



Insight



Language



A **language** is a system for encoding and decoding information In its most common use. the forms of communication considered peculiar to humankind. In linguistics the term is extended to refer to the human cognitive facility of creating and using language. Essential to both meanings is the systematic creation and usage of systems of symbols—each referring to linguistic concepts with semantic or logical or otherwise expressive meanings.

Language has been the primary means of communication that man has acquired throughout his existenc on the planet since time began. Languages are spread across the globe in their thousands and people, from all walks of life, use them effectively in their daily lives. Without language, man would have surely been a dumb animal.

The most obvious manifestations are spoken languages such as English or Spoken Chinese. However, there are also written languages and other systems of visual symbols such as sign languages.

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Water Conservation Week in August 2009



World Water Week, organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute, where various significant topics on water conservation was discussed, ended during the third week of August. Topics discussed were related to the wise use of land and water resources, balancing competing claims for water, food and energy, rainfall variability and climate change, water and sanitation, improving access to water supply in small towns, water governance, of which were also applicable in the Sri Lankan setting.

“There is no water without weather” said Vidya Jyothi Deshamanya Prof.Chris Panabokke. He explained that even before Sri Lanka was affected by climate change, the annual variation of rainfall was somewhere around 9.3 mm, the highest in the world. Moreover he said that the more than the amount of rain the behavioral change within and between seasons is important. “The change of variability of rainfall was the highest in the world even before climate change was even an issue.” This variability has changed so irreparably that past data can no longer be used to predict anomalies.

“Our surpluses and deficiencies will be more marked with the increase of climate change.” Prof. Panabokke cautioned that disregarding the effect that climate change could have on Sri Lanka’s water resources is no longer an option. He pointed out that it is of utmost importance to study water in its natural state

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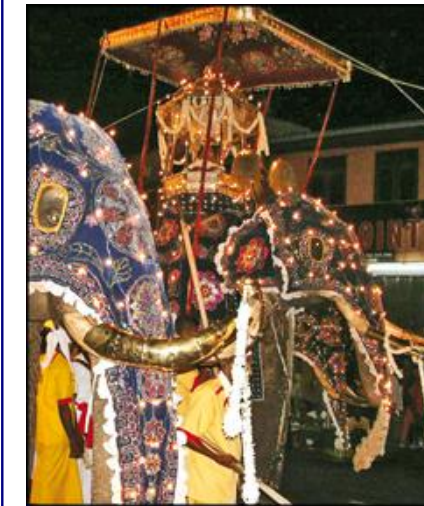
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Esala Perahera from p2



At about 8pm, the *Maligawa Perahera* joins the awaiting Devale Peraheras and leads the procession. Whip-crackers and fireball acrobats clear the path, followed by the Buddhist flag bearers. The first elephant carries the *Peramuna Rala* (Front Official). He is followed by Kandyan Drummers and Dancers who enthrall the crowd, and are themselves followed by elephants and other groups of musicians, dancers and flag bearers. A group of singers dressed in white heralds the arrival of the Maligawa Tusker carrying the Tooth Relic. The second procession is from the Natha Devale. The third is from the Vishnu Devale and the fourth from the Katharagama Devale. The fifth and final procession is from the Pattini Devale which is the only procession with female dancers.

Ramadan 1430

Ramadan (Arabic: رمضان) (also written in English as, *Ramazan, Ramzan, Ramadhan, Ramdan, Ramadaan*) is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which Muslims all over the world refrain from eating, drinking, physical marital relations, and indulging in anything that is in excess or ill-natured; from dawn until dusk. Fasting is meant to teach the individual patience, modesty, spirituality and the concern of the poor and destitute. Ramaḍān is a time to fast for the sake of Allah, the Creator and Provider, and to offer extra prayer and seek supplication.

During Ramaḍān, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds.

