

Mathematician + intellectual = love

by Lakmal Welabada

"If you are marrying, you should marry a girl with wide hips," an advice once given to Sam by a Professor in Cambridge suddenly came to his mind. He also remembered that early Sinhala Sandesha literature too had described that women with wide hips are highly regarded and considered attractive. Her gently swaying walk suddenly came to his mind. Sam, the man who had been among mathematical calculations, steam engines, voltages and Amperes all these days was at his desk trying to solve the most strange Mathematical problem he has ever come across.

Sam felt strange. Some warm feelings were warming his whole system just like the steam engine at the engineering laboratory. Miss. Kusuma Jayasooriya the pretty Sub Warden of Ramanathan Hall was in his mind.

He remembered her gentle smile and the pale pink-coloured saree with a neat matching blouse which ideally matched her complexion and the slim tall figure. "Oh! I forgot to introduce my friend to you Sam," he recollected Dr. Premasiri who gave Sam a lift from the University lecturing premises to Ramanathan Hall to meet the young lady lecturer. "Miss. Kusuma Jayasooriya is an Assistant Lecturer of the Department of Sinhala.

And Kusuma, please meet Sam Karunaratne, an Engineer and a lecturer in the Faculty of Engineering," introduced Dr. Premasiri.

Sam's preference was for a fair complexioned girl. "Her height from hips upward should be one point six times her height from toe to hip. Her mouth should be one point six times the width of her nose. Her beauty must be at least five hundred 'milihelens'," he thought. For Sam, as an engineer, whatever the project he undertakes or whatever the item he acquire should have proper specifications.

However to measure a girl's beauty, he could not find a specific measurement. When he was an Engineering student he used the unit 'Helen' on the beauty of the girls he came across. Helen of Troy is said to be a woman of extreme beauty.

In Sam's estimate the beauty of Helen of Troy was one Helen or one thousand milihelens. A woman as half as beautiful as Helen has a beauty of five hundred milihelens. The girl he was looking for should be at least half as beautiful as Helen of Troy which means her beauty should be no less than five hundred milihelens.

However, Samarajeewa Karunaratne and Kusuma Jayasooriya intensely revived the first

meeting when they met for the second time on the annual trip to 'World's End' with the Arts Faculty students. During this trip they had all the time to get to know each other. It is after this trip that their relationship was strengthened.

Both being intellectuals, they were rather frank in their discourses.

On a subsequent occasion, Kusuma asked him quite directly whether he is serious about her. His answer to this question was quite frank and in a way, rather amusing. "Well, I have 'seriousness' in view," was his answer.

Samarajeewa Karunaratne alias Sam was born in 1932 in Makoora Village, Kegalle. His father T.Karunaratne was a landed proprietor. Sam was the fourth of the eight children in the family. He first went to Hettimulla Vidyalaya (today, Bandaranaike Maha Vidyalaya, Hettimulla).

One day his father called him. "Podi Putha, how old are you?" he asked. "Seven," replied Sam. "Well, can you walk four miles in the morning and evening?" was Appachchi's next question. "Can," replied little Sam. And so the gate of St. Mary's College, Kegalle opened to Sam.

The time he spent at St. Mary's was a memorable one. Though he had to walk four miles up and down from home to school and vice versa (eight miles daily) he never complained because the journey gave him immense fun and secondly the intelligent boy was really fond of studies.

After SSC Sam joined the Technical College and then went to the University of Ceylon to follow the Engineering degree. He was called for the Assistant lecture's post while he was waiting at home after the final year.

Mr. Victor Rasiah, head of Electrical Department was one of the main characters who helped to mould Sam's future.

His association inspired him and made him become an electrical engineer.

Kusuma Ediriweera Jayasooriya was born on November 21 in 1940 at Dikwella, Dodampahala to a business family of Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Jayasooriya. Kusuma was the third of six children in their family. She had her education at Dodampahala Vidyalaya and then at Vijitha Vidyalaya, Dikwella, and then entered the University of Peradeniya in 1960.

They got married in July, 1967. "It was just the registration as Sam wanted to go abroad for further research work. But we got the blessings of our parents," she reminisces.

"Once one of my colleague Dr.PA. De Silva of University of Moratuwa asked me whether we



Sam and Kusuma Karunaratne

had children. By that time Kusuma was also doing her further research studies, so we had decided to postpone having children until she obtained her PhD. I told this to Dr.De Silva. "Sam, can't ladies without PhD degrees give birth to babies? Sam, a lady can obtain a PhD at any age, but there is an age for one to have a baby. You better remember this," was Dr.De Silva's advice.

After Kusuma heard this she made her own decision to postpone the PhD and presented Sam with two sons.

It was after the birth of both sons that she went back to her PhD. Today their elder son, Savant Kaushalya Karunaratne is a PhD holder in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the Sydney University. He is married to Dr. Samudra Pieris and has a cute little baby daughter. Karunaratne's second son, Passant Vathsalya Karunaratne is a Principal Research Engineer in USA.

The intellectual couple has no wedding photo. But they are quite happy with all that they have achieved. Proving that the love and understanding between two hearts could do wonders Sam and Kusuma both have climbed the ladder of success academically while having an excellent married life.

Pic: Kavindra Perera.