

# THE SHORT STORIES AND RADIO PLAYS OF S. RAJARATNAM

Edited with an introduction  
by **IRENE NG**, author  
of "The Singapore Lion:  
A Biography of S. Rajaratnam"



“Before there was the politician Rajaratnam, there was the writer Rajaratnam. His biographer, Irene Ng, has performed a valuable service in collecting these stories and radio plays, and editing them with delicacy and tact. For the first time we have within the covers of one book the surprising, moving, fascinating literary antecedence of one of Singapore’s most beloved founding fathers. These stories and plays provide valuable insights into the character of an astonishing, often inspiring and always gentle man.”

—Janadas Devan, Director of the Institute of Policy Studies, and Associate Editor of *The Straits Times*

“Irene Ng has presented us with a little-known side of S. Rajaratnam: fiction writer and radio-dramatist. The stories explore the relationship of individuals to nature and to the inner self, the radio-plays educate. This collection proves that Rajaratnam belongs in the company of fine writers who have expanded the consciousness of the nation and the world in times when histories are not separate but interwoven.”

—Peter Nazareth, Professor of English, University of Iowa

“This highly readable anthology contains ideas that questioned and challenged the status quo of the day. For anyone wanting to understand the twists and turns of the history of ideas in Malaysia and Singapore, this book is indispensable.”

—Mohammad A. Quayum, Professor of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Malaysia

“A treasure trove of timeless tales from one of Singapore’s founding fathers. Written in the 1940s, they resonate with relevance for today’s readers. His stories and radio plays are an invaluable part of our literary heritage.”

—Suchen Christine Lim, novelist and winner of the first Singapore Literature Prize in 1992

“The stories and radio plays of the late S. Rajaratnam is wonderful testimony to the literary talent of the extraordinary man most know and remember as a politician. This timely book will ensure that Singaporean Literature has a long and distinguished history, often coming from the pens of persons we would not usually think of as literary writers. The skillful crafting of the stories, especially, leaves one to ask why these wonderful narratives have remained hidden for so long. This book is long overdue!”

—Kirpal Singh, Director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre, Singapore Management University

“This book explodes a central national myth that Singapore’s political workings owe nothing whatsoever to the literary imagination. S. Rajaratnam’s stories are inquisitive but polemical and consistently march an argument between high humane values and the trials and irony of life. They will change the way newer generations of Singaporeans think and talk about the space and acts of culture and the history of their own condition.”

—Gwee Li Sui, literary critic and poet

S. RAJARATNAM was one of the founding fathers of independent Singapore. Born in 1915 in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), he was raised in Seremban, Malaya. Upon graduating from Raffles Institution in Singapore, he left for London to study law at King’s College. There, during the Second World War, he wrote short stories and achieved prominence as a writer. He also wrote radio scripts for the BBC. In 1947, he returned to work in Singapore as a journalist, championing socialism, anti-colonialism and democracy. Seven years later, he co-founded the People’s Action Party with Lee Kuan Yew and several others. In 1959, when the PAP swept into power, he became the first Minister of Culture of self-governing Singapore. And in 1965, after the Separation from Malaysia, he became independent Singapore’s first Foreign Minister. He died in 2006.

IRENE NG is the author of *The Singapore Lion: A Biography of S. Rajaratnam*, the first volume of S. Rajaratnam’s biography. It won an Excellence Award for “Best Book/Best Writer” at the Asian Publishing Awards 2010. She is currently working on the second volume of the biography. Formerly a newspaper journalist and columnist, she is Writer-in-Residence at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and a Member of Parliament in Singapore.

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## Foreword

The late S. Rajaratnam almost always struck a modest chord when people asked him about his literary works. A little shy and withdrawing in these moments of query, it became awkward for the inquirer to push and pursue the conversation with a man widely respected for his intellectual keenness and sharp wit in the political arena of ideological debate, but little known as a writer of substance. This collection, therefore, of his best fiction and radio plays is a most welcome addition to the body of literary works we can proudly call Singapore literature.

*The Short Stories and Radio Plays of S. Rajaratnam* marks a milestone in the history and evolution of our literature, because here is an anthology whose contents pre-date most of the works of our other writers. This is a good place to begin understanding our author's imaginative articulations—in story and dramatic form—and to try and focus on what is distinct about this man's extraordinary literary talent.

“Extraordinary” is the word: anyone reading the stories

collected here will, must, be impressed by the sheer confidence of the writing. This is an important point to note, both for students and teachers. For one major obstacle to our literature in English—and a complaint quite frequently heard—has often been that most of our writing lacks the confidence which comes with a strong and comfortable grasp of the English language. One way of noting this is to consider the presence and role of nuance in the creative output.

Now, even a cursory reading of the stories in this book will convince most that no matter which story we take to analyse, every one contains nuance: that capacity to subtly portray character and tone so that each new reading of the text reveals a variation in our knowing, understanding, and grasp of what the author is really trying to convey. It is this multi-dimensionality of interpretation and meaning which marks the difference between ordinary and extraordinary. Let's take for illustration the seemingly simple story entitled "Drought".

*The exhausted earth groaned and quivered under the monotonous glare of the sun. Spirals of heat rose from the ground as if from molten lava. A panting lizard crawled painfully over the fevered rock in search of a shady crevice. Cattle and dogs cringed under the scanty share of trees and waited for the rain to deliver them from the heat and thirst. Instead the heat grew more intense and oppressive each day, singeing and stifling all the living things with an invisible sheet of fire, which only the rain could put out.*

*The drought had persisted for over a month...*

What an opening! How precise the images and how intricate the embedded strain of anxiety, worry as well as pain. This opening

paragraph must be among the best ever written in setting the tone and pace of the narrative to follow. That sentence which follows and begins the second paragraph—The drought had persisted for over a month—is calm as its seeming rhythm suggests, but belies the harsh truth which the rest of the narrative is going to reveal. The rest of the story is chilling but told as if human experience and human boldness can counter the ironic twists which fate and destiny bring when existence becomes exacting and tough. The implicit conflict developing between Vela Mudaliar and Suriar, old Kathar's son, is so telling of our human tendency to simplify things, to take things as they seem (rather than as they might actually be!) and to act hastily, often against better advice. How terrible the revelation of the truth when Suriar learns why his father is dead! As the truth takes its full toll and Suriar in an epiphanic moment of realisation, he dashes out with the pitcher of water and dashes it to the ground. Here is how our gifted author concludes this tale of woe:

*A dark stain of water spread on the ground and caressed its parched surface with its cold, moving fingers. The thirsty earth drank the water greedily, greedily.*

Stains don't caress; humans do. And this is precisely where the genius of expression shows its force—that menacing stain, itself the result of misplaced adventure is now being consumed relentlessly by, of all things, the earth! Earth becomes personified as human and in need of drink.

Rajaratnam's underlying conviction seems to me to be heavily influenced by, on the one hand, the deterministic and fatalistic philosophies which must have been told to him by his elders,



and picked up through reading huge volumes of ancient Indian religious texts, and on the other, by the equally compelling force of the ancient Greek philosophers who energetically advocated the necessity for humans to transcend destiny and take life's choices into their own hands. We see this inevitable conflict—and its dire consequences—in “Drought” and in almost all of the other stories too. I personally believe—though I did not ever discuss it with him—that our author was firm in the opinion that, as Aristotle said, man is a political being. In other words, our humanity is always political and politically determined, by the choices we make or don't make.

Take “The Tiger”: here is a story superficially concerned about the presence, quite suddenly it would appear, of a ferocious tiger in the midst of a village which otherwise would seem to have been mostly, usually quiet and calm. The tiger's entry turns everything upside-down, as it were, and the people of the village become agitated and then anxious about the tiger's potential threat. Counterpoised is the story of Fatima who, being pregnant, finds at first a kind of irrational fear about the tiger, and then an empathy—compassion even—which she cannot explain. But let's listen carefully, with our inner ear, to what we are told, suggestively:

*Framed by the lalang and low to the ground were the massive head and shoulders of the tiger, not more than twenty yards from her. The sun imparted a wicked glint to its staring, yellow eyes and its ears drawn back warningly. It turned its head and snarled, revealing its red tongue, and the yellow fangs looked like tree stumps.*

Nature, in the form of the sun, intervenes in this confrontation between human and animal. This intervention creates its own

subtle tension but it does not hurt or violate. But when the human who is callous comes along in the form of Mamood, who wants to prove his manhood by hunting the tiger and killing it, something larger than life takes place: a strange, hypnotic, almost parallel life between the tiger and Fatima is portrayed and just as the tiger's cubs are born while the mother is being killed, so Fatima's baby is to be delivered by the midwife who has been sent for while she, Fatima, faints in agony and pain. The identification between the two mothers, one wild, the other domesticated (i.e. human) is deliberately made so that we as readers are provoked to reflect profoundly on the realities of our existence. Heroism here is not celebrated; on the contrary, there is a subtle plea for kindness and compassion and that deeper understanding which defies reason. Fatima cannot explain what goes through her mind and body as she pleads with her mother that the tiger should not be killed. But poor Fatima is young, inexperienced in the ways of the world, ways which promote expediency and profit rather than care and fellow feeling. Mamood, too, is young and we expect that this episode will teach him something deep and reflective about the relationship between man and nature.

