Emmy Award winning, New York based late Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen. He won the Emmy Award for his best TV Program called “Life is Worth Living”. His articles appeared regularly in the weekly Catholic Messenger, which was given to us at St. Mary’s Cathedral Church, the largest Cathedral in North Ceylon. The caption of these books triggered my interest & curiosity. I got thoroughly immersed in them. Reading became an addiction. The rest is history. I got hooked on these books. I got hooked on “reading” for

life. At that moment I began my new life-long worthwhile hobby – ‘Reading’. From then on, I started building my own library.

Anton’s consecutive teachings in four other schools in Ceylon impacted all of us positively about the English Language and our regular reading habits. While teaching English at St. Peter’s College, Bambalapitya, he became the top administrator in Athletics for Schools & and non-schools related bodies. With his handsome looks, excellent command of the English Language, both spoken and written, he earned the respect of everyone involved in Education & Athletics – Students, fellow teachers, Armed Forces personnel, Mercantile Sector Executives, Parliamentarians, Governor General’s Office and the Prime Minister’s office. I was a personal witness to these going ones. It also influenced me a great deal.

When Anton migrated to Australia, Rev. Brother Brady, head of the Sydney’s elitist Catholic Schools ‘Christian Brothers High School’, Lewisham interviewed him and promptly recruited him for his multi-talents & brilliant teaching experience in English Language. Fr. Brady, also had known of another fellow Irishman Father Timothy Long, when he founded the Iona College in Adelaide, but already heard about his record at St. Patrick’s College, Jaffna Ceylon, where his future teacher was a past student of Fr. Long.

David Wenham, (Star of epic films such as ‘Australia’ with Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman, the ‘Lord of the Rings; the Return of the King’ plus 40 other films) was a pupil of Anton. Anton had the vision to identify the potential in David Wenham to be a future mega star. Anton provided the inspiration and volunteered to train David in acting and in English Literature. He was able to do this after regular classes every Friday. In an interview by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) FM Morning Program in July 2001, with Australia’s popular Interviewer Margaret Ellen Throsby, David credited in naming his teacher ‘Anton Arulanandam’ as the one who initially inspired him & offered training in acting, doing various impersonations etc. at his School, that made him an actor, that he is now today. Apart from teaching English, for over 30 years, Anton edited the School’s prestigious school annual; He was also in charge of Athletics, Photography and even gave lessons in cooking. He married the daughter of a Patrician, Edith Santiago J.P. from Colombo, a Bridgetian. Posthumously, Anton received his Doctorate in Philosophy Pd.D., on the 4th of April 2009 from the University of New England, NSW, Australia. The title of his thesis was “Imagining and Remembering Home in Australia – Study of a Sri Lankan Diaspora” – 323 pages in all.

The mentor and the architect of Anton’s successful mastery of the English Language was our father A.S. Arulanandam J.P, a Patrician himself. He was Anton’s first teacher, taught him from home during his formative years. Our father laid the foundation in reading children’s books to him and thence to all our brothers and to our only sister. He would read to us daily. He was considered a teacher of Distinction in Arithmetic, English and Classical Music. He got involved in bodies that nurtured the promotion of English

**Language. Our father became the President of the English Teachers Association in the North and V.P. for its all island body. Jaffna Arts council also elected him as “Isai Arasar” and “Lion of the Veena” for his expertise in Carnatic Music. At one time, some of our outstanding Patricians, who themselves excelled in their studies at SPC during their time, were instrumental in the Island’s educational front – H.L.B. Hurulle as the Minister of Education, J.D. Aseervatham, a Lawyer/Advocate as the General Secretary of the All Ceylon Teachers Union – a powerful lobby group for bettering the educational system in Ceylon, especially in the English Language curriculum. With Senator Mudaliyar A.B.Rajendra M.B.E, as the Head of the Education Department in Colombo, it was a cinch for Fr. Long to get things done easily and speedily on the education front, especially in giving top priority to English Language for all Patricians to benefit.**

