

Esto Perpetua

May 13, 2018, 10:35 pm



The article by Dr. D. Chandraratna titled, 'We must resurrect our democracy or be doomed,' in The Island newspaper of 11th May 2018 – P9, would not have caught my attention if not for the letter in The Island newspaper captioned, 'ESTO PERPETUA' by An Old Thomian on 12th May.

Dr. Chandraratna, in his article chooses the mottos of the two schools - Royal and St. Thomas' - to make a point. His reference to ruling party leaders hailing from Royal College, and to its motto 'Disce aut Discede' being appropriate, due to the "sordid mess the country has arrived at," may find some meaning in the context. But to translate the St. Thomas' College motto, 'Esto Perpetua' to mean 'Go on for Ever' is preposterous.

Anyone with a smattering of Latin would know that the Latin word 'Esto' is derived from the Latin verb 'SUM' meaning 'I AM' and conjugated – sum, es, est; sumus, estis, sunt (its derivatives) The imperative is 'Esto'. The word 'Esto' in the context of 'Esto Perpetua' moreover implies, 'without pretensions or hypocrisy'.

The Latin word for the English word 'Go' is 'Eo' conjugated as Eo, ire, ii, itum. The imperative is 'ito'. 'Ito Perpetua' would meet Dr. Chandraratna's purpose without contaminating 'Esto Perpetua' that has no meaningful place in this context.

It seems that Dr. Chandraratna has laboured to show the two schools on a relative basis for a purpose of his own. Let me say here and now that these two schools owe so much to each other, mainly in clean and hard competition. One cannot shine without the other.

For good measure, and in the spirit of the two schools, may I relate an anecdote tossed around in the Mustangs Tent at Royal-Thomian cricket matches: "A Royalist and a Thomian can be identified from their walk". – "A Royalist walks as if he owns the whole world. – A Thomian walks as if he does not care to whom the world belongs." Guess the Difference.

TASSIE SENEVIRATNE

Winner of the Warden Stone Memorial prize for Classics - 1954