An Interview with Tissa Kariyawasam on Aspects of Culture in Sri Lanka

Le Roy Robinson

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He was formerly Director of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies at the University of Kelaniya.

He was born on August 23, 1942, in a village called Ganegama in Baddegama in the District of Galle in the Southern Province.

He went to primary school in Pilagoda and received his secondary education at Ratnasara Vidyalaya, Baddegama.

In 1964 Kariyawasam graduated from the University of Peradeniya with Honors in Sinhala and with Ceylon History and Archaeology as complementary subjects.

From 1964 to 1967 he taught Classical Sinhala Prose Literature and Modern Poetry at the University of Colombo.

In 1968 he received a Master’s degree from the University of Peradeniya. His thesis was “Demonological Rituals and Society.” In 1973 he was awarded a Ph. D. from the University of London, England. His dissertation was “Religious Activities and the Development of a New Poetical Tradition in Sinhalese from 1852 to 1906”.

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ROBINSON: When was the Institute of Aesthetic Studies founded? What is its history?

KARIYAWASAM: To answer your simple questions, I have to go into a long and complicated story. To begin with, in the year 1883 the then Ministry of Public Instruction — later the Ministry of Education — introduced courses in painting for students who wanted to become teachers of painting. Chitrakarmaguru, art teachers. Chitra is a Sanskrit word meaning painting. Karma is the activity. Guru is the teacher. Instruction was carried out by Western teachers, and the main subject was Western painting. Later, when a few Ceylonese teachers joined, they too followed the same Western system. The curriculum was put together in a very rudimentary way. There was no properly drawn up syllabus.

Then in 1901 a Drawing and Art Department was opened at the Ceylon Technical College, and in 1902 the Drawing Teachers Certificate Examination was held for the first time. This firmly established the place of the art instructor in the public school system here.

As for the people involved, C. F. Winzer, the first Inspector of Art in the Ministry, and Geoffrey Beling rendered a great service. Beling succeeded Winzer in 1932. Both of them were Dutch Burghers and were artists themselves and art teachers. They re-oriented the teaching of art in our public schools. They rescued it from the imitation of cheap forms of Western art. They tried some national subjects taken from the island’s environment. Exhibitions were held in various parts of the island. Art galleries were built in Kandy, Galle and Jaffna.

In 1949 this Drawing and Art Department was moved to Horton Place. Into a house called Heywood owned by a wealthy Westerner named Heywood. It was a massive place. There was a big ball room.
There were even stables around the house. Anyway, it was now called the Department of Painting. Only painting was taught. Under the principalship of J. D. A. Perera. Donald Ramanayeka has given you some information about Perera, but did he mention Perera’s wife Chandralekha? She was one of the first Sinhala women to dance Kandyan dances in public. She met with a premature death in 1944. Perera also wanted to introduce dancing into the curriculum of this institution.

Fortunately, by this time some enthusiasts in the Ministry of Education had done some work in the public schools with Kandyan dancing and Indian music. You see, since 1935 or 1936 a private organization, the Lanka Gandharva Sabha, had been conducting examinations in both these subjects. Those who passed the prescribed courses were issued certificates that enabled them to become public school teachers in these subjects. The chairman of the Gandharva Sabha also happened to be the Chief Inspector of Music and Dance in the Ministry of Education. S. L. B. Kapukotuwa. So J. D. A. Perera was able to introduce Kandyan dancing and Indian music into his curriculum at the Department of Painting.

ROBINSON: Before you go on with the history of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, please say a little more about Lanka Gandharva Sabha.

KARIYAWASAM: Earlier I mentioned Rabindranath Tagore. In 1934 — in May — the performance of his Sap Mocan took place here. At the Regal Theatre in Colombo. As I said before, Tagore influenced education in Ceylon. His comments on the system of Kandyan dancing interested some young men who came from wealthy families, and they went to India and started learning North Indian music and Kathakali and Kathak dancing at the feet of famous masters. They studied there for six years. Then they came back here as masters themselves in either one of the instruments in instrumental music or
in vocal music. A few years earlier Lanka Gandharva Sabha had been formed by a few enthusiasts to promote the systematic study of music and dance. Oriental music and dance, of course. Gandharva Sabha was the assisting agent to the Ministry of Education on these subjects for more than two decades. First they started classes for students to teach North Indian instruments and Sri Lankan dancing, especially Kandyan dancing, and drumming. The chief organizer and his colleagues were from the Ministry of Education, so it was not a problem to continue with this work. They were able to recruit teachers to the Department. Later on, in the 1960s, the Department took over the system of examinations, and Gandharva Sabha died a natural death, so to speak.