The stories collected here represent a broad canvas. From the searing tale of the young revolutionary nervous about the success of his planned execution of the decadent and corrupt Sir Lal Chand, and his exposure to the smooth ways of his mentor—the experienced and professional terrorist simply known as the Khan—in “The Terrorist” to the pithy and sad tale of Uncle Ram who believed above everything else in the revelations of “the stars” in the story of this name, Rajaratnam holds us as if in a spell when we read these astonishing tales of intentions gone wrong, personalities warped by experience, tragedies wrecked upon simple, innocent

folk. I have read the stories many times over the years and each time I have been impressed by the sheer insights which our author has been able, so beautifully, to capture and captivate us by in his clever, penetrating way of depicting the dramas engaging human beings as they wander hither-thither through the sometimes opaque, sometimes glass, doors of life darkly. Most of the stories are not “happy” ones except insofar as we concede that any fiction, imaginatively constructed and conveyed in language, which enthralls, testifies to the triumph of the human spirit as it registers and shares its own responses and understandings of existence. I cannot, try as I will, rid my mind, for example of the locusts creating havoc, the horrific image of the flies swarming around Murugasu’s dead bull in “Famine”, or the gnawing realisation of futile expectations in “What Has to Be”, which Leela begins slowly, sorrowfully, to fathom. There is a deftness of creative skill here which we have to admit makes us proud to know that this gifted author is a Singaporean.

Now it is this sense of being “Singaporean” which permeates the scripts contained in this book. We are told, in the Introduction by the author’s biographer, Irene Ng, that these scripts were “radio plays” broadcast in the years during which we were groping for a sense of identity and civic citizenship. Because Singapore was then a part of the larger political entity known as Malaya, and because the political leadership here in Singapore did think that a new entity, duly called Malaysia might just work in terms of providing a new way forward for these erstwhile colonies emerging from the throes of a colonial rule lasting more than a hundred and fifty years. These radio-dramas are unabashedly “political” and have to be read and understood with this over-arching agenda of political-education-through-drama in mind. As a senior cabinet minister—

indeed as the most powerful Minister of Culture that Singapore has yet seen—the late Rajaratnam took it upon himself, almost as a sacred duty, to use all the talents he had and could summon to produce plays, scripts, dramas which when heard over the radio would engage the minds and hearts of the masses in a slow but sure way to make them all realise how important it was for them to be aware of the bigger stakes which were being played out in the political arenas of Singapore and Malaya.

The six parts of “A Nation In The Making” clearly show the political thinking of our late minister, and whether it is the Optimist or the Pessimist or some highfalutin academic heavyweight that is being quoted, the entire strategy here is to demonstrate the perils of an ill-informed, ill-aware and ill-educated (politically) population. We need to always bear in mind that the years which saw Mr. Rajaratnam working hard at all of the many themes he is here discussing were years of turmoil—not just in Singapore and Malaya but all over Southeast Asia. We were all uncertain as the colonial powers came in for a good bashing and were starting to realise their irrelevance. National politicians and those aspiring to be such were demolishing various arguments and aggressively pushing others, which would be to their own advantage. The pro-Left and Communist-leaning politicians seized the opportunity to play “all” cards (racial, religious, linguistic, class) in order to stress that the only way forward was a thorough cleansing in which all factors detrimental to real progress and development for the country and region were to be eradicated. Rajaratnam was in the middle of such confusing, bewildering and damaging albeit complex political environment and he took it upon himself to show some intellectual reach and depth so as to make people aware of the very fragile but potent presence of different political ideologies.

Reading the six parts of “A Nation In The Making” today makes one humble. Almost all the themes which we read about, hear about, watch over TV and form the bases of so much that is going on in new media (blogs, Twitter, social networking platforms such as Facebook) are discussed and debated in the heated exchanges between and among the various characters embroiled in their own meanderings. Even the issue of migrant workers is anticipated and actively pursued as a discussion topic! The pros and cons of democracy, capitalism, socialism and other ideologies, masquerading as the best solutions for emerging nations seeking their own independence and sovereignty, are all under scrutiny here and our author intelligently but strategically (after all he was grinding several axes of his own!) builds the cases and then destroys these, reducing them to pathetic smithereens, empty little shells with no substance—or if there was even a pretence of substance, it is so absolutely demolished that the characters associated with them retreat in shame, embarrassment or accept defeat. The vigour and passion with which each character puts forward his argument is to be noted because this, indeed, was the case in “real life”. I myself remember how passionately our leaders were fighting when the historic “Merger with Malaysia” with its slogan of a “Malaysian Malaysia” was being brandished as the best way for us all! Those years were, as Wordsworth put it when he reflected on the French Revolution of 1789, years when it was “bliss to be alive, but to be young was Heaven itself”. And I was young!

The last radio play, “Looking Forward”, summarises the main points of the political agenda and leaves us in no doubt as to what Rajaratnam wanted us to embrace: an open, nimble, flexible society in which class, ethnicity, religion, language, while staying as pertinent and necessary aspects of existence, will all take a backseat

when it comes to the vital question of fighting for the new sovereign nation. It is not just co-incidental that even as I am penning this Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew is saying the same thing, some fifty years later! For these are critical issues which every nation has to come to terms with. As the world globalises in any meaningful way, nation after nation has begun to take stock about what their ideological platforms were and how these have shaped their larger sensibilities. The so-called “free” Western nations—the UK, Europe, USA, Australia, etc.—are now re-examining their multicultural policies and essentially admitting that multiculturalism has either failed or collapsed or taken a real beating, given the numerous conflicts resulting in real casualties in their midst. Here we have been supremely blessed—so far—in that the judicious, practical and pragmatic manner in which our leaders encased these same policies have held us in good stead. Rajaratnam’s radio plays should be made compulsory readings for all in our colleges and universities for we are, sadly, a nation without sufficient knowledge of our history and quite naive in our understanding of politics.

*The Short Stories and Radio Plays of S. Rajaratnam* is an engaging anthology—if only because it reminds us of the great intellect who wrote them. During one casual meeting with Mr. Rajaratnam I asked him, “Sir, why have you stopped writing fiction?” He very modestly responded, “I frankly now don’t have the time because writing good fiction requires concentrated focus and observation and time.” The exact words might have been slightly different but the basic message was abundantly clear: our author wrote such powerful stories when he was younger and more at the centre of life in a detached way. As he got involved in real politics, he became more intensely engaged with particular agendas and pushed for these, wherever and whenever he had the chance

to do so. Hence the difference—so imminent—between the short stories and the radio plays. But it is an amazing feat to be able to combine these distinct categories of human expression and yet remain truthful to the core of convictions and basic values. At the core of Rajaratnam’s work is humanity—the foremost and central character dominating all he wrote and said.

**Professor Kirpal Singh**

Director, Wee Kim Wee Centre  
Singapore Management University

## Preface

S. Rajaratnam, one of the founding leaders of Singapore, occupies a special place in the country’s history for his role in shaping the national ideology of a new nation born in turbulent times. One of his most enduring legacies is Singapore’s National Pledge. He drafted this in 1966, in the shadows of one of the country’s darkest hours after the trauma of two racial riots in 1964. The pledge of its people as “one united people, regardless of race, language or religion” is perhaps the most lyrical rendition of Singapore’s promise to itself and the most explicit assertion of its values to the world.

He also left a rich literary legacy. Regrettably, it is one which is little known. It predates the independence of Singapore in 1965 and even its self-governing status in 1959. His short stories, written in the 1940s, and his radio plays, broadcast in 1957, are powerful in their imagination and of a high literary standard. Indeed, his talent as a fiction writer was at one time highly acclaimed in London—the centre of the English literary scene—where he

lived for twelve years from 1935 to 1947. Hailed as a leading Indian short story writer, he was published alongside the likes of Rabindranath Tagore and Mulk Raj Anand, whose short stories are today considered literary classics.

The range and depth of his writings—and the recognition he had received for them—was uncovered in the course of my research for the biography of Rajaratnam. In all, with some help, I managed to track down seven of his short stories which originally appeared in various publications in Britain and America from 1941 to 1947. It took some effort, not least because his earlier stories appeared under the name “S. Raja Ratnam”—as he preferred to be identified at the time.

Finding the stories and his links to other great writers and history was like stumbling on a treasure trove gleaming with an array of rare gems. It was hard to look away. It was wrong to keep them locked away. They have never seen light as a collection before. Hence, this anthology.

As for the radio plays, they were broadcast over Radio Malaya in 1957. They aimed to shape public opinion on urgent issues of the day—in particular, the making of a nation. Prior to the advent of television in Singapore in 1963, radio drama was a popular form of entertainment and education. Without a visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the characters and story.

In reading his plays, what comes across with unmistakable clarity is his prodigiously imaginative flair. Their recordings, however, had disappeared into thin air. I found their scripts among Rajaratnam’s private papers, pages yellow with dust and crumbling to pieces from age. They are now preserved in the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library, which houses the S. Rajaratnam collection. They

have never been published in any form before.

This anthology offers the first comprehensive collection of his short stories, and also brings together for the first time his radio plays.

Through his writings at this seminal stage, one can trace the formation of his own views on fundamental questions at a time of great moral and political confusion. They offer sharp insights into his values and ideals. Among the controversial themes he explored were the relative value of tradition versus the necessity for social change and progress, and the importance of race and religion versus a national identity.

Sadly today, his literary legacy has been buried in the collective graves of libraries. His creative work is rarely explored and seldom read. His original contribution to the genre of creative writing in the literary history of Singapore and also of Malaysia is largely unrecognised.

One reason for this is that his early short stories and radio plays, penned before he plunged into the hurly-burly of politics, are not readily available in the public realm. Although there are some anthologies which have reprinted one or a few of Rajaratnam’s short stories among that of other authors—such as *Bunga Emas: An Anthology of Contemporary Malaysian Literature, 1930-1963*, edited by T. Wignesan (1964), and *Writing Singapore: An Historical Anthology of Singapore Literature*, edited by Angelia Poon, Philip Holden, Shirley Geok Lin Lim (2009)—there is none devoted entirely to his various literary works as a single author within a set of covers.

