

Tamil **TIMES**

"I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."

— Voltaire

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Courtesy of 'Lanka 1986-1992' by Stephen Champion – Book Review on page 25



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LESSONS OF THE 'JANAKAPURA' DEBACLE

The Sri Lankan armed forces suffered one of the worst military debacles when the Tamil Tigers recently overran the Janakapura military complex at Welio-Oya in Northeast Sri Lanka. Not only were the buildings housing the complex reduced to rubble and many soldiers and civilians killed; the Tigers also got away with a massive haul of weapons, ammunition, vehicles and communication equipment which will become very handy in their continued war with the armed forces.

Until recently known as Manal Aru (in Tamil), Welio-Oya represents more than a mere military outpost. On the one hand it signifies the politics of colonisation of Tamil areas by a process of state-aided settlements, and on the other it symbolises the military manifestation of the political aim of destroying the claim of 'traditional Tamil homeland' comprising the northeast on the basis of physical contiguity.

Long before the idea of a separate state of 'Eelam' was conceived even as an idea, the question of state-sponsored colonisation of Tamil areas resulting in demographic changes threatening their status and identity had become one of the deep-seated grievances of the Tamil people. Once the ethnic conflict assumed violent proportions in the 1980s, what was once practised as purely land settlement schemes and sought to be justified on the basis of economic reasons, became an open and deliberate political and military strategy to 'destroy the basis for Eelam'.

Even before the July 1983 anti-Tamil violence, there was a think-tank of politicians, professionals, civil servants and even prelates who gathered together under the auspices of the Mahaweli Ministry in Colombo to formulate and implement a diabolical plan to trifurcate the northeast by a process of massive state-aided colonisation of Tamil areas on three fronts - the Malwathu Oya settlement in the north-west just south of Mannar, the Maduru Oya settlement in the east to constitute a wedge between the Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts, and thirdly the Yan Oya settlement just south of Mullaitivu encompassing Welio Oya. The plan also envisaged a massive military presence with settlers being trained and armed by the state.

On 8 January 1985, the late Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, the then Minister of National Security, announced to a Conference of District Ministers and Government Agents

a scheme 'to remove the concept of traditional homelands'. The scheme provided for settling 30,000 Sinhalese families in the northern province during that year; 250 families would be selected from Sinhala constituencies in the south of the island for settlement at Killinochchi, Vavuniya and Mannar districts during that year and extended to Jaffna in the following year; and the new settlers would be given military training and weapons for their own security. And Janakapura was one of the products of this scheme. **'Janakapura settlement was set up in 1985. Janakapura was among several other state sponsored settlements for the Sinhalese which were set up by the government after the authorities forced Tamils living in the area to vacate their homes in early 1984.'** (*Welio-Oya - What Went Wrong?* by Sharindra Ferdinando, Sunday Island, 1.8.93).

Although the development of the military conflict in subsequent years, both in terms of Indian involvement and the growth in the strength of the Tamil militant groups, particularly the Tamil Tigers, did not permit those in power to implement fully their plan of action in the way they wanted, state-aided settlements accompanied by massive militarisation of the areas involved continued to remain pivotal in the politico-military strategy to resist the Tamil claim for regional autonomy for the northeast based on physical contiguity. And with the outbreak of Eelam War II, this strategy was renewed with a vengeance. And in this new phase of the strategy, civilian Sinhala settlements would appear to be required more as cover for the beleaguered armed forces than the other way round as envisaged in its earlier phases.

Janakapura is not just a military defeat. It represents the political and military failure of the politics and strategy of state sponsored colonisation backed by military force. It has been a failure in more than one sense. Financially, it has been costly with nothing to show for. Hundreds of lives, both military and civilian, have been lost. It has not achieved its purpose, however malevolent and diabolical that purpose may be. On the other hand, the calculated and deliberate pursuit of the strategy of state sponsored colonisation backed by military force by successive governments has turned the question of the control of territory as the decisive issue in the ethnic conflict.

One Hundred Days of Wijetunge's Presidency

from Rita Sebastian, Colombo

Sri Lankan President, Dingiri Banda Wijetunge marked his 100 days in office with a minor cabinet re-shuffle. Heads didn't roll as was speculated, only moved. Ministers A.C.S. Hameed and Harold Herat have swapped portfolios, and the controversial V.J.M. Lokubandara moved out of the Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs to head Education and Higher Education.

Two new faces in the Cabinet are that of Tyrone Fernando and M.L.M. Aboosally. For a man who took over the Presidency at a crucial time in Sri Lanka's political history, Dingiri Banda Wijetunge seems to have successfully marshalled his forces, and prevented any inner rumblings of which there seems to have been a few, from getting out of hand.

Wijetunge's Presidency seen as a change from the authoritarian rule of his predecessor, has helped considerably to forge a working relationship with the opposition. The decision to appoint a Parliamentary Select Committee to look into constitutional reform, which has been a cry from all opposition groups has been a major step forward.

During these three months there has also been a significant realignment of political forces in the country, and more significantly President Wijetunge has weakened the Premadasa elements in the cabinet.

One of the first steps he took was to remove the former President's son-in-law, Rohan Jayakody, from the Board of Airlanka, the national carrier. He also blocked attempts by the late President's widow, Hema Premadasa to assume any influence in the government.

President Wijetunge has also re-constituted several public corporations, re-shuffled Secretaries in Ministries and brought into key positions persons who enjoy his confidence.

Wijetunge has also dismantled some of the bitterly criticised features of the Premadasa administration, like the stranglehold on the media, and the tamasha syndrome which entailed a colossal amount of public funds.

The electronic media is no longer a cheer squad for the government and television audiences are spared the exclusively pro-government propaganda campaign. It must be said for President Wijetunge that he is con-

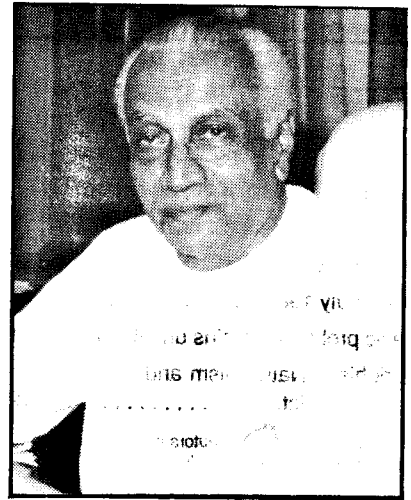
scious by his absence on television.

President Wijetunge has also indicated he will slow down the emphasis on Mobile Secretariats and Gam Uda-was, (village reawakening) which were critical to the Premadasa programme of taking the administration to the people. The Premadasa loyalists however are not pleased with these changes.

The Wijetunge government has been assisted by two important developments. Firstly, the expected return of the Democratic United National Front (DUNF), the breakaway faction of the ruling party, to the fold. Several rounds of discussions have taken place between the DUNF leader Gamini Dissanayake and President Wijetunge, and although no firm decisions have yet been taken as to when and how the merger or the coalition will take place, the very fact that the DUNF has thrown its weight, however small on the side of the government has weakened the opposition.

The second development that has worked in favour of the ruling party is the open conflict in the main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), between party President Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike and SLFP's All-island organiser Anura. With Anura suspended from the SLFP, and the SLFP hierarchy still undecided about how it is going to resolve the conflict within, the UNP seems firmly in the saddle.

With the opposition weakened there has been considerable speculation that



President D.B. Wijetunge

government might press for an early election to strengthen its political advantage over the opposition.

On the northeast war front things seem much more complicated. The recent raid by the Tigers on the northeast Janakapura army camp in which, besides killing 44 soldiers, their haul of war machinery is said to be in the region of Rs. 50 billion, and the inability of the government to secure the release of 34 security personnel held hostage by the Tigers in Jaffna has caused serious concern.

The Parliamentary Select Committee, looking for a consensus solution to the conflict is at a standstill, and there is no prospect of any significant movement on the political front.

President Wijetunge therefore does not seem to be facing any serious threat to his position. However unless he is able to address the basic problems confronting Sri Lankan society he will need to push for a new election mandate to remain in power.

Of Sausages & 'X' Rated Films on TV

by Rita Sebastian

If you telephone the Sri Lankan Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs you will be greeted with an 'Auybowan'. It replaced the customary 'hello' on a directive by V.J.M. Lokubandara when he took office as Minister in 1989. 'Hello' according to Minister Lokubandara was part of the 'aping the west' syndrome which had no place in the island's traditional culture.

But that's how far Lokubandara got. Like all Ministers in the Premadasa Cabinet he stayed very much on the

sidelines. But strangely his deputy, Minister of State for Information, A.J. Ranasinghe was seen more, and heard more.

But as Ranasinghe would say 'the old order changed' with the assassination of Premadasa on May 1. And Lokubandara came back into the driving seat with a vengeance.

He brought in his loyalists to head the state TV and radio and went on, what a not so amused official described as his 'banning spree'. He banned pornographic literature. That didn't create a furore. What did, was his banning meat advertisements on the government controlled electronic media, and now expected to be followed by the private TV channels as well.

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INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE

A 'Peace Plan' for Sri Lanka with UN Intervention

Four Nobel Prize winners – George Wald of USA, Mairead Maguire of UK, Ilya Prigogine of Belgium and Jan Tinbergen of Netherlands – have presented 'a peace plan for Sri Lanka' to President D.B. Wijetunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe.

The basic proposal of the 'peace plan' is that the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE should invite the United Nations Secretary-General to send a special envoy to mediate a negotiated settlement. This 'agreement' could include the following provisions:

a) A ceasefire verified by the United Nations. Precedent for such intervention is found in Security Council Resolution 186.

b) The establishment of buffer zones through mutual agreement by the disengagement of military forces in selected areas, such as parts of the North and East.

c) UN-observed elections in the North and East.

The 'peace-plan' also argues for a federal form of government. It says that the 'aspirations in the North and East can to a large extent be satisfied by granting them some form of regional autonomy.'

This 'peace plan' was initiated by The World Council for Global Cooperation in Toronto, Canada. The four Nobel Laureates have won prizes in their specialties. Prof. George Wald was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1967 for his insight in discovering the underlying chemical processes of human vision. Ms. Mairead Corrigan-Maguire of Northern Ireland won the award in 1977 for her efforts to end the violence in Belfast between Catholics and Protestants. Prof. Ilya Prigogine was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1977 for widening the scope of thermodynamics, the science that deals with energy. Prof. Jan Tinbergen won the prize in 1969 for Economics.

The International Secretary of the World Council for Global Cooperation is James Nicholas, a Sri Lankan Tamil, who is a citizen of Canada. He is now Professor of International Relations at Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology, Welland, Ontario, Canada.

