

# TAMIL GUARDIAN

VOL: 4

JUNE 15 - JULY 15 1994

No: 5

## DISCRIMINATION- ANOTHER FACE, ANOTHER PHASE?

In a recent official communique, the Government announced that 14,000 families, mostly Tamil and Muslims, are to be settled in Right Bank (RB) area of Madhuru Oya (ie System B of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project). While this may provide some psychological relief to the Tamil/Muslim landless and the poor peasants who were, hitherto, excluded from the Mahaweli Project, mere declarations of intent have often proven to be an illusion.

### "Demographic Engineering"

It must not be forgotten that a significant portion of the Left Bank (LB) area of the Madhuru Oya, where land alienation to predominantly Sinhala peasants has already been effected, falls within Batticaloa District. For instance, the recent Sinhala settlements comprising the villages of Nagasthana, Kurulupetha (old Omadiya Madu), Ransarathana (near Kirimichchai), Mahawelithana (6 miles away from Vaharai on the west) lie on the border areas of Batticaloa and Pollonaruwa Districts.

These were formerly Tamil-concentrated areas which have now been fully settled with Sinhalese.

These trends in the Eastern Province approximates the state-sponsored Sinhala settlements which took place at Welī Oya (ie System L of the Mahaweli Project). These two together constitute the twin-props of the "demographic engineering" aimed at breaking the contiguity of the North-East.

Let us now turn to another instrument of land alienation with some laudable features, but with the potential for

"demographic engineering". The much publicized "Swarnabhoomi" project aimed at converting cultivation rights of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) permit holders into outright grants proceeded smoothly and with much fanfare in the Sinhalese areas. The experience of the cultivators in the North-East, however, was markedly and typically different.

According to official records, 25,760 perfected Swarnabhoomi Deeds were sent to 58 Divisional Secretaries in the North-East Districts of Amparai, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Killinochchi, Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaithivu and Trincomalee. But, not one deed has so far been handed over to the LDO allottees.

### Impersonations - No Longer restricted To Polling Booths

In the midst of all this, reports have come in about instances of irregularities and discrimination against Tamil graduates who had applied for recruitment into the public service. Reports reveal that many Tamil graduates, who had turned-up for interviews in Colombo, had been sent home on grounds that they had already been interviewed!

It appears that impersonations are no longer restricted to the polling booths. At the same time, Graduates who had turned up for interviews in Jaffna were sent back since, according to the concerned officials, no proper

Continued...Page...6

## HARASSMENT OF LOCAL POPULACE IN MANDOOR

We have received reports from the local populace at Mandoor and the surrounding areas of undue and excessive harassment by the security forces - including forced labour.

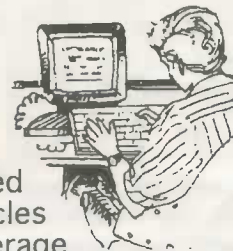
According to our information, all male residents, over 12 years of age, of Mandoor, Thambalawatha, Palamunai, 13th Colony and 14th Colony were under instructions to report to the Mandoor and 13th Colony Camp of the Security Forces before 7 am, each Sunday. Those who come late were severely assaulted, while those who were unable to report due to illness and other unavoidable circumstances were rounded-up and beaten.

But what is particularly obnoxious is that after the routine registration, all those who report at these two camps are broken-up into groups or "labour gangs" of 30 and forced to do all sorts of menial and back-breaking tasks. We understand that the conditions at camp at 13th Colony is particularly bad, where the security personnel take immense delight, of a sadistic and perverse form, at the sufferings and humiliation that the People undergo.





# REFLECTIONS



In recent times, the term “Gentleman Politics” and the need for “gentlemen in politics” has figured in numerous articles and editorials in the local media. Undoubtedly, the news coverage given to the nexus between the “underworld” and politicians, particularly in relation to “Soththi Upali”, has contributed to this loud-thinking in the media.

Let us sit back and reflect on this, a bit more objectively.

