

For the '90s : The Young, Middlebrow look

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The problem with contemporary Sinhala culture is that it does not quite know how to cope with the influx of western popular culture which has been flooding Sri Lanka at an alarming rate during the last decade. The concept of traditional culture centred on the temple no longer exerts any attraction on the new generation although this simplistic, pastoral notion is being kept alive by the average tele drama. The young are increasingly turning to the flashier manifestations of popular culture such as fast music, comic books and what the mandarins see as a 'hedonistic' life style.

But the fact is that having opened the floodgates there is little anybody can do about it. The clock can not be turned back. In one sense the despair of the proponents of Jathika Chintanaya and their harking back to the traditional, pre-capitalist way of life can be

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and the cinema and the fact that both these are modern media is by no means an accident. What is necessary is to make the more traditional organs such as fiction too more responsive to the changing cultural climate. We need more fiction and poetry which will address the burgeoning middle layers of the population such as young urban workers, the educated village youth and other such sections which might otherwise entirely fall victim to the

the centre of gravity has shifted elsewhere. The young have become more assertive. While a section of the young have been attracted by radical populism another section have become the devotees of the proliferating 'sangeetha salades'. But can we give this generation up as lost. Obviously an appeal

couched in terms of traditional or high culture will not strike a chord with them. It is time we thought seriously of a middle brow culture which can draw in wide sections of the population •

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understood in the face of the vulgarities spawned by the crass popular culture to which the country appears to be inexorably wedded. But it is a moot point whether having tasted the fruits of this new way of life the young can be weaned away and initiated back into the old certainties.

empty popular culture of the towns.

This issue also has a deeper significance. In the 1950's and 1960's it was the middle classes who were the manufacturers of culture. The renaissance in fiction and drama was their work. But in the 1980's particularly

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor

Economic Review

People Bank

I am writing this brief note to congratulate you on the new outlook of Economic Review.

I think its new emphasis on the need to reconstruct our economy and society following the recent troubles is very timely and appropriate. Please watch for printing errors.

May I suggest that you have a special issue on Social Policy as related to Sri Lanka?

Yours sincerely

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