The following is the text of the 'Peace Plan':

A brutal civil war, ten years long, has caused immense suffering to all the people of Sri Lanka: Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim.

The country, drained of much of its energy and resources, has been unable to deal effectively with its pressing economic and social problems. The senseless extension of fighting can only aggravate the war. A permanent solution to the ethnic strife will be more difficult to achieve as feelings of hatred, fuelled by savage killings, intensify.

Peace and stability cannot be restored by military means alone. A political settlement is required that would ensure justice for all. Genuine communications between the warring parties calls for impartial mediation. Recent reports indicate that all sides may welcome this.

The World Council for Global Cooperation presents the following five proposals as a basis for starting negotiations among interested parties:

United Nations Role

Decades of tension and conflict involving the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims have created mistrust and suspicion among these groups. The impasse can be broken with the help of mediation by the United Nations.

The World Council appeals to the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to invite the United Nations Secretary-General to send a special envoy to mediate a negotiated settlement. Such an agreement, which would assure fairness to all communities in the island, could include the following provisions.

a) A ceasefire, verified by the United Nations. Precedent for such intervention is found in Security Council Resolution 186.

b) The establishment of buffer zones through mutual agreement by the disengagement of military forces in selected areas, such as parts of the North and East.

c) UN-observed elections in the North and East.

Human Rights

As a member of the United Nations, Sri Lanka has accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Respect for human rights, however, has been greatly undermined by the civil war. The cessation of hostilities would create a proper climate for the strict enforcement of human rights for all citizens. The Rule of Law needs to be upheld. Human rights can be further safeguarded if the Government and the LTTE adopt the following measures.

(i) End all forms of torture and illegal detention.

(ii) Provide for fair and speedy trials of all political prisoners, by the national judiciary, with automatic rights of appeal. Those not formally charged should be released.

The Peace Dividend

Large military expenditures have imposed a heavy burden on the nation. Sri Lanka, with a per capita income of US \$400, allocates 3.1 per cent of its gross national product to the military. With an end to conflict, the Government can significantly reduce its military expenditures.

The savings obtained could be diverted to provide for civilian needs, grossly neglected through the long period of conflict.

Following a lessening of tensions, both government and LTTE forces could be mobilized, perhaps with UN supervision and advice, for much-needed rebuilding of the infrastructure and for re-forestation.

A widespread program of disarmament and the curtailment of arms imports by all parties would be essential for ending this conflict. The World Council appeals to the international community to stop the export of arms, whether by gift or sale, to all parties in this troubled land.

Peace Through Prosperity

Lack of economic opportunity is an important factor inciting violence among youth. The vicious cycle of violence and poverty must be broken. A final end to hostilities can significantly promote economic development across the country. The peace dividend, along with more energetic efforts to boost tourism, attract foreign investment, and expand trade, can provide the means for greater educational and employment opportunities for Sri Lankan youth.

The war has done considerable harm to the most vulnerable sections of society – women and children. Promo-

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Tigers Gain Massive Haul of Weapons

Army Suffers Major Debacle at 'Janakapura'

(by our Special Correspondent, Colombo)

As July 1993 approached the security forces were put on alert in the north-east and the south. The government knew for certain that the LTTE would launch a major attack to mark and symbolically avenge the bloody anti-Tamil pogrom of July '83. Intelligence reports had indicated that the LTTE was most likely to set off a massive string of explosions in Colombo. The Presidential mobile secretariat which was scheduled to be held in Batticaloa on the 23rd of July was also considered a possible target.

On Sunday 25 *The Island* and *Sunday Times* did not fail to editorialise on that bloody event that ten years ago, had indelibly marred the ethnic fabric of the island. The conscientious Sinhala Buddhist, it seemed, was inclined at the back of his mind to see the Tiger as nemesis. And true to its reputation, the Tiger struck in the small hours of Sunday morning at the very heart of Sinhala Buddhism's politico military project, Janakapura, the central military camp cum settlement in Welioya.

The camp was swiftly overrun and burnt. The Sinhala settlement around the camp was also destroyed. Forty two soldiers of the Sri Lanka Light Infantry regiment were killed (by a queer coincidence it was the SLI which lost 13 soldiers in July '83 - the event which triggered off the anti-Tamil pogrom). Seventeen Sinhala settlers were also dead. A large haul of ammunition, communications equipment, direction finding electronic devices, several rocket launchers, assault rifles and a long range mortar (81mm) were taken by the Tiger in several vehicles belonging to the camp. Three soldiers and seven civilians were taken captive.

It was clear that many soldiers had taken to their heels when the LTTE launched the main assault on the camp. The army headquarters euphemistically described it as a tactical withdrawal. The debacle was unpalatable to many Sinhala politicians who had seen the expansion of the military-civilian settlement in Welioya as the basis of undermining and destroying the Tamil demand for a northeastern autonomous region. A Tamil shop was attacked by some Sinhalese in Matara but the majority of people in the south did not seem to share in the anger of some of their nationalist leaders - they

were keenly watching the much publicised India versus Sri Lanka cricket match on TV.

It was reported initially that 18 soldiers were missing after the camp had been overrun. The LTTE, it transpired, had killed them and removed their bodies to Mullaitivu where they were displayed to the public. The Tigers had promised to hand the bodies over to the army through the ICRC. Then they went back on their word and said that the bodies had been burnt, the army requested the ICRC to procure the ashes of the soldiers instead; on Friday, 30 July, the Tigers handed over 18 urns containing the ashes of the slain Janakapura infantrymen. The seven civilians who had been taken alive by the attackers were more fortunate. They were safely returned through the good offices of the ICRC on Thursday 30.

On the same day the commander of the Sri Lankan army, Lieut. Gen. Cecil Waidyaratne appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate and report on the debacle at Janakapura. It was headed by Major General Gerry Silva.

The other members of the commission were Brigadier Nanda de Silva and Colonel Sisira Wijesuriya. The composition of the commission of inquiry was a clear indication of the serious implications for the army in the camp's fall. Particularly for the army commander and his colleague Major Gen. Lucky Algama, commander of the security forces in the east who together were gaining some ground in the power struggle in the military high command on the ground that they had consolidated the east and that hence they could do a better job in the north if given a free hand once more. Only a few weeks ago Major General Lucky Algama had confidently assured the Parliamentary Select Committee that all was quiet on the eastern front and that the referendum should therefore be held. Operation Muhudu Sulanga launched in the east had according to him driven the Tigers away from their last bastion in the east, i.e. Vakarai and its hinterland.

The army was also apparently perturbed by the serious lapse in the defence preparedness of the soldiers

who had been put on alert that particular week in anticipation of a spectacular Tiger strike to mark the tenth year of the '83 pogrom. The bothersome question was: how did 85 soldiers of the Janakapura camp go on ambush duty that night when the LTTE launched the attack? The commanders however may find it very difficult to come up with a plausible explanation. The problem before them is that the LTTE was able to move a large contingent of its commandos through a network of minefields, machine gun posts, man-made mounds and makeshift huts belonging to armed settlers and homeguards to launch a surprise attack on the camp. They had not only overrun the camp but had enough time to set fire to it and destroy the settlement that had been established at great cost in and around Janakapura. As a diversionary measure the Tigers had launched simultaneous attacks on the Kovil point and Kokkuthoduvai camps north of Janakapura. But on the western side there was a large number of detachments, minicamps and bases which had been set up over the years to defend and consolidate the Welioya settlement.

According to one estimate there are eighteen camps in the centre of the region in addition to a main base. The Padaviya scheme which adjoins Welioya to the west in the north central province has another main base with a string of camps and detachments. Many dust roads criss-cross the settlement and are all linked to the Padaviya - Siripura scheme. Hence the army has to sort out the question as to why an attack was not launched from the western side to prevent the LTTE from completely overrunning Janakapura. Even if the LTTE had succeeded in cutting off all the road approaches from the Padaviya side, there was ample area through which groups of commandos could be sent. The camps to the west of Janakapura also had enough fire power to overwhelm the LTTE units which had cut off the road approaches. But nothing happened and the camp was destroyed. This showed clearly once again that the infantry units of the Sri Lanka army were not prepared to move out into a battle zone to face the LTTE without sufficient air support. Numbers or superior fire power did not count.

It was obvious from the Janakapura debacle that the beleaguered Sinhala foot soldier and his unit commander were not ready to fight back if the right back-up was not forthcoming. The military leadership is reported to be contemplating court martial for those found guilty of negligence, but it knows full well that motivation among

Hunters Now the Hunted

A Wise Old Owl who doesn't need night vision glasses to see what is happening around him at night, was perched atop a jungle tree reflecting ruefully that it was the Hunters who are now being hunted and at times, even hounded and devoured by the Tigers, that roam the north Eastern jungles.

This old Owl who was witness to the fierce Tiger raid on the Army Camp at Janakapura just after midnight Sunday, summoned an emergency meeting of his feathered friends in a nearby heather, where he gave them a ball-by-ball account of the rout of the Hunters.

He described how careless the Hunters had become by allowing Tigers, pretending to be ordinary household cats, moving in and out of the Janakapura Camp all the while, making detailed mental notes of the locations of the most magic areas and as to who sleeps where.

The Owl related how the Tigers armed to the teeth, stealthily moved through the gaps on the Northern perimeter of the Hunter's Camp. While, one lot of Tigers remained outside firing mortars and rocket propelled grenades, others infiltrated the Camp and slit the necks of the sentries, springing on them as Tigers would.

Some Tigers had then stormed the hut in which the Commandos of the Hunters usually lived, but drew a blank as they had been moved to a troubled spot outside the Mullaiti-

vu district, only a few hours earlier.

Others had charged into the hut where the Electronic Direction Finding Equipment was kept.

Here, the officer, a brave, young, newly married Lieutenant, was shot dead when he tried to prevent the Tigers from taking the vital instrument.

The raiders then attacked the rest of the Hunters who were fast asleep and shot them dead.

The Tigers who were suffering an acute shortage of arms took their weapons and also raided the Armoury.

The birds gathered in the heather, continued to listen intently to the Owl's account of one of the more sensational happenings of the year, in the Welioya jungles.

Continuing the Owl described to his friends how the Tigers had then set fire to the entire Northern Wing of the Janakapura Camp after reducing it to rubble with a bulldozer that was on the premises.

The killers had also taken the tractor and a motor cycle before moving to the Janakapura Village and massacring 17 innocent men, women and children who had never tried to hunt the Tigers, but who lived a quiet, peaceful life, said the Owl, a big tear drop falling from his large limpid eyes.

