

THE PATRICIAN PIONEERS OF NORWAY

By Alfred Arulanandam CPA, CMA, ACMA, CGMA, CSC.

Who is a Pioneer? There are many definitions in the dictionary; a person who is among those who first to enter or settle a region, thus opening it for occupation and development by others; one who is first or among the earliest in any field of inquiry, enterprise, or progress.

THE PATRICIAN PIONEER, FROM BANKSHALL STREET, JAFFNA

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN, and GO WEST AND GROW WITH THE (new) COUNTRY! Said the American author Horace Greely. Buoyed by the pioneering spirit, one day in the early 1960's, a daring young adventurer and lad from Bankshall Street, Jaffna, decided to get on his two wheeler motorcycle and started to Ride West. His destination was almost to the North Pole, but preferably up to the hitherto unknown country called Norway would be OK. In doing so, this courageous 'KUTTY' aka Anthony Rajendram armed himself with guts, courage and a whole lot of 'risk taking' attitude, to fight against all odds that he would face on this quest, searching for greener pastures. After several weeks of hardships and hard slogging, he successfully reached his destination – Norway. This gutsy Patrician par excellence' accomplished the nearly impossible feat for many a Tamil, let alone a Patrician. But the Patrician spirit always guided him.



Anthony Kutty Rajendram

Few years after him, another young Bankshall Street lad followed suit and his name was James Felician. He was followed by a few other Patricians, among them was the former first ever Tamilian Goalie of the Ceylon Soccer Team, Joseph Aloysius, affectionately known to many, including myself, as the "All Ceylon Goal Keeper". Aloysius came to Norway in 1965 by a Ship & probably the 4th Patrician to have come to Norway. To many of us 'young ones' at that time, Aloysius was a handsome, always smiling & gentlemanly lad, who hailed from Passayoor, putting his own town as well as our SPC on the Ceylon map!. After all not every school boy get to play in a national team, an awe inspiring feat in itself,

let alone a Tamilian Patrician, in those days. To our dismay, many of us never heard of whatever happened to him, until I volunteered to edit the Bergen Souvenir, on the eve of the SPC, Bergen's first Global Get together. To my utter surprise, there was Aloysius, after nearly 40 odd years!

Kutty Rajendram enrolled himself in a naval school and trained himself as a Skipper of a Trawler in Norway and made his name known among influential circles. I understand that periodicals & newspapers published articles on him, 'singing the praises of his feat as the kid, who rode himself thousands of miles in a Motorcycle, crossing half the globe, from Ceylon to Norway. A Swedish company got wind of his achievements & donated a brand new Motorcycle to go back home to Jaffna, Sri Lanka on a holiday, probably as a promotion of their brand of Motorcycle. A young Norwegian lady named 'Sigrun', fell in love with Anthony or vice versa, got married and they started a new generation. They were blessed with three children. Rajendram is no more but the rest of the family are living happily in Norway. I sincerely wish Mrs.Sigrun Anthony Rajendram & family God's Blessings forever. We are proud of you.

Thus, began the Patrician/Tamilian immigration from Sri Lanka to Norway. Aloysius too followed suit, by enrolling in the Naval Academy and passed out as a Skipper of a Trawler in Norway. Claude Lazarus, another Patrician lad from the Bankshall Street area, known to me personally, came to Norway in 1965. He brought Kumar Master, who was his brother in law. He was eventually followed by his son Patrician Roxon Kumar, who became the President of Oslo OBA, branch. And then, gradually the rest of the Patricians started arriving for further studies, seeking jobs and to grasp the opportunity that Norway was preparing to offer at that time. They were all prepared to learn the Norwegian language, weather the harshest cold winters by acclimatizing themselves and was flexible enough to 'adapt' to their new cultures & customs in their search for greener pastures, much more greener in Norway than our birthplace of Sri Lanka.

PATRICIAN PIONEERS AND THE SPC BERGEN OBA BRANCH

Statically speaking, on a global basis, Norway stands 4th in the immigrant Tamil population, next to UK, Canada Australia & France. There are approximately 32038 Tamils almost in all of Norway, of which Bergen had about 1179. Among this population, the Patricians of Bergen are less than 30 families. The Patricians who were able to make it to Norway, approximately 30 families concentrated themselves in the Bergen & suburbs. I understand that the first Committee of the Bergen OBA was formed in 1989 Joachimpillai Lawrence, Malaiamaan, Dr. Bernardshaw & was followed by Joseph Aloysius, James Felician, Robert Dayanandan, Joseph Jesuthasan, Thomas Aloysius, Sherington Albert, Jayraj Earnest, Mihirsen A Stephan, Francis Gnanayagam and Niroshan Jesunayagm . At the time of writing this article, the young Niroshan Jesunayagam is the current President of the OBA (2012). Prior to this, the First President of the OBA was Robert Dayanandan, followed by Joseph Aloysius and thereafter Dr. Bernardshaw was at the helm during the Global Reunion in 2010/11. Lawrence Joachimpillai has been functioning as the Secretary almost on a permanent basis, as well as the Co-ordinator for the OBA, sharing this responsibility with the rest of the Committee. The dedicated Malayamaan wore many hats including as Social secretary, while Joseph Jesuthasan is still functioning as the Treasurer. As far as this OBA is concerned, although very small in numbers, it is the 'quality' of the membership that mattered. Unanimously, the entire membership was a dedicated, committed and devoted lot, when it came to serving the Patricians, selflessly and wholeheartedly.