Another has to do with Rajaratnam’s own choices in life. Consumed entirely by his national cause, he had buried his past life as a fiction writer in London and eschewed any self-promotion for his literary gifts in favour of political ideals. Even his closest

long-time friends, such as Singapore's founding leader Lee Kuan Yew who first met Rajaratnam in the early 1950s, was not aware of the latter's literary past in London until I mentioned it to him while working on Rajaratnam's biography.

Rajaratnam himself made no attempt to compile his short stories into a book. Perhaps he thought that they might be too controversial or politically sensitive to be properly received, especially after his entry into politics. This carried a steep price. He sacrificed the literary fame that he so richly deserved, and became a lost Singaporean literary treasure.

Few today would know that "The Tiger", which first appeared in 1942 in the British literary journal *Modern Reading*, has been published in many countries around the world—and even translated into several foreign languages including French. Another of his stories, "Famine", has been translated into German.

Even fewer would know that the story "The Tiger" is used as a literature text in two American textbooks published by Globe Fearon, a division of Simon & Schuster's Secondary Education Group. The textbooks, *World Tapestries and Global Studies*, were published as recently as 1997, and used to teach critical thinking.

Or that another of Rajaratnam's stories, "Drought", was once hailed as one of the world's greatest stories. It appeared in the 1947 book, *A World of Great Stories: 115 Stories, The Best of Modern Literature*, which set out to select "at least one first-rate story from every country in the world".

In the 950-page tome published in New York, Rajaratnam was classed with illustrious writers such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, John Steinbeck, Somerset Maugham, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Jean-Paul Sartre, Anton Chekhov and Franz Kafka. The book, which grouped

writers according to their provenance, listed Rajaratnam under the country "India", probably because in literary circles at the time, he was associated with the leading Indian writers in London. The only other Indian writer featured was the Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore who died in 1941. This singular honour attests to Rajaratnam's lofty literary stature at the time.

This anthology, which is presented in chronological order, also shows the development of Rajaratnam as a thinker and writer as he was caught up with the political ideas and movements of the time—humanism, socialism, the end of British imperialism, nationalism. It gives readers an opportunity to put in perspective Rajaratnam's original contribution to the genre as a pioneer for Malayan writing in English.

His writing was borne out of intellectual exploration and extensive reading, drawing on a deep knowledge of English literature, Greek and Indian classics, and philosophical texts, but rooted in fertile local soil, knowledge of his past. It is infused with deep conviction.

The radio plays presented in this anthology count among his most ambitious creative projects. In the six-part drama series "A Nation in the Making", he provoked his listeners to think about what binds a nation together, delved into the sensitive issues of race and religion, and appealed to their reason. He employed his sharpest dialogue to expose those who preached communalism and played racial politics. The programme was aired between 7:30 PM and 8 PM every Thursday from 11 July to 15 August 1957.

Also included in this collection is the radio script titled "Looking Forward", which was transmitted to schools from 11:35 AM to 12 noon on 28 October 1957. This script stands out for its clear thinking and foresight. In this programme, Rajaratnam focused on

the importance of electing a forward-looking leadership at a time of intense political ferment and uncertainty. He told his audience that every wise government must anticipate problems intelligently, so that dangers could be averted. He highlighted what for him was Malaya's number one problem: the need to unite the people of difference races and to train them to think *not* like Chinese, Malays, Indians or whatever racial group they may spring from, but like Malaysians.

One should linger over the ideas contained in these radio plays for they provide deep insights into the complex forces and contending ideas which shaped this country's social and political development. The collision of ideas and interests was tectonic, and the stakes were high. There was a real possibility that Singapore would go the way of racial politics, as had happened elsewhere, and that the primal source of national identity would be based on a common ethnicity, language or religion. It did not, only because there were men like Rajaratnam willing to fight for a different conception of a nation. All Singaporeans are living the legacy of the outcome of that struggle.

It is remarkable that Rajaratnam had imagined a nation united by a common will and national consciousness, which transcends the divisive concepts of race, religion or language, long before its outward shell of national independence was formed. When these plays were broadcast, both Singapore and Malaya were still under British rule. Fiercely anti-colonial, Rajaratnam was dogged in his attempts to rouse the people to take charge of their country and shape their own destiny. Throughout his decade-long battle for freedom, he regarded the island of Singapore and the Federation of Malaya as one country and had envisioned that, when independence was achieved, it would be with both countries flying a common flag as a united territory.

His hopes, however, were shattered when the Federation became independent on its own on 31 August 1957. His deepest fears about the grip of racial politics in the Federation were realised. Malaya's then Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, in his negotiations with the British for independence for the Federation, had opposed merger with Singapore because he feared that Singapore, with its Chinese majority, would threaten the privileged position of the Malays in Malaya. In 1957, 75 percent of Singapore's 1.45 million people were Chinese. In the Federation, Malays made up 49.8 percent and Chinese 37.2 percent. In a Malaya united with Singapore, Malays would amount to 43 percent of the population, with the Chinese outnumbering them at 44.3 percent.

Despite this severe setback, Rajaratnam's gaze remained firmly fixed on Singapore attaining independence through merger with Malaya. This would later prove to be a short-lived dream. While Singapore did merge with Malaysia in 1963, the union could not withstand the dangerous pressures of racial and religious politics, and Singapore was ejected in 1965.

Despite the void between the races and the violence on the streets, Rajaratnam continued to believe in the creation of a national consciousness that could bind the people into one. With hindsight, we see that his dream of a Malaysian Malaysia, implicit in his radio plays, was doomed to be unfulfilled. But they hold questions which reverberate through time, and which demand an answer. What of his dream of a Singaporean Singapore? How realistic is that dream today? This dream remains alive. Its heart throbs in Singapore's National Pledge.

When I read his radio plays, I wondered why they should not be adapted and staged as plays for the public. It is not just that the dialogue still feels relevant, it springs from the vision of a unique

individual who would become an important founding leader of modern Singapore and the framer of the country's national ideology.

Because of the convictions of leaders like him, Singapore was not founded on a common ethnicity, language or religion. Neither was it founded by bloodlines or genealogy. Instead, it was founded on a set of beliefs and convictions. The arguments and principles which undergird Singapore's national ideology can be found in these radio plays, which give them a special significance.

I hope that by publishing his radio plays, more drama groups will be able to take a fresh look at the plays and adapt them for the stage. In the right hands, they tell a deeper story about a man of uncommon courage and conviction who was tormented by the communal demons of his generation but refused to allow his spirit to be bowed. He believed in the best of the people of this country from the beginning, and was unflinching in reminding us that we should be doing better when we failed to live up to the ideals described in the National Pledge. He provided the moral and intellectual framework for heroic and patriotic action.

Many of Rajaratnam's ideas were ahead of their time when he first expounded them in the 1940s and 50s, and he was often flayed for them. But over the decades, they proved enduring.

As for his short stories, many were listed in international anthologies under "India". It is time to claim his work as our own.

The short stories and radio plays included in this volume are historical artefacts as well as part of our cultural and intellectual heritage, and we recognise in them Singapore's struggles to define itself and its fundamental values.

It is striking that, while there are several book compilations of Rajaratnam's many speeches as a politician, there is none that is devoted entirely to his literary work. One result is that Rajaratnam

never enjoyed a mass readership for his short stories in his own country. It seems not a little ironic that our students read works by dead Western authors with hardly any link to our social and cultural contexts, but not those of the country's own founding leader, once recognised by the Western literary cognoscenti for producing among the greatest short stories in the world.

This book is an effort to recover and restore Rajaratnam's literary legacy, and to present his work to a new generation of readers. My hope is that it will also spark a greater interest in Singapore literature both at home and abroad. His early works add depth and distinction to our literary legacy and deserve to be read, celebrated and re-interpreted.

Editing of this anthology has been kept to a minimum so as not to subtly change Rajaratnam's style, the rhythm and pace of his story-telling, or limit the possibilities of interpreting his text. I have not insisted on uniformity or consistency, and left punctuation marks the way the author wrote them.

Rajaratnam was a precise writer and often agonised over his phrasings and punctuations. A first edition which does not force the editor's interpretations of the meaning of a sentence on the reader seems only right, and this can best be achieved by presenting the original works as faithfully as possible.

I have edited only for clear typographical errors. I have refrained from revising or updating the factual information and references. In his radio plays, he had quoted from various published writers as part of the dialogue—I left untouched his rendition of their verse, as it must be borne in mind that he had referred to his own sources at the time and was writing for an oral reading for radio. I have also preserved the archaic words and spellings used, as one might a literary text.

It is to be Singapore's lasting fortune that Rajaratnam chose to



use his imaginative talent and creative skills to build up the nation, laying the foundation for the ideals that will always be crucial to our quest for a Singaporean Singapore. Singapore was also fortunate that Rajaratnam, who was born in Ceylon, raised in Seremban and spent twelve years in London, chose to make Singapore his home and to devote the rest of his life to its service.

His abandonment of a career of literary acclaim was one of the many personal sacrifices he made for that devotion. This publication of his early works is one step in acknowledging our collective debt and restoring him to his rightful place in our history as not only a great political leader, but one of the most significant thinkers and talented writers of his time.

**Irene Ng**

## Introduction

“Books,” S. Rajaratnam once said, “help in the spread of new ideas and in the re-examination of old ones.”<sup>1</sup> A lover of good books and fine writing, he used his powers of imagination and creativity to produce works that provoke people’s senses and thoughts. He was unique, exceptional, a one-off, with that touch of the wizard that distinguishes those who can cast a spell on his audience with his ideas and words, from those who merely give speeches or write articles.