At this stage, a little Maggie Robin twittered that he had been witness to a very strange scene.

He claimed he saw a number of

Hunters who were laying in ambush, apparently turning a blind eye to the packs of armed Tigers filing past them, on their way to attack the camp.

At this stage, the other birds breathed a huge sigh of despair. This indeed was tragic.

'Shame! If I were there, I would have shot at least one Tiger with my bow and arrow,' quoth a Sparrow.

Meanwhile, the Owl whose eyes were sharper than those of a Hunter wearing night vision glasses, told the younger ones how he saw a figure of a Head Hunter slinking away from the South Wing Camp and seeking the sanctuary of a peasant's hut, while leaving the others behind to face the fury of the Tigers on the rampage.

There was a kind of hush around the heather where the birds of the jungle were gathered listening to the Wise Old Owl who proudly announced that with his very retentive memory and his sharp focusing natural lenses, he was able to take a fair inventory of the loot carried away by the Tigers - 119 T-56 semi-automatic, 24 .303 and 13 T-81 rifles, eight light machine guns, one 81mm mortar, 12 shot guns, four pistols, seven rocket propelled grenades, 50,000 rounds intermediate ammunition, 10,000 rounds machine gun ammunition, 1,500 rounds .303 ammunition, 111 helmets and 35 small tents.

'Sounds like a millionaire's Christmas shopping list,' commented a bright young Wren.

(The Sunday Island).

ordinary footsoldiers is becoming a major problem in combating the Tigers. Court martial in this situation may show little result, said a military analyst.

Maj. Gen. Gerry Silva was in Welioya on Saturday 31 to probe the circumstances under which the camp was allowed to collapse. His mission, it was almost certain, would only expose the magnitude of the problem which is silently gnawing at the very innards of the army's infantry units - a problem that cannot be overcome by better weapons or more soldiers. It showed again when the LTTE attacked an army patrol two days later at Kallar near Kanthalai in Trincomalee. Three soldiers were killed and the rest took to their heels. They were presumed missing till they straggled back to base.

The Janakapura debacle has once

again brought another persistent problem faced by the army to the fore. The security forces do not have the logistical capability to effectively distribute their manpower to several points to anticipate or pre-empt possible assaults by the Tigers. The logistical problem is coupled to the difficulty faced by the military intelligence in gathering precise information on LTTE's troop movements. The LTTE overran a police camp at Ilavankulam situated in the northern extreme of the Puttalam district a week before the Janakapura attack. Ten army trained policemen were dead and many people living in the area were rendered refugees. The camp was attacked again a few days later. The Muslim religious and Cultural Affairs Minister, A.H.M. Azwer of Puttalam brought pressure on the government to step up military presence in the

affected area.

Meanwhile intelligence reports had compelled the military high command to move in a large number of troops to ensure the security of the Presidential Mobile Secretariat in Batticalao which was scheduled to be held in Batticalao on July 23. The army saw the PMS in Batticalao as another possible target for the LTTE's 'Black July' attack, for it had sufficient reason to believe that the Tigers could infiltrate the town to set off explosions and kill important people. The President whose helicopter was ready to take off to Batticalao on 23rd morning, cancelled his trip at the last moment as a result. In addition to all this the army was apprehensive about vulnerable points in the northern theatre of operations because it had well ascertained information that a large number of Tiger troops from

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the east had been called up north by the Tiger High Command and that they were being retained there, apparently for a major operation. And several days before the Janakapura attack there was, what appeared to be a probing assault on an FDL point located near the southern end of the Pannai causeway. So the army couldn't afford to be complacent about the northern front. Everyone was sure that the attack to mark 'Black July' was coming, but the LTTE was making them look anxiously in several directions by engaging in such diversionary manoeuvres, and the army had little logistical capability to be prepared for each possibility.

In this context Weli-Oya was little thought of as the main target. It was a well defended area, dotted with so many camps and points which, it had been assumed, would make a successful withdrawal impossible for the LTTE, for no sensible commander will order an attack unless he is sure of at least two possible lines of withdrawal. Furthermore reinforcements could be quickly rushed in to avert any disaster, because of the close proximity of camps, to one another. There was also a feeling in the army that it had substantially debilitated the LTTE's military might in the jungles of southern Mullaitivu bordering the Weli-Oya region during the massive military operation that was launched in 1991 with the aim of destroying the heavily fortified Base 1-4 Complex of the LTTE which was located there. The Tigers had lost hundreds of their cadres in this battle which followed on the heels of the Elephant Pass engagement. The army fought its way into this dense jungle backed by a massive artillery barrage – a great amount of foliage was destroyed by bulldozers

and firebombs. Gen. Kobbekaduwa was proud of yet another feather on his cap. Despite the warnings of the 'realists' in the army who are often dismissed as incorrigible sceptics, there were some who seriously believed that the Tigers would not be able to repair the damage sustained in the southern periphery of its Base 1-4 Complex, which in turn would, it was thought, make it difficult for them to prepare and launch a major assault on any target in Weli-Oya and then safely return to the fortified base.

It is now obvious that the Tiger retains the necessary military infrastructure in the jungles of southern Mullaitivu. All this has got everyone in the Sinhala Buddhist establishment very worried – particularly because Weli-Oya is close to their heart. One lobby is already pressing for a major assault on Jaffna, accusing the government of allowing the LTTE to take the military initiative by not keeping the army on the offensive in the north. This lobby which has the full backing of the opposition was clearly not pleased with the Prime Minister's speech at Palaly on the day of Janakapura's fall, inviting the LTTE for direct talks with the government. Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, according to reliable sources, had made the speech after he had been fully briefed about the debacle at Weli-Oya. Is the government silently losing faith in the idea of militarily defeating the LTTE? The shrill litany of the Sinhala Buddhist patriots which all but destroyed Premadasa's standing among his people has begun to be heard again in some quarters – that the government is not serious about the war and is therefore compromising the interests of the Sinhala nation. The Opposition leader, Mrs. Sirimao Bandaranaike issued a statement on Friday 30 saying, 'I am deeply disturbed and concerned that

this major disaster took place at a time when the attention of the ministers and the entire machinery of the government has been focused on the conduct of yet another highly publicised Presidential Mobile Secretariat in Batticalao, despite the fact that a major onslaught on a security camp by the LTTE should have been anticipated in the context of the 10th anniversary of the communal violence unleashed in July 1983.' And she did not fail to point out, 'This government has yet failed to appoint a full time State Minister of Defence whose task should be to co-ordinate and direct the war against the LTTE terrorists.'

'It is a matter of great disappointment that the new President continues to give higher priority to political shows, when the need of the hour is to concentrate attention and deploy our national resources to bring to an end the war in the north and east.' She appealed to the government to place the entire country on a war footing to defeat the LTTE.

But very few, if any, in the south seemed interested in being placed on a war footing. The Sinhala commanders continued to show more interest in enhancing their power than thinking of their honour. Brig. Janaka Perera (of the army Engineer Corps) who, under the patronage of Ravi Jayawardene, chased out Tamils living near Manal Aaru in 1984 to create a Sinhala settlement and army camp there and got the settlers to name the place after him, did not resign when the camp fell. (A bridge in Weli-Oya is also named after him). No soldier, in another clime, would have survived the sheer ignominy of seeing a camp named after him burnt and razed to the ground.

Brig. Janaka Perera's attitude is just another sign of the malaise that afflicts the Sri Lankan army.

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In his office the other day the 52-year-old slightly built, white tunicked Minister Lokubandara, who holds a double degree and is a lawyer as well for good measure, stoutly defended his action.

One of the 'offending advertisements' was Sri Lankan test cricketer Arvinda de Silva guzzling sausages. It is the implication of the advertisement he faults with. Lokubandara places the emphasis on truth. 'There is no truth that Arvinda is a good cricketer because he eats sausages. Don't create wants into needs,' pleads Lokubandara.

Sausages are not on the poor man's diet. 'When he finds it difficult to buy

bread why does the advertiser dish out sausages.' That's Lokubandara's argument. He takes out a copy of the Sri Lankan constitution, that's his Bible, and reads extracts from it. He reads of the sovereignty of the people, the rights of the child, etc., etc. The state has committed itself to looking after its people and according to Lokubandara he is following it in both letter and spirit.

He points to an advertisement on TV that recommends the using of a particular brand of toothpaste to remove the tartar from your teeth and make them white.

In a village he recently visited the Minister found the villagers with yellowy white teeth because of the high fluoride content in the water. Some of

the villagers were now hooked on the toothpaste, says Lokubandara.

'The trade is making fools of us' he charges. 'They must not insult the intelligence of the people.'

At the same time Lokubandara defends the fundamental rights of people, whether it be the advertiser or the consumer. 'We have liberalised the economy and I am the last person to discriminate.'

He shows no fear of being taken to court on the meat issue. 'I am prepared to face it in the courts. I haven't violated any law. It is implicit in the law that you cannot lie.'

What about all the other 'luxury' items from jewellery to cars to electric-

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Black July 1983

When the Nation Reached the Depths of Degradation

by Chanaka Amaratunga

The events that followed the killing of thirteen (some have argued that it was fifteen) soldiers of the Sri Lankan Army by guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, on 23rd July 1983, marked a dramatic transition in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. It was the appalling racial riots that were the response to this killing in which Tamils both of Sri Lankan and Indian origin were brutally killed, looted, dispossessed and otherwise humiliated, throughout Sri Lanka, and particularly in Colombo, which dramatically altered the nature of the ethnic conflict. Prior to July 1983 some estimates had concluded that the LTTE had then no more than 500 men under arms and that even of them only 200 had received a proper military training. Several years later the military strength of the LTTE was estimated at approximately 5000 men under arms. In terms of the scale of violence there can be little doubt that July 1983 greatly aggravated the intensity of the conflict which continues to rage, even ten years later.

Few Sri Lankans, certainly not those even remotely interested in things political, would be unable to say where they were and what they were doing when the rioting, murder, arson and mayhem began.

I was in London when the riots of July 1983 took place. Indeed 1983 was a year in which I never visited Sri Lanka. I did not therefore witness any of the horrors of that month or year at first hand. Although my reading of newspapers and books that dealt with the events of July 1983 then and subsequently as well as several conversations with many of those who witnessed these tragic events, have left within me a vivid impression of the riots, I was perhaps fortunate to be spared an acute personal impression of the appalling inhumanity of which our people are only too capable.