**At that time, when I joined SPC in the Lower School, English was still the medium of instruction and the curriculum for English Language in the S.S.C ( Senior School Certificate) which came to be replaced by the G.C.E. (General Certificate of Education) had only one Syllabus A. This meant that one has to acquire certain amount of proficiency in the Language, even to get a pass. In the later years, to alleviate this pain, the then Minister of Education introduced ‘Syllabus B’ to the English Language, paving the way for majority of the students to get a pass in English. All this was about to change when the Sinhala only Act came to be passed and the standard of English started deteriorating.**

**While Ceylon took this regressive step, progressive countries like Singapore did the opposite. Harvard Business Review carried an interesting article about Singapore, which is governed as a ‘Nation Corporation’ because of its total Computerization. Over 95% of the Singaporeans voted English as their preferred Language of instruction in their schools, over Mandarin Chinese who were in the majority, followed by the Malays and the Tamils; these four languages are also Singapore’s official languages. As a result, while Singapore continued to prosper to this day, Ceylon plundered itself into self destruction.**

**Given these constraints, we were fortunate to have had St. Patrick’s College, which probably had some of the best teachers in English Language in the whole Island, thanks to the wisdom and foresight of all our Rectors, during my time Fr. Long and Fr. Mathews. Their ‘modus operandi’ was to recruit the "crème de la crème" among the teachers in any subject which would boost the standard of education of our school to the highest ever. SPC continued to attract the ‘cream of the crop’ among the teachers, who were handpicked/ recruited locally, and from overseas by our Rectors, especially from India – both from Tamil Nadu and the Kerala States.**

**When I joined the Lower School my first English teachers were the great Master Francis of Mary and Mrs Lawrence and Fr. Nalliah as the boss. At the Middle school, we also had the brilliant Rev. Dr. David, who spoke many languages. He was a powerhouse in linguistics, especially, in the etymology of the English Language. We had the “D.H. Lawrence” look-**

alike Master A.J. Canagaratna, (D.H. Lawrence, who wrote the famous classics “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” and “Sons & Daughters” had a very short beard). Canagaratna also ended up teaching English Language at the Jaffna University, after a short stint at the Lake House Press. We also had Mr. Koelmeyer and Mr.C.W.D.Alwines; the latter also popularized the study of First Aid via. St. Johns’ Ambulance in our school.

When I went to the High School, Fr. Long was still our Rector and was on the verge of leaving for Australia. On the very first day, in FNC Saverimuttu’s English class, I was fascinated by FNC’S impeccable English accent, but he wasted no time in asserting his authority. He caught one of the students in our class for committing an ‘unruly behaviour’, he promptly despatched him to the Headmaster’s office to report and to bring back a ‘chit’ from the Headmaster, to be allowed into the class again., thus excusing him for his ‘first day at the High School unorthodox behaviour”. That was an eccentric ‘Champagne FNC’, at his best. His expertise showed us how English essays must be written. By sheer contrast to Iyer, who had a stereotyped Indian accent when he spoke English, FNC always spoke English like an Englishman. He was also always impeccably dressed in his full suit.

Subramanya Iyer, the other English teacher from India was the stingiest teacher we had as far as his ‘markings’ were concerned. His ‘30 Marks’ was equivalent to an 80! He was excellent in grammar and English Literature. He conducted weekly Quiz challenge, among Abraham, Bonjean, Mathews and Dunne Houses. He was strict in the use of Grammar. He followed a strict Hindu Swami dress code, like that of a Hindu Priest. His head is often shaved clean, except for a pony tail or a ‘Kudumbi’ at the very top back of his head. He wore long white shirts and Vesti/Dhoti. He was a strict vegetarian. He was a perfect Hindu Priest and a teacher, teaching English to students in a popular Catholic school.

He encouraged reading any books that were available in the English language and Newspapers on a daily basis. His recommended books were “Glimpses of World History” by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. When he was in prison as a punishment fighting for the Independence of India from Britain, he was unable to sleep at nights. So he read widely and wrote letters to his daughter Indira Gandhi on ‘world affairs’, educating her and preparing her to succeed him one day, if he ever became the first P.M of India. These letters came to be published as a book with the aforementioned title. The other was “The Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi” by Gandhiji. The reason for these recommendations were to shows us examples of how to write simple, short sentences. He was fond of newspapers and periodicals and magazines such as “Punch” and his favourite Indian Daily the “The Hindu” which he often boasted that his uncle founded this India’s popular daily. He opined that in order to become good at ‘Précis’ writing, we must continue to read the “Editorial” section of any or all Newspapers, and try to gauge the ‘gist” or ‘the summary’ of what the Editor was trying to convey to its readers!

