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The de Silva House at Mt. Lavinia by Valentine Gunasekara: Phenomenological Analysis of an Elite Dwelling from the Nationalist Era of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)

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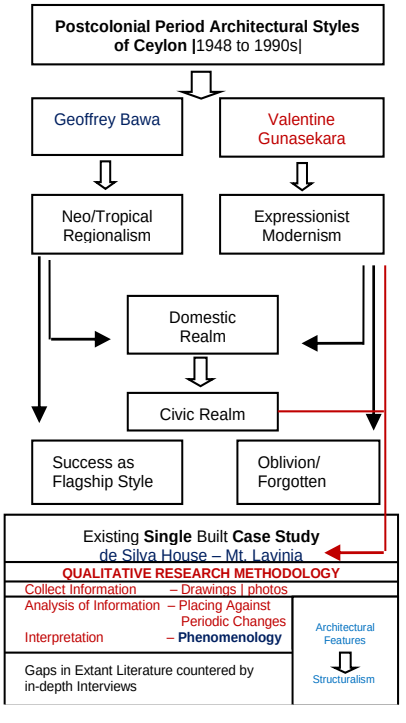

ABSTRACT

It is commonly assessed that Architect Valentine Gunasekara arrived at 'Expressionist Modernism' towards the twilight of his career. Immediately after Ceylon's independence, an elite contingent spearheaded a nationalist political course, which was perpetuated into the 1990s and beyond. During this nationalist window, the vernacular-based Neo/Tropical Regionalism was mediated as the flagship architectural style of the nation, whereas Gunasekara's product was pushed into oblivion. In this light, the study of this fascinating style could serve as a useful precedence to asses/theorize similar domestic architectural styles to come. Adhering to a qualitative methodology, the study is based on one single well-justified case study. In terms of collecting information, drawings are secured/reproduced, supported by a photographic survey. The analysis places the case study against periodic changes of the time in question. Phenomenology is used for interpretation. To compensate for gaps in the extant literature, in-depth interviews are utilized. Examining in a phenomenological viewpoint how such examples executed for the elite class frame the periodic changes in local and international arenas, if successful, could be applied to similar cases elsewhere.

KEYWORDS
Elite, Nationalism, Expressionist Modernism, Phenomenology

1. Introduction

Valentine Gunasekara undoubtedly is one of the two foremost postcolonial period architects in Sri Lanka to have instigated a unique style grounded on architectural modernism (*i.e. Expressionist Modernism)* (Wijetunge, 2018:14).[i] This is often assessed by commentators as the last stage (*i.e.* phase 3) of his career. In this context, an attempt is made to tackle a domestic building from the aforementioned phase, designed for a family that ascended newly into the fringes of nation's elite class. The time in consideration – the aforementioned phase 3 – falls well within the island's 'nationalist' window. The featured domestic building (*i.e.* de Silva House at Mt. Lavinia, Colombo) assumes due importance on one hand, because it was the only Gunasekara project to be realized from this phase (and style), and on the other, for being a much-discussed-about building that was featured in numerous academic publications [*i.e.* Rajapaksha (1999), Pieris (2007), Wijetunge (2012a,b/2018/2021) etc.], as well as being a selected feature of two international exhibitions.[ii] The fact that it was demolished recently in 2017 highlights its importance furthermore; in a time when the postcolonial architectural legacies is Sri Lanka are at the risk of imminent destruction (Wijetunge, 2018:13).

The only other houses to be designed by Valentine Gunasekara in this style were both conceived for California, USA. The first was Walter Jayasinghe house in Camino Verde, South Pasadena, Las Angeles designed in 1983; and the second was for his wife Ranee Jayamanne in Placeville, Camino designed in 2003. The only project outside of the domestic realm designed in this style was his competition entry for the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA) Colombo Head Quarters in 1983.

An objective here is to ascertain if the elites in society are more sensitive to periodic changes (*i.e.* political, economic and socio-cultural) of a given time than any other social stratum, and if their domestic architecture in turn, reflects them. Assessing how exactly such changes are reflected architecturally is an intrinsic part of this exercise. Another objective is to determine how personal biases (*i.e.* personal beliefs and anxieties etc.) are conveyed via architectural production; with or without direct relevance to the condition of the clients the architectural work is intended for. The aforesaid objectives are sought via a phenomenological analysis of the case study in question; in an approach of structuralism. The main aim here is to determine whether phenomenology is a suitable theoretical approach to assess such polemical architectural case studies; to ascertain the fact that periodic changes and personal biases of architects are reflected via architecture.

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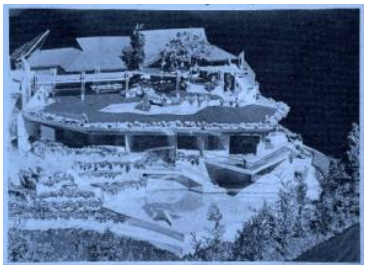
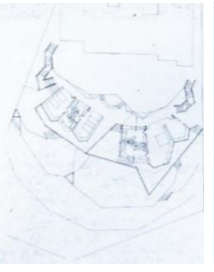


(Fig.01)



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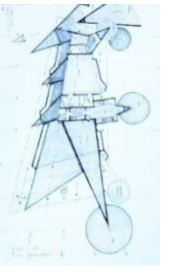


(Fig.03)

(Fig.04)

(Fig.05)

(Fig.01). Walter Jayasinghe House Model -1983
(Fig.02). Walter Jayasinghe House Ground Floor Plan manifesting deconstructive architectural tendencies -2003
(Fig.03). Ranee Jayamanne House Ground Floor Plan manifesting deconstructive architectural tendencies -2003
(Fig.04). SLIA Head Quarters competition Entry Model -1983
(Fig.05). SLIA Head Quarters competition Entry Ground Floor Plan manifesting deconstructive architectural tendencies -1983
Source: Valentine Gunasekara Estate

2. Research Methodology

In terms of its selected qualitative research methodology, the study delves on a single primary case study. This lone case study selection was justified above in the Introduction. To secure information, the study relies on collected material – drawings (that were reproduced based on originals) and also an original photographic survey – in its empirical approach. Such material is utilized for the analysis of the case study against the periodic changes (*i.e.* political, economic and socio-cultural) of the time in question. In terms of interpretation, a phenomenological stance is utilized; similar to that employed by architectural phenomenologists/theorists elsewhere.[iii] Each identified architectural aspect/trait is scrutinized using a structuralist configuration to bring out the real underlying core factor/s that was/were the root cause/s behind the formation of such. The utilized in-depth interviews of clients/observers, practicing architects and especially architectural historians are meant to bridge-in gaps

in the extant literature pertaining to period in question; since the available literature on this timeframe is not very extensive. Semi-structured questionnaires are utilized for the aforesaid exercise. This also makes up an essential part of the empirical works.

The study commences by giving an insight into postcolonial Ceylon's political and socio-cultural backdrops, and then brings in an analysis of extant theories on elitism. Elitism that has been derived over the years largely in a pro-western perspective is analytically modified and then applied to the hybrid condition of the island's postcolonial elite stratum that oscillated between the orient and occident. Framing the social stratifications relevant to the postcolonial window in question and determining the true political and socio-cultural and political conditions (of belonging) of its complicated elite stratum is tackled next. The political and socio-cultural positions that Gunasekara himself held (as the architect in the project taken up), and the consequent client allegiances he formed are then assessed. Subsequently, the political and socio-cultural positions of the de Silva family is determined, before taking up the house in consideration. The analysis places the selected prominent aspects/traits of architecture of the house against the political, economic and socio-cultural backdrops of the time, while the enquiry ends with a step by step interpretation carried out in a phenomenological perspective. Each architectural aspect/trait is tackled by placing them under a number of sub-topics (in a perspective of structuralism) based on noteworthy periodic changes that took place during the nationalist window. Each point is taken up separately and elaborated via text and illustrations to bring out the core reason/s behind their formation.

3. Theories on Elitism

3.1. A Colonized/Newly liberated Setting

The definitions/theories on elitism are largely modern Western phenomena, where the term's evolution – from pre-modern to modern – articulates the periodically shifting nature of the condition. Out of the 'objective' and 'subjective' means of social stratification available, the tangible former is more scientific and hence, convincing. The available theories on elitism in fact, are grounded on the objective means, and 'social class' (in the economic sense) is imperative for their respective formations; attributing an economic-determinacy to the discourse. This manifests itself within the historical narration of Western social metamorphoses (Silva, 2005:8). The Marxist repudiation as well as homage to a self-conscious democracy is at the heart of formations of theories on elitism. Out of the several theories at hand that are discussed by Bottomore (1993:87-88), the 'political-class' and the governing-elite' is the least-repudiated, and on the grounds of its acknowledgement of progressive notions – the sub-elites and elite circulation – remains the most convincing. On the other hand, in the light of an oblivion suffered by Eastern elitism, the pre-modern Lankan situation needs to be considered, through the studies by local scholars with their intimate knowledge of the area – having repudiated 'orientalist' viewpoints (Wijetunge, 2011a,b: 2012a,c). The historical narrations of the sub-continental and the

resultant local situations respectively, frame the dominance of 'caste', within a culturally- determinant social stratification. The in-depth analysis of the pre-modern Lankan situation reveals that the Sinhalese were undeterred by economics for their social stratification. However, with the advent of modern European influence of the colonial encounter, the notion of social class was imparted – at least on a small section of the populace – to co-exist with the archaic culturally-determinant system. Thus, the caste assumed a new role with its perpetuation into the contemporary period via the postcolonial era.[iv] While the 'caste' operates at the micro level, the 'class' follows suit at the macro-level (Wijetunge, 2012a: 126). Thus, it could be asserted that since economic and cultural factors are the *raison d'être* of the elite condition that is characterized by political influence, elites are indeed sensitive to their periodic changes.