THE SPC BERGEN NORWAY COMMITTEE - 2011



Standing Back: S.V. Bernardshaw, Mihrsen A. Stephen, Nieroshan Jesunayagam, Jeyaraj Earnest, Sherington Albert, A. Francis X. Gnananayagam.
Standing Front: Thomas A. Aloysius, M.J. Malayamaan, Joseph Aloysius, Robert Dayanandan, Joachim-Pillai Lawrence
Not in the Photo: Joseph Jesuthasan & James Felecian

To quote from Dr. Bernardshaw's researched article in the Bergen Global Souvenir – "So, Bergen has been a city where the Tamils moved in, got educated, upgraded their lives and moved to other part of the countries like Oslo and many other cities around the world. We established our organization – "The Bergen SPC OBA" in the 1980's and to our knowledge, it was in 1984 we pioneered our own Christmas Carol Service, collected funds, and even sent money to a children's organization in Jaffna. We also organized «Fr. David Indoor Games Championships» in order to promote Chess, Dart, Carom, Table Tennis and Badminton. Currently, there are about 25-30 Patricians living in Bergen and they continue to co-ordinate other activities, in collaboration with Oslo OBA. Many of them have children in their teens. In 2009, we celebrated our 20th Anniversary"

"Our main aim is to support our college programs where we can play a supportive role to make their lives better for our students in Jaffna. Our philosophy is one of „ongoing support“ to provide equipments and stationary materials directly to students and its body whenever it is needed funded from our savings accounts in the Old Boys Association." SPC-OBA, Bergen"

Perhaps the greatest success is the unforgettable First ever 2011 Global Reunion – and what a party it was!

We were personally indebted, to the entire family of Malayamaan, his adorable wife Victoria and their accomplished daughters in the Cambridge educated and talented Priya & her sister Sanjana, for their marvellous Norwegian hospitality. Joachim Pillai has been an ongoing Secretary of the OBA, since its inception, except for the few years of him being away from Bergen to Oslo. But even then, in my

research, I came across a 'Message' written by him dated 29 July 2000 from OSLO that appeared in the Australian Sesqui Centenary Souvenir, edited by Dr. Anton Arulanandam of the OBA in Sydney. Also, I came across a letter written by Dr. Philips of Jaffna OBA in the 1990, advising Joachimpillai on 'How to set up & write a Constitution for an OBA' etc., which showed Joachimpillai's painstaking devotion for the continuation of our Patrician OBA's in Oslo & Bergen. His daughter Cecilia Isabel could not attend his Global Reunion; because she was busy participating in a WADO Karate World Championships, for which Cecilia already won a Bronze Medal for Norway in previous years, while his younger daughter Ketty Marcia attended the GR with her mother. The entire Committee of 2011 and their family members contributed to the Global Reunion that the whole Committee of 2011 decided to organize for all Patricians, So Dr. Bernardshaw, the organizing President in 2011, assisted by his charming wife Anne Marit Soerlie and his two lovely daughters Emilie Gayathri and Tyra Ashwini, got the entire Committee to assist him in this Herculean venture. He was always the first one to point out that the success of the GR was a 'collective effort of the ENTIRE committee, rather than a 'solo' effort by anyone alone. The worldwide Patrician members & friends, joins me, in thanking this selfless, dedicated and passionate Committee members and their wives & children and their friends who played a huge role, behind the scenes, to have made all of us Patricians very happy & proud. Thanks to all their efforts, this event was a roaring success. To organize a huge global event like this, by a small group of dedicated Committee, spoke volumes of their large-heartedness, dedication and affection for their Alma Mater. Bravo to the committee on their bravery! This was purely Patrician history in the making, by some of our Pioneers in a new country!