The term “Gentleman Politics” has many connotations. One connotation is that only “gentlemen” should engage themselves in politics. We dismiss this outright, since it implies that politics or the capacity to “govern” is the sole preserve of “gentlemen” - a proxy for elites, not to mention the male bastion. One positive aspect of free universal education in Sri Lanka and “swabasha” is that the elitist character of Sri Lankan politics was undermined and, in turn, created the space for persons of “humble origins”, including women, to occupy the higher echelons of the Sri Lankan polity, government and public administration.

On the other hand, if the term “gentleman politics” is used as a form of common parlance to indicate the opposite of the on-going process of “criminalization” of politics and political opportunism, then we have no grouse with this term.

In a recent statement, Madame Bandaranaike had this to say: “The task of cleansing society of the evil of corruption that has been encouraged for so long is no easy task. Yet, we believe it is an urgent and essential need, to restore public confidence in government and rebuild the democratic structures, which have been systematically destroyed with the environment of corruption and criminality after 1977”.

We agree. But, when it comes to political opportunism by “gentlemen in politics”, we also have this to say. In 1956, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike tore the “Banda-Chelva” Pact which evolved out of an understanding between “gentlemen”. In 1977, J.R. Jayawardena declared to the Tamil People, “if you want war I will give you war, if you want peace, I will give you peace.”. Here was a “gentleman” Head of State declaring war on innocent Tamils at a time when there was hardly any armed resistance! Again, after the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983, where thousands of innocent Tamils were killed, the “gentlemen” of the Cabinet trooped before the TV, after the carnage had spent itself out, and expressed grief over the shortage of food and long queues due to the civil disturbances. But not one word was mentioned as an expression of remorse for what the Tamil people had undergone!

Then, we have the recent trend of a nexus between “politicians” and “criminals” which has led to contract killings, intimidation of the “gentlemen” of the judiciary and a whole range of perverse and sadistic acts of violence against political opponents.

Yes. If “gentleman” politics means honesty, integrity, commitment and selflessness, then there is a definite need for the introduction of “gentleman politics” (suitably amended to make the term gender neutral) into the national polity. On the other hand, if “gentleman politics” means allowing a small “elite” to dominate the national polity, on the grounds that they are the true “gentlemen” who can lead the “uncouth, ignorant masses”, then that attitude and tendency must be challenged.

Field  
Report



## The Plight Of Mannar And Its' People

### Background

The District of Mannar, with an area of 2014 Sq.Km and a total population of 131,000 was, for a long time, a show-case of harmony and peaceful coexistence. The Tamils and Muslims number 89,000 and 40,000 respectively. The balance are Sinhalese.

The on-going war between the LTTE and the Government's Security Forces has changed all that. But even prior to that, during the period of state terrorism and military occupation, the People of the District of Mannar could be said to have been the most affected.

The advent of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord did provide a respite, particularly during the functioning of the North-East Provincial Government, when projects pertaining to resettlement and rehabilitation were formulated. Some ad hoc and immediate remedial measures were also activated during this period.

The de facto unilateral abrogation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord by the Premadasa regime, the de-induction of the IPKF and the dissolution of the EPRLF-led North-East Provincial Government by Colombo, in collaboration with the LTTE, changed all this.

The situation deteriorated when the opportunistic alliance between the Premadasa regime and the LTTE collapsed and the so-called "Eelam War 2" began in June 1990. 50,000 Tamils of Mannar District were displaced and rendered homeless - and reduced to the status of "parasites" living on State dole. The 40,000 Muslims, who had co-existed with their Tamil brethren in peace and harmony, were almost over-night chased out of Mannar by the LTTE. The only possessions they were allowed to carry were the clothes that they happened to be wearing on that fateful day.

### The Illusion of Resettlement

Following limited military operations, some areas of Mannar district were declared "cleared areas"

where Government agencies, the UNHCR and some NGOs, international as well as local, were directly involved in the task of resettlement and rehabilitation. The UNHCR and other NGOs are also active in the "uncleared areas". However, the situation is far from satisfactory, and, in some instances, worse than the conditions faced by displaced persons before being so-called "resettled".

In particular, despite being "resettled", the people are not in a position to engage in traditional economic activities - mainly fishing and agriculture.