This anthology presents seven short stories and seven radio scripts which he wrote in the 1940s and 50s. They contain ideas that remain relevant today. They are profound in their insights into the human condition and the world we live in. They are well worth reading and thinking about, one at a time, since each tends to contain subtle ironies and hidden meanings. They provide no easy answers. For the same reason, they invite discussion. They are a reminder of the links to history and fiction, and our constant re-reading of the past.

Rajaratnam led a life as rich and unexpected as the plot of his prose. He was born in Jaffna, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1915 into

the powerful landowning Vellalar caste, which formed the peak of the Ceylonese hierarchy. At the age of six months, he was brought to the rubber town of Seremban in Malaya, where his grandparents, parents and many other relatives sought to make a new and better life for themselves and their children.

In the rubber estate, he was raised in a caste-conscious environment in which blood relations, tradition and class largely defined one's world. His father, a supervisor in a rubber estate who became a wealthy and respected man of standing, was a devout Hindu, as was his mother.

Rajaratnam transcended his cloistered world through literature. He discovered a love for books at a tender age. He had an irrepressible curiosity about life. His thirst for knowledge led him into literary realms that ranged from science fiction to philosophy. At the mission school in Seremban where he studied, St Paul's Institution, he thrived on religious knowledge.

At the age of nineteen in 1934, he came to Singapore to study at Raffles Institution. Here, he sat for his matriculation exams, a necessary step for entry into the University of London to study law; part of his father's grand plans for him.

The following year, Rajaratnam left for London and enrolled in King's College. He never graduated. He was caught up in a different kind of learning, as he immersed himself in the moral and political ferment of the times. As the drama of nationalism and the danger of fascism became obvious and urgent to him, he sought out answers. He found himself gravitating towards Marxist and Fabian circles which discussed the international crisis fuelled by the forward march of fascism in Europe. He attended meetings of the left-wing Left Book Club and met many prominent writers such as Kingsley Martin from the *New Statesman* and Michael Foot from the *Tribune*.

A budding bibliophile, he listened to people talk books at book launches. One of them—the launch of the *Half Caste* by Cedric Dover in 1937—was to leave a powerful life-long impression. Dover, a biologist, used a rational, scientific approach to expose popular racial prejudices and to condemn the belief in eugenics, which was in the ascendant during that period. This belief supposed that pure Northern Europeans were superior in civilization to other races such as Indians and people of mixed races.

Rajaratnam was struck by Dover's opening remarks at the event: "We are all half-castes. There have never been pure races despite the shrill voice of Hitler's Aryanism." For the first time, Rajaratnam, young and impressionable at twenty-two, was introduced to the profound complexities of "the politics of nationalism and the politics of race". As he recounted years later: "Until then, I had accepted the problem of race and nationalism as simply a natural relationship between god-like white men on the one hand and inferior Asiatics on the other."<sup>2</sup>

In this fertile intellectual environment, he gained insights into the iniquity of capitalism, fascism and racism; an encounter of ideas that altered his life view.

Rajaratnam also fell in with many students from India—most notably the radical writer Mulk Raj Anand—who were seized by the struggle to free India from colonial rule. And he fell in love with a Hungarian woman he met at the Left Book Club, named Piroska Feher, whom he married in 1943.

Then the war began. And the terror. Throughout that turbulent period, when any day could be his last, he continued to develop a questioning and critical mind, and discovered a gift for writing. He decided that he would stop pursuing his law studies, which held no interest for him, and devote himself to his art.

In the midst of the Blitz, he made his debut in the August 1941 edition of the journal *Indian Writing*, a quarterly popular among Indians in England. The journal was edited by Iqbal Singh, K.S. Shelvankar, Ahmed Ali and A. Subramaniam, all prominent writers. In that issue, Rajaratnam's short story, titled "Famine", was sandwiched between commentaries by Indian luminaries such as Rabindranath Tagore and Krishna Menon, the maverick leader of the pro-independence movement for India called the India League. Menon would later become India's defence minister in Nehru's government.

With his debut, Rajaratnam firmly associated himself with that brand of Indian writers who used their craft to expose social and political injustice and to effect change. Fighting with them against imperialism and fascism made sense to him. His starting point is always the underdog, a sense of injustice. He wrote not to produce an obscure work of high art but to get across some ideas, to expose some falsehood, to make people think. In his development as a writer, he considered Anand and Shelvankar his gurus.

Rajaratnam's debut, "Famine", concerns a rural community which was being starved by famine and must choose between the rules of its religion and its survival—which ultimately depends on eating cattle, considered sacred to Hindus.

It is a powerful story. So powerful that E.M. Forster, best known for his novels *A Passage to India* and *Howards End*, highlighted this story in one of his radio talks for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).<sup>3</sup>

In that broadcast on 29 April 1942, Forster, a respected literary critic, described Rajaratnam's work as a "touching and well-constructed story" and praised it alongside his remarks on Anand's trilogy of Sikh peasant life. Like several English left-wing

intellectuals, Forster was an advocate for Indian independence and allied to the Indian radical writers based in London. In his radio talks, which attracted a huge following, Forster lent his weight and influence to promoting their names and their work.

Encouraged by the reception to his maiden effort, Rajaratnam proved he had the promise of a literary career ahead of him with a quick succession of stories. Two of them—"The Locusts" and "What Has to Be"—appeared in the August 1941 issue of the *Life and Letters and the London Mercury*, edited by Robert Herring.

"The Tiger", the first of his stories set in Malaya, appeared in 1942 in *Modern Reading* which published some of the foremost short story writers in Britain. It was reprinted in 1948 in the *Mirror*, a monthly international review, and was presented as "an example of modern Malayan writing". It was reprinted again in the October 1951 edition of *New-Story*, a monthly magazine published in New York.

The literary journal, *Little Reviews Anthology*, which selected the best of that year's output from Britain's many literary magazines, reprinted "Famine" in its 1943 edition. As his literary reputation spread, Rajaratnam's stories made their way across the Atlantic.

His story "Drought" emerged in the September 1941 edition of the respected *Asia* magazine, published in United States. The magazine, which was later renamed *Asia and the Americas*, was co-edited by Richard Walsh and Pearl S. Buck and had a substantial influence on American opinion about Asia. The reprinting of "Drought" in the 1947 book, *A World of Great Stories: 115 Stories, The Best of Modern Literature*, marked Rajaratnam's promotion to literary celebrity.

By the mid-1940s, Rajaratnam was billed "one of the leading Indian short story writers" in the anthology, *Modern International*

*Short Stories*, edited by Denys Val Baker.

Rajaratnam was as much philosopher as writer. Implicit in his stories is the desire to make readers reflect on their own condition and perceptions, to portray the inner conflicts of old beliefs and new ideas, to examine the central human problems. He was concerned with the causes and effects of prejudice, poverty, injustice, oppression, moral blindness, cruelty, greed, despair. Through his stories, he explores the ideas in people's heads, the values they hold, and questions their beliefs on how life should be lived. These early writings demonstrate a deep desire for political change and social transformation that remained with him throughout his life.

His stories received a good review in the journal *The Spectator* in 1947. The reviewer, author J.B. Trend, highlighted Rajaratnam as part of the younger writers to watch, contrasting their work with that of Mulk Raj Anand whose characters, according to Trend, were "too simple to hold the attention for long; their misery too constant for art." He added that "younger writers of imaginative power," such as Rajaratnam, "are showing that they cannot be confined by convention to the social tract, but must revert to familiar worlds where complexities of character whet the imagination."

His vivid imagination caught the attention of others, notably writer George Orwell who then worked in the Indian Section of the BBC's Eastern Service based in London. Orwell would later achieve fame for his novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In his two years at BBC between 1941 and 1943, Orwell produced high-quality and highbrow programmes broadcast to the BBC's Asian listeners and roped in distinguished Indians to write and deliver talks on air. One of them was Rajaratnam.

At Orwell's invitation, Rajaratnam wrote for the weekly series called "Open Letters" to explain the origins of the war in the form

of open letters to imaginary people representing the key trends of thought at the time. When the BBC introduced the series in a broadcast on 4 August 1942, it announced that "Raja Ratnam, who is well known among the new Indian writers in Great Britain, will address his letter to a Quisling."<sup>4</sup> Quisling, after Norwegian politician Vidkun Quisling who assisted Nazi Germany to conquer his own country in the Second World War, is a term used to describe traitors and collaborators.

The other contributors to the BBC series include Cedric Dover (Letter to a Liberal), Mulk Raj Anand (Letter to a Chinese guerrilla), and M.J. Tambimuttu (Letter to a Marxist).

This was part of Rajaratnam's war work, his small contribution towards the fight against Nazism. India had an army of over two million men—a fact of great psychological importance to the overall war effort—and the Indian Section of the Eastern service was a propaganda effort to convince the people of Asia that they have common cause with the Allies. His stint at the BBC taught him the art of being a great explainer and a storyteller. The experience would prove useful to him when he sought to influence minds through Radio Malaya in the 1950s.

His love and flair for literature begs the question: Why did he not continue writing fiction after he returned to Malaya in 1947? A key reason is that he became completely obsessed with championing the death of colonialism, the dawn of socialism and democracy, and the growth of indigenous leadership through serious journalism and political activism. Towards these grand causes, he directed all his literary powers.

He excelled in political commentary and satire, and made his mark as a fearless critic and controversial columnist, firstly for the

newspaper *Malaya Tribune* and then the *Singapore Standard*. His columns in the *Singapore Standard*, particularly his weekly series “I Write As I Please”, established him as a household name among the reading public. He probably would not have reached such a wide audience or struck such a chord with his audience in Singapore and Malaya had he stuck to fiction.