My first intimation that something was very wrong in the state of Sri Lanka, came that hot July by means of the *Daily Telegraph*. This was not my usual newspaper in London but I had noticed a long report in it, on the death of the 13 soldiers and immediately purchased a copy which I proceeded to read on the underground. I remember

clearly that something told me there would be the kind of reaction in Sri Lanka that very soon took place. A few days later all British newspapers, radio and television, began reporting the growing atrocities in Colombo and elsewhere outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Although July 1983, accordingly lacks for me, the immediacy of direct experience, it was true that international coverage of the riots was a good deal more honest than the appallingly one-sided and unsympathetic coverage of this tragic event in our own media, particularly that section of it, under state-control. I was able at the time to witness much that Sri Lankans in Sri Lanka were therefore denied.

The almost total inaction of the J.R. Jayewardene Government to the riots and its desperate attempts at appeasing the murderous mobs were unbelievably immoral. Watching these events unfold in London, one's level of incredulity at the base opportunism of J.R. Jayewardene, (and his cronies) his insensitivity and cynicism, epitomised in the now famous because so appalling broadcast to the nation in which he offered not one word of apology or regret to the Tamil people who had been murdered, rendered homeless and otherwise traumatised but described the riots instead as:

the understandable reaction of the Sinhala people who will never allow their beloved country to be divided

knew no bounds. I felt then that we had reached the ultimate depths of degradation as a nation. When it was not actively cheering it on, our establishment, was an assiduous apologist for the mob. It is amazing that ethnic relations in Sri Lanka have recovered even to the degree that they have, given a context in which the J.R. Government was so inclined to justify the mob, so little inclined to demonstrate any sympathy for its victims.

Not surprisingly the most hideous polarisation took place among Sinhalese and Tamils scattered around the globe. In Britain the sheer absurdity of atavistic attitudes of racism were brought home to us on television by two appallingly inarticu-

late and stupid men who emerged in the aftermath of the riots as the spokesmen of the two communities. One was a principal of a Tamil school who was President of an organisation which styled itself the Eelam Association of Great Britain. The other was an estate agent who was President of what called itself the Sinhala Association of Britain. The same infantile communalism was, I was told, very evident among Sri Lankan communities in Australia, the United States of America, Canada and no doubt were to found in appreciable numbers elsewhere across the globe.

Politicians and the people, Sinhalese, and Tamil, Muslim and Burgher, at home and abroad, could not have acted with such cruel insensitivity, if there were not a fundamental inadequacy in us, as a people. It is by recognizing that the poison of July 1983 was in the last analysis, a consequence of our nature as a people, that we can even now take real measures to ensure that racism is truly a thing of the past.

The most constructive response to July 1983 and its aftermath should be a determination to discover and document the responsibility for these terrible events. Who supplied rioters with voters lists through which to identify the houses of Tamils? Who were these rioters? Who was responsible for the massacres in our prisons? Whose idea was it to add insult to injury to a grievously wronged ethnic minority by imposing the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution which banished the moderate elected representation of the Tamil people from Parliament and from the political mainstream for over five years?

Ten years after the riots of July 1983 none of these questions has authoritatively been answered. Our political culture has deteriorated so sadly that we seem completely oblivious to the notion of public accountability. At the height of the apparently iniquitous era of colonialism, the two Houses of the British Parliament appointed a Commission on Viscount Torrington's handling of the rebellion of 1848 in Ceylon, and found him wanting to such a degree that he was recalled. John Stuart Mill conducted a brilliant campaign to set up a Commission which totally condemned and removed from office a Governor of Jamaica named Eyre for his gross cruelty in his administration of that colony. Yet scarcely anyone has demanded a full and open investigation of the events of July 1983. Are we not entitled to know how many people died, how many were rendered homeless, whether politi-

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Ten Years After July 1983

Basic Problems Remain Unresolved

by Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam

Ten years have elapsed since one of the cruellest weeks in the troubled history of modern Sri Lanka. Tamils of Sri Lanka have been exposed to collective violence in 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983. There was however a qualitative difference in the intensity, brutality and organized nature of the violence of July '83. There is no other event which is so deeply etched in the collective memories of the victims and survivors. Neither time nor space has helped ease the pain, the trauma and the bitter memories.

It was estimated that about 2000 – 3000 defenceless people were brutally murdered, although official figures maintain that the death toll was about 400. Many were beaten or hacked to death, while several were torched to death. Thousands of homes and buildings were torched or destroyed. Within the city of Colombo almost a hundred thousand persons, more than half the city's Tamil population, were displaced from their homes, many never returned to their neighbourhoods or to their work places. Outside the country it was estimated that there were about 175 thousand refugees and displaced persons. Hardly a family escaped the death of a relative, or the destruction of their houses or their livelihood and the dislocation of their families. One woman who had been victimised by the repeated cycles of violence, reconstructed her Tamil identity, 'to be a Tamil is to live in fear', she exclaimed in despair.

Many observers were disturbed by the organized and systematic nature of the violence. The rampaging mobs were fed with precise information on the location of Tamil houses and businesses. Their leaders were often armed with voters lists, and with detailed addresses of every Tamil-owned shop, house or factory. The business, entrepreneurial and professional classes were specially targeted, as part of the objective appeared to be to break the economic backbone of the Tamils. It was estimated that almost 100 industrial plants, including 20 garment factories were severely damaged or destroyed. The cost of industrial reconstruction was estimated at Rs. 2 billion rupees. This did not include the hundreds of shops and small trading establishments.

Equally disturbing was the element of state complicity in the violence. The state not only mishandled the funeral of 13 soldiers who had been ambushed by the LTTE on July 23rd, 1983 but also allowed the inflammatory news to be projected in banner headlines in the newspapers on the 24th. On the other hand, the retaliatory violence of the security forces in Tirunelveli and Kantharmadu which resulted in an estimated 50 to 70 persons being killed was suppressed from the media. Army personnel appeared to have encouraged arson and looting and in some instances participated in the looting. Neither the army nor the police took any meaningful action to prevent the

violence or to apprehend the culprits. No curfew was declared for almost two days. Neither the President nor any senior minister made a public appeal for calm and restraint. It was also widely believed that elements within the state or the ruling party had either orchestrated the violence or encouraged the blood letting. No Commission of Inquiry was ever appointed to clear the state of these allegations or to investigate the causes of violence.

When however political leaders did speak four days later, there was a total identification of the state with the majority community. President Jayewardene said that the riots were not a product of urban mobs but a mass movement of the generality of the Sinhalese people. He spoke of the need to politically 'appease' the natural desires and requests of the Sinhalese people. Similarly, none of the senior cabinet ministers who spoke on television, including Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, had a word of sympathy for the victims of this terrible outrage, nor did any of them visit the refugee camps to commiserate even briefly with those who had suffered. This conduct of the President was in sharp contrast with his more conciliatory behaviour in the aftermath of the 1981 violence. He was quoted on September 11 – 'I regret that some members of my party have spoken in Parliament and outside words that encourage violence and murders, rapes and arson that have been committed.' The President further stated that he would resign as the Head of his party if its members continued to encourage ethnic violence and racial bigotry.

Clearly the most disturbing episode took place on the 25th of July at Welikade prison, when 35 Tamil political detainees were battered and hacked to death with clubs, pipes and iron rods by fellow prisoners with the complicity of the prison guards. The government conducted a perfunctory magisterial inquiry but no attempt has yet been made to take legal action against those responsible. This incident was repeated again on Wednesday the 27th of July and it is shameful that the government has yet to pay compensation to the bereaved families and has pleaded immunity to the legal proceedings instituted by them.

Several scholars have written extensively on the causes and consequences of July '83, which the British anthropologist, Jonathan Spencer, has described as 'the dark night of the collective soul'. How is it possible that an island society renowned for its scenic beauty and the warmth and hospita-

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cians, within or without the Government bore responsibility for those terrible events? Surely when there are still dedicated organisations committed to hunting down Nazi war criminals and bringing them to trial, there must be some concern for those who suffered in 1983 for no reason save an accident of birth?

I firmly believe that it is by confronting the full horror of the events of July 1983, by implacably insisting on justice, by holding those responsible for the crimes that then were committed, fully accountable, that Sri Lanka can evolve the consciousness that is so necessary for national reconciliation. A full commission of inquiry into the

circumstances of July 1983 is the imperative need of the hour.

Over two hundred years ago a Governor General of India, Warren Hastings was sought to be impeached by the great Whig (Liberal) leader Charles James Fox. Among those who participated in that debate in support of Fox were the famous political theorist Edmund Burke and the famous playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Burke concluded his indictment of Warren Hastings in the House of Commons with the words:

I impeach him in the name of human nature itself.

Have we Sri Lankans no human nature left in us that calls for justice and truth, for the victims of July 1983?

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bility of its inhabitants is capable of such collective evil and inhumanity? Some have referred to the crisis of competing nationalism of the Sinhalese and the Tamils as being a contributory factor. Both forms of nationalism were antagonistic and incompatible. The assertion of one was perceived to be a denial of the other. Others have referred to the historical myths as embodied in the ancient chronicle that demonised the Tamils. Jonathan Spencer points out that in the popular imagination, the Tigers were believed to be 'superhumanly cruel and cunning and like demons ubiquitous' and that ordinary Tamil workmates and neighbours also became vested with these attributes. They remind us, as Voltaire did that 'if you believe in absurdities you will commit atrocities'. Others have pointed to the propensity for violence in authoritarian political structures which enthrone the majoritarian principle and provide for the bizarre entrenchment of the unitary state. The Referendum in December 1982 which extended the life of Parliament further exacerbated the climate of political animosity and of intolerance.

July '83 also contributed towards convulsive changes in the politics of

the Tamil community and their methods of struggle. As the political leaders committed to constitutional means of agitation became marginalised, Tamil militancy assumed ascendancy. It was even asserted by some that violence of the victims was on a different moral plane from that of the oppressor. This was a dangerous doctrine for the violence of the victim soon consumed the victim, and the victims also became possessed by the demons of racial bigotry and intolerance which had characterised the oppressor. These are seen in the fratricidal violence between Tamils and Muslims, the massacres at the Kathankudy mosque, in Welikanda and Medirigiriya, and the forcible expulsion of Muslims from the Mannar and Jaffna Districts.