As far as Fisheries is concerned, the on-going restrictions on fishing by the

*A.G.Linges*

security forces has affected more than 1000 families in the cleared areas and over 2,000 families in the "uncleared areas". Although, dry rations are being supplied, this is far from adequate to meet the daily nutritional requirements. In addition, the loss of income from fisheries-related economic activities has also adversely affected wider human needs - including self-esteem.

In the Agricultural sector, it is estimated that not more than 20% of the available land will be cultivated during 1993/94. In addition, nearly 5,000 acres out of 11,000 acres of paddy cultivation was affected due to heavy rains.

This problem has been further compounded by the fact that the Agricultural Indusrance Board had not made any attempts to have the crops insured. Neither have the State Banks made any arrangements to release any cultivation loans in certain areas.

### Water, Water Everywhere - But Not A Drop To Drink!

Despite a project to supply drinking water to Adampan, Vankalai and Mannar Towm from Kattukkarai Kulam, it continues to remain blocked in the pipeline!

During the period of the EPRLF-led North-East Provincial Government, the supply of drinking water was carried out quite satisfactorily. This was once again disrupted when the LTTE blew-up the reservoir at Semmanal Thivu and Vankalai.

Further, despite the efforts taken by the EPRLF Member of Parliament for Mannar, Emmanuel Silva to allocate funds for water supply schemes to Mannar District under the Decentralized Budget, bureaucratic lethargy as well as ulterior motives of the Centre has contributed to these projects being stalled.

### Power-supply - But No Electricity!

Unlike in Jaffna, where there is no power supply and, therefore, no electricity - in Mannar, we have the curious situation of power-supply, but with Mannar coming under a black-out intermittently and for long period of time. Last January, two Ministers descended on Mannar, promised two power generators and departed.

The people of Mannar are still waiting with heightened expectations. In the meantime, the existing power-supply remains disrupted due to negligence, inadequate maintenance and sheer lethargy on the part of the Electricity Board.

### Caught Between the Devil - And The Devil!

The People, who are in the so-called cleared areas, continue to experience the consequences of armed hostilities between the LTTE and the Security Forces. The periodic ambushes by the LTTE, aimed at provoking a retaliation by the security forces which invariably affect the civilians, is causing immense hardship for the People. It disrupts the desperate attempts by the people to restore some semblance of normalcy into their lives.

In addition, the anti-social and criminal behaviour of armed Tamil groups, which are collaborating with the forces, has made life intolerable for the People. (See Page 6)

Further, the plight of the People in areas under the control of the LTTE is not entirely different. This is despite the presence of international NGOs and the UNHCR all of whom function under conditions of virtual seige by the LTTE.





# Women in the LTTE: Liberation or Subjugation?

**Excerpts from Paper submitted by Ms. Mangalika de Silva at the Fourth National Convention on Women's Studies held between 3rd-6th March 1994 at CENWOR, Colombo. The central theme at this conference was "Women and Ideology".**

In this paper, I have briefly attempted to critique gender from the point of view of women in the LTTE. As access to information on this subject is limited, I have relied heavily on two resource materials. **The Broken Palmyra** provides a 'disturbing account' of the liberation struggle through the eyes of four academics. The other, **Women Fighters of Liberation Tigers**, is a propaganda piece written by Adele, the Australian-born wife of Anton Balasingham who is the chief spokesperson for the LTTE.

## Adele - the Self-proclaimed Messiah

Adele, the self-proclaimed messiah of Tamil women has gained dubious prominence and has assumed a role questionable in many respects. Whatever the pros and cons of that position may be, moderate sections of the Tamil community are alarmed and appalled by the violent and aggressive militancy that Adele has articulated for Tamil women and on behalf of Tamil women all in the name of liberation. Hence violence and repression have become means to achieve the ultimate end. Women, in her theoretical formulation become cannon fodder to be used as the leadership (whose interests she safeguards and promotes) demands.

Premonitions and admonitions abound in her text, a warning to those rational forces who dare to defy or

sidetrack that the totalitarian regime which she so vociferously and assiduously espouses is not be challenged, questioned or exposed.