As compared to solar calendar, the dates of Ramadan vary, moving forward about ten days each year. Ramadhan was the month in which the first verses of the [Qur'an](#) were revealed

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Although some other animals make use of quite sophisticated communicative systems, and these are sometimes casually referred to as animal language, none of these are known to make use of all of the properties that linguists use to define language in the strict sense.

When discussed more technically as a general phenomenon then, "language" always implies a particular type of human thought which can be present even when communication is not the result, and this way of thinking is also sometimes treated as indistinguishable from language itself.

English is a West Germanic language that originated in Anglo-Saxon England. It has become the *lingua franca* in many parts of the world. It is used extensively as a second language and as an official language in Commonwealth countries and many international organizations.

A working knowledge of English has become a requirement in a number of fields, occupations and professions such as medicine and computing; as a consequence over a billion people speak English. It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

Language also has its many connotations in terms of the development of its use in slang, short forms, codes, and in recent times in email, chat rooms and texting on mobile phones.

The ability of the human mind to squeeze the language into its smallest element that will be understood by the receiver is simply astonishing. In Western Philosophy for example, language has long been closely associated with reason, which is also a uniquely human way of using symbols.

In Ancient Greek philosophical terminology, the same word, *logos*, was used as a term for both language or speech and reason, and the philosopher Thomas Hobbes used the English word "speech" so that it similarly could refer to reason.

THE KANDY ESALA PERAHERA



Esala Perahera is the grand festival and pageant of Esala held in Kandy in the central province of Sri Lanka. It is a very grand parade with elegant costumes, drums, dancing and a multitude of ceremonially dressed elephants. Happening in July or August in Kandy, it has become a unique symbol of Sri Lanka. There are fire-dances, whip-dances, Kandyan dances and various other cultural dances. The elephants are usually adorned with lavish garments. The festival ends with the traditional 'diya-kepeema' or water cutting ceremony.

The Esala Perahera is believed to be a fusion of two separate but interconnected "*Peraheras*" (Processions) – The *Esala* and *Dalada*. The Esala Perahera which is thought to date back to the 3rd century BC, was a Sinhalese Buddhist ritual enacted to request God for rainfall. The Dalada Perahera is believed to have begun when the Tooth Relic of the Buddha was brought to Sri Lanka from India during the 4th Century AD.

The Modern Perahera dates back to the reign of the Kandyan King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe (1747–1781 AD). During that era, the Tooth Relic was considered private property of the King and the public never had an opportunity to view it. However, King Rajasinghe decreed that the Relic be taken in procession for the masses to see and venerate.

After the Kandyan Kingdom fell to the British in 1815, the custody of the Relic was handed over to the *Maha Sangha* (the Buddhist Clergy). In the absence of the king, a lay custodian called the "*Diyawadana Nilame*" was appointed to handle routine administrative matters.

The Kandy Esala Perahera begins with the *Kap Situveema* or *Kappa*, in which a sanctified young Jack tree (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) is cut and planted in the premises of each of the four Devalas. Traditionally it was meant to shower blessing on the King and the people.

For the next five nights, the "*Devale Peraheras*" take place within the premises of the four Devalas with the custodian of each Devale taking the pole every evening, accompanied by music and drumming, flag and canopy bearers, spearman and the *Ran Ayudh*. On the sixth night, the *Kumbal Perahera* begins and continues on for five days. Initially, the Devale Peraheras assemble in front of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (or Temple of the Tooth) with their insignias placed on the *ransivige* (a dome-like structure) accompanied by the Basnayake Nilames (the lay custodians of the Devalas). The relic casket, which is a substitute for the Tooth Relic, is placed inside the ransivige affixed to the Maligawa Elephant, a tusker.

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Water

from p1



Ground water is a significant water source for Sri Lanka, which is unfortunately also very limited, especially in hard rock regions like Jaffna and in 'coastal sand' areas like Nilaveli and Kalpitiya. An ever increasing exertion is applied on this limited and precious resource by coning - shooting of brackish water - and over utilization.

He emphasized that human consumptions needs should always be given priority over agriculture, when considering ground water requirements.

