



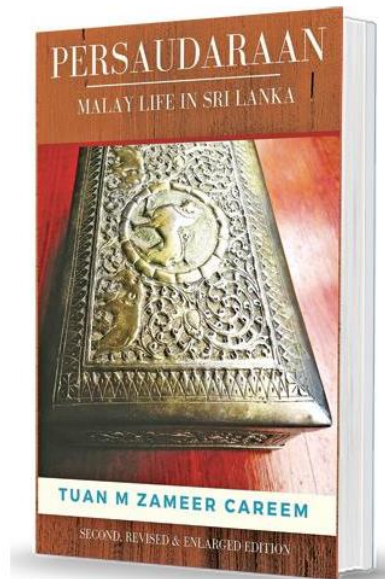
REVIEW: A NEW PERCEPTION ON LANKAN MALAYS

3 September, 2017



Art

By Prof. Dr. Hanafi Hussin



Persaudaraan, the Revised and Upgraded Edition, is an anthropological tome written by Tuan M. Zameer Careem, a Sri Lankan Malay medical student who has in his enlarged edition provided an insight into the unique way of life of Ceylon Malays, an ethnic minority living in Sri Lanka. Careem already has a considerable number of publications on Malays of Sri Lanka, and this is the latest in his publication series, which is again related to history and the background of the Malays in Sri Lanka.

It is impressive that a medical student shows detailed research and well-documented information with good revision and an updated version on the Ceylon Malays. It helps the current generation of Sri Lankan Malays to trace their roots, origin and heritage.

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With more academic approaches in organizing the book, and with historical and sociological perspectives the author has made the book arrangement look more scientific and his diachronic and synchronic approaches have helped chart the history of Ceylon Malays going back several centuries, in his 720 page book.

Careem has discussed in detail, the long forgotten traditions, customs, and rituals. The title of the book conveys the thrust of Careem's argument: Sri Lanka's diverse community has helped create a multicultural Lanka and the rich, vibrant and complex Malay entity has further enriched the nation's multicultural mosaic.

The origin of Malays in Sri Lanka comes from two different entities, the first set of Malays came to Ceylon during Dutch colonialism from Celebes, Java, and Sumatera, currently part of the Indonesian archipelago, and the second group, mainly soldiers and mercenaries arrived from the current Malaysia, during British rule. The book discusses the existence of Sri Lankan Malays through colonial influences of the Portuguese, Dutch and British, in twenty one chapters.

In the preface, Careem contextualizes these Malays in Sri Lanka and their relationship with their ancestor's land. Malays in early Sri Lanka is discussed in chapter one which focuses on their distribution mainly in the coastal area of the Island. It is followed by their socioeconomic activities and involvement in the politics of Sri Lanka.

As indicated by the author, this edition really is a new book, with more than fifty percent of the contents consisting new research material, and I do agree with the author's claim that Sri Lankan Malays stand out with three extraordinary elements, the Malay cuisine, the Creole version of the Malay language and the quintessential Malay costumes and jewellery (p.38).

Diachronically and synchronically, Careem elaborately discusses the earlier history and achievement of the Malays in Sri Lanka in chapters three to eleven.

Their loyalty to the Kandyan court shows that the Malays, despite their Malay/Indonesian origin managed to gain the trust of the local Nayaka Kings. Being loyal to the masters whether the Kandyan court or the colonial government, the Malays have always played a pivotal role in the security of the nation. There were cases where the British colonial government treated the Ceylonese badly which the author has discussed in detail in some of the chapters on British colonialism.

He has described how Britain destroyed Ceylon through looting, expropriation, bloody battles and outright theft, but he has seized every opportunity to praise the martial prowess of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. The Malays in the British era continuously showed their strength and capabilities and managed to gain recognition, especially, through the much acclaimed Rifle Regiment.

TITLE OF THE BOOK :
PERSAUDARAAN - MALAY LIFE IN SRI LANKA

EDITION :
SECOND REVISED, UPGRADED &
ENLARGED EDITION

PAGES : 720

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AUTHOR & EDITOR :
TUAN M ZAMEER CAREEM

	Business War Games	
11 Sep	08:00 AM	The Kingsbury C
	CIMA Business Leaders Summit 2017	
11 Sep	09:00 AM	Cinnamon Grand
	Sri Lanka Retail Forum 2017	
12 Sep	08:00 AM	Cinnamon Grand,
	Sri Lanka Retail Forum 2017	
13 Sep	08:00 AM	Colombo
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Other achievements of the Malays are discussed in chapter five on Honours and Service (p. 78-86). The book also narrates some of the misconduct carried out by Malays such as, treachery, immorality, etc and the stories have been unravelled in the chapter following British rule. There is an incident which speaks of a Malay guy involved in a murder when the girl he courted refused him. As the book is interwoven synchronically, a few personalities who contributed to Malay presence in the history of Sri Lanka, like, the Malay Royals and Malay Military Chiefs are also mentioned.



The author has tried to show that the Malays played important roles in the history of Sri Lanka. While inheriting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage from their ancestors, the Sri Lankan Malays have accepted and adapted to some of the local cultural practices. However, Careem has described some of the authentic Malay rituals as dating back several centuries. As a diaspora community, the Malays continue to practise the culture inherited from their ancestors. This can be seen in chapters like, Exiled Royalty and Fashion, Sri Lankan Malay Culture and Typical Malay Wedding and Rituals. The author tries to maintain the Lankan Malay culture, and raise awareness and sustain these practices.

The book also includes many other aspects of Language, literature and literary activities which are discussed in detail. The author has also discussed the Baba and Nyonya, a sub ethnic Malay group in Sri Lanka, a community closely related to the Cina Peranakan (Hybrid Chinese) of Malaysia, who have embedded the Malay culture, especially, language, costume, and cuisine.

Being a Diaspora community, the Sri Lankan Malays have also maintained age old performing arts and incorporated them as part of their leisure time activities and it is evident that they hold strong imprints in music and the film industry of Sri Lanka (p.468). The current generation is more comfortable with the local and modern music elements, the reasons why the author has stressed on the need for traditional Malay music to be revived and played by them.

Tuan M. Zameer Careem offers a scholarly and informative account on Sri Lankan Malays and has helped explain their importance in history, social, cultural, economic and political aspects. The range of references and interviews on which his narratives and analysis have been drawn are impressive.

One of the hallmarks of Careem's writings in general, is that he carefully embeds his empirical discussions with empirical data and sources.

Hence, the book is valuable not only to Malay Sociologists but also to Sri Lankan historians, sociologists and students who wish to learn about the Malay ethnic minority in Sri Lanka which is undoubtedly part of the global Malay diaspora.

Although a medical student, through his Second Revised and enlarged edition of Persaudaraan: Malay Life in Sri Lanka, Careem has successfully brought the discourse on Malays through his historical approach and blended it with the diachronic and synchronic discussions.

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<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2017/09/03/art/review-new-perception-lankan-malays>

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