He used his newspaper columns to champion his ideals of a society free from communal politics, to cut the colonial government down to size, and to condemn the violent methods of the communists who had started an armed insurgency in Malaya. For his efforts, he received hate mail from communalists, reprimands from the ironfisted General Sir Gerald Templer, the British High Commissioner in Malaya, and death threats from the communists. He refused to be intimidated.

His buccaneering anti-colonial and socialist campaign eventually caught up with him, however, when the management of the *Singapore Standard* issued him an ultimatum: change his tune or quit. He quit. He then published his own journal, *Raayat*, as a platform for serious political discussion on national and international issues. When the venture failed in 1955, he joined *The Straits Times* as a leader writer.

He also began to write and present scripts for Radio Malaya. Besides the plays presented in this anthology, he also wrote and presented programmes on Radio Malaya on a range of other subjects, including international issues. The radio was then a pervasive and powerful medium of communication, with people from all walks of life turning on their radio sets at coffee shops, offices, and homes. This was before the era of the television, which by the way, he was instrumental in bringing to Singapore in 1963.

For each radio script, he was paid between twenty dollars and forty dollars. His prodigious output would not have been

discovered had it not been for the receipts of payments for his scripts which I found in his old briefcase in his house at Chancery Lane. Unfortunately, not a single recording based on Rajaratnam’s scripts has survived the ravages of time.

As he straddled the worlds of journalism and politics, the circumstances then made it necessary to choose between his two loves: writing or politics. He made his choice. In 1959, he left journalism to contest in the first Legislative Assembly General Election as a candidate for the People’s Action Party (PAP), which he helped to found in 1954. When the PAP swept into power, he became the Legislative Assemblyman in the Kampong Glam constituency and the country’s first Minister of Culture. The political office gave him the power and the levers to implement ideas he had championed for many years. He was no longer just a writer commenting on events, an intellectual expounding ideas; he became a protagonist directly influencing the course of events and making history.

He rode into the thick of the political battles with the pro-communists and communalists and hoisted high his battle flag of a multi-racial Malayan nation. Because he was the PAP’s ideologue, they went after him with a vigour and vitriol that were scorching. Several times, when it looked as if all was lost, he redoubled in his determination and came back fighting. He inspired the PAP ranks with his combination of courage, idealism and absolute belief in the righteousness of their cause.

Upon Singapore’s merger with Malaysia on 16 September 1963, he became a member of the Federal Malaysian Parliament. When Singapore was expelled two years later, he found himself in the hot seat once more, this time as the country’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs. He focused all his energy on establishing good relations with other countries in the face of doubts and derision at its fate. His

life was submerged in the struggle to meet the complex challenges facing the small, vulnerable island and to ensure its survival.

He was pursuing a cause larger than himself, a higher level of existence. Indeed, he regarded political service as the highest form of service an individual can render to his people and his country. As he said, “political service is a unique form of service in that it tests and stretches the intellectual and moral resources of an individual as no other service can. Many fail and break under the strain. Many degenerate into corrupt, mean and vicious individuals. But those who pass the test find the answer to a very old philosophical and religious question: ‘What is the meaning of existence? What is a man’s destiny?’”<sup>5</sup>

Rajaratnam, the philosopher king, found his own answer in putting his life in service to the greater vision of a multiracial and multi-religious Singapore—a Singaporean Singapore. This vision, so often darkened by the ugly reality around him, took all his imagination, energy and skills.

This does not explain, however, why he never wrote a book or a novel, especially after he retired from politics in 1988. Instead, he returned to writing political columns for newspapers. One explanation is that he didn’t have the patience for anything longer than a column, and his sense of purpose kept him focused resolutely on politics.

As he wrote in a letter to David Marshall, then the Singapore ambassador to France, in 1991: “As you know, I am more a journalistic sprinter better at short bursts of writing than a marathon runner.”<sup>6</sup>

On Singapore’s walls, he was ever on guard, a vigilant sentry, scanning the horizon for any sign of approaching danger from racial and religious intolerance. As he wrote in a letter to the then

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1988: “Having followed closely for years, the growing prairie fires of religious wars in so many Asian and other countries, I believe Singapore cannot claim special dispensation from religious conflict unless the government has the resolve to nip in the bud symptoms of religious intolerance.”

He continued: “This is why when you asked me some time ago what I would like to do on retirement, I said I would like to go back to my days of fighting journalism.” This was not vanity, he added, “but simply to leave this world with the satisfaction that my 30 years in politics were not wasted years.” Poignantly, he added: “On the other hand, they might turn out to be wasted years, but by then I may not be around to regret anything.”<sup>7</sup>

For his ideas, he had weathered the scorn of many in the course of his eventful career as a journalist and then a politician. In his private moments, he drew solace from the knowledge that, in history, men had suffered worse fate for their great ideas and that at least for some, even after death, their ideas continued to live on.

While he might not have written a book, he was a great reader and a tireless promoter and defender of good books. He treasured them for the knowledge past and present that they bring, “for knowledge is the key to all advancement”. He elaborated: “A knowledge of the past and an understanding of the present will help us immeasurably in forming a true, deep sense of national identity, of achieving national unity.”<sup>8</sup>

In his own personal life, he valued books most for transporting him to new worlds and acquainting him with the great minds of generations past. He called the experience the “miracle” of books. “The moment a person reads a book by Plato or Tolstoy or Tagore or Shaw, then Plato, Shaw and all the other great minds of the past come to life,” he said. “They talk to a living person across

the centuries and decades—intimately and directly to stimulate and inspire the living reader into thinking new thoughts.”<sup>9</sup>

I hope that, through this book, the readers of today and tomorrow can experience the same miracle as they acquaint themselves with Rajaratnam and his great mind, and rediscover the power of his central vision.

**Irene Ng**

## NOTES

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- 1 Speech at the opening of the British Council Book Exhibition at the National Library, 12 January 1965.
- 2 Speech at the launch of the book *Singapore Eurasians: Memories and Hopes*, 18 July 1992.
- 3 Forster, Edward Morgan, Mary Lago, Linda K. Hughes, Elizabeth MacLeod Walls, P.N. (FRW) Furbank. *The BBC Talks of E.M. Forster, 1929-1960: A Selected Edition*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008.
- 4 George Orwell, *All Propaganda Is Lies, 1941 – 1942*, p. 446. Unfortunately, the BBC is unable to track down any of Rajaratnam’s scripts or recordings of this period.
- 5 Speech at the Anglo-Chinese Junior College Pre U seminar, Jurong Town Hall, 1 June 1978.
- 6 Letter to David Marshall dated 23 May 1991.
- 7 Letter to Lee Kuan Yew dated 29 November 1988.
- 8 Speech at the opening of Singapore Library Week, 24 June 1961.
- 9 Speech at the official opening of the National Library, 12 November 1960.

# SHORT STORIES

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## What Has to Be

She entered through the yawning mouth of the hut and stood wiping her hands on her cotton skirt, regarding first the flickering oil lamp which stood in a smoke-blackened niche in the dung wall, and then her husband. He sat on the floor, his face buried between his hunched-up knees and his broad, smooth back against the battered, heavy wooden chest. There was a smell of sweat, smoke, and soiled linen.

She stood there saying nothing, but watching her husband who was apparently unaware of her presence. He seemed like a man in a deep sleep. Then she moved towards the far end of the hut and, unrolling the mat, prepared the bed.

Her face was bloodless, the skin transparent, and her movements had a wearied, lifeless quality about them. Her hands, especially, were so thin that they looked like dry twigs. Only in her black sombre eyes was there a suggestion of that other strength which came from within.

She lay upon the mat without undressing, but could not sleep.

Her eyes were fixed on her husband, who still sat there quiet, and hugging his knees.

“Husband!” she whispered. “Are you asleep?”

She had to call out a few times before he raised his head. He looked about him dazed, as if he had not completely recovered a grip on his surroundings. Even in the half shadow she could see the dull, glazed film over his eyes.

“Umm!” he mumbled, looking about him.

“The bed is ready.”

He rubbed his face. It was a lean, young face, neither stupid nor intelligent, nor particularly brutal. The hands were strong and square, with the nails black and broken.

“It’s very late,” she said.

“Is it, Leela?” he mumbled without looking at her. “Don’t wait up for me, please. You go to sleep. I’ll come in later.”

“But you were asleep when I called out to you. Why don’t you come to bed now instead of sitting there? You look tired.”

“I’m not sleepy really. I’ll sit up for a while. You put out the light and go to sleep, Leela.”

Leela sat up and pushed back the coarse, red blankets.

“What is it, my husband? What is ailing you?”

“It’s nothing,” he said wearily. “There is nothing the matter with me. I don’t feel like sleep at the moment, that’s all.” He smiled feebly to reassure her.

“But there is something the matter,” she cried, moving towards him. “I know that you are worried about something. You have been sitting like this the whole evening, and the night before and the night before that. I can’t get to sleep wondering why! I thought it was some passing mood, but you seem to be getting deeper and deeper into it. Won’t you trust me and tell me? Please!”

She was almost in tears. She leant against him.

“But telling you won’t make any difference. Perhaps it will only make things worse. Especially now that you are with child, it will be better if you don’t know.”

His arm which she gripped was without life.

“But don’t you trust me enough?” she pleaded. “Have you not told me your troubles before—troubles which were not easy to bear? When we lost our land it was a terrible blow, but it was easier for you when you told me. Won’t you trust me and tell me now?”

He stared at her, his eyes suddenly becoming bright and hard.

