



# THE TERNION

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## EDITORIAL

The last few months have seen frenetic activity all around the world; oil hitting \$135 a barrel, Barack Obama inching towards the Democratic Presidential nomination, earthquakes in China and a cyclone in Myanmar. Sri Lanka has not been left out either: the assassination of a prominent Minister, bomb blasts, the Eastern Provincial Council elections and most recently, the brutal treatment of a well-known journalist- all of this occurred in recent months.

For most Thomians it may seem that school life has had its own quota of ups and downs, with the Ruggerites having had some excellent performances, as well as some disappointing ones. The second batch of exchange students to Germany returned brimful of new experiences; and (to the horror of many students) Parents' Days were held.

Meanwhile Old Thomians continue to prove the worthiness of their alma mater. In July, "Revelations" -the male voice choral ensemble consisting of Old Boys which has already proved its prowess internationally- is to head to Graz, Austria, to participate in The World Choir Games 2008. No doubt they will make their mark there as they have around the world.

In the midst of all this the Ternion decided to sit down and talk to a prominent Old Boy, Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu. Not everyone will agree with what he has said but his words will definitely challenge us to think more about the problems faced by countless thousands in both the South and the North of our country. More importantly, they will challenge us to think about what we, as students and as Thomians, can do to solve our country's problems.

### An interview with Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu

*For this issue the Ternion interviewed a son of a famous Thomian family, who is a prominent member of civil society, a co-convenor of the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and the current Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA); he has consistently reiterated the importance of preserving citizens' fundamental rights especially during times of war, and has been quoted widely in both the domestic and international media on the political situation in Sri Lanka: Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu.*

### **Could you tell us something about your time at S. Thomas' College?**

I joined college from prep school in 1972 and was involved a lot with the Debating and Literary Society and with the Drama Society while I also played some Under-16 cricket. What was particularly interesting and exciting at that time was that the Drama Society and the English Literary and Debating Society were very vibrant and dynamic; inter-house debates, the inter-house drama competitions- all of that was very keenly contested. At the time we had people like Rohan Ponniah, Steve de la Zilva, and Richard de Zoysa -who later on really distinguished themselves in the

field of the arts and in theatre in particular- involved in these societies. I also remember that at the time the Shakespeare inter-school drama competition was revived after many years and College won every single award that was in that competition, from best actor, to best play, to *best actress* as well. In fact, I think the story is that because S. Thomas' kept winning the best actress award, it was made very gender specific subsequently.

**What was your most memorable experience while at school?**

I guess my most memorable experience was the whole experience around the staging of the play "Matchmaker". The key point about that production was that every single thing with regard to it was done by College students; from the simple fact of it being directed by Rohan Ponniah, to all the actors, to getting the ads for the souvenir, to getting the stuff for the costumes and the stage set, the stage management, lighting- the whole works was done entirely by boys in the school. It was thoroughly enjoyable because we were doing something artistic and creative and the responsibility for it was on us: we either sank or swam because of our own efforts- and we succeeded big time. And I think we set a standard, set a bar, for theatre and drama –certainly among schools- through the staging of the play.

**What do you think about the traditions of S. Thomas' College?**

Well I think that one of the major reasons for the survival of an institution like S. Thomas' College is its traditions. But I think that the point about traditions is two fold. I think that over a period of

time some traditions may well not apply in a society because society has changed; they might be totally inappropriate or irrelevant and therefore lapse. However, new traditions that come out must be traditions that are founded not just on the fact that society is changing out there, but those new traditions must also be founded on the values on which the school was founded.

For College, the key thing is that there are eternal values and beliefs upon which all its traditions and all its practices must be founded -or else it makes no sense to have a school like it. Everyone in the school must understand and believe that there are certain things that this school stands for and has always stood for, and that *that* doesn't change. It adapts to changed circumstances but that is the rock on which it is all founded, in the end.