ROBINSON: You mentioned young men from wealthy families. How did people who were not rich get training in the arts?

KARIYAWASAM: In the villages. In almost every village there were two or three traditional masters. Gurunnanse. Most of them belonged to communities low on the social ladder. I’m referring to caste. In the coastal areas and the mid-Kandyan area — the Hatara Korale and the Siyana Korale — the caste system was rigid. Let me explain Korale. For administrative purposes, this island is divided into nine provinces, as you know. The provinces are divided into 25 districts. The districts are divided up into Pattuvas and they are divided into Korales. Anyway, in the Low Country the caste system was less rigid. The caste system probably hindered the progress of art education — the drumming and dancing, for example, were limited to the Berava caste, the drummers caste — but it was immaterial whether the teacher came from the hill country or the low country because their characteristics were similar. When I say art education, you must bear in mind that, according to the traditional way of thinking in Sri
Lanka, art was not limited to a single field. Dance, music, painting, sculpture, drumming, reading horoscopes, communicating with demons and deities — the traditional masters I’m talking about performed all of these activities. They were a major force in the life of the people.

Now to get to the point of your question. When a boy — no girls! — desired to learn dancing, say, his parents had a discussion with the master. They gave him a basket full of rice. Sweets. They presented him with betel leaves to pay homage to him in the traditional manner. The boy had to forget his own caste in some cases. He went to the master’s house in the mornings, say, to get instruction. Then he had to practice by himself. You see, the master was not always available for the whole day. He had to see people who were ill — he did not prescribe medication, but he prescribed a ritual to be performed — or he had to read the horoscope of somebody in another village. The education was not formal. There was no timetable. Sometimes another trainee assisted the newcomer with beating the Kaytalama drum or reading the *pada* aloud. A *pada* is a line in a four-line verse. Anyway, it took about a year or more for the boy to master twelve exercises. The Dandiyame Haramba. Body exercises. The limbs, the trunk and gait of the dancer are controlled with these exercises. Dandiyama is a pole that is placed horizontally $2 \frac{1}{2}$ feet above ground level. It’s equivalent to the bar in Western ballet. The dancer must complete the exercises touching the pole. In Goda Haramba you do not touch the bar. The master also had several types of drums. Tammattam, or kettle drum. Udekki. Panteru Valalu. And the Kaytalama. *Kay* is hand. *Talam* is cymbal. Udekki is a drum shaped like an hour glass.

ROBINSON: Can you play any of these drums?
KARIYAWASAM: As a young village boy I learned dancing and drumming from my relatives who engaged in those arts. In the Low Country area where I was born those arts were not limited to the so-called lower ranks. Yes, my environment was full of these activities. Yes, if I try for some hours, I can still play the low country drum and can dance a few steps. Unfortunately, I don’t practice, so I tire easily. But I can teach somebody how to dance.

ROBINSON: You said an apprentice had one year to learn 12 exercises. That seems a long time.

KARIYAWASAM: The length of time was no problem. Learning dancing was not the main duty of the boy. He had to do farming with his father. He had to learn other disciplines in another school or at a temple. He had to go to a normal school to receive his education in reading and writing, the whole school curriculum, maths, social science, history, geography. Anyway, the longer he spent in learning the Dandiya Haramba, the better it was, for he could develop a flexible body, which is an asset to a dancer. As for time, after the Dandiya Haramba, the boy had to do the Goda Haramba, another course of 12 exercises accompanied by a drummer. Then he could start reciting various padas connected with ritualistic dances, puja pada. He had to recite them word for word. All of the dances of the Kandyan tradition are connected with rituals. The young man — by this time, the young boy has become a young man! — has learned dancing and drumming, and he had to be able to sing. Now if the master is called to do a ritual at the house of someone who is afflicted with a disease caused by a demon or some malefactory deity, the young dancer accompanies him. He carries the Ves Pettiya, a box containing the paraphernalia of a dancer. Or he carries a drum. He takes a part in the ritual. In the arena. When the more experienced drummers want a little
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rest, the young dancer plays the drum for the other dancers. This participation in rituals also gives the young man knowledge of many things besides dancing, drumming and singing. At the place where a ritual is performed pandals must be erected to various deities. A pandal is an altar prepared with young coconut leaves and trunks of banana trees. These pandals carry traditional decorations. Figures of deities have to be painted, or molded out of clay. Colors must be used according to the different characteristics of the deities. These are mentioned in the traditional books of knowledge, Ambum Kavi, verses characterizing the deities or demons. So, you see, after nearly seven years, the young man will be accustomed to all the necessary interdisciplinary activities of an artist in Sri Lanka.