3.2. Shifting Nature of Elitism

By the colonial era, the caste in its micro-level effectiveness was overpowered by the application of class operating at the macro-level. Therefore, for the colonial era and the postcolonial to follow, the class was the main factor of consideration for social stratification; contrary to the pre-modern situation where the caste determined the same (Wijetunge, 2012a:126-27). Henceforth, the bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie and working class top-bottom social stratification that lasted until the dawn of British colonialism according to V. K. Jayawardena (in Silva, 2005: 99), perpetuated well into the immediate postcolonial decade, until the minority bourgeoisie became the minority elite – governing elite and the political class – while the more numerous petty-bourgeoisie formed the middle class in the 1960s-70s; in the contemporary sense. The most numerous working class remained largely unaltered in its definition and constitution (Wijetunge, 2012a:161). It was only after open economic reforms in 1977 that this stratification was even slightly altered; splitting the middle class into 'upper' and 'lower' contingents by the 1980s (Silva: 112).

4. Overlapping Nationalist Window and Phase 3

The 'nationalist' period in Sri Lanka is a loosely defined one, where most scholars see it as a wave that was triggered in the 19th century that respectively saw landmark events such as 1948 independence, 1956 political change, 1971 JVP insurrections, 1977 open economy, 1983-87 Eelam war I, 1987 Indian intervention and 1988-89 JVP uprising etc. The point here is that the Sri Lankan state in all aforementioned instances prevailed, safeguarding its core ethno-centric values largely moulded by its dominant culture. Wijetunge (2012a) with evidence – Perera (1994): 444-446, Ivan (2006): 74, 83-84, Silva (2005): 151-55, De Votta (2007): 7 – affirms the fact that the 'underplayed-nationalism' of these times was finally extinguished in 1994 (at least temporarily) with the shifting of governments after 17 years; in an attempt that underlined a covert agenda of the nation's partition.

In this backdrop, Rajapaksha (1999:15), categorizes the evolution of Gunasekara's architectural concepts into three chronological phases, where his philosophy, concepts and forms saw radical transformations. An evolution is evident from rectangular objects of 'Tropical Modern' provenance (*i.e.* phase 1); then spatial containers and curvilinear elements (*i.e.* phase 2); to the exploration of interlocking planes, sculpture-like forms and deconstruction (*i.e.* phase 3). This metamorphosis consisting of threefold phases has indeed been confirmed by both Pieris (2007: 22) and Wijetunge (2012a: 67; 2018; 2021). Further, Wijetunge's (2012b: 77) analysis of Gunasekara's work portfolio affirms that phase 3 started with the early 1980s and went on until he quit practice later in the same decade. Hence, it is fair to claim that 1985 – when the de Silva house was designed – falls well within Gunasekara's work phase 3, and also the nationalist window in consideration. In this light, one has to assess Gunasekara's own social background as well as political and client allegiances.

5. Backgrounds and Allegiances

5.1. Architect

Valentine Gunasekara was born to a once wealthy *Salagama* caste family that had seen a sudden decline in its social position.[v] His financially challenged family was a closely-knit unit, desperately continuing their past vestiges of glory. Despite Gunasekara's exposure to first-hand metropolitan epistemology as Pieris affirms (2007:17-18),[vi] he continued his professional life on fairgrounds – with neither elite backing that won him commissions, nor substantial personal wealth that gave him room for choice/freedom in projects – as they assisted certain well-known architects of the time (Wijetunge, 2012a:357-359).[vii] Gunasekara's ardent Catholic upbringing and respect for/knowledge of Buddhism imparted in him a strong sense of compassion towards others (Gunasekara, 2011). Hence, in line with such ethics, he would have developed a socialist political allegiance in his adult life (Robson, 2004: 265).

At the same time as the post-war European metropolitan influence had ensued in the developing world, the US equivalent too was on course, and Gunasekara was one of the first beneficiaries of its recruitment schemes (Pieris, 2007:19).[viii] The pretentions of egalitarianism and democracy the United States promised to uphold appealed to Gunasekara who despised the colonial and feudalist ideological residues plaguing his motherland; and also its architecture (Gunasekara, 2011). Consequently, he came to cater largely to the nationalist 'middle-class' intelligentsia as was confirmed by Wijetunge (2012a:357-359) who analyzed carefully his domestic clients throughout his career for determining their socio-cultural standing and level of political power. After neo-liberalism, his sphere of influence was limited to largely the new 'upper middle-class' that bordered also on the 'political-class'. According to Wijetunge, analysis of his domestic clients affirmed that except for a handful of cases, the most did not have access to direct modes of political power. A lack of this on clients' part curtailed Gunasekara's chances of landing commissions at the civic level. The

de Silvas who commissioned the house in question very much so belonged to this new upper middle-class, and Gunasekara's own socio-political standing indeed justified him serving them. This was in the light of architects hailing from political-class and governing-elite fringes (*i.e.* Geoffrey Bawa, Minnette de Silva etc.) who kept on serving client contingents of same stature (Wijetunge, 2012a:332).

5.2. The de Silva Family

The de Silvas – both Upali (husband) and Manel (wife) – by genealogy, belonged to the 'colonial petty-bourgeoisie-turned 'post-independence middle-class' that later saw a fleeting upward mobility after 1977s open-economy, to ascend into the 'upper middle-class'; and from there, the political-class. Apart from the fact that they hailed from the *Karave* caste residing at the second tier in the island's caste hierarchy [as confirmed by Roberts (1994)] – which had by now become irrelevant in social formation – their ancestry is neither recorded nor well-known (A. de Silva, 2010/11). Although the de Silvas were Buddhists in faith, they were neither religious nor culturally-conservative, but outward-oriented (Gunasekara, 2011). This was in fact, atypical to the Sri Lankan upper-middle class at the time (Silva, 2005: 112). Their cultural hybridity was much different to that of the larger Sri Lankan middle-class in general (Wijetunge, 2012:322). Upali de Silva was educated in University of Ceylon to qualify as an accountant. His wife Manel was a homemaker and they had a teenage son and a daughter at the time (A. de Silva: 2010). Upali de Silva's shift from working for Bank of Ceylon to the World Bank (stationed first in Rome and then in the USA subsequently as he took up an assignment) marks his ascent from the middle-class. However, considering the prestige and economic/power dimensions associated with his new occupation as well as the assorted privileges for which, the caste background was by this point irrelevant; arguably, the family could now push the upper middle and political-class fringe. Thus, they were now arguably placed well within the elite faction itself. Even their political allegiance, like that of the prototypical middle-class prior to its polarization, would have been directed at the right-wing; either at the UNP or SLFP,[ix] but the Marxists (Matthews, 1978: 100).[x] This inclination guaranteed further upward social mobility; especially, if the allegiance was directed at the ruling party. Consequently, the family eventually would have come to reap privileges of their newly-ascended social position – from progressive education to cultural and lifestyle novelties.

6. De Silva House Architecture

6.1. Sketch of the Plot

A plot in Mt. Lavinia – a Colombo suburb – with a colonial-type bungalow was originally inherited by Manel, and subsequently, the de Silvas desired to build a comfortable house there to retire to. Although at one point, the option of keeping the old façade and extending the bungalow was considered, they ultimately

thought it could not provide their desired level of comfort. Gunasekara's wife and Manel were friends and the fact that the family was impressed by some of his completed projects subsequently led to the commission in 1985 (A. de Silva, 2011). The attraction towards a building that alienated its observers sums up the revolutionary spirit of the de Silvas who were willing to go against the grain. Pieris (2007: 45-52) in fact, highlights this daring quality of the Sri Lankan middle-class of the time. On the other hand, the de Silvas were very much aware of Geoffrey Bawa who was by the time, undoubtedly the most famous architect around. However, Bawa' reputation as an 'architect of the elite' compelled them to settle for more accessible Gunasekara; hailing from a similar class background as themselves. Gunasekara met with the family in Rome during a visit and discussed preliminary details, where he was given a free hand to design. As the de Silvas had spent many years abroad, their preferred lifestyle was more Western-oriented (A. de Silva, 2011).[xi]

6.2. Site Relations

The house sits on a corner plot at the intersection of two streets in Mt. Lavinia.[xii] While the adjacent plot on the Sea Street was vacant, the property borders the playground of the neighboring school (Fig. 6). The approach to the neighborhood from Galle Road – a foremost traffic artery from colonial times – is dramatic. From the congested Galle Road lined with commercial blocks, one descends gradually along narrow and shady Sea Street into Mt. Lavinia beach-strip renowned for its picturesque quality, passing through a series of largely residential and hotel properties. The beach draws daily, loads of visitors, and their approach is past here. The tranquil residential setting has a relaxed atmosphere, opposed to that of the Galle Road that frames the recent commercialization of the Colombo suburbs (Fig. 7). The haphazardness and eclecticism of Galle Road's commercial realm have in fact, infiltrated the seaside stretch too, as evident by its stylistic multiplicity of houses (Fig. 8). Only a handful of palatial bungalows that once dominated the area now remain. According to Gunasekara (2012), once Manel's ancestral house was demolished, the plot was sub-divided, and the new construction happened on the eastern-facing portion. Land sub-divisions were commonplace and buildable plots around urban areas were still diminishing by the 1980s (Wijetunge, 2012a: 291, 322). The 'more the merrier' family approach of the Ceylonese after the turn of century had resulted in large families as shown by 1946, 1953,1963 and 1971 census that yielded growth percentages (%) of 25.4, 21.6, 30.7 and 20.1 respectively, as against notably slower growth levels indicated in census reports that came before (Department of Census & Statistics, 1974: 4). Hence, in the decades after the 1960s, it was customary to divide larger plots among adult siblings. Further, the introduction of tourism industry took place in 1965 according to Robson (2004: 109-14, 49-60), and after neo-liberal reforms that promoted commerce, demand for land in the tourist sector-related suburbs rapidly grew. After the so-called 'progressive legislature'[xiii] that pertained to property nature and ownership, the minimum possible plot size division was fixed by the state to be 20 perches, and eventually to 15 by the 1980s (Perera, 1994: 387, de Saram, 2011). The subsequent setting up of the Urban Development Authority (UDA)

aided this scenario (uda.lk). Consequently, the once larger de Silva plot also could not escape this fate. The west-facing plot was subsequently sold off.