**What do you think schools like S. Thomas' College can do to help find a solution to the ethnic conflict?**

Why do you have schools like S. Thomas' College? Schools like S. Thomas' are a value, an asset in a society not only because of what they have done in the past, but also because of what they continue to do in the present and what they can do in the future. After all, it is a school in which people of all religions and all ethnicities, and indeed all classes come together; there are traditions and values dating over a hundred years -which have taken a knocking in this society- but are nevertheless still very important and ought to be strengthened and ought to be upheld in this society as being very valuable for the future.

*(Continued on page 5)*

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"Yearn to understand first and to be understood second."

### The resurgent Ruggerites

The Thomian Rugby-Football team stormed through its first few games, and has set the stage for a highly successful season with some brilliant wins.

In its first match of the Singer Shield Under-20 Division One Rugby tournament held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April at the Big Club Grounds, the College team led by R. Rajapaksa beat St. Anthony's Katugastota 14-10. The game was closely contested, with the Thomians doing well in the first half (taking a slender lead at half-time with the score on 7-5), and the Antonians coming back in the second half. The win brought back to College the Rev. Fr. Angelo Rossati Trophy after a lapse of three years.

In its next match, held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May on home turf, S. Thomas' College pulled off a stunning victory to bring down defending champions St. Peter's College 22-19. In what was an amazing match where dominance swung pendulum-like from one team to another, the score was 10-7 in the Peterites' favour at lemons. Scoring occurred occasionally as the game began to wind down. Then, in the dying minutes of the game with the score at 19-17 to the Peterites, a try by S. Kapuwatte gave S. Thomas' a glorious victory with the scorecard reading 22-19. The victory means the team has regained the Archibald Perera Memorial Trophy which eluded them for the past two years.

In their next match against Dharmaraja College at the Bogambara Stadium in Kandy on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, the Thomians snatched yet another victory with a score of 22-20. The team did not perform as well as in the previous matches, with the

Rajans leading after the first half 20-8; however S. Thomas' came back strongly in the second half to secure another victory.

Sadly these victories were overshadowed by two late losses. The match against Trinity, held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May at the Bogambara Stadium, was one in which a bit of last minute luck for Trinity led to a Thomian loss, with the score reading 15-10 in favour of Trinity. That this happened in spite of a lead of 10 points at half-time makes the defeat even harder to accept.

The second loss was at the hands of Kingswood on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May at the Big Club Grounds. The boys from Kingswood were leading 15-0 at half-time, and indeed the Thomian team seemed to be struggling from the start. Despite a try and conversion in the second half which left the score at 15-7 in Kingswood's favour, we were unable to make a match of it. The match ended in a heavy defeat, 29-7.

However, our team has performed very well this year and all students are encouraged to come along for the matches and support the team, especially since most of them are taking place at the Big Club Grounds. We wish the ruggerites the best of luck for their remaining matches.

The schedule for the rest of the season is as follows:

31<sup>st</sup> of May- STC vs Isipathana College  
- Big Club Grounds

7<sup>th</sup> of June- STC vs Vidyarthana College  
- Big Club Grounds

14<sup>th</sup> of June- STC vs St. Joseph's  
College - CR& FC

21<sup>st</sup> of June- STC vs Royal College  
- Royal College Stadium

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"The world only goes round by misunderstanding."

Charles Baudelaire

**Swimmers win Novices**

The Novices Swimming Meet was held at the Sugathadasa Stadium on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of March. The Thomian team performed brilliantly to clinch an emphatic sixty-point win. The Ternion congratulates the swimmers on their excellent efforts.

**Water Polo team emerges runners-up**

The College Water Polo team emerged runners-up at the Under-20 Water Polo Championship for 2008, which was worked off on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May at the Police Sports Club Swimming Pool, Narahenpita.

Despite a promising start, the team was unable to successfully clinch victory, losing to Royal College 'A' 7-5. The battle for 3<sup>rd</sup> place was also between the two schools, with the 'B' teams fighting it out; sadly this match also ended in defeat as the Royalists won 6-2.