ROBINSON: Are these books of knowledge secret books?

KARIYAWASAM: No, these aren't secret books, but one is handed down only to one's own son, not even to one's best student. What happens is the knowledge dies with the father.

ROBINSON: When is the young man no longer considered an apprentice?

KARIYAWASAM: At a ceremony called Ves Bandeeme Mangallaya or Madu Baseema Mangallaya. He gets the blessings of Buddhist priests. He can wear the costume of a dancer. He can dance alone without the help of his master. It's an historic occasion for him. After this ceremony he is able to teach others, and he can become a master.

Madu is a hall specially made for the debut of the dancer. Ves is the costume of the dancer. Madu Baseema means the dancer's first public performance. It's a feast. The festival is called Mangallya. Ves Bandeema is the wearing of the 64 pieces of the paraphernalia and costume of a Kandyan dancer. Ves always goes with Kandyan dancing. You also get these two ceremonies in Low Country and Sabaragamuwa dancing, where they're called Madu Baseema.
ROBINSON: Would you recite a few lines of one of the pada you've been referring to?

KARIYAWASAM: Yes, Haramba exercises have padas, but there's no meaning attached to them. Tit Tit Tey. Teyyat Teyyat Tam. In a more developed stage, the padas are longer. For example, the twelfth pada of the Goda Haramba goes like this: Domita Domita Domi. Domita Domita Domi. Domita Domita Domi. Domikita Kita Domi.

ROBINSON: Now a side question. Is Chitrasena's Kandyan dancing an art apart from ritual? Does a Sinhala audience always know the ritual behind a dance when Chitrasena performs?

KARIYAWASAM: Yes, Chitrasena's dancing is different from authentic Kandyan dancing. He's modified the dance movements. Because of his educational background, his studying in India, there's more technical purity in his dances. He's closer to ballet than to traditional Kandyan dancing. Oh, yes, the Sinhala audience always realizes the difference between the dances of Chitrasena and those of Pani Bharata, say, or Heen Baba Dharmasiri or Suramba or Nittawela Gunaya.

ROBINSON: Since I've had the honor of meeting Chitrasena, would you mind saying a bit about him, his background?

KARIYAWASAM: His given name was Morris Dias. He and his wife Vajira used to have a studio in Colombo. His father Seebert was a producer of Tower Hall dramas and at one time the manager of Tower Hall Theatre. Chitrasena had a liking for drama from childhood. Later he was sent to India to learn dancing, and he was influenced by the dance dramas of Rabindranath Tagore, too. When he came back here he started to teach them to young people in Colombo. He also produced new dance dramas — called ballets here — based on Indian stories, such as Ravana, Vidura, Nala and Damayanti. Then he realiz-
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ed the importance of Kandying dancing. He studied them, the dances, under the guidance of traditional exponents. Vajira was one of his students. They both have created ballets. Vajira, especially for children. She has been the leading dancer in most of Chitrasena’s ballets. They’ve performed in many countries of the world with their troupes. Incidentally, Chitrasena is the name of a celestial dancer in Sanskrit and Hindu mythology.

ROBINSON: Then to go back to history of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, what happened in the 1950s?

KARIYAWASAM: With the assistance of some able politicians J. D. A. Perera was able to have the newly organized Department of Painting called the Government College of Fine Arts. Rajaye Kalayatanaya. That was in July 1952. The College was officially opened by our former President Junius R. Jayawardene. At that time he was the Minister of Finance. He was the M. P. for that area, Kelaniya. J. D. A. Perera enlisted music and dance teachers. The dancing teacher was S. Panibharata. He was an exponent of Kandyan dancing who had been in India with Chandralekha. Lionel Edirisinha became the teacher of music. He had been at Shanti Niketan, too, and was a student of Lucknow Sangeet Vidya Pitha.

