

Homage to Trinity's Bill Sinnethamby

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"I am not Cinna the conspirator. I am Cinna the poet" is a memorable line from Shakespeare's Julius Ceasar. For "Sinna" or Bill Sinnethamby of Trinity who passed away last week no confusion of identity was ever possible — for there was never another like him. Perhaps Lucifer in a more devilish mood destroyed the mould that God used to create Bill Sinnethamby.

The public display of private grief is often embarrassing and sometimes pharisaical. And yet obituary writers serve a valuable function

in holding up the lives of good men as an example for others to follow. It is in this spirit that I pay homage to the memory of Bill Sinnethamby. He was not a Very Important Person in the conventional sense but there is no doubt that countless people whose lives were touched by his will remember him with affection and gratitude.

Bill Sinnethamby had no detractors. Those who did not love him and admire him regarded him, at worst, as a

charming eccentric dedicated to the cause of seeing things grow to feed people. The Trinity Farm was his passion and when he lost the land he had so tenderly cared for — once because the lease ran out and, then later in the name of Development — he was undismayed. Well past 70 years of age, he took up the challenge of building another farm on the land given to him. His was an indomitable spirit — a dreamer of dreams and a doer of deeds.

No one epitomized the fusion of visionary idealist and practical worker more than Bill Sinnethamby. His farm was a model and an example of what Sri Lankans can do for themselves sans foreign experts sans foreign aid and sans the expensive gadgetry of modern agriculture. There were no short cut methods, no glamorous showpieces or antiseptic odour about the Trinity farm. It had the natural smells of a farm and the mud and dirt that adorned Bill Sinnethamby's crumpled and shabby attire was a shining badge of hard labour.

Bill loved to show his visitors the farm interspersing his vivid description of the miracle we saw before us with preemptory commands to his fellow-workers and pauses when he would weed out some offending plant or refill a feed-bucket in the piggery. As he walked through the farm it seemed as if Bill Sinnethamby was perfectly "in tune with Nature" as Wordsworth sought to be. He spoke to the trees and plants and how they responded!