Can July '83 recur? The government has pointed out that since 1983, despite similar incidents of mass deaths of soldiers and of civilians there have been few collective reprisals. On the 12th of June 1991, 67 men, women and children were killed by the army in retaliatory violence following a land-mine incident in Kokadaicholai within the Batticaloa district. A Commission of Inquiry found that the army had been responsible for the killings, and awarded compensation to the victims. Although the captain of the unit

was dismissed, the government has not prosecuted those responsible for these gross violations. Similarly after the landmine incident which killed General Denzil Kobbekaduwa, 35 men, women and children were hacked to death by an army unit in Mailanthanai on the borders of the Batticaloa district. Although 23 soldiers have been charged, the transfer of the case from Batticaloa to Polonnaruwa has raised concerns with regard to the state's resolve to prosecute those responsible.

A decade later the basic problems remain unresolved, and to some extent are more intractable. On June 18th 1993, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe told the Sri Lanka Aid Consortium, 'History has shown us, that there are numerous lessons to be drawn from other countries of the world that problems of a minority cannot be resolved by suppressing the minority or by riding roughshod over the heads of the majority. An honourable solution needs a recognisable consensus. We are therefore not relaxing our efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the North and East based on such a consensus.' But as yet the Sri Lankan political leadership has not shown the political imagination, the resolve or the sense of urgency to forge such a consensus.

Buddhism, Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict

The Thai Buddhist social thinker and activist, Sulak Sivaraksa, interviewed by N. Shanmugaratnam.

Sulak Sivaraksa is a well known Thai social thinker and activist. A nominee for the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, Sulak is being tried by the Thai supreme court on a charge of defaming the King of Thailand. The charge of *lese majeste*, if proved, carries a maximum penalty of fifteen years in prison. Currently, Sulak is a Visiting Professor at Ryukoku University, Kyoto. In Japan, he is engaged in dialogues with Buddhists, non-Buddhists, atheists and socialists on problems of Asian societies. The present interviewer, who identifies himself as an atheist and a socialist, has also participated in some of these discussions. The purpose of this interview, however, is to present Sulak's views on issues that are likely to interest readers of *Tamil Times*. Sulak has recently published a book entitled *Seeds of Peace - A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*. He has also been engaged, along with several others, in a dialogue with

Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists from Lanka on the ethnic conflict with the aim of promoting justice and peace in Lanka. He is due to return to Thailand shortly to face trial. This interview took place in Kyoto on 20 July 1993.

You are an advocate of a Buddhist approach to social change. The title of your recent book is 'Seeds of Peace - A Buddhist Vision For Renewing Society'. Can you state your world view in a few words?

I have discussed at some length the Buddhist Vision in the book mentioned by you. The beauty of the Buddhist view is that you do not have to believe in a god. First of all, you have to be a peaceful, humble and simple person who is in harmony with other beings including non-human beings such as animals and plants and the natural world in general. I respect other religions and believe in learning from

them too. But I think they spend a lot of time and effort to prove the existence of a god. The basic question is one of finding ways to help those who suffer. In a sense everyone in this world suffers in one way or the other. Helping others is a good way to build friendship. I believe that friendship is possible even between persons who hold different views and spiritual values. I know that there are problems when disagreements take irreconcilable forms. I have been beaten up a few times by people who thought that I was their enemy because I disagreed with them. One has to be patient at such times and prepared not to let anger and hatred take the upper hand.

How does Buddhism define an alternative path for social development?

Before answering that question, let me say something about the dominant approaches of our times, capitalism, and socialism as we have known it. Both these approaches have used social engineering strategies in their own ways. I think social engineering has failed to create the conditions for human development. Capitalism does not merely make use of human greed but glorifies this human weakness as a great virtue. It celebrates self-

interested behaviour. Capitalism encourages accumulation of wealth but does not easily allow even a basically fair distribution of it. It subordinates human development to the accumulation motive by putting the economic objective above all else. I have discussed the new religion of consumerism and how it ruins the Thai society in my last book. The equalitarian ideology of socialism is wonderful but in reality it has led to state capitalism and authoritarianism. Capitalism permits some individual freedom while denying a fair distribution of wealth. The socialism we have seen ensured a fairer distribution but denied basic freedoms. I do recognise the merits of Marxist class analysis and the contribution of Marxism to the debates on social development. Now turning to Buddhism, the most crucial difference it has with capitalism is that it does not seek to make a virtue of self-interest, greed and self-aggrandisement. In fact, Buddhism condemns greed, which can easily lead to aggression and hatred, and shows how to be content by changing yourself and striving with your fellow human beings to improve everyone's wellbeing. Unfortunately, Buddhists have failed to deal with problems in that spirit. We have failed to deal with the injustices of feudalism and capitalism and with the impacts of Hinduism and Confucianism on Buddhist philosophy. We have to understand socio-cultural realities in our societies and their tensions and evolve appropriate approaches so that no section feels discriminated against. As a Buddhist, I am an advocate of what has come to be known as the middle path when it comes to development. We can not turn the clock backwards. We must adopt from the modern systems whatever is good for the people's human development and build a righteous society. This is no easy task and I know it involves compromises for the sake of peace and harmony. I would refer those interested to know more to my book.

If I may turn to a more specific issue, Thai and Lankan Buddhist clerical establishments have had a very long and cordial relationship. You have been involved for some time in peace promotion in Sri Lanka. Do you think that Buddhist peace activists like you in Thailand could play a role in bringing about a resolution of the Lankan conflict?

Let me first tell you something about Thai-Tamil relations of which many people do not seem to be aware in Thailand or in India and Sri Lanka. Before the establishment of close links between Lankan and Thai Buddhists,

we had a long period of interaction with South Indian culture. Tamil Nadu already had a rich culture many centuries ago and there was constant intercourse between Thai and Tamil culture. The version of Ramaayana we have in Thailand came from Tamil Nadu. The Brahmanistic mantras chanted at ceremonies in the Thai court are Tamil in origin although many people still think that they are Sanskrit. In fact, some scholars have deciphered the words and shown them to be Tamil. And Buddhism came not only from North India but from the South as well as Tamil Nadu had one of the most active centres of Buddhism in Kanchi.

Sorry to interrupt you at this point. I have been told that in your language the word Tamil means something very bad. Is this true?

Yes. Thamin, that is how Thamil is spelt in Thai, means something dreadful, bloody, violent etc. There is a history behind this. I think the word in its current usage came into the Thai language from Sri Lanka through Mahavamsa and the Sinhala Buddhist monks who used it pejoratively. In May this year, a peaceful mass demonstration was broken up by the police and several people got killed. A major newspaper headlined its story about this incident as 'Pruspa Thamin' which means 'May Thamil', i.e. May Violence. I wrote a long article to that newspaper protesting against the misuse of a word which actually describes the ethnic identity and language of more than 50 million people. There was a positive response to my article from a popular columnist in the same paper who stressed that we should not use the word Thamin in the sense we have been using it all this time as it could hurt the feelings of the Tamil people. I hope this message will reach everyone in Thailand.

Now to return to your question about our role in promoting justice and peace in Lanka. There are people like me in Thailand who are very concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka and willing to do whatever we can to bring about a just resolution of the conflict and an end to the war. My nationality and religion could be both a help and a hindrance in this regard. The close ties between the Sri Lankan and Thai sanghas provide us with a good communication channel. On the other hand the nationalist elements in the Sinhala Buddhist sangha may expect us to support their positions or, at least, not to oppose them. The first message I have for the Sinhala Buddhists is that they should abide by the Buddhist precept of non-violence. You

can not be a Buddhist and an advocate or a supporter of violence at the same time. Almost ten years ago, I was asked by three international peace bodies: War Resister International, Peace Brigades International and International Fellowship for Reconciliation, to participate in a peace initiative in Sri Lanka. I agreed to this and visited Sri Lanka in 1984 and several times after that. I met with Buddhist leaders including the Mahanayake to whom I said that the Sangha had got too close to politics at the expense of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. I also politely asked the Mahanayake to explain why there were no Tamil Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka. I did not get a satisfactory answer. As a result of my visits and with the cooperation of the Peace Research Institute, Oslo, (PRIO) we managed to invite 35 Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka to Bangkok for a dialogue and reflection on the ethnic problem. Tord Høvic of PRIO, himself a Buddhist, was very helpful to me. I noticed that the Sinhala Buddhist monks suffered from a mental block when it came to the Tamil question. We talked a lot and at one stage I proposed that a meeting with Tamil militants may help and that it could be held in Madras or Bangkok. The monks were not ready for such a dialogue yet. They appeared to be worried that such a meeting might adversely affect their credibility among the Sinhala people. We also discussed other matters of mutual interest including alternative development. I showed the monks some parts of Bangkok to help them see the negative aspects of so-called development. They also saw some of the positive side. I raised another important question too. It concerned the virtual disappearance of Pintapata (the practice of begging by Buddhist monks) among the Sri Lankan Buddhist clergy.

An upshot of our efforts was that we gained a few individuals who became dedicated to the peace process at the risk of being attacked by chauvinists as traitors to the Sinhala Buddhist cause. Now some monks and lay persons are working with Tamils. Some of them have been exposed to training in Norway and the Philippines sponsored by HURIDOCs and PRIO. I will continue my effort but I know it is not an easy task to find a solution and end the war.

Can a Buddhist be a nationalist too?

Not the way many Buddhists in Sri Lanka are nationalists; they are Sinhalese before they are Buddhists. Buddha was born in India but his

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On Rewriting Constitutions

by Jehan Perera

More than a window of opportunity for constitutional change appears to have opened. The same problems of civil war, poverty and moral decay that have dogged the country continue with no sign of decrease. Also, for the first time since 1970, the country does not have a headstrong leadership that knows (or thinks it knows) its final destination.

Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, President J.R. Jayewardene and President Ranasinghe Premadasa all had clear ideas about where they hoped to take the country. Attempting to persuade them to take another direction or use different methods would well nigh have been a futile endeavour. They believed that they had the answers.

In particular, Mr. Jayewardene with his sophisticated ways succeeded in convincing many intelligent people that he always had a trick up his sleeve by which he would pull the country out of trouble, even at the last moment. That is perhaps the main reason why, during the larger part of his term in office, he was spared the wrath of the intelligentsia that took Mrs. Bandaranaike and Mr. Premadasa to pieces.

But finally it seems that we have got rid of our illusions about politicians, especially those in positions of political power. The fact is quite evident that they have failed to come up with the answers to the country's problems.

Perhaps Mr. Gamini Disnayake or someone else on the peripheries of today will have the answers for tomorrow. But not today. This is the context in which the think-tank of university dons headed by Prof. G.L. Peiris have been making a series of analyses of the scope for constitutional reform today.

No special mention needs to be made of Peiris's contribution to the intellectual life of the country. With his brilliant mind, he has been able to make immense contributions to a diverse area of social and political endeavour.