In her book, what comes out sharply is a voice of a propagandist who hypocritically advances the cause of the movement's despicable power struggle rather than a catalyst committed to the goals of women's liberation. **Rajani Thiraganama**, an extraordinary Tamil woman who stood up to the Sinhala state and the repression of the LTTE became a victim at the hands of those who could not tolerate reason and moderation within the movement whose leader is a committed fascist.

"Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by not obeying unjust laws. It is a refusal to do a thing that is



repugnant to the conscience. It is contrary to our humanity if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such reaching means slavery. But we have so forgotten ourselves and become so compliant that we do not mind any degrading law. We have sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If women/man will only realize that it is inhuman to obey laws that are unjust, no women's/man's tyranny will enslave him/her." (**Gandhi in Hind Swaraj**)

"Tamil women guerrillas articulated a tremendous determination to fight the Sri Lanka army who they firmly feel have no place in their homeland. This is an unshakable belief and one that will sustain their struggle for however long it may take to liberate their homeland. It is the strength of this

conviction that allows these Young Women to fight and rejoice in the success of their military operations; it is the conviction that sustains them emotionally when their colleagues die in battle; it is the conviction that prepares them to make supreme sacrifices". (**Adele in Women Fighters of Liberation Tigers**)

One of the fundamental contradiction that arises from the above quote, undoubtedly a revolutionary statement, is that armed struggle is essentialized and particularized as the sole means by which liberation could be achieved through the creation of a new "nation". My objective in this paper is limited in scope in that I want to put forward few strands of thought on Adele's assumption, a particularly volatile issue in the post colonial South as well as other propaganda material put out by the LTTE.

## Women's Rights And Forms Of Struggle

To rationalize the claim that by relying on revolutionary struggle (violent/militaristic) women would achieve national liberation is to negate and therefore undermine the importance and inherent potential in non-violent forms of agitation. Perhaps a pertinent question to pose here is whether violent, armed struggle is a pre-condition for bringing about progressive revolutionary changes to the lives of women! The basic ideological thrust of her argument creates confusions in terms of the form of struggle women ought to wage for the realization of their many aspirations.

The lack of a vision amongst the women's section in the LTTE to forge ahead with clarity, given the level of their political consciousness, is because of their failure to take into consideration the objective reality of their society. As **Thiraganama** petitions, it would have been impossible for women to assert themselves, carving out spaces to positively address issues specific and common to them within a repressive military structure. Their expression would have been stifled/curtailed. They would have been co-opted and/or



silenced as the fate that befell on the Jaffna Mother's Front amply demonstrated. It is an indisputable fact that LTTE stands today indicted for its ruthless crushing of opposition/dissent. In such circumstances, dreams of equality and liberty can be mere illusions.

### Rajani's Vision - And Fears

Thiranagama notes in "No more tears sister"- Broken Palmyra: "because our society is hierarchically organized and seeped in the ideology of male dominance the women's position is shaped in every aspect..by a girdle of patriarchy. If in such a society like this, the dominant ideology under which the struggle is organized is itself an even more narrow, revivalistic and romantic one, well sprinkled with images of male heroes, (it) would be working against the inner core of such a struggle.

Rajini perceptively observes that existing nationalism including Tamil nationalism are gendered and dangerous. Before the LTTE's women's wing was formed, several other mainstream militant groups had their own women cadres. When EPRLF was crushed by the LTTE, the women cadres who had no way to escape were subjected to manifest forms of harassment. The following statement reflects the ideological basis on which women came to be perceived and treated in Tamil resistance movement: "what liberation for you all. Go and wait in the kitchen.

Legitimizing further this claim to a male superiority, women were pushed to taking a passive stand when it required sustained, consistent protest against violations.

Rajini writes: "women were considered evil by the LTTE and were said to make men loose their sense of purpose". Prabhakaran, prohibited sexual relationship within the movement (until he himself breached the law by falling in love, marrying).

How can women within the armed resistance movement, struggle and strive for women's rights and interests, when the movement horrendously lacks a clear vision of a women-centred project towards liberation. The new cultural image, and radically progressive political role women have assumed, a change in the power relations, has not altered their subjugated existence in any drastic way. One of the major drawbacks for women is their failure to collectively articulate issues specific to women as women.