“Yes, Leela,” he said slowly, his voice an even flow. “Yes, I can trust you... You remember our first baby...”

“It is not that baby you are worried about!” said Leela. “Why, it was not even ten months old when it died! But that was six months ago. You are not still grieving for the child?”

She looked at his face, wondering whether he was telling a tale just because she had pestered him. The child had been a sickly thing with wheezy lungs. He had not even the strength when her cousin Meenachi, because Leela’s breasts could not feed him, had cajoled the child to take to her own breasts. Her husband, too, had been disappointed in the shrivelled tiny creature, but had done everything he could for his son. The child had, however, grown worse and worse till one day it died. She never fully understood why the merciful death of the child should have affected her husband so much. It was some weeks before he could forget about the child.

“Is it the child you are worrying about?” she asked again. He sat erect and rigid, staring straight ahead at the struggling shadows on the wall.

“You remember how happy I was when you told me that I was going to be a father,” he said, slowly. “I was like a schoolboy

expecting a promised gift and making plans what he would do when he got it. You grew weak and sickly carrying the baby, but I was too happy to notice that. Even when I heard you cry in labour I was waiting impatiently for the howls of the baby and praying, God make it a boy. A lusty, strong boy... Then the midwife handed me a tiny shrivelled thing instead, which whined like a sick dog. O Leela, how I hated the tiny thing right from the very start! I could not bring myself to hold it even. Holding it I felt the smell of death which hung over it...

“When I thought perhaps if I took it to the dispensary the doctor sahib could do something for it. Perhaps it could grow with the doctor’s medicine. You know what the doctor sahib said? He said, ‘There is no medicine to cure this child. It was born ill.’ That’s what the doctor sahib said.

“You know the rest. Yes, it was a sickly baby and grew uglier and uglier every day. When I saw the sores come up on the poor mite’s body and heard it trying to breathe, I wondered why it was born in the first place. Every time I looked into the mite’s eyes I could see so much of pain and misery that I had to look away. You know, Leela, sometimes I wanted to put the child out of its misery. Many times I had my fingers curled round the tiny throat and thought that I had only to squeeze once and all would have been over in a moment. Only I had not the courage. But I swear, had the child lived longer I would have killed it. I knew that every day the child lived it would become harder for me to bear its growing misery. You don’t know what a relief it was when the poor thing died.”

He paused to wipe his face with the back of his hand. There was a film of perspiration on his forehead.

“God, forgive me that I should talk like this,” he continued. “Sometimes I wonder if I have a stone for a heart! The day when I

saw my own child dead the tears in my eyes were of joy and thanks. I tried so hard to love the child, but all I could give was pity. From the time it was born till the day it died I suffered with the child.”

She put her arms around his shoulders.

“My poor, poor husband,” she said softly. “Did I not know how you felt? Everything you went through I had also gone through. If it had pleased God to give us such a child it is not for us to question the ways of the Creator. What has to be will be! But what good will it do to think about the child now? It lived and it died, and no amount of brooding will change the past. Besides this... this other child which is to come soon, it will be as you want it.”

She heard him grind his teeth, and the expression on his face terrified her.

“It is not the dead child that has tormented me these last few days,” he cried. “Don’t you understand, Leela? Don’t you understand why our child died? The doctor said that it was ill before it was born.”

She did not comprehend him at first, until she saw his rigid accusing stare. Suddenly she was conscious of the sick emaciated body of hers, and of the child struggling to live within.

She groped her way towards the mat, aware of a looming dread for her unborn child.

# RADIO PLAYS

## A NATION IN THE MAKING

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These radio scripts were first broadcast on Radio Malaya in 1957 from July to October. The original typewritten scripts are housed in the S. Rajaratnam Private Archives Collection in the ISEAS Library, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

## A NATION IN THE MAKING

(Part I)

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*Cast*

Pessimist

Optimist

Reader 1

Reader 2

Lecturer

Chinese

Malay

Indian

Student of Malayan history

*Effects*

Chinese funeral

(Chinese) Christian singing

Indian temple music

“Merdeka” crowd

---

Transmission: 11 July 1957

Network: Radio Malaya

1 PESSIMIST Nation? I see no nation in the making. I am  
 against Merdeka quite frankly. No. Sorry. I  
 don't think we'll be better off when Malaya's  
 independent. I think we are in for trouble.

5 OPTIMIST I disagree with you completely.  
 PESSIMIST You do? Listen to this.  
 [FRENZIED SHOUTS OF MERDEKA]  
 PESSIMIST There. Would you say they were rational,  
 reasonable people?

10 OPTIMIST Why not? Haven't you ever roared your head  
 off at a football match?  
 PESSIMIST Football—but that's different.  
 OPTIMIST But the enthusiasm's the same. No—when it  
 comes to shouting Merdeka you'll find me  
 bellowing as loud as the rest. I'm all for it.

15 PESSIMIST Frankly that amazes me, because in every other  
 respect you seem a very reasonable fellow.  
 OPTIMIST Nice of you to say so.  
 PESSIMIST But mark my words. After a few years of  
 independence we shall look back upon  
 colonialism and the years of British rule as a  
 golden age.

OPTIMIST Care to bet on that?  
 PESSIMIST After a few years of Merdeka you won't be  
 able to afford to bet.

25 OPTIMIST All right. What's the worry?  
 PESSIMIST Frankly I see nothing wrong with colonialism  
 and—  
 OPTIMIST Frankly, I see plenty wrong with colonialism—  
 30 but you said you saw no prospect of a nation

in the making. If we never become a nation  
 then I agree—Merdeka will be fraught with  
 danger—but you see I believe we can build a  
 Malayan nation.

5 PESSIMIST All right—stick to this question of the Malayan  
 nation. Quite simply—it's an illusion.

OPTIMIST Really?  
 PESSIMIST Well, listen.  
 EFFECTS: CROSS FADED  
 [COFFEE SHOP BACKGROUND. CHATTER IN  
 ENGLISH, CHINESE, MALAY, AND TAMIL]

10 OPTIMIST Yes, yes, I know that.  
 PESSIMIST And listen again.  
 EFFECTS: CROSS FADED  
 [VOICES SINGING CHINESE HYMNS; CHINESE  
 FUNERAL; MALAY PRAYERS; TAMIL TEMPLE  
 MUSIC]

15 OPTIMIST Yes, yes, I know that.  
 PESSIMIST I see no Malayans. I see men of many  
 worlds and many nations. I see faces of all  
 colours. Faces that look at each other in  
 mute incomprehension. Blank stares. Because  
 they don't understand each other. They don't  
 understand each other's religion. They don't  
 even like each other's smell.

25 OPTIMIST All right, all right—  
 PESSIMIST And listen to this. This chap knew what he  
 was talking about. He understood Asia and  
 the problems of people who couldn't talk each  
 other's talk.

30

1 READER 1 *The stranger within my gate,  
He may be true or kind,  
But he does not talk my talk—  
I cannot feel his mind.*

5 *I see the face and the eyes and the mouth,  
But not the soul behind.  
The men of my own stock  
They may do ill or well,  
But they tell the lies I am wonted to,  
They are used to the lies I tell;  
And we do not need interpreters  
When we go to buy and sell.  
The stranger within my gates,  
He may be evil or good,  
15 But I cannot tell what powers control—  
What reasons sway his mood;  
Nor when the Gods of his far-off land  
May repossess his blood.*

OPTIMIST Ha! I might have known you'd quote Kipling

20 at me—that old defender of the British Empire.

PESSIMIST But a shrewd and sensitive man.

OPTIMIST Granted, and a very fine writer—in his early  
days. But you forget. He lived an age ago.  
Two wars ago. Two revolutions ago.

25 PESSIMIST But isn't it true?  
'Nor when the Gods of his far-off land  
May repossess his blood?'  
Let's face it. All we have are Malays, Chinese,  
Indians, Eurasians, Arabs, Ceylonese and the  
30 rest. They have one reason for living in the

1 same place. As Kipling says—to buy and sell. 1  
They come to trade—and when their purpose  
here is served they retreat each into his own  
exclusive world. How can such a hotchpotch of  
races become a nation? 5

OPTIMIST Okay. Let me find some lines to throw at you.  
What about this—

READER 2 *Thus from a mixture of all kinds began  
That heterogeneous thing, an Englishman:  
In eager rapes, and furious lust begot,  
10 Between a painted Briton and a Scot;  
Whose gendering offspring quickly  
learnt to bow,  
And yoke their heifers to the Roman plough;  
From whence a mongrel half-bred race  
15 there came,  
With neither name, nor nation, speech or fame;  
In whose hot veins new mixtures quickly ran,  
Infused between a Saxon and a Dane.  
While their rank daughters to their parents just,  
20 Received all nations with promiscuous lust.*

PESSIMIST I say—a bit anti-British isn't it?

OPTIMIST I don't think so. It was written by Daniel Defoe,  
the British novelist.

PESSIMIST Your point being, I take it, that the British are  
25 the product of a mixture of races and cultures.