Later, in the 1960s, under the same institution, two schools developed, one for music and one for dancing. Perera was the principal administrator. Panibharata became the principal of the dance school and Edirisinha became the principal of the music school. Now the name Government College of Arts was changed into the Government College of Arts and Crafts, and the two schools were called the Government College of Music and the Government College of Dancing.

Then in 1974 under the government of Mrs. Sirimavo Ban-
daranaike these three schools and the Ramanathan Academy of Jaffna were affiliated. The Ramanathan Academy was producing Tamil musicians and dancers. In this way the Institute of Aesthetic Studies was founded. This was done by a notice that appeared in the Government Gazette. At the same time the various universities of Sri Lanka were united into one University with several campuses. The main administrative office was the Senate House. The Institute of Aesthetic Studies then came under the University of Sri Lanka.

ROBINSON: May I say that these changes are somewhat confusing?

KARIYAWASAM: This was a very complex situation. The illplanned way the Institute was created resulted in many problems. Actually, even early on, in the mid-1950s, some educationalists advocated a University for Fine Arts. Dr. Ranjan Abeysinha, for one. Premakuma Epitawela, for another. Ranjan is a dentist, a musician, an art lover. He’s chairman of the Arts Association. Premakumar is a Kathakali dancer. He studied in India and wrote a book called The Language of Kathakali. He produces ballets.

ROBINSON: All this organizational history aside, what was the purpose in founding the Institute of Aesthetic Studies?

KARIYAWASAM: Well, there were those who had neither university education nor university experiences who wanted university status for dance, music and painting. For reasons of their own. When the Bandaranaike’s came to power, one after the other, it was accepted as the age of the common man in Sri Lanka. During Mr. Bandaranaike’s time in office, two pirivenas, traditional religious education institutions, were transferred into universities. Likewise, some people thought it was the age of the artistes. They thought there was a pressing need for university status for arts studies. They thought the easiest thing was to transfer the Kalayatanaya into a university. Put it
this way: there was an election pledge to boost up the traditional Buddhist Sinhala education. Mr. Bandaranaike had to elevate these two pirivenas into universities. As for the founding of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, the then Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister were not so keen on this proposal. Another Deputy Minister in another department was interested in the whole project, though. Luxman Jayakody. He was Deputy Minister of Defense. He was a relative of Charles Dias and the founder of Tower Hall. He was able to sing and he patronized the arts. He's a member of parliament now.

ROBINSON: There seems to have been a lot of politicking going on.

KARIYAWASAM: Let me say this. Ministers and politicians are there to fulfill the wishes of the common people who voted them into power. But it is the bureaucrats, the administrators, who should implement them, the laws, in a well-planned way. This case is a horrible example of the ignorance of the administration that transformed three government schools and a private academy — Ramanathan, in Jaffna, was a private school — into a university institute by a gazette notification. Nobody knew what was happening. A director was also gazetted. Dr. Hema Ratnayaka. This was all done in great haste. Dr. Ratnayaka is a lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Colombo.

ROBINSON: This must have caused a great controversy.

KARIYAWASAM: Not so much. Not many people were interested in the foundation of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. The main reason was that it did not include a large amount of people. Except the few students and the few teachers in the Kalayatanaya at that time. Don't think I'm always humorous about all these events. You'll be surprised to hear they, these students and teachers, were not effected in any way. You see, when the Ministry of Education put its notice in the
gazette about the establishment of the Institute they forgot to mention the moveable and immoveable properties that ought to have been gazetted too. So four institutions were gazetted as an Institute but nothing was mentioned regarding the premises where it would be located and nothing was mentioned about the teachers and students in the Kalayatanaya. This shows you the ill-planned way it was established. The teachers who were in the service of the Ministry of Education did not become faculty members of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. Nor did the students. The teachers got their salaries but they did not become the University teachers. The students were learning, but not in the structure of the university.

ROBINSON: The questions were too simple. I'm more confused than before.