## "LESSONS FROM THE PHILIPPINES - LESSONS FOR SRI LANKA"

- PROF. ED GARCIA -

Professor Ed Garcia of the University of Philippines and author of several books and articles on theories and practice of conflict resolution, as well the Philippine experience with internal conflicts, presented a lecture entitled "Community-based Strategies for Conflict Resolution: Lessons for the Philippines". The talk was organized by the Centre for Policy Research and Analysis, which is affiliated to the University of Colombo. The talk took place at the Board Room of the Faculty of Law on June 3, 1994.

Professor Garcia, who is no stranger to Sri Lanka, and has interacted with Sri Lankan academics as well as human rights and political activists in various international fora, expressed anguish over the unresolved internal conflict in Sri Lanka. He further observed that this being the "Election Year" in Sri Lanka, the conditions were favourable for a "bipartisan peace initiative". He, however, also cautioned against the tendency on the part of politicians to use the "peace process" for narrow political ends.

Proceeding to the Philippine case, Ed Garcia pointed out that more than 80,000 People had been killed in ethnic conflicts, as well as in relation to conflicts over land. The advance made in resolving the internal conflict was primarily due to "Citizen Participation" in shaping events and in exerting pressure on the State and Guerrillas alike.

Professor Garcia, whose specialty is methodology of conflict resolution backed by practical experience, placed before the audience what he termed his "Bakers Dozen" - or Reflections on 12 essential components of conflict resolution:

- \* Commitment to a negotiated political solution.
- \* Citizens participation to ensure continued vigilance that priority issues figure high on the national agenda.
- \* Recognizing the need for 3rd Party mediation.
- \* Confidence-building between parties in conflict and strong leadership to harness support for peace process.
- \* Searching for acceptable processes aimed at overcoming mistrusts and phobia vis a vis each other.
- \* Defining the substantive issues.
- \* Identifying areas of convergence, before proceeding to tackle contentious issues
- \* Time frame for de-militarization of conflict.
- \* Monitoring mechanisms.
- \* Long-term Peace Education Programmes.
- \* Looking for different alternatives.

Following the presentation by Prof. Garcia, there was a lively discussion amongst the audience which included academics, students, political activists and journalists.

### Editor's Note:

Tamil Guardian is a monthly, with a political perspective. Signed articles are the personal views of the authors. The contents of Tamil Guardian may be quoted or reproduced with due acknowledgement.



## “NO SOLUTION DUE TO

## ABSENCE OF POLITICAL WILL”

**- SURESH PREMACHANDRAN**

**D**uring a recent tour of Batticaloa and Amparai Districts, the Secretary-General of EPRLF and Member of Parliament for Jaffna District, Suresh Premachandran, addressed several pocket-meetings and public meetings.

At the annual Sports meet organized by the Golden Star Sports Club held at Thiruperunthurai, Suresh Premachandran, who was the Chief Guest, delivered a speech on the problems related to seeking a political solution to the ethnic problem, as well as on the qualities of leadership.

“The main reason for the protracted ethnic problem, with no end in sight for a just and equitable solution, is the total absence of political will and courage on the part of national leaders. This is quite in contrast to what we witness in South Africa where due to the bold and courageous initiatives, coupled with the spirit of accommodation, taken by Nelson Mandela and De Klerk the reprehensible Apartheid system has been replaced by majority rule based on power-sharing.”

He further added that while the world had embarked on the path of modernization and development and eager anticipation about Sri Lanka achieving the so-called “NIC status”, the rural areas in the North-Eastern province remained neglected and backward. The monies earmarked for the Tamil areas in the North-East are almost entirely devoted to the war and relief measures arising out of the war.

Under these conditions, it was important that the younger generation equip themselves to overcome the adversities that the present generation continue to face and to learn, in the sports arena, the basic leadership qualities of self-discipline, courage, and the collective spirit.

Continued from page 1...

## DISCRIMINATION...

guidelines had been received from Colombo.

