

Chella Pathmanathan: A loyal son of Hartley

Chelliah Pathmanathan JP, affectionately known as 'Chella' to his friends, was born on March 13, 1933 in the region of Puloly, Northern province to Shaivite parents Chelliah and Sin-nachchipillai. He was a grandchild of Vinasithambi and second in the family of two, the eldest being a sister named Nagaratnam.

Academic and professional career

Pathmanathan commenced his secondary education at Hartley College, Point Pedro, in 1944 and continued until he sat for the S.S.C. Examination in 1951.

After completing his school education, Pathmanathan joined the Government clerical service. At the age of 29, he married Annarathinam of Uduppiddy and the couple were blessed with five children, two boys and three girls.

Pathmanathan went onto successfully complete accountancy exams that helped him advance his career as an accountant at the Department of Food in 1967.

His knowledge for excellence saw him progress up the ladder, first as the Assistant Director at Department of Wildlife, and then a Director at the General Treasury of the Ministry of Finance. It also came as no surprise that his unmatched linguistics skills saw him function as a Sworn Translator and a Justice of Peace.

Contribution to Hartley College

Pathmanathan functioned as the Secretary of the Colombo Branch of Hartley College OBA, during 1983 - 1995, perhaps the most challenging times in history for the school and the

Tamil community in general.

His selfless commitment to his alma mater saw him become the longest serving Secretary of this Association, then as the Vice President and finally as the Vice Patron, a post that he held till his last breath.

Pathmanathan was also the founder secretary of the Hartley College PPA Trust since 2002 and made a significant contribution to the school rebuilding efforts, in both infrastructure as well as in the educational initiatives.

Hartley boasts a constant stream of old boys and teachers/principals who provided yeoman service to elevate the level of the school, both in academic as well as extra-curricular matters.

However, if one was to name an individual who has contributed the most in the post-1983 era, especially in actively participating in rebuilding the school's activities and in particular working towards the consolidation of the past pupils branches both here and overseas, Chella will be the unanimous choice.

The fact that the Colombo Branch was able to develop a comprehensive members' directory was entirely due to his painstaking efforts by individually contacting all past pupils in the Colombo District by visiting them or calling them personally during challenging times.

This untiring effort paved the way for the Colombo Branch to grow and acted as a catalyst to have the overseas branches follow suit.

Contributions to society and community

During his tenure as the Essential Services Deputy Director, Pathmanathan was targeted by racist elements and was forced to resign after he had raised a voice for equitable distribution

of supplies in the areas where the minority communities predominantly reside.

Sri Lanka United Nations Friendship Organization (SUNFO) felicitated Pathmanathan and conferred him the title of "Associate Supportive Fellow" (AFSUNFO) for his service at Sri Lanka Christian Children's Fund as a consultant.

His powerful speech at a conference hosted by Asian Resources Institution in December 2003, on the topic of "Poverty and peace", brought him accolades and international recognition.

Pathmanathan also rendered his service to vulnerable communities during his tenure as a part-time consultant at the Sri Lanka Red Cross.

A devout Hindu, he actively participated in all the temple functions both in Colombo as well as in Jaffna and also assisted in the administrations of many temples.

An unsung hero who shuns publicity

Even as he fell ill during his last few years, Pathmanathan continued his untiring efforts aimed at the development of his cherished alma mater.

Being a selfless humanitarian, he avoided publicity in his service to the Tamil language and Hindu religious communities.

He was also fearless when it came to facing the opposition of racist and opportunistic elements and raised his voice genuinely and courageously on many issues.

This note is written on behalf of members of the Hartley College PPA Trust, the many branches of the PPA, the past pupils in general, the teaching faculty of Hartley and its students, showing gratitude to selfless services by him to his alma mater.