(Fig. 06)

(Fig. 07) (Fig. 08)

(Fig. 06). Haphazardness and eclecticism of Galle Road's commercial buildings in Mt. Lavinia
(Fig. 07). Site Plan of de Silva House
(Fig. 08). Stylistic multiplicity of Mt. Lavinia houses around the site)
Source: Author (2019)

6.3. Framed Cultural Orientations

Neo-liberalism for Silva (2005: 112) was a 'reversal' of the prior welfare socialist state into an era of Western dependence and market mechanism. In his opinion, the process revitalized the urban middle-class that was threatened by post-1956 nationalist changes. Although this particular class could be considered a derivative of the former urban petty-bourgeoisie (more than a mercantile class), they were a new 'international wage-earning class'; a product of globalization-enabled 'trans-national spaces' (Hettige, 1995: 89-115). Neo-liberalism after 1977, linked Sri Lanka to the globalization process and its onslaught was now felt rigorously (Silva, 2005:112). As for Weragama (1994: 7-8), the foregoing affairs secured hitherto-unforeseen opportunities for the country's populace in political, economic and cultural spheres. This particular class was ideologically bound with the 'international space' and quintessentially 'consumerist' in nature[xiv] The growth in world-wide media-telecommunication and especially, international travels fed their lifestyle. Consequently, they shed ethnicity, religion and caste backgrounds, in order to share certain solidarity as a common class; marked by common interests, wants and needs, in a context where post-1977 economic benefit had been delimited to the Western province (Silva, 2005: 113). The faction's orientation largely differed from 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' applicable to the archetypal Sri Lankan middle-class (Pieris, 2007: 11-13). The

outward orientation of the de Silvas was embodied in the spaces Gunasekara had to accommodate in the design, facilitating a predominantly Western lifestyle. The usual ensemble of spaces suggestive of the 1980s version of modernity [from living, dining, car porch, servants' quarters, pantry and kitchen to attached bathrooms seen even in the nascent middle-class houses from the 1970s as Wijetunge (2011, 65-67) affirms] was kept intact, where the most striking difference came from how their demarcations were marked, inter-relationships and configured how they interacted with the outside.

6.4. Desired Critical Cosmopolitism?

When the notion of cosmopolitanism for the nationalist elite in Asia was 'progressive modernism', alternative expressions to it emerged from below. Mignolo (in Pieris, 2007: 12) uses the term 'critical cosmopolitanism' to address projects outside the domains of both modernity and colonialism, suggestive of 'a border thinking'. This occurs outside official nationalisms and elite hegemonic cultures; as struggles by marginalized communities striving for political/economic equality. Within post-colonial settings, the former colonial class structures play a seminal role in marginalization of the newly arrived contingents in the ex-colonial city; the economically-deprived rural migrants with bourgeoisie aspirations (Pieris, 2007: 12). Bhaba and Clifford (in Cheah and Robbins, 1998: 262-370) stress on the 'hybridity' of such spaces. In their view, both revivalist cultural agendas of postcolonial polity as well as an authentic alterity are equally rejected by such migrants. In the Sri Lankan case, the quintessential middle-class embraced a liminal architectural position within their rural vernacular (and colonial hybrids) and authentic alternatives from abroad as the so-called 'case study houses', to eventually settle for its local variant; the 'American style' house. Wijetunge (2011: 64-67; 2022:180-201) and Pieris (2011) trace such origins. This particular project for Gunasekara, for an upper middle-class client with rural origins,[xv] afforded the perfect opportunity to seek for an authentic alterity instead, as the circumstances had now changed with neo-liberalism. The discussion on the house to reveals how exactly it was achieved.

6.5. Spaces in Continuum

6.5.1. Configuration

The design of the de Silva house encompasses the entire site extent, where the structural components (columns and beams) are almost pushed to the edges, with two vacant strips of space allocated as a 'frontage' and 'rear space' (Fig. 6). By the 1980s, planning/building regulations had become strict (see UDA Law, 1978). The peripheral column grid that sprouts from the ground rises to the roof level, to be tied together by rings of beams at floor levels. This assemblage creates a spatial container within which, the vertical-horizontals planes interact to create volumetric spaces. 'Spatial container' concept developed by Gunasekara throughout the 1960s-70s according to Pieris (2007:58-60), had thus been continued into the 1980s.

There are two prominent lines legible on the plans. The prominent contour that cuts across the site in the longitudinal direction – broken only by the placement of three doorways – is the spine (or datum) that holds the composition together. The other, the west-facing boundary wall that rises up to the roof terrace, completely cuts-off the building from adjacent site. This was caused by rationality; when a pleasant view could not be afforded and for climatic reasons. The spine-wall divides the plan into north and south-facing sections. Another almost perpendicular line to the spine-wall divides the south-facing section into two unequal compartments. The strip-like reflective pool extends this division into the north-facing section, to separate it in two. The plan could consequently be read as four enclosed/semi-enclosed spaces, where two of each kind crisscross. The north-western and south-western quadrants are enclosed to form the bedroom section and dining cum pantry/servant's quarter respectively; north-eastern and south-western ones are the entrance-court cum garage and living room cum rear-garden respectively. Through the entrance court/garage space, the access road has been invited to the compound, to be extended deep into the interior via the narrow corridor that runs alongside the spine-wall. The two visitors' bedrooms facing Sea Street and master bedroom at the Western end of plan are all accessed by this single corridor. The peripheral wall enclosing the row of rooms and their attached bathrooms are placed on the Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia Urban council prescribed 'building-line' (Gunasekara, 2012). The internal walls that separate them appear to be radial, emanating from the spine-wall, where the assemblage of walls portrays a fish bone; a metaphorical representation. Such configurations based on datum lines place Gunasekara's planning in contiguity to similar works by Alvar Aalto such as Villa Mairea and the famous Baker House (as illustrated by Lahti, 2004). When the former manifested a geometric articulation of the concept, the latter was a rather nebulous representation that would have appealed to Gunasekara. The element of rationality that was evident in his earlier works, as that of Aalto, had been replaced by a strong degree of expressionism. As it appears, Gunasekara was fascinated by Aalto's convictions that "*[…] form is a mystery that eludes every definition [and when] there are many situations in life in which organisation is too brutal; the duty of the architect is to give life a more sensitive structure".* The corridor also provides a single opening into the open living room that extends into the garden. Its outer floor lines correspond with the two contour lines that break the garden space into three descending levels. Opening of habitable spaces in this manner into semi-enclosed gardens assures the continuous flow of spaces throughout the entire site extent. This makes the building look more spacious than it really is. The south-eastern quadrant is again divided in two, by a wall parallel to the one perpendicular to the spine. Out of the two units the division creates the east-facing one is the dining cum pantry and the other, hidden-away in the corner, is the servant's quarter with a small bedroom and attached bathroom. Both sections are lit and ventilated commonly from a small private rear-garden. The dining cum pantry is divided across, again by a level change, and a pantry top that demarcates a small foyer is accessible from the garage. The foyer at the garage level also provides access into servant's quarter at the same plane. The dining/pantry located at a level as high as the living room has an access door.

Consistent with Gunasekara's earlier designs, the de Silva house too pays homage the *Beaux-Art* tradition of the *Parti*.[xvi] The comparison of plans (Fig. 19-22) from Gunasekara's domestic portfolio allows one to infer that the architect has attempted to capture *"the essence of the project at large"* or the *"central idea or building concept",* in the words of Danielle Shows and Matthew Frederick respectively (in wespeakarchitecture.com, 2011). This explains the strong divisions on the plan narrated before. Dividing the site into four quadrants is the basic *parti* of the design, where the entrance, massing and spatial hierarchy have all followed that basic organization. The perfectionist that Gunasekara was – as Pieris, (2007) reveals – he pushed the idea to cover other design aspects too. These were manifested in the pervasive triangle in plans, stairwell, the pond and other elements on the façade. The 'wholly inclusive' possibility of *parti* that Frederick posits has been explored, when most others believe that *"[…] perfect parti is neither attainable nor desirable"* (in wespeakarchitecture.com, 2011). The reliance on the *parti* makes it plausible to argue that Gunasekara's fundamental design approach did not change over time – be it catering to the elite or sub-elite.

6.5.2. The Journey

Once arrived at the entrance court of the de Silva house, one is naturally drawn towards the light-flooded front end of the internal corridor, drawn by a phototrophic movement (Fig. 15). A few steps have to be climbed and the reflective pool crossed over, to reach the slightly wider starting point of the corridor. The foyer-like quality of the space allows one of three journey options; either to continue down into the darkness of the passage, to enter the naturally lit living through the door on the right or take the playfully arranged staircase to ascent to the upper levels bathed in the light from the roof gaps. Hence, this arguably, is a threshold point. The corridor provides access to bedrooms as well as the living and garden beyond. Zigzagging staircase flights lead into landing levels to provide access at first, to a mezzanine, and then, to an apartment unit, and finally, to the open roof terrace. A bizarre object that vaguely resembles a pyramid protects the stairwell.