### What! No Ethnic problem?

While sufficient leeway has to be given for bureaucratic lethargy and inefficiency, the past experience of the Tamil People with discrimination and institutionalised racism has created a psychosis where bureaucratic explanations have no credibility.

What matters is that the specific problems faced by our national minorities are not faced by the majority community - whether be it in the spheres of education, employment, land, citizenship and language rights.

The rather naive assertion by the Head of State, that the Tamil-speaking People suffer no disabilities and have no legitimate grievances on the basis of their ethnicity, remains a bad joke!

## Anti-Social Activities of Armed Tamil Groups in “Cleared Areas”

A series of incidents, in Colombo as well as in some of the “cleared areas”, involving armed Tamil groups which are co-operating with the Security Forces, have now reached proportions which are intolerable.

Beginning with the cold-blooded assassination of the leader of a PLOT splinter group, Mr. Uma Prakash, in the suburbs of Colombo last year, where no action was taken against the assassin, the PLOT has resorted to more armed and illegal actions against the civilian populace and political cadres of other political parties in the cleared areas.

On 16.04.94, the PLOT was involved in the shooting-down of a woman, one Nirmaladevi Vijayaraghavan, while attempting to rob the household. When, the EPRLF issued a leaflet condemning such anti-social activities, without specifically naming PLOT, an EPRLF cadre who is based at the office of EPRLF’s Member of Parliament for Mannar, Mr. Emanuel Silva, was abducted by PLOT and severely assaulted - requiring hospitalization. Although, a complaint was made by the victim of this assault and despite the intervention of Mr. Emanuel Silva, the assailants have been allowed to go free.

While, we understand the need of the Government to have some Tamil armed groups working with the Security Forces in areas of combat, in practice, these armed groups are active only in the “cleared areas”-where their activities range was extortion to robberies to intimidation of cadres of other political parties. The “tax” of Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,000 imposed by PLOT and TELO, respectively, on lorry owners at Vavuniya is no different from the “taxes” being levied by the LTTE which together have contributed to mammoth increases in the price of essential commodities in Jaffna.

This intolerable state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue any longer.

### Readers and Well-wishers of Tamil Guardian!

Articles, Comments and Contributions may be sent to the following EPIC Centres:

Sri Lanka: P.O.Box 442  
Colombo.

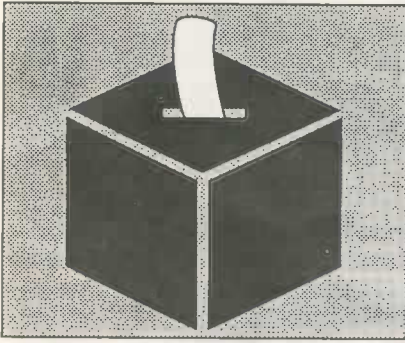
U.K: B.M.Box 6800,  
London WC1X 3NN

Canada: P.Box 6800  
Agriculture, Ont M153C6

Germany: P. Fach 100206,  
44002 Dortmund

France: 11, Roger Salenro,  
95140 Garges Les,  
Gonnesse





**K**umar Ponnambalam in a recent article to the Sunday Times argued that the "Tamils must chart a radically new course for themselves politically, and forthwith, if they are not to make their position worse from what it is at the moment, and if the Tamils want to be taken seriously by the Sinhalese and the world in the future. They must abandon their craving for being appendages of the UNP and SLFP, and stand on their own feet and by themselves."

### TAMIL EELAM OR TAMIL PRESIDENT?

He instead advocates a "new political path"- namely the fielding of a Tamil Presidential candidate. He also gives an elaborate and a laboured argument on how the Tamils could hold the balance of power as well as the bargaining card by fielding such a candidate. Informed Tamil circles take it for granted that the Tamil candidate foremost in Kumar Ponnambalam mind is Kumar Ponnambalam himself. But that is irrelevant.