**In the High School, a new rule was introduced – “READ A BOOK A WEEK”– A Fine of Five Cents was charged to anyone failing to do so. We were required to borrow a book from our High School Library every Friday, and return it on Monday morning. This ruling forced us to get better and better in our English Language skills. To me, this was a blessing in disguise and the best thing that ever happened to me.**

**Our ‘Junior’ Ferdinand Master was exceptional in preparing his lessons daily and explaining clearly the entire prose and poetry in our text books. I remember the text book ‘The White Company’ by Arthur Conan Doyle and the main character as Alleyne, raised by Monks and his witty & funny buddy John Hordle John, who gets kicked out of monastery. It was Ferdinand Master, who also registered in my mind, the true meaning of the Poems “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes and “The Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” by Poet Thomas Gray. He was equally good in both prose and poetry!**

**I admired Fr. Noel Crusz, even before he taught us at St. Patrick’s College. I got to know of him since he wrote extensively to the Catholic Messenger Weekly and to the English Ceylon dailies. He was very popular among the youth, especially in the Bambalawatte area. Perhaps, it is the movies that he produced – such as ‘The Little Bike Lost’ – that attracted the younger crowds. He listened to Bing Crosby records and always groomed and dressed impeccably, as a Priest. After his term at St. Patrick’s was over he moved back to Colombo.**

**One Saturday, I attended an evening Mass at St. Lucia’s Cathedral in Kotahena. I was pleasantly surprised to see our own former teacher Fr. Noel Crusz. It was a sheer coincidence that he was also conducting the mass and delivering his sermon as well. What astonished me most was what he said in his sermon. He recollected his days at St. Patrick’s College, as a teacher of English and then he paid the highest compliment to the congregation about our school. He said that “In all of his years of his teachings, he had never come across anyone like the Jaffna boys in his class at St. Patrick’s College of Jaffna. “The standard of diction, vocabulary and the style of writing and the imagination that my students exhibited were so high, in his personal opinion no other school could hold a candle to the Jaffna boys’ knowledge of English. Sitting inside the Cathedral, I wished that I had a ‘Tape Recorder’ to record those historic remarks! My self esteem, as a Patrician, went sky high. Year ago the InterSector published this true story. He got married, wrote a book called ‘The Bells of Silence’, the book was based on his struggles with celibacy, emigrated to ‘down –under’ and died there.**

**Our own school Library – was the very best one among the schools in the North during my era; We had a wonderful large brand new Jaffna Central Public Library; The Americans thought it fit to have a U.S. Information Center Library – in Yarlpanam, which was located at 5th Cross Street in Jaffna; We had our own Home libraries, which our father and our brother Anton built up. In our own home, we had access to several past issues of SPC’s ‘Bottled Sunshine’, “Shamrock” etc. ‘Bottled Sunshine’ contained valuable articles,**

contributed by many outstanding students. This was a great tool to expand one's vocabulary. Many articles were written with wit and humour; articles such as "How to bring up Father Rector" and "How to bring up our Head Master" etc.. Father Rector gave full freedom of expression and even enjoyed and approved of articles on these topics. Among the many contributors, one distinct name that comes to my mind was a Patrician named 'Guy Amirthanayagam,' who taught at St. Joseph's College Colombo, wrote several books, many articles and poems and topped the Ceylon Civil Service Entrance Exams, was a Deputy High Commissioner for Britain!

Special mention must be made of my school time friend Dr. Alex Pillainayagam and his sister the late Acca Jeyarane Fernando nee Pillainayagam, for lending me/exchanging books/magazines from their home library, on an ongoing basis. Growing up in Jaffna, where there were hardly any other avenues of recreation, such friends who shared similar interests, not only in reading but also in other intellectual and cultural pursuits, were great assets to have had. Currently, thanks to the habits of reading and writing, we are still in touch almost every day, criss-crossing between UK/Canada, courtesy of the e-mailing system. The same thing goes for Professor Charles Santhiapillai in Kandy. During our SPC days, we exchanged several reading materials, especially humorous ones. It is healthier to be eternally 'mirthful' rather than be willfully 'wrathful'. Charles has always been mirthful, sporting a great 'sense of humour' – a natural gift from his school days, as I remember him. I have been encouraging Charles, a gifted writer, to continue his writings, especially to the InterSector enriching us.