KARIYAWASAM: Another point. You asked about opposition. In a subtle way some did oppose the establishment of an Institute of Aesthetic Studies. There was a section in the Education Ministry at that time called the Aesthetic Section by some teachers in dancing, music and painting. In 1977 the dancing and music teachers in the Ministry introduced new examinations. Jatika Natum and Sangeeta Vibhagaya. National Examination of Dancing. National Examination of Music. Their purpose was to continue the same Kalayatanaya examinations even after the establishment of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. That is, they did not want to see the development of the Institute. Even today, when it comes to recruitment of teachers, this three-part examination is considered equivalent to University examinations and certifications. In a subtle way they were proceeding towards the disruption of the Institute. These things, however, were nobody's concern, as I said. Nobody was upset about the establishment of the Institute. There was further opposition in University circles. The three
schools had no traditionally accepted degrees or certificates. Teachers had various certificates issued by the technical college, by the Ministry, by the Kalayatanaya, or by private music schools in India. The University scholars did not want to recognize them as scholars. Some more ardent scholars in the University tried too to have some sort of course in Fine Arts as against the curriculum in the Institute of Aesthetic studies.

ROBINSON: On the subject of competition does the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, which I understand is the only state institution in Sri Lanka where music, dancing, art and sculpture are taught for the Bachelor of Arts, does the Institute compete now with other similar institutes or schools in Sri Lanka?

KARIYAWASAM: When the Institute was founded in 1974 there was no rival institution. But in 1977 the Ministry of Education introduced a rival examination, as I told you. Until 1978 the Institute had no rival as such. There were private Kalayatanayas and government-sponsored Kalayatanayas that could not compete with the former Kalayatanaya until 1974. Why? After it became a University institute it went into a big slumber. No creative work was done. The dancing teachers and music teachers had their private works done, of course. But nothing was done inside the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. There was no initiative from the administration, either. Then in the late 1970s two rivals did spring up. One was the National Youth Service Council. The other was the National Dancers Ensemble. The first was under the Ministry of Youth and Employment. The second was under the Ministry of Culture. Both did excellent performances. The demand for them at public functions created interest in the society at large. Another rivalry was started within the Ministry of Education. The graduates of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies were collected together
when they were employed as teachers by the Ministry. This resulted in the formation of a group who forget their mother institution and acted as rivals to it. This was a big challenge.

And, yes, there is another kind of opposition to the Institute of Aesthetic Studies. There are various political stooges who are seeking positions in the fields of music, dancing and art. Under any government. With the development of the Institute some who did not have bona fide university qualifications could not seek employment in the Institute. They often attacked the Institute in newspapers and magazines. For example, when I was about to complete my second term as Director, a magazine sponsored by a corporation launched a big campaign against my seeking a third term.

The opposition was mainly based on the insularity of people who never dreamed of the activities which took place in the Institute after 1980.

ROBINSON: You probably have enough material for another novel like *Atta Bindeyi Paya Burulen!* But let's go on to less controversial questions. What is the size of this Institute? What are the departments? How many teachers are there? Students? Graduates? That sort of thing.

KARIYAWASAM: There's an arts and sculpture department. A dance department. A music department. As I already explained. In the arts department there are 16 regular teachers and 20 who come in as external teachers, visiting teachers, part-time teachers, as you will. The music department has 22 teachers and 16 visiting teachers. The dance department has 20 teachers and 26 visiting teachers. These teachers are Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers, Instructors Lower Grade and Instructors Higher Grade. Students? In arts and sculpture there are 125 students. The music department has 225. The dance department has
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about 210. I won't bother to give you a breakdown of the numbers of first year students or second year students and so on. As for graduates, the first degree examinations were in 1979, in August. To date, there have been about 1000 graduates. The single largest graduation class was in 1980 — 155 men and women in all.

ROBINSON: How do students gain entrance into the Institute of Aesthetic Studies?

KARIYAWASAM: To enter any of the 17 higher education institutions — institutes or universities — a candidate must meet the criteria provided by the University Grants Commission. The candidate should pass the G. C. E. Advanced Level Examination. This is conducted by the Department of Examinations. The candidate must pass in four subjects, with an aggregate mark over 180. Otherwise, he or she has to pass three subjects and get at least a mark of 25 in the fourth. The Institute, of course, accepts applications only from those who pass the G. C. E. Advanced Level in dancing, music or painting. Then an aptitude test is given. Candidates are selected according to the number of places available.

ROBINSON: Are there non-academic barriers, so to speak?

KARIYAWASAM: There are no racial or ethnic barriers, if that's what you mean. Our medium of instruction is Sinhala, so we do have fewer Tamil applicants.

ROBINSON: What about political influence on behalf of applicants?