What is relevant is that just a week before the above article was published, Kumar Ponnambalam while addressing the Trincomalee Rotary Club, issued his now familiar clarion call for the setting-up of a Tamil State by exercising the military option. To quote: "It seems to me that we have missed the opportunity to solve the Tamil problem politically. It seems to me that it can only be solved militarily now, and that is not by finishing off the LTTE militarily, but in Tamils militarily setting up a separate state". Incidentally, it is not very clear whether he is appealing to the Sri Lankan State not to finish off the LTTE! It is, indeed curious that a Kumar while advocating that the "Tamils should learn to stand on their own feet" should appeal to the State not to finish off the LTTE!

But returning to the subject matter, the quantum leap from the advocacy of a Tamil State, through military means, to discussing the ways and means of entering the corridors of power in Colombo and back again to "Tamil Eelam" is, indeed, astonishing and mind-boggling.

## KUMAR RIDES AGAIN!

### POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM

It is about time that Kumar Ponnambalam was "honest" to himself, as well as to the Tamil People who, in his considered opinion, deserve nothing less than a Kumar Ponnambalam! History has shown us how Tamil politicians and parliamentarians, not to mention their financiers within the business community, used the "Tamil Eelam" card when they least meant it and had not even the foggiest notion of how to achieve it. Ofcourse, in the process People got killed, lost their loved ones and ultimately their land and means of livelihood- only to end up in refugee camps run by the State or as unwanted refugees in distant lands.

waged at different levels. The same holds for the oppressed Tamil-speaking People of Sri Lanka. The particular form that the struggle takes is largely determined by forces, both, external and internal to it. Given the present conjuncture of politico-military, geo-political and economic factors, both, the LTTE and the Sri Lankan State remain weakened following a protracted and a bloody stalemate in the military arena. At the same time, both, have demonstrated their utter incapacity and unwillingness to engage in a serious and sincere negotiations aimed at resolving the Tamil Question. However, defeatism is not the answer - neither is jingoism, whether be it the D.B. version or the Kumar version. Defeatism

## ELECTION FEVER ELECTION FEVER ELECTION FEVER ELECTION FEVER

This is not to argue that a liberation struggle is one without any sacrifices. But, when a so-called "liberation organization" degenerates into a megalomaniacal pursuit for hegemony over the very People and Land that it claims to "solely" represent, then it ceases to be a liberation struggle. And when cheer leaders like Kumar Ponnambalam urge this process of self-destruction to go on while building mansions in Tamil Nadu, managing plantations in Malaysia and widening and deepening their investment portfolios in Colombo, it ceases to be a joke.

It must be clearly understood by Kumar Ponnambalam that he cannot have the cake and eat it at the same time. He simply cannot take a militant posture, urging on the Tamil People to stand on their own feet and create their own state and attack mainstream Tamil political parties, like EPRLF, for seeking a negotiated just and an equitable settlement to the Tamil Question, while at the same time entertaining ideas of being the only "honest" arbiter of Tamil interests by riding on the back of his homogenous and united Tamil voter!

What argument can Kumar give other than the self-deception that he is the sole rear guard in the "Lion's Den"?

### OBJECTIVE REALITIES

The struggle for the right of self-determination of an oppressed people takes many forms and is

and war-mongering are the clear signs of weakness and incapacity to shape events - or destiny.

### IMMEDIATE TASK

The need of the hour is to bring to a halt the endless deaths, destruction and deprivation. Simultaneously, a concerted effort must be taken to create an authentic secular-democratic consensus on the Ethnic Question that is just and durable. This is the task that face not only the secular-democratic forces of Sri Lanka, but the oppressed minority nationalities. Such a task is not an easy one involving numerous sacrifices. It also involves challenges from those who benefit from the war and whose mode of existence, whether be it military, political or economic, is the on-going war.

In concrete terms, it involves the search for alternatives to war-mongers. It involves dialogue and negotiations. As Kumar argues, the past experience has been negative. So be it. But, our contribution to the future generation should not be bitter memories of the past or horrors of a bloody future - and certainly not the romanticizing of military adventurism and sufferings while living in safe havens. Our contribution to our children, instead, should be Peace, Identity and Social Progress - not hate, nihilism and eventual oblivion.

This is all we wish to tell Kumar Ponnambalam.