6.6. Architectonics

6.6.1. Orchestrated Views

The views from the house are carefully choreographed. Only the southern façade affords extensive views via full-height door-window panels, while the northern side only contains ribbon-like windows fixed closer to the ceiling level. The eastern facade is almost blank, while the western one has a few ribbon windows and horizontal linear cuts. The choices were strictly functional. The north and east sides had no views to offer, the west side's neglect was climatic, and thus, at the south side the emphasis was directed on. The loss of load-bearing walls precipitated in the loss of the façade, which in Vidler's (1989: 42)

perspective, allowed the long window to be inserted into what became no more than a thin skin stretched across the surface of the edges of the horizontal slab (Fig. 14). From the first and second floor rooms, Gunasekara framed in all cardinal directions, views of the surrounding middle-class houses/hotels that were growing leaps and bounds. The middle-class penetration into a quarter formerly dominated by sea-side palatial elite estates marked a new becoming; the first step perhaps, towards a more 'just' society that the architect prophesized. Gunasekara's revelation has to be taken in the context where the middle-class suburban neighborhood (first encountered in the 1960s and 70s) was, even by the mid-1980s, not an omnipresent occurrence in Sri Lanka. Pieris (2007: 50-51) who mapped locations of these neighborhoods around their inception, in fact, attribute the phenomenon as a limitation to Colombo's new 'satellite towns'.[xvii] In the light of no available research, it could be inferred that the middle-class disbursement elsewhere in the island would have been sporadic. It is under these circumstances that Gunasekara's effort gains currency. On the other hand, the proliferating hotels – some brand-new and others, converted former elite houses/mansions – framed yet another new reality of open economy, at the macro level. The liberal system had created a new 'urban middle-class' according to Silva (2005: 112) and arguably, the class was not only propelling tourism industry to record highs by the mid-1980s as illustrated via statistics by Fernando, Bandara and Smith (2016: 6); most importantly, it was buying-out and pushing elites out of Mt. Lavinia. The family estates of the de Sarams' and Bandaranaikes' that not-so-long-ago comprised most of the sea-side land stretch between Mt. Lavinia and *Dehiwala,* had by now been reduced to a number of dispersed properties (L. D. Bandaranaike, 2010). When looking out from top floor interior towards the South, the horizon line falls amidst the horizontal floor-ceiling planes; framing the view of the vast expanse (Fig. 9). As soon as one steps outside on to the terrace, the external web-like structure assumes the framing function (Fig. 13). First, it frames the direct view along the horizontal, and also vertically, the sky above. The views the upper terraces selectively furnished is metaphorical of two contemporary realities. The view of the immediate St. Thomas's college (its classical stone-faced facades of main building blocks), conveys the colonial legacy still lurking at the back of 'sovereign' and 'nationalist' Sri Lankan state. Perhaps, Gunasekara was lamenting on how the colonial epistemological aegis was maintained in vain, in a nation that would benefit from its removal. The residential neighborhood between the edge of school playground and distant horizon portrays the expanding middle-class sphere of influence; spreading modernization from the suburbs to rural. The framed view of the sky is perhaps a frill but makes sense with regard to a similar arrangement inside. The oblique vertical view inside the building from entrance level promises a phototrophic movement towards light from gaps above, evokes the feeling of being inside a chapel.[xviii] After all, light, for Temple (2007: 76-102), is suggestive of knowledge and redemption; and more vitally, immanence of God. This spiritual quality was surely imbued in the design.

6.6.2. Nature's Inspirations

The close proximity of the spectacular Mt. Lavinia beach has made its mark on the design too. The representations of rugged edges of beach boulders are pervasive throughout the house, from its pointed wall edges (Fig. 10), pergola frames (Fig. 18), to jagged staircases (Fig. 11). The house could be conceived as a huge boulder, dislocated from the beach to perch uneasily within schools of geometric buildings – a natural phenomenon amidst man-made objects. This theme seems as an extension of the fish bone metaphor that inspired the plan's configuration to start with. The vegetation sprouting from plant troughs to dangle and camouflage the facades (Fig. 24) is comparable to the green algae subsuming boulder surfaces; and the protective structure (Fig. 13), the grasp of an octopus's tentacles. In another point of view, Gunasekara has allowed nature to re-claim as Laurie Baker did in his Indian projects (see Bhatia, 2003); yet in a more rigorous way in comparison to previous works. The green affinity of the de Silva house may trap Gunasekara's distress on two timely issues. On one hand, he might have been expressing disgust at the exacerbating scale of deforestation and resultant pollution plaguing Sri Lanka (Perera, 1994: 372-75).[xix] Gunasekara (2011) in fact, reminisced how green and unpolluted the Lankan cities were in his youth. On the other, Gunasekara might have been directing his reproach at the extant main-stream architectural scenario with its outright disregard for nature. After all, the 1980s marks the worst deforestation rates on record (Kariyawasam and Rajapakse, 2014: 36). In his view, even the meager laws that were there to protect the environment were not adhered to at the time (Gunasekara, 2011). Thus, Gunasekara would have been refuting the haphazard tendency that by 1977, took hold of the Sri Lankan urban fabric, and particularly, the 'brutalism' of the UNP government's modernization programme (Perera, 1994). It not only enabled certain non-architects to prevail as attested by O. Kalubovila (2011), the so-called 'foreign experts' also thrived in the opinion of Jayewardene (1984: 237), where both parties could be held responsible for environmentally unfriendly practices. Perhaps, de Silva house was Gunasekara's message to society on what the commitment to nature should be. This notion of 'environmentally friendly designing' that was also manifested in Bawa's works from the time in Sri Lanka as confirmed by Robson (2004: 134) had become a talking point indeed and was taken to another level subsequently by other Asian architects (Hart, 2011).[xx]

6.6.3. Deconstructive Touch

In terms of architecture, certain deconstructive inclinations could be ascertained in the de Silva house. First, the concept of the 'house' has been deconstructed into three discrete units; a larger unit for the parents and two smaller units for the two siblings (Fig. 19-22). This division was confirmed by A. de Silva (2010). Secondly, the structure has been separated from the envelope; again an alien practice to Sri Lankan architecture at the time. The structure is not based on a geometric grid as it has been twisted, while floor slab planes have been dislocated from their ideal positions (Fig. 23). This assemblage suggests of certain precariousness; an impression is given that the building has survived a hurricane. The perverse external structures that support the wide pergolas (extending from the envelope to form a web-like protective configuration) in turn,

adds to this effect. Volumetrically, the design could be conceived as a series of loose horizontal and vertical planes, detached from one another. Vegetation has been skillfully deployed to infill spaces between the structure and envelope. The green also gives a humane appearance to the strong geometric edges of the composition. Such transgressions have caused the external aesthetic of this house to take a bizarre and unconventional turn. Internally too, odd-shaped spaces have been fashioned with acute corners. Not just the bedrooms, the living and dining as well as the bathrooms share this predisposition that is far distant from their 'ideal' configurations for the Sri Lankan mind.

6.6.4. Bodily Analogy and Effacement

The deconstructive predisposition the discussed transgressions caused to traditional architectures was augmented through other experimental tropes. Gunasekara (2011) being the great admirer of Le Corbusier was deeply inspired, for the master's trends to be articulated in his works. He paid homage to Le Corbusier's reliance of the human body – like that of Alberti – as the foundation to repetition that resulted in the 'free plan', and Vidler (1989: 46) believes that there is plenty of evidence to substantiate this argument. *"From the house to the city, the body acts… as the central referent: its shape informs the layout of the Ville Radieuse its analogy infuses biology in to the mechanics of the city and the building; its proportions are embedded into every measure through the operation of the tracésrégulateurs of the Modulor".*[xxi] Within this bodily architecture, lies the concept of 'effacement'. Like the face, the façade of a building is *"a metaphorical plane of intersection between the eyes of the observer and what one may dare to call the 'soul' of the building"* (Vidler, 1989: 41). For Colin Rowe (in Vidler, 1989: 41), the existential interface between the *"eye and idea"* was necessary for any interaction between building and observer to take place. When considering intercourse with a building, *"[its] face, however, veiled, must always be a desirable and provocative item".* On the other hand, Leatherbarrow (2002: 73) tells us that façade generally *"registered first"*, and to 'arrive' is to stand in front of the façade. This is a face to face exchange that allows the building in question 'stand apart' from the rest that blends into oblivion.[xxii] The lack of façade Rowe attributes to the continuous-failing of modern architecture.[xxiii] It was the emphasis on the horizontal, and on the interpretation of inside-outside relationship that had made possible the 'free-façade' – no façade in the traditional sense. For Rowe, 'Face' was never a preoccupation of modern architecture (in Vidler, 1989: 42).

It could now be linked with the initial discussion on bodily architecture. The tradition of 'Renaissance bodily analogy'[xxiv] has become *"psychologised"* as a principle of 'humanistic architecture' in general (Vidler, 1989: 41). An ascription of a 'corporeal psychology' to the experience of architecture is pointed out by Wőlfflin (1966: 77).[xxv] In Wőlfflin's view, it denotes the 'creature'-like nature of the building *"with head and foot, back and front",* and in Scot's terms, we unconsciously invest the building itself with the human movement and moods (in Vidler, 1989: 42). The two principals together, form 'the humanism of architecture'.[xxvi] Moreover, the direct face-façade analogy demonstrative of eye and idea (that was once discredited through racial physiognomic analogies with

regionalist styles in the past) that Vilder (1989: 44) elaborates, has been lapsed deliberately. Rowe (in Vidler, 1989: 44) however, is critical towards this lacking as he insists that the face is the indication of the *"internal animation"* of a building, *"both opaque and revealing",* in the line of George Simmel's (1959) exploration on the 'Aesthetic Significance of the Human Face' as an index for modern spirituality (he believed that the face is the mirror of the soul).[xxvii]

As the modernists he admired, Gunasekara's path to artistic representation of the building's soul arguably took a more indirect form of abstraction in the de Silva house. For him, the entire sphere of experience the building offers (involving all senses) should signify its soul, not just the façade (and eye) that appeals to the sense of vision.[xxviii] After all, 'façadism' is a post-renaissance phenomenon that came into being after the perspective was invented (Leatherbarrow, 2002: 76), and its result was the façade assuming what Pallasmaa (2005) calls a *"retinal-centric imagery"*. It seems that this bodily architecture and effacement carry their underlying agendas.

