

adaptability of Buddhism to the principles of Modern Science.

In Chapter 7, the author discusses the "modern temper" (a western literary critic's phrase) of Buddhism, with its emphasis on the need to "see things as they really are," the crucial role of critical thinking in modern times, and the "timelessness" of the teachings of Buddhism that is a natural by-product of its pervasive flexibility.

In Chapter 8, Dr. Guruge discusses the Path of the Arahant and the Path of the Bodhisattva, with ample citations of ancient Buddhist texts and modern writings, with a view toward sketching out the strategy for a "universal Buddhism for social well-being."

This excellent interpretative summary of Ven. Master's teaching culminates in a series of hermeneutical statements by the author concerning the nature and mission of Humanistic Buddhism: "to bring Buddhism, literally and metaphorically, from the mountains to the city and the village," to serve humanity as a whole, to pro-mote a form of Buddhism that is socially-engaged at all levels of social life, to explore ways of living life in a purposeful and well-directed manner, to benefit all peoples through education and social services, to rise above all parochial and sectarian considerations, and thereby, to bring to realization the goal(s) of Buddhism in this very life. (Or, as Master Hsing Yun has states the matter in a number of places in his writings, "to create a Pure Land in this very world.")

In conclusion, this small but highly informative and insightful book can serve well the needs of those people who wish to inform themselves about and come to a clear understanding of the relevance of Humanistic Buddhism to the modern world and how that understanding of Buddhist beliefs and practices is organically expressive of the basic teachings of the Buddha, himself.

– J. Bruce Long

Serendipity of Andrew George

By Ananda W.P. Guruge
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Ananda Guruge's *Free at Last in Paradise* was an unusual novel. It traced the history of the one hundred years of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), leading up to independence. The focus was on the national and Buddhist revival and the related movement for regaining independence. This was skillfully interwoven with a personal story, too, of a boy: his growing up, his entering the order of monks, his successful life as a layman for a time, and his eventual return to monkhood, achieving fame as a great scholar. In this human story, love and other human emotions featured. It was a remarkable book by any standards: original, multi-layered, informative and touching.

The author has now produced a sequel to this book: *Serendipity of Andrew George*. This is an equally remarkable book; it is equally readable - indeed 'unputdownable,' equally satisfying, and equally intriguing. It also, like its predecessor, contains a wealth of information woven into the novel. This time the information is about the religious, cultural, historical and geographical aspects of the island of Sri Lanka, provided in a highly readable way as part of the story. One almost gets the impression that this is an encyclopedia on Sri Lanka, parading as a novel! I mean this not as a criticism, but as a compliment.

The setting is in the 1960s, a vibrant and exciting decade for the Island. The title is based on a pun. *Serendip* was the name by which the country was known to some foreign writers of times past. The word serendipity was derived from it, meaning an incidental discovery or an apparent aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally. And the novel's theme is Andrew George's serendipity, literally and

metaphorically. Who is Andrew George? He is an American academic, an anthropologist by profession, who visits Sri Lanka (still known as Ceylon in the 'sixties) on a research award. He is unaware that his won ancestral roots lay in the island. This personal story unravels in stages, until the final, almost dramatic, confirmation. His great-grandfather was, in fact, the great scholar monk whose life was covered in *Free at Last in Paradise*.

The author uses a clever and unusual ploy in this story. The scholar monk had written his own story (which we read in *Free at Last in Paradise*), but had decreed that it should not be published until the young schoolboy to whom he had entrusted the task was seventy. This was to avoid any hurt that might be caused to family and others mentioned in the book: so a safe gap of time was needed. This young schoolboy who dutifully undertook the task, was wait for it – none other than Ananda Guruge! Guruge, a highly regarded and top ranking civil servant at the time of Andrew George's visit, eventually confirms the story of the latter's ancestral roots. So the author is also a character in the story, in fact a key one. There are other real persons, too, such as Venerable Welivitiye Sorata, Martin Wickremasinghe, A.T. Ariyaratne, Amaradasaa and Lorna Dewaraja, Cecil Lyons, Stuart Smith, Richard T. Arndt and David Vickery, along with numerous fictional characters. The clever, almost unique, mixing of the true and fictional characters is another major reason why this book is so interesting. In the hands of a less skilled author, the ploy of using himself as a character might have failed or appeared as an unwarranted intrusion. Here it is done unobtrusively and enhances the novel rather than diminishing it.

In addition to this story of Andrew George's ancestry, which emerges in stages, the book is a panoramic account of the island. Andrew George travels around the island with various people who show him places of historical and cultural interest, including the early Sinhala cities and religious structures. He, ever the observant anthropologist, asks questions,

and the answers he receives, sometimes in the form of disagreements and debates among his 'guides,' are a wonderful education for the reader, not just for him. The reader learns a great deal about Sri Lanka, not just its ancient history and culture but also its contemporary aspects – drama, cinema, poetry, rituals etc. The multiplicity of cultures and subcultures, how they have blended harmoniously in some ways and retained their distinctive features in others, is an underlying theme throughout.

I said in an earlier paragraph that this book is an encyclopedia parading as a novel. It can also be seen as a travel guide. If one uses it in that role, one will not be disappointed. The wealth of information is truly amazing. Here we have Guruge the scholar extraordinary: historian, linguist, purveyor of literature, expert on art and architecture. He gives, through his fictional characters, the most authoritative information. When there are different theories and different versions of an event, he exposes the reader to these opposing positions. There is no dogma, but facts and a balanced interpretation of them. This is, in short, an exceptional book. It entertains the reader and educates him in equal measure, and the education is painless.

Only an author with exceptional talents, skill and wisdom can write such a book. One never ceases to marvel at the talents, skill and wisdom of Ananda Guruge.

To say that one waits eagerly for his next novel is a gross understatement.

– **Padmal de Silva**

Friends and acquaintances of Ananda W. P. Guruge in many countries of the world know him in many roles as national and international civil servant, diplomat, scholar, and exponent of Eastern culture and history, with special reference to Buddhist Studies. They know of his many skills from culinary to oratorical and literary. But few had known him as a