# MARTYRS DAY



**J**une 19, 1990 is one amongst numerous "Black Days" that dot the calendar of the Tamil National Movement. That was the day when the founder-mentor of EPRLF, Pathmanabha (or Comrade Nabha" as he was known) was killed by the LTTE, along with 12 of his Comrades, in a cowardly attack in the heart of a residential area in Madras City.

This day was henceforth been observed as the "Martyrs Day" by the EPRLF in remembrance of not only Comrade Nabha, but all those who laid

down their lives in the struggle for the right of self-determination of the Tamil-speaking People in the struggle for Peace and Democracy for all Peoples of Sri Lanka.

At this juncture, it is necessary to reflect on who is a Martyr. In the conventional sense, a martyr is one who lays down his/her life for a cause that not only he or she believes in - but a cause that moves an entire humanity to break the shackles imposed on Freedom and Human Dignity.

In the Sri Lankan Context, the shackles on Freedom and Human Dignity come from two sources: The Sri Lankan State and the LTTE. In this context, Urumpirai Sivakumaran, who consumed cyanide in 1974, Kuttimani, Jegan, and the other victims of the Welikade Prison massacre of 1983, Viswanantha Deva, Thambiluvil

Kumar and the countless number of leaders and youths, who died while resisting the forces of state terrorism and Sinhala chauvinism, are martyrs.

So are personalities like Pathmanabha, Amirthalingam, Rajani Thirana-gama who all fell victims to LTTE since they challenged the fascist methods of the LTTE. It did not matter to the LTTE, that the victims of their cowardly assassinations were also fighting against State Terrorism and the denial of the right of self-determination of the Tamil-speaking People.

Let June 19 be a reminder to all of us that till Peace reigns, till there is a just and equitable solution to the Ethnic Question and till the authoritarian nature of the State disappears, the list of Martyrs will keep increasing. This is, in a way, also the tragedy of Sri Lanka.

## WHAT OTHERS THOUGHT OF COMRADE "NABHA"

**We give below excerpts of the tributes that were paid to the founder-mentor of EPRLF, Comrade Pathmanabha, following the assassination by the LTTE:**

**Shri Rajiv Gandhi:** "It is hardly believable that one so young, so bright, so full of life, with so much to contribute to his people, should no longer be with us."

**K.P. Siva (General Secretary- CPSL):** "Pathmanabha was one of the most prominent leaders of the new generation of Tamil politicians who came to the fore with the intensification of the struggle of the Tamil People for their national rights."

**M.H.M. Ashraff, M.P. (Leader, SLMC):** "Although I knew Comrade Pathmanabha only for a brief time, he has left behind in my mind pleasant memories and deep rooted positive impressions. Within a militant out-fit lay his melting heart for human sufferings. While fighting for the liberation of the oppressed Tamil community, he was revolting against those who were working towards the birth of the ugly Tamil Chauvinism..."

He was also conscious of the dangers of allowing the Sinhala chauvinists to take advantage of the difference

between the Tamils and Muslims.

The respect that the Tamil community could pay to Comrade Pathmanabha is to strive towards the realization of his ideals."

**Harkishan Singh Surjeet (General Secretary, CPM):** "I was impressed by Pathmanabha's sincerity, seriousness and dedication to the cause of democracy... The tragic death of this devoted fighter for a just cause is undoubtedly a great loss to the democratic and progressive forces in Sri Lanka."

**Sumit Chakravarthy (Editor, Mainstream):** "A man of few words, Nabha expressed himself through the warmth of his embrace... Nabha was much more than a Sri Lankan Tamil militant leader. It was the breath of his vision that endeared him to different persons who came in touch with him here."

**Shri P.N. Haksar:** The brooding sense of tragedy to which I have referred takes on a sharper edge when I recall the face of 39 year old Shri K. Pathmanabha whose life has been so cruelly extinguished by bullet. On a few occasions that I met him in Delhi, I was deeply moved by Shri Pathmanabha's warmth and humanity. Despite all odds, he continued to believe that Sri Lankans and Tamils could work together and that each could live with dignity in that island."

**FASCISM MAY MAKE SHORT-TERM GAINS, BUT HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT THERE CAN BE NO VICTORY FOR FASCISM.**