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OF BERGEN TAMILS – LED BY A PATRICIAN

Talking about the Global Reunion of Bergen OBA of 2011, one can never forget the most devoted and dynamic Patrician of all – affectionately known to everyone as my friend Gnanan, a non-committee member, who voluntarily contributed in the 'Printing' of the first ever Souvenir published here. As a member of the Bergen Tamil Community, his activities in his volunteer work epitomizes and gives us living outside of Norway, an indication of the 'activities of the Tamils' held in Norway, but carried out by a latecomer Patrician Pioneer like Gnanan. Hence, it is worth reproducing my writing on Gnanan in the 2011 Bergen Souvenir as follows:



GNANAN

“Augustine Francis Xavier Gnananayagam is from Bergen, Norway. He is a Patrician, having studied at St. Patrick’s College from 1963 till 1970. He is married to Rose and is blessed with one daughter called Jane Tamara. His wife is none other than the sister of our devoted prominent Patrician - Arul Jeyarajah of the ‘Isle of Wight’ fame, another Patrician giant, very much respected everyone.

Gnanan migrated to Norway in 1981. He has been working as a Computer Consultant for a Norwegian Bank in Bergen. He is passionately involved in the welfare of the Tamil community in Bergen. Consequently, he has been Secretary of the Tamil Student Union (1982 – 1984); Secretary of the Bergen Tamil Sangam (1984- 1987). He has also played an active role as Treasurer in the Tamil Sports Club in Bergen. In 1987, Bergen started one of the World’s first Tamil Schools in Europe, outside of United Kingdom. It was known as the “Bergen Tamil Siruvar Padasalai’. Gnanan has been a Secretary and a Committee member of this school. Currently he serves as an adviser for the school. As a Patrician and a devout Catholic, he has been a Committee member of the Norwegian Catholic Board. Currently he holds the important post as Treasurer for the Bergen Tamil Catholic Group.

Gnanan is the current Secretary for the Bergen branch of the prestigious Center for Performing Arts. At present Gnanan is a Co-ordinator for a RADIO called “THEEN THAMIL OOSAI”. This is the ONLY Tamil FM radio which has a License to broadcast, issued by the Norwegian authorities since 1992. Having been migrated to Norway in 1981, he has been associated with the Bergen Patrician Old Boys Association of Jaffna. He is an active member of this SPC OBA Bergen, Norway now. What is incredible about Gnanan is this - with all of the above voluntary work that he has done and/or doing, he has undertaken another heavy job of assisting in the Printing of the great publication of the Souvenir in commemorating this global get together in Bergen.”

PATRICIAN PIONEERS AND THE SPC OSLO BRANCH

Oslo, the Capital city of Norway has the largest Tamil population in all of Norway, and consequently has the largest members of Patricians as well. But they are not active as Bergen is – But among the few active are the following:

Saba Naganathan is an Architect par excellence and alternate as President of the Oslo Branch OBA along with Roxon Kumar. Saba is the nephew of the great Patrician as Rev. Dr. & Professor Thaninayaga Adigal, the founder of the First World Tamil Conference. The Patrician values runs firmly in his veins. Last year 2011, he invited over 30 Patricians for Dinner at his house, who had gathered in Oslo from all over the place 'enroute' to the Bergen Global get-together along with Aneclate as the only one representing Sydney OBA Australia, Alex (UK) and I (Canada). His wonderful wife Margaret & 2 lovely daughters Camilla & Linda (Saba's only son was away from home on assignments), were excellent hosts to us Patricians, despite the fact Margaret was in the midst of preparing for her Master's Program in Sociology at the University.

Roxon Kumar, a passionate Patrician, shares the responsibility of President, alternatively with Saba. As already indicated, Roxon's uncle Claude Lazarus was one of the early arrivals in Norway, few years later than Rajendram, Felician and Aloysius's arrival. I personally knew Claude in Jaffna, at time he was preparing to move over to Norway, and vaguely remember his reference to 'a Rajendram of Bankshall Street' already in Norway. The relative recent arrivals were Saba Naganathan, Dr. Soosai Joseph, Edmund Rajesan (As Treasurer) and the late Fredrick Antonypillai who were active members, along with Antony Newman (Patrician footballer Ferminus's son) .

Cricket is big among the immigrant population, especially among the Pakistani immigrants who are the largest immigrant minority group in Oslo and in all of Norway. Dr. Beranardshaw sent some information on this. There is a minimum of 80 Cricket Clubs in Oslo, playing under the Norwegian Cricket Board. A Patrician 'Joe Gracion Richard is a Wicket Keeper/Batsman for the United Cricket Club.

WHAT IS IT THAT NORWAY HAS GOT, THAT OTHER'S HAVE NOT

Ever since the Tamil pioneers arrive in Norway, the Sri Lankan Tamils have earned the utmost respect and trustworthiness of the majority of their fellow Norwegians - as an educated, hardworking trustworthy and adaptable race. Today, there are many Professors, Doctors, Engineers, Architect, Businessmen, Software Engineers, Bus/Train drivers, Teachers and even Politicians. Yogarajah Balasingam (Baskaran) is the first elected Tamil member for the city council in Bergen.