At a recent seminar on the press which was attended by the Prime Minister, Prof. Peiris made a succinct analysis of the situation of journalists that was probably superior to anything a journalist could have done.

Fortunately, Prof. Peiris has been a stranger to intellectual snobbery. Some years ago, a very senior university don delivered a brilliant paper at a seminar. But when he was asked to publish it in a newspaper, he said:

'No, that is not the place for these ideas.' It is at least in part due to snobbish sentiments such as this that bureaucrats and politicians have been so easily able to take people, who are left without an exposure to sophisticated ideas, for a ride.

Unfortunately, Sri Lankans have another shortcoming, and this is to be unable to distance their egos from their ideas. That is perhaps an additional reason why they shrink from engaging in open debate, for instance, in the newspapers. Of course, in doing so, they make themselves vulnerable to attack by anyone who chooses to pick up pen and paper. Nor has Prof. Peiris been spared such criticism.

For instance, several letters to the editor have appeared taking Prof. Peiris to task for not expressing his opinion on many controversial matters at an earlier date. 'The owl of Minerva,' said Hegel, 'takes flight when the shades of twilight are already falling.'

But it is absurd to make this a personal criticism. It means that if we failed to do a good thing in the past, we should not do it in the future as well unless we wish to be criticised! On the contrary, Prof. Peiris should be commended for getting together university scholars from different fields to work together on a common project.

Another criticism in a similar vein that might be made is that the series of articles on constitutional reform appearing in the newspapers are too abstract and too long making them lose out to lighter fare in the Sunday newspapers. Perhaps these articles should have been written in a shorter and less complex style specifically for the newspapers in order to be actually read rather than glanced at.

Limitations

In my view, however, more fundamental criticisms of the constitutional reform project is that the analysis of the constitutional structure in the country has been done without sufficiently taking into consideration the social reality. For instance, while constitutions are important, people of integrity who uphold the constitution are more important.

One of the best constitutions ever written was that of Germany in the Weimar period between the two world wars. Still for all, it was within this constitution that Hitler came to power and finally assumed absolute power.

There was a fatal gap between the liberal constitution and the ugly social

reality with its unemployment, race hate and war reparations. The Weimar constitution and the rights and protections in it became a worthless scrap of paper in the face of this social reality.

Sri Lanka after 1977 offers another example of how people in positions of authority, and constitutionally protected with autonomy, nevertheless caved in to 'Orders from Above'. Perhaps they were thinking of their promotions, or their after-retirement jobs, or getting a foreign trip. Or perhaps they had no spine. Alas, rewriting the constitution will not give a spine to those who do not have one.

Another major issue which Prof. Peiris and his team would need to give more attention to is how to draw up a constitution that meets the needs of the non-elite people who constitute perhaps 90 percent of the population.

A basic feature of all our constitutions is that they were framed by small coteries of political elites. The lifestyles and values of the framers of the constitutions were at variance with those of the vast majority of the people. Therefore, in designing their constitutions they would, naturally and primarily have been guided by their limited visions and protecting their own interests.

Elitist

Unfortunately, Prof. Peiris and his team's effort to show the way to a new constitution appears to suffer from a similar infirmity. Their constitutional reform project appears to be a detached view from the top, and not one that is very much involved with the lives of the millions at the grassroots level.

This weakness comes out somewhat clearly in the recommendation to admit intellectuals and other elevated personalities direct to the Cabinet through the national lists without making them go through the political process.

It is reasonable to believe that in order for a person to understand the people's aspirations, he or she would need to go to the people, spend time with them and see their daily lives and problems. Those who 'parachute' into Parliament from 'experts' positions may have all the fine theories, but if they do not understand the social reality, their decisions will very likely be narrow and self-centred ones. Unless, of course, they are like Gandhi.

The model politician and social reformer will, from one point of view, always be Mahatma Gandhi, who though highly educated and from an upper class family, nevertheless gave

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Tamil Refugees in Sri Lanka and the West

by Rajan Hoole

Continued from last issue.

A new category of persons joining the refugee exodus abroad were businessmen fleeing extortionate demands by the LTTE. A typical person in this category, now in London, was a dealer in metal goods, in Jaffna. Through contacts within the LTTE he discovered that a huge sum of money was to be demanded of him. With the help of his friends to obtain travel clearance, he fled to Colombo abandoning his shop. In the course of trying to set up shop in Colombo he was picked up by the police on suspicion with Rs. 85,000/- (US\$ 2000) in hand. This was shortly after the JOC bomb explosion in June 1991. He got himself released by going through a lawyer and paying Rs. 20,000/- to an inspector of police. Subsequently policemen called on him regularly. This finally led him to contact an agent and go to London. He took this decision which he had not contemplated earlier, because life in the North or in the South of Sri Lanka became impossible for him. He was a trader who could only trade and was competent at that. The choices for him were to either go abroad, or to give away what remained of his money and beg.

He said that had he the money demanded by the Tigers, he could have brought his entire family to London. A number of businessmen have been abducted and held by the Tigers since 1989, pending payment of large sums of money.

New Ramifications

The cost of living whether in Jaffna, or to rent accommodation and live in the relative safety of Colombo, has become so expensive that nearly every family depends at least on partial support from abroad. This means that a significant proportion of refugees and semi-refugees at home depend on refugees in the West. A small family in Jaffna requires a minimum of Rs. 4000/- a month for food alone. (We are not talking in terms of food that is even remotely adequate nutritionally by Western standards). A graduate school teacher earns a bare Rs. 2700/- a month. Food prices in Jaffna vary sharply and are normally two to any number of times what they are in the South.

A combination of events has driven Jaffna folk to a point where they are forced to live in Sri Lanka at tourist

rates. The availability of foreign funds has jacked up various incidental costs and the people, however much they resent it, are locked into it.

This money provides the spur for those thrown out of work to undertake the risky business of transporting food and fuel into Jaffna, and providing transport services for those going South. It provides the means to pay the huge cuts on trade and transport, visa fees charged by the Tigers and bribes to army and police personnel. In the South it helps to fund the huge costs involved in releasing people picked up by the police, and lawyers fees.

In the case of an innocent young lady picked up by the police in Colombo, held for one-and-a-half years, and almost certain to be released by the courts, she had to come up with lawyers fees of Rs. 100,000 (US\$ 2500) – an impossible sum by local standards. In the meantime her family had suffered grievously, her husband having committed suicide. Her family could find this money only because of a brother who is a refugee in Switzerland. People's expenses now bear no relation to their local earning power, thus locking them into the refugee phenomenon.

The exodus meant that a high proportion of women at home were unmarried. When men went in the mid-80s, they never dreamed of permanent stay in the West. But their own plight and that of their family made them stay on. The women in turn were forced to go West once marriages were arranged. This has led to children being born and organised Tamil communities coming up in the West.

The response of Western authorities has pushed up the cost and complexity of the exodus. This means a high level of organisation and sophisticated business deals. There is now little question of the costs being raised locally. This means guarantees by well wishers, payment by instalments, insurance against deportation all of which become part of the enterprise. These contracts are operated on trust and are non-enforceable in a court of law. Thus deterrents put up by Western authorities do not necessarily keep out those who have links with this community through personal contacts. The costs involved would make it more difficult for Eastern Tamils lacking contacts. Those outside the circles trying to deal with agents with a view

to going abroad face a high risk of being swindled.

The need for funds from relatives in the West would remain long after the conflict is ended. Many have lost their homes and if the past is anything to go by, rehabilitation schemes, although repeatedly promised, never took off. From 1987 people have been repeatedly encouraged to file for claims. Even then the amounts contemplated were paltry in relation to the cost of rebuilding or repair. In a typical case, a house in Urumpirai was bombed in 1987. The cost of repair was well over Rs. 100,000. What a newly graduated son could earn in Colombo was barely Rs. 3000 a month. The parents borrowed money and sent the son to England.

Instinctive Reactions

Western governments often try to deal with this exodus without trying to understand its complexity. Stereotyped phrases such as 'economic refugees' and the associated emotions usually lead to disastrous measures being applied. To start with, a significant proportion of political refugees face real danger at home. The others are not economic refugees in the sense that they wanted to graduate from an old Raleigh bicycle to Jaguar or a Mitsubishi, or from a cottage in Chullipuram to a flat in Chelsea. Nearly every refugee I have come across denies himself the pleasures of the West and sends his last penny home. We are still very much a family centred people where social and cultural expectations play a key role. The money helps many at home to stave off starvation. In a world that has denied them any positive role in protecting the interests of their community, sending money home gives them a means of feeling human and retaining some semblance of honour.

The instinctive reaction of governments is to take a narrowly legalistic view, refuse to understand the problem, and deport them. What results is often ugly and only worsens the problem. In order to make it look good and to minimise the bad publicity at home and abroad, governments try to get one or more international organisation involved. Meaningless statements are made such as 'though the North-East is unsafe, the refugees can live in the South'. An international organisation was recently pressurised into lending its name to a proposed deportation from a European country. The international organisation was in turn looking for others to share the liabilities. At one point it had plans to meet the LTTE representative in Paris, another European capital, to minimise friction that could affect its work. But

when asked, it had no plans to ask its representative in Colombo to receive the deportees and signal to the Sri Lankan government that it had an interest in their well being. Whatever the end result, the politics of such operations take little account of the well-being of the people concerned. They rather pander to the insensitivity of governments and reinforce the LTTE's shadowy role over a whole people. Moreover to so use international organisations which try to breathe a little sanity into an insane world order, is to subject them to disrepute and the whole world would lose by it.

Then what would be the plight of a deportee once dumped in Sri Lanka?

To start with, they would have no guarantee of security such as Westerners would find acceptable for themselves. Picking up people from refugee camps has continued. There have even been cases of refugees disappearing after they were returned from India under the aegis of UNHCR. When officials of the state contemplating deportations maintain that the security situation has improved, the fact that refugees abducted from camps by government forces in public view have disappeared, and the matter remains swept under the carpet, is conveniently ignored. That disappearance is improbable is not the issue.

More importantly, the person deported would be a heavily indebted, humiliated person without the ability to help himself or his family. This gnawing sense of failure would either destroy the person through suicide or drive him to greater desperation that could work no good.

The only human and dignified solution to the problem needs to be radically different.

Some Cautionary Notes:

What follows summarises some points that are already implicit in the foregoing.

1. To treat refugees as unwelcome law breakers or free loaders would only strengthen attitudes on both sides that work towards making the problem insoluble. The reasons for their being refugees have complex ramifications and are, humanly speaking, genuine. An unsympathetic narrow legalism on the part of officials is often reciprocated by answers tailored to fit these legalities. The result is cynicism and a lack of dialogue.