(Fig. 09)

(Fig. 10)

(Fig. 11)

Fig. 09 View of the expanding commercial realm towards suburban Colombo from the roof terrace
Fig. 10 Alien outlook
Fig. 11 Zig-zagging staircase flights
Source: Author (2010)

The hitherto-unforeseen degree of bodily articulation within the configuration could be pinned on the turmoil of social life, at a time when the image of the slain body haunted the Sri Lankan psyche. Sri Lankans had by the mid-1980s been traumatized by the constant terrorist attacks by the hordes of LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) the island over.[xxix] They were the first of many more to follow (Jalaldeen in dailynews.lk, 2009).[xxx] The horrific images were reported via an array of media institutions that had by the time, seen a remarkable expansion thanks to neo-liberal policies. In a context when the value of human life had diminished drastically, Gunasekara allegorically evoked its significance. An architecture based on the human body (and its extension to the macro level) would have been an assumption of prominence to it that had been lost, and thus,

to human life the human body is a vehicle for. The humanist idea would have been that life is there to be indulged, but to suffer (N. de Silva, 2008b).[xxxi] Gunasekara would have indeed embraced this sentiment via his European avant-garde training. On the other hand, Christian ethos that Gunasekara cherished, maintain that nature is by God, for human progress (N. de Silva, 2006). His own personal compassion towards humanity imparted by his strong conviction to faith, would have provoked such a depiction. Within this depiction, lied an embodied message.

A nation's soul is arguably its cultural ensemble. However, this is never the case almost everywhere including Sri Lanka; as in every modern nation state, there is always a dominant culture that underplays the impact of its contenders in the making of a national identity (Eriksen, 1993: 143-146). It is the dominant culture that forms itself as the face, and therefore the soul, of a nation state. It is pertinent that the de Silva house by Gunasekara was built during a time when the majority's Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism was experiencing yet another peak. It was a revolutionary building that arguably added a last phase to Gunasekara's career; as he went on to apply its metaphorical currency to an array of projects of national importance to come as posited by Pieris (2007). Thus, arguably, this was an experiment at the micro-level; the initial step of something greater envisaged. By denying a face to the building that he would have metaphorically taken as 'Mother Lanka', Gunasekara possibly refuted the majority culture's claim to become the nation's face and soul. In the end, in a given multi-cultural situation, each culture assumes its meaning (identity) in relation to 'other' cultures (Eriksen, 1993: 121). This reality was recorded in the faceless, and in Pallasmaa's (2005) terms, 'haptic' architectural experience; depicting that a country's soul is an ensemble of cultures, but a dominant one. Debatably, this was never a refutation of Sinhalese Buddhist claim to legitimate cultural dominance,[xxxii] but an appeal for reconciliation among disparate cultures of Sri Lanka.

6.7. Trapping Global Trends

6.7.1. An Alien Pastiche

The design illustrates a clear set of dualities with humanism of the renaissance and anti-humanism of modernism. Humanism is evident in the *parti* configurations, bodily reference and other rational design choices from orientation to environmental sensibilities. On the other hand, anti-humanism renders the building faceless and attributes an eccentric physical and experiential quality to it. The unresolved nature of such dualities suggests that emphasis was not on a dialectical relation to his composition but showed a grappling to arrive at a good solution. Considering Gunasekara's artistic inclination, the house could indeed be viewed as a pastiche that replicates nature's occurrences. The form in overall is abstract, with the corporeal element celebrated, analogous to 19th century paintings by impressionist pioneers. The emphasis is not on the product itself, but the feelings it evokes (Evans, 2003: 161). It is this 'whole' that makes sublime plausible. In a period when architecture in Sri Lanka was lagging behind in artistic substance but fulfilling cultural needs

of modernity via emulation and nationalism,[xxxiii] Gunasekara may have been trying to awaken the artist in the architect. After all, Gunasekara (2011), the artist, comments that when architecture is an art form, what is the use of an architectural product that does not evoke the sublime in its observer? This certainly complies with Nammuni's (1987: 10) idea that a good 'shelter' should have a profound and enduring impact on its user that in turn, *"distracts"* him from the specific (building), to the contemplation of the abstract (and thus away from his physical constraints, anger frustration and poverty), *"[…] very much like a good poem, music or a good book […]".* When such artistic qualities are ascribed to shelter, then only architecture is created.[xxxiv] Hence, architecture certainly was created here. The overall composition of de Silva house is expressionist than rationalist (Fig. 10-18). Although Gunasekara was tempted by the rubric of deconstruction, he never incorporated its more salient features into his repertoire. Its haphazard tendency [that arises out of joining together discordant pieces to arrive at unrelated abstract forms] and the design being carried out in parts [the 'bits and pieces' approach (Raunekk, 2010)] would not have appealed to the idealist that he was. In this backdrop, it could be discerned that Gunasekara's application of certain key ideas of it in that particular juncture of Sri Lankan history was audacious and explains the added- alienation suffered by observers of his works. Analyzing the role played by Gunasekara, Christopher de Saram makes a number of seminal observations. His use of concrete forms was looked upon as an *"anti-traditional"* gesture during a period when identity was being found through nostalgia. Valentine's *"alien-ness, American-ness, modernity, freedom" was seen as "anti-national"*. Within an orientalist discourse,[xxxv] *"as Bawa became the role model, Valentine became the villain of the piece"* (de Saram in Pieris, 2007: 21).[xxxvi]

6.7.2. An Ethereal Familiarity?

Although Gunasekara's architecture from a first glance proved alien, it did contain certain elements of familiarity within. In the works of American practitioners,[xxxvii] he saw an effort to mold new technologies into an aesthetic that resonated with a specific geography; that he conceived to be a definitive break with the colonial past. The plastic curvature of concrete experimented within tropical climates by South American modernists suggested of an approach comparable to the linearity of the prairie style that had emphasized the expanse of the vast American geography. In this light, Pieris (2007: 13) suggests that *"[the] reference to ancient monuments of Incas and Mayas in Californian Modernists suggested ways in which he might approach and reinterpret Sri Lanka's historic architecture. For Gunasekara, the undulating softness of the tropical geography and interweaving of form and space in the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa would be parallel sources of inspiration".* In this particular case, having set aside historic references, it was the concomitant landscape he decided to replicate. After all, Mt. Lavinia where the famous hotel sits on a rocky vantage point, is a landscape with colonial associations apart from its economic significance. The hotel, formerly a colonial mansion, and the surrounding beach stretch linked with it, attests to a renowned love story (mountlaviniahotel.lk, 2011; Madawala, 2016).[xxxviii] Thus, this romantic association would have induced Gunasekara's creativity – in recreating the

environment through imaginative replication. How this replication was realised was discussed earlier. The building, analogous to the works of many modernist masters (*i.e.* Saarinen and Lloyd Wright) was not conceived as an object, but one that grew from its site. As Saarinen, Gunasekara would have also resorted to, not by the implication of surrendering of the building to its place, but instead realising enhancement of its place – collaboration with the natural and the man-made (Leatherbarrow, 2002). In this light, the notion that the latter of Gunasekara's works lacked any reference to past is a fallacy. Consequently, there was indeed, some form of familiarity of the context in his work, however ethereal it was. Presumably, it was this etherealness that rendered comprehension ineffective for their lay observers.

6.7.3. Audacious Technology

The de Silva house trapped a timely reality through its technological emphasis. The audacious concrete technologies used for the challenging structural configurations marked the culmination of Gunasekara's sectarian devotion to technological experimentation; and the kits-of-parts approach too he had by now, perfected. For Jayatilaka (2011) this technological stride forward pushed boundaries. Having taken inspiration from the 1960-70s industrialisation drive by the state and exhibitions it organised, Sri Lanka's engineering profession endured an innovative phase, and the tricked down effects sustained into the mid-1980s (Pieris, 2007: 13).[xxxix] In this backdrop, Gunasekara continued to collaborate with Engineer Jayathi Weerakoon on whom he had great confidence. For them, new technology promised solutions for the nation's housing crisis, when for many architects; a veneer of vernacular had either provided solutions, or concealed the chasms left by modern technologies. A vernacular masquerade on a modern concrete building diminished negative effect of the tropical climate, where humidity accelerated the decay of materials. It also obscured problems of poor workmanship, quintessential to the trade. Moreover, the scale and additive nature of the vernacular favored the artistic skill of the architect underplaying the role of the engineer. Gunasekara refused to abide by these choices that had become customary by the early 1980s and was determined to contribute to the progress of the industry by continuing experimentation (Pieris, 2007: 21).[xl]

6.7.4. Tropical Modern Residues

Gunasekara, in his inherent knowledge of Tropical Modernist applicability in the Sri Lankan climate, was astute enough to borrow appropriately from the rubric. The de Silva house is a repository of many Tropical Modernist experiments that yielded positive results. The most striking discount to the discourse could be found in the section of the building. The parallel yet slipped, horizontal slab planes create vertical openings to enable a stack effect throughout the house. The high entrance court space especially, with abrupt openings all around the spacious volume is the foremost stack ventilator. The slab arrangement coupled with vertical wall sections that stop short of soffits, facilitate a fair degree of cross-ventilation throughout. The stack and cross-ventilation coupled with the 'shadow-umbrella' effect to keep the interior cool. This is achieved in three ways; primarily, by the web-like pergolas resting on the external structure to protect

the building envelope, and secondarily, by the plant troughs that cover the circumference of the building (also by the surrounding greenery in the gardens all around). Especially, the wide canopy-like pergola structure that covers half of the rear-garden is striking (Fig. 18). The building at a glance is partly camouflaged by its surrounding trees, bushes growing on troughs, as well as runners that dangle from pergolas and slabs. These cut-down heat gain and glare, while making the experience of looking out (through greenery) pleasant. There are other precautions too. The fenestration on the west-facing façade has been largely reduced to narrow strips to minimize glare and heat gain amplified by the property's close proximity to the sea. On this largely blank facade, Gunasekara cut ribbon-like strips horizontally, for the cool sea breeze to flow through the garden (Fig. 14).[xli] Gunasekara's commitment to his tropical modernist training revealed a truth that most non-architect designed buildings of aesthetic pretentions failed to acknowledge in tropical Sri Lanka that was fast-urbanizing. Climatic suitability had been traded-off in the name of modernity and the de Silva house exemplified the applicability of the discourse, three decades on.