Water conservation is a tremendous responsibility, not just in the hands of the governments and authorities across the globe but also in each and every one of us. How many times do we leave the faucet running while we brush our teeth every morning and night? Do we ever think that all that water is simply being wasted down the drain for no reason whatsoever? How many times have you seen garden hosepipes left running on the grass, car washing with callous disregard for the amount of water being wasted? Is it important to be conscious and aware of conservation at all times at every place?

Wijerathne Bohingamuwa, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Ruhuna, also explained that during the ancient times water stored or diverted from the rivers - other than agriculture - was used for drinking, animal husbandry, sanitation and even for the beautification of the gardens.

Another issue discussed in the International Water Week, that Sri Lanka can also relate to, was improving access to water supply in small towns.

Water resources management is an individual responsibility. So turn off those taps when not required, reduce the volume of your toilet flush. Water is a life giving resource, but it should not be taken for granted.

THE FORT OF COLOMBO



GOH Building (Now Hotel Taprobane)

Colombo Fort was, always, a memorable place to be, in the sixties and seventies. The business town was always alive, kicking, and buzzing with activity from dawn to dusk and even after through the midnight hours. Double Decker buses plied the route from the south on the Galle Road bringing in the multitudes of masses to their work places and shopping expeditions.

Fort was the place for banking. Fort was the shoppers dream. Fort was also famous for its variety of food.

Every foreign bank had its head office located in the Fort. There was The Mercantile Bank and Chartered Bank on Queen Street, Eastern Bank (later converted to the present Commercial Bank of Ceylon), National & Grindlays Bank and Bank of Ceylon on York Street, The Peoples Bank on Duke Street, HongKong & Shanghai Banking Corporation on Prince Street, Bank of Ceylon Fifth City Branch on York Street, Indian Bank on Baillie Street, and eventually the Central Bank was also located on Queen Street. .

Nanking Hotel, a typical Chinese restaurant on the Queen street Chatham street corner was, usually, frequented by the die-hard connoisseurs of good Chinese food.. The Akasa Kade restaurant on the rooftop of Ceylinco building was a more elite eating place for the executives and families who frequented the place. Pagoda, run by Rodrigo Restaurants, down Chatham Street was always famous for its exquisite Chinese Rolls, Lamprais, Iced Coffee and Chocolate Cake. Nectar Café, at the corner of Baillie Street and York Street, erupted like wildfire by providing a self service menu dished out by young ladies dressed in smartly ironed striped uniforms.

Then there was the hot rice and crab curry place called Jaffna Hotel down Hospital Street that anyone shopping or working in Fort could never miss. The steaming hot crab that was served, Jaffna style, was found nowhere else in all of Colombo.



GPO building in The Fort

A true five star lunch place in the town, in those days, was in the restaurant at the Hotel Taprobane, located at the end of York Street facing the Port of Colombo. Previously known as the Grand Oriental Hotel (GOH) during the old Colonial times it was haunted by the rich, famous and glamorous folk who were always dressed to kill and also had lots of cash to spend.

The buildings and structures that are found in the Fort are also a great legacy from the Colonial era as well as masterpieces of civil engineering and design in keeping with traditional Greco-Roman architecture. Queens House, now referred to as Presidents House, is the most handsome of them all. Located on Queen Street, opposite the Post Office, the mansion was the abode of the then Colonial Dutch and British Governors before independence in 1948, and later on the Governor Generals under local rule, and eventually the Presidents who came thereafter. The lone sentry at the gates and the changing of the guard are sights that were extremely beautiful to witness in those salubrious times. The mansion itself borders a wide acreage of land with tremendous foliage surrounding it.

The General Post Office was built during British colonial rule and contracted to the famous Moor builder, Wapchi Marikar Baas, grandfather of Sir Razik Fareed, who also built the NMLA building, Customs Long Room, Colombo Museum, Victoria Memorial Eye Hospital at Maradana, and many other similar colossal structures that still stand tall today as a memory to those great times.

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