In spite of much cynicism about the LTTE among Western officials, facing a vacuum arising from a lack of dialogue with the refugees, there is a strong temptation to cultivate and use the LTTE as a handle to deal with the

refugees. It in effect becomes somewhat like putting the wolf in charge of the sheep pen.

2. In the absence of a dialogue the refugees live in constant fear of deportation whenever a cosmetic temporary peace is secured. This leads to unhealthy attitudes. People instinctively distrust a peace that is not accompanied by a politics of peace as past experience vindicates. To keep such a fear alive is not only unreasonable, but also strengthens the LTTE's hold over them.

3. The generally unsympathetic attitude towards refugees distorts real issues while dwelling on inanities. We occasionally hear of Western officials visiting Ceylon and exclaiming 'Eureka' after finding holes in the stories of a couple of refugee claimants. This in turn leads to stereotyping.

The reality is that hardly any of the many students from the University of Jaffna who had political involvements and fled to the West in real fear of their lives, did so by going to a Western embassy and saying, 'Listen, I have a problem'. This reality received confirmation from my own experience and that of others known to me. A colleague and I were talking to a very high ranking official in the Canadian High Commission in Colombo. We raised two matters. One was that of two of our graduates who had obtained assistantships to follow research programmes in Canadian universities. They had been denied visas after six months of being treated to misleading statements, delays and finally to outright rudeness. The other was that of a student facing danger. The official told us that 'because many abuse the system, the innocent must suffer'. The logic was not dissimilar to that of an army justifying its massacre of civilians after a guerrilla attack. A letter of complaint written to the Canadian High Commissioner received no reply. It is against attitudes making ordinary people powerless that an ugly situation has built up.

Take the trader referred to earlier. His story is hardly romantic, heroic or pathetic. But his reasons for being a refugee are genuine, but hardly ones that would receive a sympathetic hearing.

4. It is a mistake to make decisions on the assumption that Tamil refugees in general have no wish to return. Particularly those who had a political commitment would mostly like to return, if there is a healthy political environment at home where their contribution would be recognised and they could live in dignity. This will not happen as long as attitudes of states

empower only the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE.

5. When people do return, apart from security, they must also have assurances of financial solvency to ensure that life with dignity is possible. A person must be able to fulfil basic social obligations. No amount of money pledged to the rehabilitation ministry, the provincial government or to other large organisations will convince a person whose house was destroyed that help is on the way. Experience has made people very distrustful in a culture where accountability has been on the decline. A person would by far place his bets on a son in the West to have his house rebuilt. There is thus a real need to make money more directly accessible to people.

6. When dealing with Tamil refugees, it must be kept in mind that it is not an individual one is dealing with, who could be dumped in Colombo and forgotten. Almost every individual refugee represents a community of interests depending on him to meet basic needs, stretching through Colombo to Jaffna.

A Recapitulation of Causes

Once more to get things in perspective, the internal as well as the external refugee problem up to mid-1986 was largely due to the actions of the Sri Lankan state. The Tamils left in Ceylon at this time were either those committed to the struggle, who believed that peace would soon return, or like the rural refugees and those who went to India, lacked the means to go very far.

From this time to the present, internal refugees continued to multiply by the hundreds of thousands because of massacres and actions of state forces. These actions contributed to a steady stream of refugees going West, in much smaller numbers in relation to the rising internal problem, as homes and livelihoods were destroyed. But the external refugees exodus became more complex, acquiring a critical internal dimension. Except for a small handful, the exodus of the large number of young and students with a political commitment to the liberation struggle was a direct consequence of internal developments. It must be remembered that a liberation struggle involves a high level of politicisation. The Tigers' hold on power necessarily demanded depoliticisation, and depended rather on sensationalism and terror.

Once the politics became debased, almost every aspirant for power used terror. The LTTE may have gained the

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initiative and made a fine art of it. But particularly during the IPKF presence, everyone with a real or imagined link with one party was in danger from the other. The need to flee for many was very real.

The role of the Sri Lankan state in the suffering of by far the huge, destitute and almost forgotten internal refugee problem should not be lost sight of.

Approaching the Problem Creatively

The foregoing, perhaps, suggests courses of action that could be adopted in practice, would gain the approval of host countries and would also go some way towards creating conditions for a VOLUNTARY return of refugees. As much as one may wish, ideal conditions for their return would not arise in a few months or two years. These suggestions if developed may also pave the way for a dialogue on the issues which is frank, sympathetic and respects truth rather than desultory legalities.

1. The dialogue should in the first instance involve the section of refugees who had a political commitment to the struggle. Many of them still show an active concern through several excellent journals appearing in Tamil. They are the ones most likely to wish to return even if conditions are not ideal. **Provided** they have an opportunity to contribute towards the general social and material upliftment of the community, rather than live as zombies, returning home would be a fulfilment of the aims that fired their youth.

This dialogue, if accompanied by political will, could even evolve a time frame to work towards a solution.

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up everything and with a goat and loin cloth walked the length and breadth of India among the people, serving them, loving them, organising them and learning from them. As an outcome of all of this only did he speak up on their behalf.

It is his counterparts we most need in Sri Lanka today. It is also a changed consciousness in the people themselves that will forcefully propel the political leaders towards resolving the problems in the country. By putting forth ideas for debate in the press, Prof. Peiris and his team are undoubtedly contributing to that change in people's thinking. But their efforts need to be complemented by people's organisations such as the Sarvodaya Movement that work with and organise people at the base of society. This should be recognised too.

There must be parallel moves to bring the government and the Tigers to show tangible good faith in creating a benign political and human rights environment where a return of exiles is feasible.

2. On the part of the Sri Lankan government, there must be a political initiative to give confidence to the Tamils. To tackle disabilities faced by civilians because of the actions of the forces in isolation can only bring limited results. Extortion of Tamils, for example is very much a consequence of the lack of political direction. Without a political initiative, the security enterprise will be about as open and confused as the economy.

The practical problems involved in governments having a dialogue with refugee representatives can be bridged by using NGOs more effectively.

For anyone to say that conditions are right for the return of refugees is meaningless unless the security and well-being of internal refugees is assured. To start with, the government must be made to account for those hundreds of refugees abducted by the forces in public view, for which responsibility was later denied. To talk of peace in the country would have no meaning if there could be peace one day and people disappear the next when the government forces have a quarrel with a rebel group, especially one with whom they were as thick as thieves.

3. The Tigers must be challenged to demonstrate that they respect dissent and that people could contribute to the well-being of their community without interference and as their conscience allows. To start with they must be made to account for the 4000 or so political prisoners they hold. If those who are committed to the well-being of the community and actively cared for it can be tortured, killed or imprisoned by its so-called representatives, the community has no future. The refugees would do well to stay where they are. **The ability of those politically committed refugees to return and the early release of the LTTE's prisoners, will crucially determine the prospects for a politics of peace and a general return of refugees.**

4. With these measures, rather than keeping refugees idle, they should be encouraged to acquire skills geared to the eventual rehabilitation of the whole community at home. These skills could be technical, psychiatric nursing, providing a future for the war-maimed and the founding and running of co-operative enterprises.

As mentioned earlier, apart from the security and political aspects of the

return of refugees, the economic one is also a key to the whole process. The government, central or provincial, and large institutions probably cannot handle this and the people's past experience will hardly give them confidence in these institutions. Money must be much more within the reach of people. The host countries in the West could involve committed and appropriately trained returning refugees as a means of directing relief in a decentralised manner. This is just the germ of an idea whose working out would be more involved. Those who remained at home should not be made to feel powerless.

5. If those who were once politically committed had established themselves at home, and conditions are seen to have improved, then many other refugees will wish to return voluntarily. Although material advantages in the West could be habit forming, most of those from rural backgrounds who came to the West feel more keenly the loss of emotional security which the easy going communal life at home gave them. What they mainly ask for is a life with dignity and without want.

If the problem is approached sympathetically and with understanding, without making the refugees feel threatened, I strongly believe that it could be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

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THE SUB-CONTINENTAL SCENE

● Rao Govt. Survives

The two-year-old Narasimhao Rao government has managed to survive by the skin of its teeth. In a touch and go affair, the Cong-I marshalled all its resources to get the Opposition no-confidence motion defeated by a mere 14 votes, 265 against and 251 for.

The no-confidence motion mentioned three points for its lack of confidence in the Council of Ministers – namely, the government's 'anti-people economic policies based on total surrender to the IMF-World Bank,' its 'compromising attitude to communal forces' and its 'all-pervading corruption.'

While the effective strength of the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Indian Parliament, is 533, 524 MPs were present at the time of voting on the night of July 28, not counting the Speaker. All the 248 members of the ruling party voted against the motion and so did ten of its minor allies.

But the government's victory was made possible by a split in the Ajit Singh-led Janata Dal, with seven of its 20 members defying the party whip and supporting the Cong-I. Incidentally the Ajit Singh group itself is a splinter group of the Janata Dal led by Mr. V.P. Singh and the split had been engineered by the Cong-I last year. Poetic justice then if the Cong-I is at it again when Mr. Ajit Singh tries to play truant!

Both then and now, it was the arch-manipulator of Indian politics Dr. Subramanyam Swamy who played a crucial role in strengthening the position of the minority government of Rao.

Even though it had warded off two other no-confidence motions in the past, this time around it had to undergo some agonising moments before the result was out because virtually the entire opposition, the Hindu revivalist BJP, the Left parties as also the AIADMK from Tamil Nadu, till recently a trusted ally of the Cong-I, had ganged up in an attempt to vote out the Rao regime.

While the Left had become disenchanted with the seemingly unstoppable liberalisation policies initiated by Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, the BJP is keen to cash in on the militant mood among a section of Hindus in the North in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December last. As for the AIADMK, since Mr. Rao consistently

refused to humour the bloated ego of Ms. Jayalalitha, she sought to teach him a lesson, though not very successfully as it has turned out.

However, the fact remains that Mr. Narasimha Rao who at the beginning of his innings had striven to 'rule by consensus' and promised a refreshing change from the abrasive Rajiv regime is now a beleaguered man, his track-record blotted on various fronts. He himself is at the centre of a scam-storm, charged as he is with receiving Rs.1 crore from the notorious stockbroker Harshad Mehta. He has not made any serious effort to come clean on the matter. The communal cauldron is still hissing, could explode anytime again. Thousands of jobs are vanishing into thin air in the wake of liberalisation.