The main employment for Tamils was found in the Fisheries and Marine Departments, and in the State and District Councils.

At a time, when most of the nations are suffering economically/financially, Norway has set aside a large nest egg of its invested income for all Norwegians from their Petroleum income and its related investments, which is said to be only second to that of a similar 'Fund' established by another oil rich country - Dubai. This was accomplished through careful planning and looking into the future, by the responsible Government of Norway. About 5 years a TV program that aired in my home country in Canada, filmed in Norway, caught my attention on the prosperous Norway and their financial management style, as espoused by the then lady Finance Minister. The Norway Heritage Fund, as it was referred to then, would earn every head in Norway a sum of over \$75,000.00 US Dollars, if the Fund was de-registered & given away to Norwegians at that time. 6 Years later, this Fund has ballooned itself into billions of Dollars, which bodes well for all those who have chosen to become Norwegian citizens. Well done Patricians for choosing Norway as your mother country. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Pioneers who paved the way for the rest to migrate to this marvellous country.

In all of this prosperity, there was a dark cloud that hung over the peaceful Norway that was, over an incident that took place few days before we landed in Oslo for the Bergen Get-together in July 2011. An unknown Nazi-style rebellion group, headed by an ‘Anders Breivik’ brutally assaulted Norway’s multiculturalism, when he murdered over 80 Norwegians, in an attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. It was primarily targeted toward Muslims in Norway, who are the 2nd largest minorities there. So it was poetic justice for the Prime minister this month September 2012, when he appointed the 29 year old Muslim Woman of Pakistani Origin Ms.Hadia Tajik as the new Cultural Minister for Norway. Hadia has become the first ever Muslim cabinet member and youngest ever government minister in the Scandinavian country. It bodes well for all immigrants, including to the Tamils and a courageous move by the government of Norway towards reinforcing multi-culturism in this ethnically diverse country.



P.M. of Norway Jens Stoltenberg

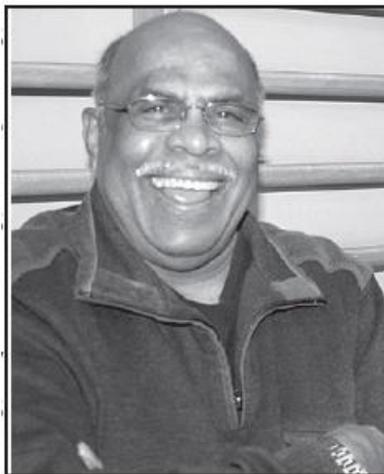


Ms.Hadia Tajik - Norway’s New Minister of Culture

29 year old Muslim of Pakistani Origin

CONCLUSION – A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS OF PATRICIANS

Finally, the 1st and 2nd generation of Sri Lankans are truly blessed in Norway. Their future is very good. Most of them are tri-lingual, and speak Norwegian, Tamil & English. The opportunities for them to seek lucrative positions in the promising land of prosperous Norway are plenty. And the growth of Patricians via the OBA’s are assured of a future and a continuous place in Norway.



Joseph Aloysius

To cite just one example; We will always be thinking and thanking Joseph Aloysius, a proud pioneer Patrician & and his dearest wife Francisca, for raising a brand new generations of Patricians from their own two daughters and one son, two of whom ended up marrying Norwegians and all of them giving birth to a new generations of Norwegian Tamilians; Eleven (11) Grandchildren and three (3) Great grand kids of Tamilian/Norwegian extraction. All of them are happy & contented in Norway, compared to the trouble torn Sri Lankans. They are truly blessed for their gutsy decision that their grandpa and their great grandpa made years ago. And so are all the Patrician families in Norway. May God bless all Tamils and Patricians of Norway. Long Live our Great St Patrick's College, Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Note by Alfred:



**AUTHOR ALFRED ARULANANDAM WITH
FR.JERO AND RAJASOORIYAR IN BERGEN
NORWAY AUGUST 2011**

I spent over a year in collecting facts, nothing but facts, for this article. It was not an easy task. In few instances I could not come up with a consensus. I wrote this article despite these limitations. Due to these limitations, any omission, commissions or errors are regretted. I owe a debt of gratitude to Roxon Kumar, Joseph Aloysius, Saba Naganathan, Dr. Bernardshaw, Joachimpillai Lawrence, Martin Malaiamaan, Joseph Jesuthasan Francis Gnanananayagm & Claude Lazarus, the latter is one of the oldest surviving Patricians, whom I personally knew in Jaffna, just before he left for Norway. I am also personally aware that the Sri Lankan Tamils in Norway have earned the highest regard, respect and trust from almost all Norwegians through their sheer dedication, contribution and their capacity to adapt themselves to the Norwegian way of life, while in parallel, preserving our own Tamilian way of life as well. **Alfred A.**