Both teams are definitely capable of much better performances and these results belie their strength. Hopefully it will become evident at future tournaments.

**Miscellaneous**

March saw the completion of the Prefects' matches between the School Prefects of Royal and S. Thomas' College. Royal triumphed in the cricket match, while the Rugby match ended in a 20-all draw.

The Royal-Thomian Sinhala and English debates were held in the same month. The debates were both very entertaining, with the English debate involving the

hurling of insults while the Sinhala debate consisted of a thorough analysis of the punishment and its effectiveness in achieving discipline.

The Inter-House Swimming Gala was concluded in late February; Wood House emerged champions, with Stone house being placed 2<sup>nd</sup>. E.M.K Fernando (u-19), J.P.C. Jayasundara(U-17), S.K. Wickramarathne and D.N. De Mel (U-15) emerged champions in their respective age-groups.

**Clubs and Societies****UN T-shirt sale**

The United Nations Club is selling T-Shirts at Rs. 800 apiece. Please contact a member of the Club for further information.

**Buddhist Students' Association AGM**

The annual general meeting of the Buddhist Students' Association was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and the following were appointed office bearers.

Co-Presidents - N.C. Weerasinghe  
H.J. Saddhasena  
Vice President - N.R. Dias  
Secretary - C.M. Rajapakse  
Treasurer - P.P.V. Perera

The Association is also in the process of donating money to refurbish the hall of Dharmendrarاما Temple. Students are urged to contribute to this worthy cause.

**Environmental Conservation Society AGM**

The annual general meeting of the Environmental Conservation Society

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"Before we can forgive one another, we have to understand one another."

Emma Goldman

was held in March and the following were appointed office bearers.

President - M.R. Yattigala  
 Vice President - S.M.D.A. Sangakkara  
 Secretary - A.C.T. Peiris  
 Treasurer - L.M. Sugathadasa

### **Student Christian Movement AGM**

The Student Christian Movement held its annual general meeting in the month of March. The following were appointed office bearers:

President – D.A. Tranchell  
 Vice- President – M. De Silva  
 Secretary – P. Dissanayake  
 Treasurer – M.A. Algama

### **Art Club in action**

The Art Club organized a sculpture exhibition which was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March at the Middle School art room. Over 200 sculptures, made by students of the Middle and Upper schools, were displayed. The exhibition served as an opportunity for the exposition of hidden talents, and it is learned that the club plans to have many similar exhibitions to encourage and improve artistic Thomians.

The Club also organized a chapel painting project & sale which was highly successful; the proceeds were donated to the Chapel Renovation Fund.

### **Interview**

*(Continued from page 2)*

So we need to ask ourselves whether a school like S. Thomas' is going to make a point about celebrating the diversity and pluralism that is in our society, or is it going to say: "Look we can't have anything to do with those kinds of things because we are an island unto ourselves, a world unto our own, and that's none of our business"? Given the many challenges and crises in this country, all institutions need to take this on in a major way; institutions like College should mount a resistance to the divisions that have taken place in society and take the lead in projecting the values that it exemplifies.

For example, there is an annual memorial service held at College for the members of the security services that have given their lives in the war; I would also like to see a memorial service every year for all the civilians who have lost their lives in the course of this ethnic conflict, or indeed in any other conflict. After all every human life is precious –that's what we learnt- civilians are the most important people in a functioning democracy, and should be recognised as such.

I would also love to see College getting more involved in activities of reconciliation: there are schools in the North, and indeed in the East, that need to have such exchanges- that can profit immensely from those exchanges. I think boys in College too will profit greatly from experiences of interacting with kids from Jaffna, from Batticaloa and Trinco, and so on because of the understanding they will gain about the challenges people face in this country. After all, in society in general I think there is an unreality: for instance, how many people

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"If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday."

realize that some two-hundred miles from where we are sitting now, there are bombs falling – there's fighting going on? That there are human rights violations across the board- that everyday people disappear, are abducted, and are killed? We need to realise that that's the society that we are living in and understand the reality of our situation.