KARIYAWASAM: Well, yes. Politicians here are always pressing the Institute to admit their supporters. But a note from a Member of Parliament does not make somebody a musician or an artist. We do not count political affiliations. There is no religious barrier either, it should be said. We have 539 Buddhists and 18 Christians. There is no barrier because of gender. Since recent changes in education have
taken place here, the Institute has a majority of female students. We have 424 female students and 124 male students. As I say, there is no religious barrier, but no clergyman will be admitted to the Institute. In the other institutes monks can join. Here it's different because some Buddhists object if they see a monk performing music or dancing.

They enjoy these arts, but that is a different story.

ROBINSON: Do you have many foreign students at the Institute? How does a foreign student get permission to enter?

KARIYAWASAM: There are only a few foreign students. According to rules and regulations, a foreign applicant should apply for admission to one of our institutes or universities before coming to Sri Lanka. We get only a few foreign full time students. A number of foreign doctors and engineers and development consultants who come to Colombo have wives who attend the Institute as part time students. Recently there were two women from the United States, one Chilean, and one Japanese. There was a young woman from West Germany who studied Kandyan dancing for four years.

ROBINSON: What about foreign teachers?

KARIYAWASAM: We did have one foreign teacher. We do not have a big enough budget to afford foreign teachers. He — the foreign teacher — is Rudy Corens, a Belgian. He was a music teacher and drama and puppetry teacher. He also worked with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. He pioneered in the opening of the Children's Museum in Puppetry at the National Museum. He also directed three plays. Caligula, Knots. A Nephew from Angoda.

ROBINSON: In a minute I'm going to ask you a question or two about contemporary theatre in Sri Lanka. But first let me ask you about money. Money for tuition fees. Can students at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies get loans? Scholarships?
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KARIYAWASAM: The loan system is called bursaries for needy students. There are three ways available for needy students. There's the Mahapola Scholarship Scheme. Nineteen students get 350 rupees each monthly. They are selected according to the marks they get in the G. C. E. exams and according to a point system relating to the distance they travel to school and to the number of their brothers and sisters under 18 years of age. A student in the Colombo area who has less than 222 cannot enter a Higher Educational Institute. A student who gets the highest mark in the G. C. E. gets 20 points. A student who travels about 50 miles gets 10 points; one who travels 100 miles gets 15. A student with brothers and/or sisters under the age of 18 gets 5 points for each up to a total of 15. For students who entered the Institute before 1984 the Bank of Ceylon and the Peoples Bank provide loans to those whose income is less than 18,000 rupees a year. Two guarantors are needed. When they graduate they are supposed to repay with interest.

ROBINSOM: Do they always repay their loans?

KARIYAWASAM: In most cases they do not. Banks don't attempt to get the money back from the borrowers, but they select the easiest way — to sue the guarantors. This is normal bank practice in this country.

ROBINSON: Finally, would you say something about the salaries of teachers at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies?

KARIYAWASAM: The faculty members are paid on the same basis as university teachers. A lecturer is paid 5500 rupees per month. Unmarried teachers get an additional 504 rupees as a living allowance. Married men whose wives are working get 375 rupees. There's also a professional allowance of between 400 rupees and 700 rupees depending on years of service. An assistant lecturer is paid 4000 rupees per
month and gets the living allowance but not the professional allowance. An instructor higher grade gets 2500 rupees and the same living allowance of 504 rupees. An instructor lower grade gets 1100 rupees. There are also demonstrators, as they are called, accom­panists, who get a monthly salary of 900 rupees. As for adminis­trators, the senior assistant registrar, say, gets 2400 rupees, the assistant registrar gets 1700 rupees — both get allowances — and the senior assistant bursar gets 2400 rupees and the allowances. All in all, as you can see, salaries are not very high for most people in education in Sri Lanka.

ROBINSON: One last question. Can students transfer in and out of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies?

KARIYAWASAM: In this country the transfer of students is not done. Students who enter the Institute must complete their degrees within four years. They cannot enter other universities in Sri Lanka with these subjects — music, dancing, art. At least 98% of them can't, anyway. Even if they get 180 points in the G. C. E. Advanced Level, there are cutoff points for every district that will not allow them to enter another university. For example, the cutoff for the district of Colombo is 222 points. A student whose total points are below that cannot enter any other institute or university in the Colombo area. But those whose marks range between 180 to 221 in aesthetic subjects can enter the Institute of Aesthetic Studies.