6.7.5. Trans-national Preferences

Gunasekara's domestic design for the progressive de Silva family replaced one that was the status symbol of the petty-bourgeoisie of yesteryear. An introvert bungalow with its hybrid colonial aesthetic was replaced by a totally alien and extroverted product that had architecturally encompassed the most fashionable philosophical strand of the time (*i.e.* deconstruction). The design traprd the modern aspirations of a fairly recent class construction – the upper middle-class. Within their commitment to authentic alterity, modern aspirations and outward-orientation had compelled them to turn their backs on colonial value systems, class structure and also architectures. The class did not possess a past heyday to celebrate, or a repository of pompous traditions to borrow from. Hence, in the very modern house by Gunasekara for the de Silvas, the traditional concession was removed, even from the dwelling equipment and accessories. This allowed de Silvas the freedom to choose what they wanted to use as well as display in the interiors, and the choice was obviously conterminous with the rest of the modern house (A. de Silva, 2010).[xlii]The excessive westernization of the de Silvas would have eliminated the sense of family contiguity pervasive in the quintessential Sri Lankan setting that was in turn, manifested in their request for a house that would ensure privacy for parents, as well as for each of their two young-adult children. Gunasekara thus, had to facilitate the deconstruction of the family-unit.[xliii] This organization was not consistent with the quintessential Sri Lankan dwelling arrangement[xliv] and was in fact, more of a Western sensibility. The only concession made to the Sri Lankan family was the encouragement for interactions provided on the well-resolved ground floor. The traditional Lankan dwelling after all, was a single-story open plan configuration that prompted constant family gatherings (Wijetunge 2011b, 2012c). Having realized this, he may have reproduced a parallel for the de Silvas on the ground floor, while the clients' specific requirement was reluctantly accommodated on the upper levels, as isolated compounds.

The agenda at the national level is more compelling. The eccentric design by Guasekara is a precarious-looking ensemble of architectonic elements that has in fact, deconstructed the very idea of the conventional house. The shift towards a deconstructive tendency frames perhaps, the turbulent politics of Sri Lanka of the period – overridden by the infamous Indian intervention of 1987 that called for a federal solution to the ethnic conflict (Gunaratna, 1993).[xlv] The intervention as many patriotic others, would have been considered by a frustrated Gunasekara himself, as a disturbance of sovereignty. The point when the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) would pull-out, by the end of 1987, was unforeseeable. At the time, it was everyone's view – including the president to be (*i.e.* Ranasinghe Premadasa) – that this domestic crisis needed a home-grown solution (Gunaratne, 1993). Thus, the attempted deconstruction of Sri Lanka would have been possibly framed metaphorically via deconstructive inclinations in Gunasekara's domestic architecture. The ensuing uneasy politics and its deteriorating consequences would have prompted the subsequent extension of the style into the civic level for more public receptivity.

6.7.6. Pejorative Residues and Trickled-down Content.

Gunasekara's design conceals other unpleasant realities of neo-liberal Sri Lanka too. As the ground floor plan illustrates, concealing of servants' spaces marks the sinister elite desire to keep working classes at bay; a continuum even the new upper middle-class favored analogous to their feudal counterparts. Irrespective of their repudiation of elitist architectural aesthetics, allowing of certain unethical practices that could be hidden conveniently was desirable. After all, the 'wage workers' the domestic servants now were, having stripped-off their former loyalties, were neither trustworthy nor reliable in the age of monetarism and political turmoil.[xlvi] However, Gunasekara, within his own convictions may not have approved of this, yet would have succumbed to his clients' pressure.

The de Silva house is protected on all four of its sides by lanky walls that appear impassable. This fortification suggests of yet another unpleasant political reality. The second insurrection led by the JVP – comprised mainly of Sinhalese working-class youth – between 1988-90 had a background of events commencing from the organization's outset and pioneering struggle in 1971 (Gunaratne, 1993). When Gunasekara began to design in 1985, in the wake of the Indian intervention, the nationalist ebb of the JVP who fervently opposed it was extremely high. People by this time realized that it was just a matter of time before the notorious organization would go on yet another violent rampage against the Sri Lankan state, and it eventually happened in 1987 (Dayasiri, 2011).[xlvii] The Sri Lankan state's latest creation – the upper middle-class – would have taken umbrage by JVP's burgeoning acts of resistance in the South. The architect would have been astute enough to predict what was to come; based on the ill omens. Thus, what he created was a receptacle within which, the affluent family could seek refuge in the wake of an insurrection by a rival class. Hence, within four lanky walls, the expressionist quality of Gunasekara's pastiche was hindered.

The due consideration given to the automobile in the house too is conspicuous. The automobile in the past had always been in the island a 'status symbol' of the affluent. It was a gulf-creator between classes; earlier between the elite and others, now between elites, sub-elites and others. The prominence given to the automobile space in the designing of the ground floor is noteworthy. Not only that Gunasekara provided ample space for two cars, he also ensured that they could be comfortably maneuvered from the road; made evident through the splayed edge of the garage entrance, and the hard mass-concrete floor that was formed as a vehicular ramp (Fig. 19). Just as in elite houses, the two-car garage by the time, had become customary in upper middle-class counterparts too, as Gunasekara's other designs also confirm. The open economy by the late 1980s had made relatively inexpensive Asian automobile makes even more affordable by lowering taxes. This trend was analogous with other developing countries as Connors (2011) suggests.[xlviii] Consequently, for a social group mainly stationed in the Colombo suburbs, automobile was a good alternative to what Pieris (2007: 50) calls *"perilous public transport"*. It not only assured comfort, but also a new 'visible consumption choice' in the words of Belk, Mayer and Bahn (1982), to demarcate class lines with the 'lower' middle-class, as well as a stride closer to the elite class. Most of Colombo district's major roads since open-economy have been plagued by vehicular-induced air, noise, visual pollutions as well as fatal accidents. Referring to this concurrent unpleasant state of the Sri Lankan roads, Dayaratne (2011: 3) notes that the motorcar has been often seen as a 'necessary evil'. In Dayaratne's (2011: 3) view, the modern urban spaces have been dehumanized in the quest for development and progress, and the over-reliance on private means of transport have removed the element of what he calls *"unplanned social encounters"* that has the potential to break prevailing social barriers. He concludes that in the 'hostile' roads of contemporary Sri Lanka, such encounters are unlikely. Arguably, such issues would have been first encountered by the mid-1980s (Chandrasiri, 2003: 2).[xlix] The policy-makers employed by a progressive Sri Lankan state following 'development' aims set by the capitalist West, gave priority to 'movement space' than 'social space', creating 'conduits' for efficient transport as in cities of the Western world (Dayaratna, 2011: 3). This significant policy change that was a complete reversal of the prior human-friendly urban inclinations arguably found indirect representation in the de Silva house.

6.7.7. Christianity, Modernity and Cultural Clash

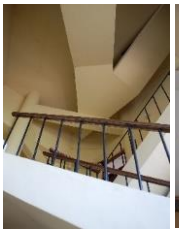
Gunasekara, the ardent Catholic, speaks through his architecture. Replication of natural occurrences – *"patterns, order and proportions"* in his own words – is appreciating that they exist, and paying homage to the creator who created such, for us to reach ultimate and intense inner joy – the sublime – and in the process create 'art'. Repetition throughout the house reinforces this idea, evoking immanence of God. The anticipation of industrial repetition as a panacea to cure domestic ills of a country by making architecture accessible to all is indeed in line with communal Catholic teachings. He is confident that the environmental constraints could be overcome;[l] within the strong (perhaps too strong) conviction he holds on science and technology (Gunasekara, 2011).[li]

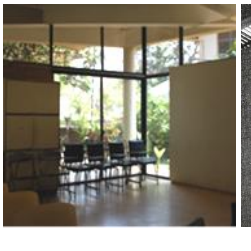
Gunasekara's approach framed yet another vague reality; the plight of the Sri Lankan Christian in the age of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism. The co-existence of Buddhism and Christianity in the island had always been uneasy. When Sinhalese Buddhism was rescued at the hands of colonialism, the state patronage the Christian faith had prior received by foreign rulers was removed. In fact, the once-dominant minority religion that intervened in state affairs and education as Perera (1994: 266-67) illustrates, by the 1980s, had plummeted to its lowest ebb since first introduced centuries ago.[lii] This called for its reinvigoration that took place largely in the rural areas, as a wave of organized conversion of poor peasants by various Christian sects.[liii] This was naturally challenged by the Buddhists, where their gradual resistance was to culminate later,[liv] and the outburst did not show until 2004 when a series of anti-Christian attacks took place (Pieris, 2007: 100).[lv] This is the concurrent phase of the ever-existing tussle between Christianity and Buddhism, where the liberal policies of the post 1977 were arguably its precursor. When the country was infiltrated by modern cultural influences than never before, it was the perfect opportunity for foreign missionary organizations to cash-in. Thus, when Gunasekara's personal fear of losing religious freedom was reflected in his architecture, the shrewdness of certain factions of his minority community resulted in the Buddhist counter attacks.[lvi] The Buddhist resistance on the other hand, was prompted by the urge to contain the relentless modernisation of the Sinhalese population under neo-liberal conditions. The fear that modernity was impairing the archaic Sinhala culture and its world view[lvii] in fact, underscored this urge. The perpetuation of Sinhala culture in the nationalists' perspective is vital as the receptacle of Buddhism. Endurance of Buddhism on the other hand, ensures the continuum of the alternative epistemology it harbors; that in their belief has the potential of curing ills ascribed upon the human being by modernity (N. de Silva, 2006). Hence, arguably, Gunasekara's architectural impressions that suggested the loss of his religious freedom perhaps was irrelevant to the clients of his project directly but served a higher purpose of warning against the imminent loss of religious freedom for all.