So I think S. Thomas' College should take the lead in terms of reconciliation, in terms of being an example of the pluralism and the diversity that is here in our society and show that it must and can be celebrated, that it's not a threat in anyway to anyone else's values.

**Could you tell us something about the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) and the work it is involved in?**

The CPA is a public policy organisation that works through programs of research and advocacy on human rights, democracy, peace and governance. We came into existence because we believe that civil society- that is people like you and me- need to have a say in the decisions that affect our daily lives; politicians and government alone should not be deciding these things. That was the whole idea, that CPA would be an organization that would come up with new ideas through research, and advocate those ideas to decision makers and opinion makers in order to effect changes in policy decisions.

**What do you think students could do in relation to finding a solution to the ethnic conflict?**

I think that students and educational institutions need to foster a culture reflecting the very pluralistic society this

is: one must be able to look at diversity not as a threat but as something that has to be celebrated- one must understand that it's the differences in this country that make the whole that much more interesting and richer. We need to have more programs through which we learn to understand each others' perspectives, culture, and we must learn to respect them - understanding alone is not enough; we must have mutual respect for each other.

So I think a lot more interaction and exchange with people who come from different social backgrounds, ethnic communities, religions, different parts of the country is necessary. Only by doing so will Thomians become people who know what this country is about, recognise that this country is diverse, pluralistic. They should be people who realise that the unity of this country is ultimately founded on the self-respect and mutual respect that all these different people have as Sri Lankans; educational institutions must encourage that exchange and must foster understanding and reconciliation. A student at STC should learn about the world at large, but not at the expense of knowing about his own country; it is equally important to equip oneself to be able to get around London, Paris, New York or wherever, but at the same time it is equally important to be able to go to Moneragala, and to be able to relate to the people there – or Jaffna or Batticaloa for that matter.

**What prompted you to return to Sri Lanka after living abroad for so many years, unlike many others who decide to settle down abroad permanently?**

I came back because I believe that at the end of the day the whole purpose of life

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“Imagination is the one weapon in the war against reality.”

is to make a difference, to make a change - hopefully for the better. I mean, here is a society that has so much of potential, but at the same time so many things seem to have gone wrong and it needs fixing in a lot of ways. I think that at the end of the day it is the people of this country that really need to do it- we can't have people from outside coming to tell us how to do it or doing it for us.

**What inspires you to continue in your work in spite of the criticism you've faced from people on both sides of the political spectrum?**

I suppose it's some notion of public service; and what keeps me going is that the people that I work with are also quite inspiring. So when your morale and your energy is flagging, when you realize that there are others who still believe strongly and have the capacity to just keep forging ahead and take whatever risks that have to be taken- that keeps you going. You know that you are not alone in what you are doing. So I guess the inspiration comes from a firm conviction, a firm belief, shared with my colleagues, that one must make a difference.

**Finally, what advice would you give the present students of S. Thomas' College?**

Make sure that whatever you choose as a career is something that is of interest to you and that you actually enjoy it. I think that the worst thing that could happen is for one to end up doing some "9 to 5" job because one needs to earn money to support a family or whatever. If you have dreams, if you have passions, things that you want to do, don't give them up. Don't run the risk of becoming an embittered middle-aged or old man who says "If I did this" or "If I could have done that", etcetera. Try; at the end of the day you have to be able to take those risks and do the things that really interest you. Because I think that at the end of the day that's the fulfilling life: one without regrets.

**Notices**

- The 1<sup>st</sup> Term ended on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Term began on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May
- D.S. Rajasingham has been appointed Chief Editor of the Ternion.
- The following received 8 Distinctions at the G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination held in December 2007:  
T.T.D. Silva, N.C. Dewapura

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"A blind man knows he cannot see, and is glad to be led, though it be by a dog; but he that is blind in his understanding, which is the worst blindness of all, believes he sees as the best, and scorns a guide."

Samuel Butler



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### Editors

D.S. Rajasingham, Mrs. T. Bartlett