



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

Changing Landscapes of a Colonial Society: The Formative Years of Martin Wickramasinghe

By
Uditha Devapriya

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 182 of the National Trust

Thursday 17th September 2026 at 6.00 pm

at the Auditorium of the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka

No. 6, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7

(For those who join online: <https://youtube.com/live/miJN5gOOSLI>)

Martin Wickramasinghe (1890 – 1976) is regarded as one of the foremost writers and public intellectuals of 20th century Sri Lanka. Chiefly celebrated for his fiction, his writings on art, culture, science, society, and politics are also widely read and studied. In 1961 Wickramasinghe published his memoirs, *Upan Da Sita (From the Cradle)*. Evoking his childhood, youth, and later life, it explores the many worlds he confronted, from his upbringing in Koggala to his years in Colombo.

Drawing on the speaker's original research, this lecture examines how the many environments of a colonial society in flux shaped Wickramasinghe's worldview. It delves into three locations from his autobiography: the southern belt from Galle to Matara, Colombo, and the country's south-east quadrant from Hambantota to Batticaloa. Wickramasinghe's recollections of these places reflect his perceptions of the cultural and political changes that swept through early 20th century Sri Lanka and gave form to his subsequent work on art, culture, history, and anthropology.



Uditha Devapriya is an independent researcher and analyst who works at the intersection of art, culture, history, anthropology, and international relations. The author of five books, his latest publication, *Enduring Works*, is an official history of S. Thomas' College that explores the relationship between institutional history and social change. He is currently working on a critical study of Martin Wickramasinghe, which delves into his largely neglected role as public intellectual and social critic. He has delivered several lectures on Sri Lankan culture, including at the India International Centre (IIC) in New Delhi.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929