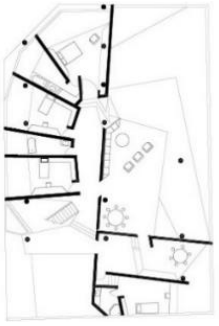
(Fig. 12)

(Fig. 13)

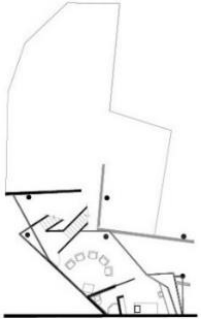
(Fig. 14)



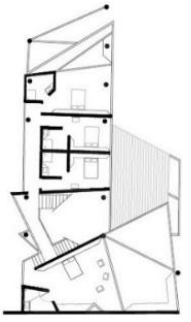




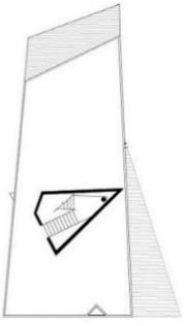
(Fig. 19)



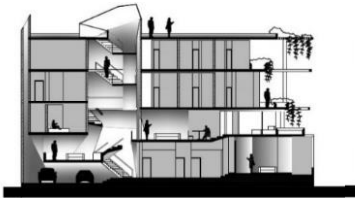
(Fig. 20)



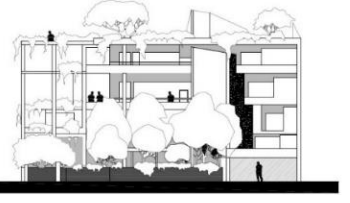
(Fig. 21)



(Fig. 22)



(Fig. 23)



(Fig. 24)

(Fig. 12)- Looking out from stairwell
(Fig. 13)- Web-like external concrete structure
(Fig. 14)- West-facing blank facade
(Fig. 15)- Various levels of Ground Floor
(Fig. 16)- Ground floor living open to garden.
(Fig. 17)- Looking up the stairwell
(Fig. 18)- External Pergolas
(Fig. 19)- Ground Floor Plan
(Fig. 20)- First Floor Plan
(Fig. 21)- Second Floor Plan
(Fig. 22)- Roof Terrace Plan
(Fig. 23)- Cross Section

7. Conclusion

The de Silva house was for a family where both the husband and wife were of a petty-bourgeoisie provenance. They also belonged to a so-called 'lower caste' group. About a decade after neo-liberalism when persistent nationalism had threatened the nation's moral values and sovereignty, Gunasekara's convictions on a just society and spirituality seemed to have intensified. While vindication of economic inequality for inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions continued to justify his political stance, the disenchantment with the unethical political reckonings and prolific violence, perhaps drove Gunasekara even-more towards obscurity, and ultimately into grips of the all-mighty. While the socialist inclination was still articulated in the stepped-up kit-of-parts approach, the attempted

political deconstruction of his motherland and the resultant bloodshed was engulfed within his interests in architectural deconstruction. Within this agenda, the promotion of the de Silvas from the middleclass into the upper middleclass/political class fringe was also represented in the architecture of the house in its spatial configurations. Since the family had no glorious family history to celebrate, and unique architecture to revive in the age of reinvigorated nationalism, the best choice was external orientation for architectural borrowings. The borrowing epitomized a feature of liminal mimicry quintessential to the class they belonged. The house which is a notable one from Gunasekara's repertoire entailed not only the foremost events in the political-economic spheres (marked as conspicuous incidents in history), but also the resultant socio-cultural trends of the country for the periods in question. When the architect and client did not directly mobilize in their capacities to articulate such, they found indirect reflections in alternative ways. Thus, the house belonging to a family that was now arguably placed within the elite sphere did indeed trapped and in turn, reflects periodic changes of the time it was built via its architecture. On the other hand, in irrelevance to the cultural condition of the clients, Gunasekara in his design trapped his own expressions of his faith, experiences and anxieties about existence in a turbulent place as Sri Lanka that also did indeed were tied to periodic changes. Some of such attributes in their generality were indeed relevant to his client too. It is evident that the analysis of architecture against policies, economic and socio-cultural trends of the times, and phenomenological interpretation of the de Silva house, do yield an assortment of underlying factors behind its formation – that are actually from the time of its inception and realization.

Moreover, it could be concluded that the employed qualitative methodology aforementioned – collecting of information via empirical works, analysis of case study against periodic changes and finally, phenomenological interpretation – could also be applied to similar genre-defining and polemical architectural case studies elsewhere to throw some light into future.

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Notes

[i] the other one being the great Geoffrey Bawa who was responsible for the style known as *Neo/Tropical Regionalism*.

[ii]The exhibition entitled *Architectural Modernism in Sri Lanka: Geoffrey Bawa and Valentine Gunasekara* took place in September 2017. The exhibition catalog was authored by its curator, Wijetunge (2018). The one entitled *Age of Passion: The Architecture of Valentine Gunasekara* happened in October 2018, and the catalog was authored again by its curator Wijetunge (2019).

[iii]The discussion appropriates similar approaches to Evans (2003), Rykwert (1982), Temple (2007), Leatherbarrow (2002), Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow (1993), Menin and Samuel (2003), Bandyopadhyay (in Fræscari, Hale and Starkkey eds., 2007), Bandyopadhyay and Garma-Montiel (in press), as well as Bandyapadhyay and Jackson (2007); all attempting to reveal the underlying factors of architectural works by scrutinizing their drawings and photography. The works of Pallasma (2005) on the other hand, helps the inquiry of sensory properties in buildings where appropriate, although his approach is not the main concern of this study. Moreover, the theoretical works of Corbusier (in Jenger, 1993), Vidler (1989) as well as Menin and Samuel (2003) are also considered. The theoretical discussions of Alexander (1977) on different architectural spaces and places are also important.

[iv] In the light of a criterion derived to be applied to the hybrid colonial/post-colonial societies of the island for their stratifications, only vertical divisions become relevant.

[v] from bourgeoisie to the petty bourgeoisie

[vi] Consequently, Gunasekara received the best available education; both at the secondary and tertiary levels (in Ceylon and England respectively).

[vii] Geoffrey Bawa is notorious for exploiting his personal connections to attract lucrative work.

[viii] This manifested in him winning a Rockefeller grant in 1965 to travel and experience the best of architecture in the USA.

[ix] the two mainstream opponents in Sri Lanka since independence.

[x] The son of the de Silva family, A. de Silva (2010) too once alluded to this tendency.

[xi] This, the architect would have comprehended during his numerous visits to them.

[xii] The 'Sea Street' leads to Mt. Lavinia beach and 'de Saram Street' to the nearby St. Thomas's College rear entrance.

[xiii] The so-called 'progressive legislature' that was a result of 1972 'Rent Control Act' and subsequent 1973 'House Property Act' were later extended to cover aspects from minimum lot sizes for buildings [20 perches (505 Sq. m)] to maximum buildable square areas [2000 Sq. Ft. (185 Sq. m)] (Perera, 1994: 387).

[xiv] The super markets, cafes, gyms and night clubs that have sprung up in major cities in Sri Lanka reflect the lifestyle of this class. The progeny of this class seek Western education. Consequently, international schools have sprung up to cater to them, as precursor to their education abroad.

xiv After all, although both Upali and Manel grew up in urban areas, their rural origins is undeniable. When Manel was born and brought up in Mt. Lavinia, Upali's origins are traceable to rural *Kegalle* in the central province. Even Manel's father hailed from a rural town. Although it could be inferred that her mother was from the Mt. Lavinia area itself, it was a rural fishers' hamlet on the coast during the British period. The professional engagements on part of grandparents place them well within the colonial petty-bourgeoisie class – according to the information supplied by the son of Upali and Manel, Asitha de Silva. His maternal grandfather was a senior civil servant [Superintendent of Government Stores and Director of CTB (Supplies)]. Maternal grandmother operated a 'Patisserie' that served short eats and soft drinks to St Thomas's College boys from the back garden of the old house that was on the site of the present house. Details about paternal grandparents are unknown (A. de Silva, 2011).

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[xvi] from Jayakody, Munasinghe, Weeramuni, Gunasekara to Elapatha houses.

[xvii] such as *Ratmalana*, *Nawala* and *Rajagitiya*.

[xviii] Gunasekara in deed had experience completing a number of them looking at his career project list (Wijetunge 2012b).

[xix]Behind this concrete view, lurked a salient consequence of mass-modernisation. The UNP government was sphere-heading a rapid modernization program. The accelerated *'Mahaveli'* development project was making way for numerous reservoirs and dams and accompanying agricultural settlements supported by infra-structure in the Dry-Zone. Moreover, the 'One Hundred Thousand' followed by a 'Million Houses' programs under the banner of *'Gam Udava'* (village reawakening) was creating inter-connected cities (Perera, 1994: 372-375). Consequently, by the mid-1980s, the resource of construction timber that had been in abundance before had become a valued commodity.

[xx] such as Ken Yeang

[xxi] He calls this *"an ever-present body reflected in and projected into a bodily architecture"*. Vilder assesses that despite the rhetoric of the free plan and façade, there seems to be a countertendency at work in Corbusier's work, emphasizing continuity with the humanist position.

[xxii] Leatherbarrow (2002:72) notes that *"… every build design is meant to stand apart from its surroundings because each is supposed to have its own look, weather it looks a little or a lot like the buildings that preceded it, within its vicinity or elsewhere [and] before the advent to façade recognition a person is still en route, still in the midst of things and more or less vagabond, aware of what's around but not focused on anything in particular"*.

[xxiii] Vidler (1989: 42) argues that *"Once the horizontal slab on columns, permeable to light, air, and space, had technically and polemically replaced the vertical load-bearing wall, the façade was inevitably at risk"*. This was expressed in Le Corbusier's prototype, *Maison Domino*.

[xxiv] inspired by Vitruvius to be extended by Alberti, Filarete, Francisco di Giordio and Leonardo da Vinci.

[xxv] As he elaborates, *"we judge every object by analogy with our own bodies"*. In Scott's mind, the building's 'body' acts as a referent for *"the body's favourable states*. [The] m*oods of the spirit…, power and laughter, strength and terror and calm"*.

[xxvi] What provides the basis for design is the *"tendency to project the image of our functions into concrete forms"*. On the other hand, *"the tendency to recognise, in concrete forms, the image of these functions"* is the basis of criticism (Scotte, 1924: 239).