OPTIMIST Yes—

PESSIMIST It's a nice debating point. But—

OPTIMIST It's more than a debating point. It's a lecturing  
point— 30



1 LECTURER [FADE UP]  
 It was Daniel Defoe who—in terms perhaps  
 not the most delicate to our modern ear—drew  
 attention to the remarkably mixed ancestry of  
 5 the British people. Saxons, Celts, Romans,  
 Normans, Danes. And the French who today  
 consider themselves Cimbri, Gauls, Iberians,  
 Latins and Germans. And the Germans—for all  
 the screaming of Hitler about racial purity—  
 10 are composed of Lapps and Finns, Slavs and  
 Mongols. There's no such thing as a pure race.  
 So all this talk of racial purity is nonsense.  
 PESSIMIST All right, all right. But how many hundreds of  
 years did it take before these European people  
 15 chose to consider themselves nations—and  
 how many centuries of war and conquest?  
 OPTIMIST True. But nationalism—  
 PESSIMIST And another thing. Saxons, Gauls and Danes  
 are much closer racially and culturally than  
 20 the three main racial groups in Malaya.  
 OPTIMIST True—but it's not important.  
 PESSIMIST Not import—  
 OPTIMIST No. I'll show you in a moment. But as I was  
 saying—nationalism itself is a pretty new idea  
 25 you know. New even in Europe.  
 PESSIMIST Well?  
 OPTIMIST Loyalty to a nation was a feeling which people  
 cultivated only during the French Revolution.  
 The nation state is very new in the history  
 30 of the world. Many nations were created

only after the First World War—Hungary,  
 Czechoslovakia, Poland, for example. And in  
 India and China, nationalism appeared only  
 at the beginning of this century. And it didn't  
 become a force in Asia till the thirties. India  
 5 and China were—and in many ways still are—  
 very diverse—they contain huge numbers of  
 people and hundreds of different languages.  
 And yet, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mao Tse-tung  
 have generated and focused nationalist feeling  
 10 in their own lifetime.

Now we are so much smaller, and our  
 standard of living so much higher than India  
 and China—surely we don't have to fumble  
 and stumble towards becoming a Malayan  
 15 nation?

PESSIMIST But what about the deep-seated race  
 consciousness here? How do you propose to  
 persuade Malays, Chinese, and the rest to give  
 up all their prejudices and preferences and  
 20 adopt what you call 'Malayan consciousness'?  
 OPTIMIST Ah. Now I think we are getting somewhere.  
 This 'deep-seated race consciousness' you  
 mention. We are always hearing about  
 this by one name or other. Communalism.  
 25 Chauvinism. Do you understand what is meant  
 by 'deep-seated race consciousness'?  
 PESSIMIST Er... yes.  
 OPTIMIST Well, what is it?  
 PESSIMIST It's, er—how shall I put it—you know—er—a  
 30

1 sense of solidarity—yes that’s it—a sense of  
solidarity and security that you feel when you  
are among members of your own race.

OPTIMIST Ah! Race! We are always hearing this word.

5 PESSIMIST Well, why not?

OPTIMIST But let’s at least use the word properly.  
When scientists talk about race, they mean a  
classification of people by their skin colour  
and type of hair, shape of nose and eye, and  
whether a group has more narrow or broad-  
headed people. Surely the same shape of nose  
or same colour of skin is not a very sound  
basis of mutual trust—or, what did you say—  
a sense of solidarity and security?

10 PESSIMIST Well—race or no race it’s a fact, isn’t it, that  
Chinese stick together? And so do Malays and  
Indians and Englishmen.

OPTIMIST But do they? The Chinese? Haven’t they been  
fighting civil wars on and off for centuries,  
20 until the country was united just recently?  
And do the people of China have any fellow  
feeling for their fellow Chinese in Formosa?  
They are more likely to feel solidarity and  
security among Russians than Formosans.  
25 And the nationalist Chinese are most likely to  
feel security among Americans than mainland  
Chinese. And of course in Europe—people  
of the same race are always fighting each  
other. French against English, English against  
30 Germans, and towards the end of the war,

1 Communists verses Fascists, which means  
French against French, Jugoslavs against  
Jugoslavs, and literally, Greek against Greek.

You know I think it’s quite wrong to  
5 think that people are held together by racial  
sentiment. Of course, we often find people who  
hold together and who are of the same race.  
But their race is purely incidental. Let me quote  
a historian at you.

READER 1 *Before the French Revolution, however*  
10 *much men of different races may have striven*  
*with one another, it was seldom any sense*  
*of racial opposition that caused their strife.*  
*They fought for land. They plundered one*  
*another. They sought glory by conquest.*  
15 *In none of these cases did the thought of*  
*racial distinction come to the front.*

PESSIMIST So you are saying people do not come together  
on the basis of their common racial origins.

OPTIMIST Yes. They may have the same racial origin. But  
20 that is not what binds them together.

PESSIMIST Then what does?

OPTIMIST People come together, stick together, work  
together because they have common cultural  
and political sentiments.  
25

PESSIMIST Huh—

OPTIMIST Malays don’t stick together because they  
all have the same shape of nose. Malays  
stick together because they speak a common  
language. Go to the same schools. Have the  
30

1 same religion. Most Malays are farmers and therefore have the same social and economic background.

PESSIMIST But not all Malays have the same background.

5 OPTIMIST Exactly. That's my point. Some Malays have had a Western education and their cultural values will be different. Malays who have become clerks or industrial workers or doctors or lawyers or senior civil servants will move in a different social and economic level. So their sense of group solidarity on the traditional basis weakens. And they have to find different links to hold their group together.

10

PESSIMIST Not racial ones?

OPTIMIST Not racial ones. They will have interests in common with other people in the same sort of job as themselves. People in the same social and economic position. They and their fellow doctors, lawyers, labourers, clerks, civil servants may belong to any race. It's the same with other races of course. And often the leaders—or so-called leaders—of communities make a call for unity among their community. This in itself suggests that the old groups are changing.

20

INDIAN We Indians must all stick together, and be united, and fight for our rights. We are a small community here in Malaya, but we have every right to be represented. We shall oppose any

30

curtailment of our rights with every fibre of our bodies. We shall fight to the last straw.

OPTIMIST Why does he shout so loud for unity? Is it because many Indians have discovered other loyalties and other interests?

5

CHINESE Chinese culture is in danger. The Chinese community must be united to oppose any encroachment on the right of the Chinese to make their voice heard. We must be united to...

10

OPTIMIST Again, the shrill note in the voice of the communist.

MALAY Malays—do not be misled by agitators, many of whom are not even citizens of this country. Beware of the aliens in your midst. We Malays must be united...

15

OPTIMIST It looks as if some Malays have found common cause with non-Malays. This must mean that the sense of group solidarity is not based on race at all. If it were—there would be no need for all these anxious calls for communal unity. So what I wish to stress is that what keeps the communities apart is not race but culture.

20

PESSIMIST Now what do you mean by culture?

OPTIMIST I am using the word loosely to include language, food, music, drama and the whole social and economic environment we live in.

25

PESSIMIST All right. But what's the difference? So it's not race that unites people—and divides Malaya. It's culture. So what?

30

1 If it's cultural loyalties which hold groups together, then you are back where you started. The problem of creating a Malayan nation is just the same. Malays won't give up their food, music or religion in favour of Malayan religion or Malayan food or music. And the Chinese are certainly not going to give up their language and literature in favour of a Malayan language and literature. So what on earth are you going to found your Malayan nation on?

5 OPTIMIST All right, all right. It's not as difficult as you may think. Do you agree that race is not an essential factor in the making of a nation?

PESSIMIST Well, all right. I'll grant you that.

15 OPTIMIST So, we agree that race is not all-important. Now let's try and find out what factors do produce nationalism—do make a nation. Here's the famous Zionist writer Israel Zangwill.

READER 2 *Nationalism is one of those tropical jungles of thought in which politics and journalism flourish.*

20 OPTIMIST And this is the verdict of the British historian Sir John Marriot after his long search in the jungle.

25 READER 1 *The principle of nationality has defied definition and even analysis.*

OPTIMIST And yet another despondent explorer—the historian George P. Gooch.

READER 2 *All attempts to penetrate the secrets of nationalism by light of mechanical*

30

*interpretation break down before the rest of experience.*

1 OPTIMIST And finally an American professor, Louis L. Snyder, in a recent study on The Meaning of Nationalism came to perhaps the cleverest if not the most necessary definition.

5 READER 1 *Nationalism may mean whatever a given people, on the basis of their own historical experience, decide it to mean.*

PESSIMIST Well, you seem to have as much difficulty trying to define nationalism as I have had trying to explain race consciousness.

10 OPTIMIST Well the trouble is, the very idea and concept of a 'nation' is always changing through history and it varies from country to country.

15 In Malaya, nationalism will have its own characteristics. All the same we shall be able to learn from other nationalisms, how to avoid mistakes and how to build a nation in the shortest possible time.

20 PESSIMIST For instance?

OPTIMIST Well. Religion. A common religion is not needed to sustain a modern state.

PESSIMIST No? What about King Henry the Eighth in Britain and Martin Luther in Germany?

25 Wasn't the Reformation with Luther demanding national churches an attempt to make religion a basis for nationalism? Isn't Islam the driving force behind the nationalism of the Arab countries?

