

Prasanna Vithanage

Why I read the WSWS

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[*Editor's note:* Prasanna Vithanage, veteran Sri Lankan filmmaker, has been acclaimed both nationally and internationally. Apart from several striking films such as *Purahanda Kaluwara*, (*Death on a Full Moon Day*) and *Ira Mediyama* (*August Sun*) he has also produced and directed several stage dramas including *Debiddo* (Dario Fo's *Trumpets and Raspberries*).]

If I may recall my first encounter with WSWS, it was during the time I screened my second film *Pavuru Walalu* (*Walls Within*) in January, 1999. A colleague informed me that WSWS had published a review of my film and recommended to read it. In her film review, late comrade Piyaseeli Wijegunasinghe, explored how man is being deprived of socially harmonious relations and development within the existing social environment. I was then interviewed by the WSWS in order to examine the connection between the artist's self-expression and the social reality expressed in his artwork. That was how I started to follow WSWS and I continue to benefit from its analysis.

I thank WSWS for its principled and courageous campaign waged against the banning of my next film *Purahanda Kaluwara* (*Death on a Full Moon Day*) by the government. Through that campaign, many international artists and intellectuals came forward to defend the rights of artists and the freedom of art. I think that campaign was one of the major reasons for lifting the ban on my film.

I follow WSWS diligently, its art reviews in particular. I have found the web site to be a knowledge generator on all aspects of social existence. I would like to draw special attention to David Walsh's *The Aesthetic Component of Socialism* which has helped me immensely whenever I become sceptical about my own work. I have read it many times to understand the roots of the problems faced by artists in this consumer society.

When I meet fellow filmmakers, we talk about international films. In these discussions, I base myself mostly on the reviews of WSWS and they have vastly broadened my own knowledge on art and cultural issues as well as others. So, I always recommend WSWS to my colleagues. At the same time, WSWS is the only organ that I have come across that fights against the idea currently dominant among many artists that the struggle for socialism is futile.

The value of WSWS is not limited to the field of art. When you consider the situations in either Egypt, or in Libya and Syria, the analysis of the WSWS stands opposed to any position of despair. People have shown their readiness to engage in struggle but they are maneuvered by reactionary forces with the help of pseudo left groups. WSWS explains the reasons behind this situation. The main issue is the lack of a genuine socialist perspective.

The recent Sri Lankan Socialist Equality Party document on its historical foundations published on the WSWS make it clear that many historical problems created in the island and the region stem from the liquidation of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, abandoning Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution. Today we face complex issues that emerged after that betrayal. I would like to claim that without having this historical knowledge on what happened in the world, an artist cannot make a contribution to society. I believe that although the art work is a self expression of the artist it always has an objective basis.

Finally, I would say without any doubt, WSWS has been the most influential cultural organ in shaping my vision of life. So, I wish WSWS a long life on its fifteenth anniversary.



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