[xxvii] Simmel believed that it was no doubt the result of its unity in response, a symmetry that rendered all the more expressive even the slight distortion of one of its parts. Further, he noted that the structure of the face makes too exaggerated a transformation in any one of its parts impossible without positively unaesthetic, almost unhuman results. He equated such 'centrifugal movements' – characteristic of baroque figures – to 'despiritualization', the weakening of the domination of the mind over the extremities of the being. Beyond this, the face is an index, not simply of 'mind' in the abstract, but individuality in the concrete. *"The face strikes us as the symbol, not only of the spirit, but also of an unmistakable personality"* (Vidler, 1989: 45). For Rowe (in Vidler, 1989: 45), lapsing of the facade in the face of anti-individualist program is a dislike for personality. Simmel's perception was that face as a bearer of meaning far-surpasses the body in expressiveness. On the other hand, the eye epitomises the face in mirroring the soul and appearance; the latter leading to the veiling and unveiling of the soul (Vidler, 1989: 45). *"At the same time it [eyes] accomplishes its finest, purely formal end as the interpreter of mere appearance, which knows no going back to any pure intellectuality behind the appearance. It is precisely this achievement with which the eye, like the face generally, gives us the intimation, indeed the guarantee, that the artistic problems of pure perception and the pure sensory image of things – if perfectly solves – would lead to the solution of those other problems which involve soul and appearance. Appearance would then become the veiling and unveiling of the soul"* (Simmel, 1958: 281). For Simmel (in Vidler, 1989: 45), art's task of *"creating a maximum change of total expression by a minimum change of detail"* is framed in the *"most complete model"* of the face. For him, the symmetry of the face makes sense due to this quality. Simmel believed that stripping-away of the face from soul would be analogous in some sense, to the denature of the soul itself, or at least, to deprive it of that content it received from the face as its expression and representation (Vidler, 1989: 45).

[xxviii] Gunasekara's building, rather than being a mimetic and figurative correspondence is based on abstract qualities – height, weight, stability-instability, and so on.

[xxix] the most memorable incidents being the notorious massacres in *Sri Maha Bodhi* and *Aranthalawa* in 1985 and 1987 respectively.

[xxx] The massacres mark the stepping up of the LTTE's terror campaign, where they extended their attacks from the military to the Sinhalese Buddhist civilians. The horrors of these attacks particularly, still haunt Sri Lankans twenty years on. *Anuradhapura Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi* massacre took place on the 14th of May, 1985. In *Anuradhapura*, LTTE cadres massacred 146 Sinhalese civilians. The cadres first entered the main bus station and opened fire indiscriminately killing and wounding many civilians. Then they drove to the *Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi* shrine and gunned-down monks and civilians as they engaged in religious activities. *Aranthalava* massacre took place on 2nd of June, 1987. It was the massacre of 33 Buddhist monks (most of them young novice monks) and four civilians by LTTE cadres in the *Ampara* district of Eastern Sri Lanka (Jalaldeen in dailynews.lk, 2009). Many more similar attacks followed after 1987.

[xxxi] expressed through modern capitalism, the discourse ensued that in turn resulted in the ego-centric individual

[xxxii] judging by Gunasekara's (2011) utmost respect for Buddhist teachings, Sinhalese history and complete disapproval of separatism.

[xxxiii]via a fruitful fruition of modern and traditional contents in the Regionalist discourse.

[xxxiv]*"Architecture is thus 'Significant building' – building which communicates, building which possesses fine 'language' and wears appropriate expression. Architecture is building which makes man complete. Like a good teacher it is that which renders itself absolute. It is building which releases the Inner Force of Man and fortifies him against external forces"* (Nammuni, 1987: 10).

[xxxv]whereas the preferred architecture of that time was one based on the European perspective of the orient – finding the nice things that ordinary people in the country have done historically – outside their scope of experience.

[xxxvi]In de Saram's view, Gunasekara was the male counterpart of Minette de Silva.

[xxxvii]Eero Saarinen, Louis Kahn, Charles and Ray Eames, Paul Rudolph, Richard Neutra, Kevin Roche etc.

[xxxviii] This is said to have occurred between a former British Governor General of Ceylon, Sir Thomas Maitland, and the beautiful mestizo dancer called *Lovina*. It is believed that the name Lavinia is a derivation from Lovina.

[xxxix]This is confirmed by Sri Lanka Institution of Engineers' 'Innovation and Self-reliance; 'Kulasinghe Felicitation Volume', History of Engineering in Sri Lanka' published in 2001 (in Pieris, 2007: 26-41). Civil engineer Dr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe is considered the father of modern Sri Lankan engineering field (kulasinghe.com, 2011).

[xl]Gunasekara not only played the part of bricoleur – picking up various seminal architectural influences from an extant array of mainstream practices of the time – he ventured beyond the conventional scope, and exploited potential solutions engineering profession was capable of delivering. In the process he knew exactly what engineering material and tool was to be used for each unique job at

hand, to a level of efficacy. This made his approach one of an *engineer*'s. Towards the very end of his career, as the de Silva house posits, the two approaches converged; making him an *engineer-bricoleur* (Pieris, 2007: 152-153).

[xii]Conversely, on the garden-facing façade, all windows cover full-height between floor and soffit.

[xiii] He confirms that all dwelling equipment and accessories in the house were new and no traditional content was retained.

[xiii] as opposed to his own personal preference for family contiguity portrayed in the earlier designs.

[xiv] be it vernacular or colonial hybrids, extended family is a common occurrence.

[xv] The separatist demands by the Tamil politicians at the democratic level since the 1950s, was by the 1970s, overhauled by Tamil militarism that found its patronage both in the sub-continent and West. When Tamil politicians were conspiring to carve-out a separate state democratically – as it appeared following *Tamil United Liberation Front* being disproportionately elected as the opposition, and immediately after declaring a *Tamil Eelam* in their electorates of majority (Matthews, 1978: 96) – the militants had resorted to violence (Gunaratne, 1993). It was such systematic provocations that resulted in ferocious outbreaks – such as the 1983 anti-Tamil riots the island over by certain Sinhalese mobs – and the civil war that in turn, shunned Sri Lanka's Buddhist image (Ivan, 2006: 79-86). The persistence of the India state compelled its neighbour to abandon the conclusive stage of campaign against separatist LTTE (i.e the infamous *Wadamarachchi* operation), and engage in dialogue. This was to result in a hitherto-unforeseen concession – the 'federal solution' (known as 'the Thirteen Amendment' to the constitution). Notwithstanding the Sri Lankan state's willingness, despite of uproar and mass agitation that culminated as the JVP insurrection in the South, LTTE's persistence for self-determination marked a new phase of the Eelam War that the Indian Peace Keeping Force had to fight (Gunaratne, 1993).

[xvi] In colonial Ceylon, even the petty-bourgeoisie traditionally received services of loyal domestic aides.

[xvii] The eruption happened immediately after the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of 1987, when the JVP began their so-called 'Anti-IPKF War'; ironically not directed at the Indian forces, but its Sri Lankan supporters and sympathisers the organisation prescribed as 'traitors' (Dayasiri, 2011).

[xviii] He notes this as a result of his enquiry into the Nigerian middle-class car market.

[xix] The increase in vehicle population was significantly higher during the post-1977 period. Of the total number, about 44% were active in the Colombo Metropolitan Area. The total number of vehicles in Sri Lanka has increased from 129,520 in 1970 to 1,374,144 by 1996.

[i] He is not in favour of its limitations and hails modern-day technological achievements of man (Gunasekara, 2011). For instance, he adores the mechanised house of luxury that is a common phenomenon in his present home California.

[ii] The linear progressive nature of Western science and epistemology is attributed to Christianity's concept that the resources of the earth and its beings are meant for the habitation and progression of the human being – all of which are god's creations (N. de Silva, 2006). Further, the underlying truth behind Western epistemology is that once man is able to comprehend – in an all-encompassing manner – the forces of this universe – by subjecting universal phenomena into an epistemological process of rational deconstruction – he will come to possess the ability to control them for his kind's advantage (Ieichakman, 2006); analogous to the above view. In this light, Gunasekara's willingness to acknowledge Western science and its benefits is explanatory based on his homage to the creator. In doing so, he fails to draw the connection between science and capitalism that he despises – for it is capitalism that ushers scientific development articulated as technology, where both feed one another (N. de Silva, 2006).

[iii] For instance, the Christian figures had dropped from 10% of the population in the early 20th century, to 7.4% by 2000 (K. Pieris, 2000).

[iii] These sects ranged from the from Roman Catholics, the Methodists to adherents of Jehovah's witness, and the American evangelists also played a major role. Western funded hospitals and other charity organisations offering help (only if converted), free English classes teaching Christian religious contents, to pre-schools that teach pupils Christian hymns and elements of Christianity among many other means, took over the task of religious propagation. Among many practices employed by the proselytisers, the most unethical however, was approaching people in their hours of vulnerability such as sickness, physical handicap bereavement or financial difficulties (K. Pieris, 2000; christianaggression.org, 2011).
[iv] The predecessor of *Jathika Hela Urumaya* (JHU) was *Sihala Urumaya*. With Buddhist monks in the lead, JHU was formed as a Sinhalese Buddhist political party in 2004. The party lobbied to prevent forceful proselytizing resulted in the so-called 'Anti-conversion bill' enacted in 2009 (Jain, 2009; solofeminity.blogs.com, 2009). A similar bill had been presented in 2004 but failed after the Supreme Court found it unconstitutional.
[iv] The attacks were directed on small evangelical groups who were converting the rural poor. This was eventually stepped up to target the majority Catholics, resulting in a number of isolated incidents.

[vi] Anyway, the liberal individual that Gunasekara was, it is unlikely that he approved of unethical conversion of desperate peoples, especially from a religion he himself admired. Although Gunasekara is skilfully tied up with personal opinions of certain authors, he does not believe that the reinvigoration of Sinhalese Buddhism in the island was in any way chauvinist. In his words an *"inferiority complex"* under the colonial aegis underpinned the nationalist phenomena and its resultant architecture (Gunasekara, 2012).

[vii][viii] as Dayaratne (2010) illustrates of the post 1977 changes in the rural village