30

1 OPTIMIST I think religion is still a factor in the  
nationalism of some countries. But the vast  
majority of nation states today are secular.  
Religion was the dominating force before the  
5 age of nationalism, and the object even of  
political loyalty. But today, nationalism is a  
more dominating political force than religion.  
PESSIMIST Well—I agree that in Malaya there’s a long  
tradition of religious tolerance. So I suppose  
10 people can have different religions and still feel  
the same about nationalism. But surely after  
Merdeka, Islam is to be the state religion?  
OPTIMIST Ah, but a state religion does not mean the  
government demands a common religion.  
15 PESSIMIST All right—but what about social customs,  
manners, food...  
OPTIMIST There can be a diversity of social manners,  
of taste in food and clothing within a nation.  
Look at the differences within a particular  
20 community. A westernised Chinese or Indian  
or Malay may prefer Western clothes and he  
may eat all sorts of different food. There are  
vast differences in food, clothing and manners  
within any community. It’s obvious, isn’t it,  
25 that upper-class Malays, Chinese and Indians  
have far more in common with each other than  
with poorer members of their own community.  
PESSIMIST Yes... There’s a lot in that. Of course, I’m not  
at all sure it’s a good thing this Westernisation  
and breaking up of old loyalties.  
30

OPTIMIST Many people who disapprove of all these  
changes try to pretend that the changes don’t  
exist. But that’s not the point. The changes  
are taking place, and nothing can stop them.  
5 Modern civilisation standardises manners  
and personal tastes. The urbanised Malay, or  
Chinese or Indian is never quite at home with  
his rural cousin.  
PESSIMIST Well, that’s what I mean. The young people  
from the rural areas are becoming rootless.  
10 No respect for the old way of life. No faith in  
traditional values.  
OPTIMIST Yes. But that simply shows that the basis of  
communal society, of exclusive racial groups,  
is breaking down.  
15 PESSIMIST Is it the fault of the British?  
OPTIMIST Well the West has certainly erected a twentieth  
century society for us. But it’s useless asking  
whose fault it is. It is inevitable. It’s an  
economic transformation. Gradually we have  
20 built an economic structure and economic  
relationships which belong to a state.  
PESSIMIST Yes. I agree that businessmen and industrialists  
and civil servants and even industrial workers  
don’t recognise communal and racial barriers  
amongst each other very much.  
25 OPTIMIST No, and Chinese, Indian and Malay workers  
don’t worry about the race of their employer  
when they unite in a Trade Union to get better  
wages and better conditions of work. And a  
30

1 Chinese employer or an Indian employer is certainly no more kind-hearted towards his employee because he is Chinese or Indian.

PESSIMIST 5 That may be so. But don't Indian employers tend to employ Indian workers and Chinese employers Chinese workers.

OPTIMIST 10 Yes, but not because of racial sentiments. At least they are not the prime consideration. The reasons for this are practical, historical and economic. It was cheaper and more convenient for Chinese and Indian employers to recruit their workers from China and India. A Chinese-speaking employer found it more convenient to have employees who spoke his language and were able to keep accounts in the language he understood. You'll find, for example, that employers from Northern India are just as reluctant to employ, say, a Tamil-speaking Indian as they are a Malay or a Chinese. So it's convenience and economic efficiency rather than racial sentiment.

PESSIMIST 20 But you don't find employees in Government offices or in Western-owned business firms confined to a particular racial group.

OPTIMIST 25 Well—a great deal of labour in the big estates and in some Government departments is mainly Tamil-speaking. But employees in Government and in Western-owned enterprises are racially mixed.

PESSIMIST 30 Of course, recruitment of the more senior

1 employees is restricted to those who speak English.

OPTIMIST 5 Yes. That proves my point. It is not racial sentiment but administrative and economic deficiency which determine the choice of employees. Let's listen to a student of Malayan history on this.

STUDENT OF MALAYAN HISTORY 10 When once the Western type of capitalist economy has been introduced into an Asian country, the destruction is inevitable of all those bonds which hold together communal or racial groups. In Malaya, many of those accustomed to living in a communal type of society are not yet aware that the old ties have become loose or have snapped altogether. The old communal habits of thought may still persist—habits of thought which no longer harmonise with the twentieth century society which has been established. And since people cannot reconcile the old ways of thought with the new ways of behaviour, which our modern society demands, there is conflict and confusion.

PESSIMIST 15 Conflict and confusion! Quite. Don't you think that perhaps, in the end, the old ways of thought will win, particularly after Merdeka, when political power passes into the hands of people still attached to the old ways.

OPTIMIST 20 Yes, that could happen. People whose ideas are still those of the pre-twentieth century society will certainly try to defend those habits of

PESSIMIST 25

OPTIMIST 30

1 thought. But they can never succeed in the end  
 because those ideas could only survive if the  
 pre-twentieth century society were restored.  
 PESSIMIST Couldn't they re-create that pre-twentieth  
 5 century, and the old loyalties?  
 OPTIMIST No! Societies are not like frocks or cars that  
 you can buy brand new. New societies are  
 really the old societies adapted or transformed  
 from time to time, to meet new conditions.  
 10 Either the old ways of thought must give  
 way before the advance of the new economic  
 society we have created or the old economic  
 order must be restored. But restoration of  
 the old economic order would mean going  
 15 back to the more primitive economy of the  
 past. And even the exponents of the old  
 ways of life would not be prepared to face  
 the consequences. A return to the old order  
 would bring economic disaster and starvation  
 20 to Malaya's present population. In fact, to  
 judge by its plans for economic development,  
 the Federation Government wants the most  
 rapid modernisation possible.  
 PESSIMIST All right, I'm realistic enough to recognise that  
 25 we can't put back the economic clock.  
 OPTIMIST But if you believe in economic progress, you  
 must also believe in political progress. You  
 can't separate the two.  
 PESSIMIST Nonsense! Of course you can. Malaya's  
 30 modern economy was developed under

1 conditions of colonialism. In fact but for  
 colonial control, Malaya's economy might  
 have been backward as those of the Middle  
 Eastern countries, or some African territories  
 which escaped coming under the control of a  
 5 colonial power.  
 MALAY Yes. I agree. There is a debit and a credit side in  
 the ledger of colonialism. Where's that student  
 of Malayan history?  
 10 STUDENT OF COLONIAL HISTORY Colonialism exposed countries like Malaya  
 to progressive thought and learning. One of  
 these is nationalism and the national state.  
 Now having created the economic institutions  
 appropriate to a national state, it was inevitable  
 15 that sooner or later the political institutions of a  
 national state would be created. The emergence  
 of an independence movement, and its victory,  
 were logical and inevitable developments.  
 It was not a question of whether we were or  
 20 were not fitted for Merdeka. It was simply that  
 a free enterprise economy could develop further  
 only on the basis of free political institutions.  
 To have withheld independence would have  
 been to invite the breakdown of the whole  
 25 system that colonialism had helped to create.  
 But it is not enough to win independence.  
 We must learn to hold the independent  
 state together. Nationalism is such a force.  
 But it must be a nationalism appropriate to  
 30 conditions in Malaya.

## A NATION IN THE MAKING

(Part II)

1 OPTIMIST You see? Nationalism is a force which can  
hold the independent state together.

PESSIMIST Well—I hope something will hold us together.

5 OPTIMIST In our discussion so far we have eliminated  
some of the things which, whatever people  
say, are not vital for the creation of a Malayan  
nation—common religion, common racial  
origin and so on.

10 PESSIMIST I'm not so sure. But even if we have—what's  
left?

OPTIMIST A great deal. Enough for us to meet again for  
another discussion.

15

20

25

30

---

*Cast*

Pessimist

Optimist

Malayan

Communalist

Reader 1

Reader 2

Reader 3

Economist (Malay)

*Effects*Crowd cheering

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Transmission: 18 July 1957

Network: Radio Malaya



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The short stories were first published in various journals in Britain and America more than sixty years ago in the 1940s. The publisher of this volume, Epigram Books, has made every effort to locate all persons having any rights to the stories and scripts appearing in this book, and to clear permissions with them. All possible care is also taken to make full acknowledgement for their use as well as their original source. If any required acknowledgements have been omitted or any rights overlooked, it is by accident and we humbly apologise; we welcome any information that would assist us in this matter.

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The radio scripts were originally written by Rajaratnam in 1957 for the national broadcasting station Radio Malaya, which was then under the Department of Broadcasting, Federation of Malaya and Singapore. Both the station and the department are now defunct. During that period, the headquarters of the station, which served both the peninsula and Singapore, was based in Singapore. In 1959, when Singapore achieved self-governing status, the administration of broadcasting for the peninsula and Singapore was separated, and Radio Singapore came into being. Radio Malaya, which then transferred to Kuala Lumpur, served the Federation, and in 1963 with the formation of Malaysia, was renamed Radio Malaysia.

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I dedicate this book to every Singaporean.

## Sources

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“Famine” first appeared in *Indian Writing*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1941. Published by The Bibliophile Society, London.

“What Has to Be” and “The Locusts” first appeared in *Life and Letters and the London Mercury*, August 1941. Published by Brendin Pub. Co, London.

“Drought” first appeared in *Asia*, September 1941. Published by John Day Co., New York.

“The Tiger” first appeared in *Modern Reading*, No. 5, 1942. Published by Staples & Staples, London.

“The Stars” was first published in *Indian Short Stories*, 1946. Published by New India Publishing Co, London.

“The Terrorist” was first published in *Modern International Short Stories*, 1947. Published by W.H. Allen, London.

### Radio Plays

The collection of radio plays is published courtesy of ISEAS Library, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam Private Archives Collection. The collection is housed in the ISEAS Library, which holds the copyright, and also features a permanent exhibition on Rajaratnam.

The series “A Nation in the Making” was first broadcast on Radio Malaya. Transmission dates as follows:

Part I, 11 July 1957

Part II, 18 July 1957

Part III, 25 July 1957

Part IV, 1 August 1957

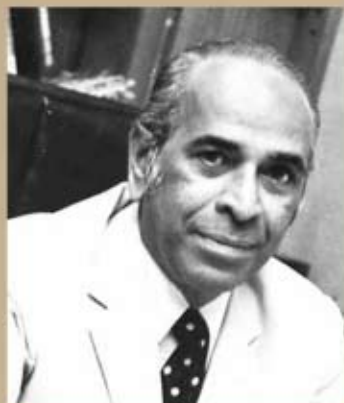
Part V, 8 August 1957

Part VI, 15 August 1957

The script “Looking Forward” was first broadcast on Radio Malaya on 28 October 1957.

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