I became a frequent visitor to our present Jaffna Public Library and to the old one when it was a small upstairs building, then located right next to the Rest House across from the old U.D.C. (Urban District Council). Quite often I would also see my brother Anton there. When the new library was built, what I remember most is the greatest book that I came across accidentally by Napoleon Hill titled "The Laws of Success". It was the ONLY hard cover copy that was available in the Library. It was always kept under lock & key. Like a magnet, the title of this book attracted me. It is considered the bible on Success. "Think and Grow Rich" is another major book by Hill, a recommended reading for Universities.

Perhaps the proof (of my reading habits and its fruits) is in the pudding! Our families benefited a great deal from our 'habits in reading'. It is these habits that attracted 'our partners in life' as well. As our Physics Master Christie would say that 'Like poles attract, unlike poles repel' is very much true in our personal lives. My better-half Sharmini and I are voracious readers and thus also are good writers. We are also passionate about the English Language and Classical Music, which rules our daily lives. It is these passions that made Sharmini, a "Teacher of Distinction" twice by her employer/a Canadian School Board. She was also selected as a "Citizen of the Year" by the Lions Club in Newfoundland. when the school that Sharmini taught swept the awards in all categories in Music for the first time in the school's history. It was a way of the parents from several

communities showing their gratitude and appreciation to Sharmini, for excelling in Classical Music.

Finally, the benefits of early reading cannot be underestimated. Our reading qualities and to excel in the English Language and Classical Music, spun off in our off-springs, Suhashini and Amahl, both of them started reading Books at age two. These early reading habits boosted their IQ and they became the youngest members of Mensa Canada, which is a Society that welcomes people from all walks of life, whose IQ is in the top two percent (2%) of the population. The added advantage of teaching a child to read young, enables them to become self-reliant and to self manage, boosting their self confidence and self esteem. Once they learn to read, very little looking after was required of them. The books of their choice, becomes their companions and they would want to sit in a corner all by themselves and immerse into a world of wonder, imagination and fascination. Research proves that to be true. Early reading in English Language also accelerated their learning to read Music. The fruits of their hard work in learning to read very early helped both them to secure their M.Mus (Masters in Music) degrees, and to become accomplished professional Violinist and Cellist respectively in North America, among Canadians of Sri Lankan extraction.

The reading habits, made me to become a reasonably good writer, and helped me to edit materials easily and enjoy it while doing so, for any publications. I must thank the entire SPC OBA Committee for having asked me to edit the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our OBA. We were proud to see 600 plus friends and Patricians, attending this historical event at Hilton Hotel in Canada on 02 June 2012. As a result, I received accolades from many individuals from all parts of the world, extolling the virtues of having produced a great Souvenir. They were hungry for more materials to read.

Among these testimonies, it is worth mentioning what I heard from our Patrician pillar Raymond Santiago. Raymond happen to visit a friend of his - a retired gentleman/teacher Mr. Kandasamy of Jaffna College, who now lives in Canada. He found out that his friend's hobby, was to collect souvenirs and worthy materials and to continue to add to his home library that he built in Canada. When Raymond eagerly offered to present him with one of our own prestigious 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Souvenir – a bulky 178 pages of glossy paper, with coloured pictures and as many worthy articles, contributed by writers worldwide – he surprised Raymond and us, by saying that he already has got a copy and gladly added our Souvenir to his worthy collection in his Library. His fine gesture, perhaps, was the greatest testimony paid to us, for all the hard work done by our Souvenir Printing Committee of our SPC OBA, namely Anton Rajinthrakumar (a great gifted writer among Patricians), Pakiareginald Nicholapillai, Donald Joseph and Gilroy Ponniah.

This is an acknowledgement of Patrician's excellence! There is nothing like the majesty and grandeur of the English Language, which is the most universal language understood by many, next to the language of Music. Reading Maketh a Full Man, Indeed. End.