



Yala National Park – Picture by Lal Anthonis.

Last Trumpet Call

Sunil Sarath Perera
Senior Asst. Secretary
Ministry of Environment
and
Parliamentary Affairs

To the tank from which we drank
The herd in its accustomed way
Came at evening to the bank

Though the sparkling water clear
Grew muddied where they thronged the bank
Anger never did we feel;
In peace the waters of the tank
Man and elephant would share:

We saw she-elephants display
Their mother love towards their young
In the moonlit forest glades
Underneath the Palu shrank
By the margins of the bank.

Twining trunks around each tree
Scattering leaves that fluttered free
The milk of love flowed freely given

Shattered underneath the axe
Fell the forest; flames flared high
For the source of life now lost
Rose the bees' sad murmerous sigh

When the peace men knew was gone
When strife and frenzied madness came
It was then the elephants lost their lives.

While the suckling nestled close
To its mother, down they fell
Overflowing mother-love
Kept the warm milk flowing still
Mingling with water in the tank.

To the water as it flowed
Tinged now with the red of blood
On the surface of the tank
Swimming the long-necked bitterns drew

Death could not kill mother-love
Hear the heron's long lament
From the centre of the tank

That trumpet call
That lovely scene
In forest glades
No more is heard
No more is seen.