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An é-danda is an improvised bridge across streams and rivulets. More often than not, put in place with a coconut trunk or such log, it connects the two banks of a river and enables people to cross over from one bank to the other. “An heirloom of the past,” é-danda still remains in use in present day Sri Lanka.

“The dead past is alive in the present. Vividly.” reads the tag line of É-Danda, a work of fiction that has captured a significant period in the recent history of Sri Lanka. In this book Mineka P Wickramasingha crosses almost uncharted territory by writing about the 1989 JVP insurrection, a subject that has been approached by a handful of Sri Lankan English writers.

Speaking about how he started writing, he goes back to the late 60’s and the time when he got the opportunity to meet “The Mother” at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in Pondicherry, India; an event that changed his life. It was there in Pondicherry that he wrote his first short story - ‘The Evolved Crow’. Reading that first short story, Manoj Das, a prolific short story writer and an award winning Indian author had one thing to say, for Wickramasingha to keep on writing. Ever since then, he has continued writing and even gone on to win the State Literary award for his short story collection, ‘The Playmate’ in 1995.

His latest book, É-Danda narrates the story of Pol, a rebel who sacrificed his life for a cause that he believed in. But along with the story of Pol, run many parallel stories; that of Pol’s elder brother Kalu, who has gone abroad in search of greener pastures, the plight of Upali and Leela, whose clandestine love crosses caste barriers, the tale of Pol’s father Don Suda and also the fate of Devi, a woman who is fearless to face the harsh truths about her life. With the many accounts of these individuals, the book discusses many socio-political issues in the country.

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