● Jayalalitha Tries a 'Fast' One



With her known penchant for theatricals, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha suddenly embarked on a 'fast unto death' on a quiet Sunday morning in the third week of July – her demand – immediate release of adequate water in Cauvery by Karnataka to save the withering khariff crop in her state.

Even her most virulent critics would concede that Tamil Nadu had indeed a strong case. The neighbouring Karnataka has steadfastly refused to honour the interim award of the Cauvery

Though the Cong-I is heaving a sigh of relief, its leaders are aware that troubled days are ahead. For instance in the forthcoming elections in the four northern states the BJP is poised to sock it in the party's eye. And more elections are to follow in other states.

With no charismatic leader around, Mr. Rao himself prevaricating on major issues, corruption charges mounting, the future is anything but bright for the Cong-I. But the prospect of a take-over by the Hindu fundamentalists is not very pleasant either.

And hence a search is on for a secular left-of-centre united front to take on the BJP and its allies. And for a dynamic leadership.

In the circumstances Mr. Rao does not certainly fit the bill, and his party might be obliged to look for a man with a vision to steer it out of trouble in the days to come.

Water Disputes Tribunal. There was no hitch last year, thanks to bountiful rains. But with monsoon proving miserly this time and Karnataka itself facing some difficulties, Tamil Nadu got only 4.82 tmcft of water in June (against 42.76 tmcft), gravely jeopardising the khariff prospects. And the Centre has long since stopped taking initiatives to sort out such problems unless under serious compulsions.

So then as a Chief Minister she indeed had a responsibility to secure

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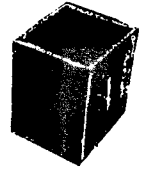


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Trauma of Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in South India

by N. Gopalan, Madras

The saga of the Sri Lankan Tamils seems to be a never-ending tragedy. The discrimination and the pogroms in the island, the fratricidal war among the militants, the disastrous Indian intervention, the continuing battle for supremacy between the Tigers and the Lankan armed forces and the consequent stone-age living conditions in Jaffna and so on.

Through all that misery the moral support from the Tamils of Tamil Nadu has been a source of great strength to the Lankan Tamils. At the sign of the slightest trouble, they could hop into the first available boat and make it to the Indian shores. There has never been a dearth of sympathisers who would accommodate them. In 1983, 1985 and even in 1990 – when the Tigers were crossing swords with the IPKF – the governments of the day, both at the Centre and at the state, went about organising camps for the refugees, disbursing doles and food articles and generally ensuring that the administrative action or attitude did not add to the woes of the displaced.

There was a time in 1985 when the entire bureaucracy worked overtime to see that life was as comfortable as possible for 'our guests'. This correspondent had met a refugee at Mandapam then who said, 'They are doing a grand job, feeding us, sustaining us and guaranteeing our security which our own government miserably failed to do.'

But the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi has irretrievably damaged their position. There were around 1.15 lakh persons accommodated in 237 camps at the time. In a fit of rage, Ms. Jayalalitha herself called for the repatriation of all the Lankan Tamils from the Indian soil.

Ground realities softened her up a bit when she assumed office as Chief Minister. But she decided that she would not allow any trouble to erupt from the refugee quarters.

She ordered proper registration of all Lankan Tamils and thereafter succeeded in getting the Centre to accede to the deportation of 29,102 refugees till October last year.

It is not just the question of registration or the militant infiltration or the deportation which is causing concern to the human rights activists and the United Nations High Commissioner

for Refugees monitoring the situation, but the very attitude of the people and the government of Tamil Nadu. Unfortunately the poor Lankan Tamil refugees – both inside the camps and outside – have become the target of all round suspicion and hostility, and this is causing tremendous damage to their psyche.

Perhaps the most serious blow to the refugees has been in the sphere of education. After the ethnic holocaust in Sri Lanka in 1983 and the large-scale immigration of the Lankan Tamils, the state government even ordered special quota for the wards of the refugees in professional courses. But now the doors of almost all higher educational institutions are shut for good for the Lankan refugees. Even in schools the refugee children could get admission only with a great amount of difficulty. As a perceptive observer put it, 'The Rajiv assassination is perhaps the most treacherous activity one can conceive of, and it has proved to be a great setback to the Eelam struggle. The perpetrators have to blame only themselves for their present situation. But I don't think it is either fair or even makes sense to deny the innocent refugee children their education. Denying them education is the surest way of sending them hurtling headlong into the most misguided form of militancy. The powers-that-be do not seem to realise that it is only lack of introspection and exposure to the wider world – which only education can provide – that sets the youth on an irresponsible and adventurist tract...'

The 30,000 and odd inmates of the 131 refugee camps find their movements increasingly getting restricted ever since the assassination in May 1991. They are allowed to move out only for a few hours a day, that too only after obtaining permission from the authorities.

The ban prevents a refugee from gainfully employing himself or herself and supplementing the family income. The cash and rice doles are inadequate to meet the needs of many a family and hence the menfolk especially used to take up a variety of jobs involving tough physical labour in the towns nearby. This has now ceased.

A voluntary organisation worker described the state of refugee children thus: 'Their nutritional intake has

gone down dangerously. What can they eat when their fathers have been denied the opportunity to earn some extra income and the vegetable prices are shooting up everyday?...'

Hundreds of Lankan Tamils have been cashiered by many established concerns fearing trouble with the police after the Sriperumbudur blast. It is in the unorganised sector like the construction industry that the refugees have a good chance of being taken in, though on a casual basis. And this is where the restrictions come in their way.

In the rural areas the refugee women from the camps find it difficult to go around collecting twigs and firewood as they get into trouble with the local people. The latter conveniently label the Lankan women as Tiger informants and the police pounce upon them with alacrity. With a meagre allotment of around three litres of kerosene per family per month and firewood supplies difficult to replenish, many families can afford to cook only once in two or three days.

Temporary structures were constructed by the authorities purportedly to house the refugees for short periods, but there is no chance the refugees here will move out on their own. Meantime the shelters are decaying and during monsoon the conditions of the inmates become miserable. The children become an easy prey to all kinds of infectious diseases at such times.

The toilets in most of the camps are bursting at the seams. The refugees stray into private fields nearby creating unnecessary friction with the locals.

Poor nutrition and unhygienic environments add to the health problems of the refugees. The health care system is nothing much to speak of. Many doctors simply refused to visit the camps in the wake of the assassination. The government doles being what they are, the inmates can hardly afford to seek treatment from private medical practitioners.

While the doles, fixed three years ago, have remained static, the payment dates do not correspond to the supply of the subsidised rations in the camps. So then the procurement of subsidised food articles becomes difficult and the inmates are constrained to buy such items from nearby shops at exorbitant rates.

But more than most the constant harassment due to checking and finger-printing, rude behaviour and incivility of the authorities, sheer con-

Continued on page 22

Women in Exile

'To be uprooted from one's own land is itself a trauma for anyone. Could be even more so for women since cultural differences are destabilising... While the camp-life is not enjoyable in the best of times, since the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi things have become much worse... Our families are disintegrating and we feel humiliated at every turn... Suicide seems to be the only option for many of us,' despairs Mahalakshmi, an inmate of a camp in Gudiyatham in North Arcot district.

She notes that back home Lankan Tamil girls pursue their education till the high school and beyond, then go for jobs and get married. The ethnic strife, the flight to India and problems in schooling here have rudely disrupted that process and many girls are confined to their homes. This naturally gives rise to a lot of interaction with the boys of the camp lounging around. Then on to affairs, marriages without parental consent, family break-up and so on. Many parents who fled to India in the interest of the safety of their children lament their decision to leave Sri Lanka. 'We're going un-stuck,' they say.

Mrs. Manohari notes young couples go in for abortion because of

their precarious economic condition, this naturally telling on the health of the women. 'We can't afford nutritional supplements to the pregnant; no lactation; but no money to go in for baby food. Oh god, we'd like to have children, but we can't afford. We consciously deprive ourselves of that wonderful experience of motherhood...' she cries in anguish.

Mrs. Mary Jenoa from a camp in Arcot points to another problem of the camp women - 'There's absolutely no privacy whether it is taking bath or answering nature's call... We feel humiliated and there are those who taunt us asking whether it is the way we live in Lanka too, without any sense of shame... Confinement for long periods breeds sexual perversions too...'

On the one hand lack of privacy tends to bring down the birth rate among the refugees. On the other suicidal tendencies are on the increase, though no precise figures are available. 'As a community, I think, we're being slowly wiped out,' says Mrs. Francisca.

She also says that widows of those separated from their husbands find life very difficult in the camps. 'We're unable to venture out in search of jobs since tongues tend

to get loose in such circumstances... And the doles are very inadequate... Without emotional or financial support from the male, we find existence crushing...'

Ms. Thenmozhi, a refugee outside the camp, notes that back home the women are more independent than the Tamil women of this country. 'We tend to be more aware, get involved in some public work or other, earn our own money, generally hold our heads high despite all the oppression common to the lot of the women the world over. All that has changed here. We find it difficult to adjust to. And anyway as Lankans we are seen as aliens more and more...'

However, Ms. Suryakumari, a petite social worker, is optimistic: 'This is an ordeal of fire. Rudely pulled out of the cocooned existence back home, the Lankan Tamil woman is forced to make the best of very adverse circumstances. She learns to get by with very little and fight social odds, face officials of varying kinds, adjust to differing environments as she shifts from one place to another and finally makes do without male support. May be exposure to things here will prevent them from becoming fascinated by senseless militancy and encourage them to take to democratic struggles...'

Continued from page 21

finement for long periods of time in one place or another are all proving traumatic to the refugees.

Now take into consideration the problem of those in the special detention camps. Apart from the thousand and odd militants and their families held in various camps, there are six or seven camps in which refugees arrested on flimsy grounds are kept.

The Organisation for the Protection of the Tamils of Eelam from Genocide and other Violations of Human Rights (PROTEG) says that it has received letters from many such detenus who are 'languishing in these special camps for about two years' (since the crack-down after the assassination) without being told of the nature of the crimes they are supposed to have committed and without any inquiry being held.

Take the instance of A. Gopalapillai, first accommodated in the camp at Athyanthal in Tiruvannamalai Sambuvarayar district. When he went to the Aliyanilai camp in Pudukottai looking for his family, he did not find them there and he fell sick. He found it necessary to stay on in the Pudukottai

camp for some time and his relatives attended on him. But when he returned to Athyanthal a couple of months later, he found his own registration cancelled.

He again applied for registration only to be picked up by the Q branch police. He is serving his time in Polur sub jail for the last 20 months.

There is this Philomina Rani who lost her husband while in Sri Lanka itself and was put up at the Mandapam camp along with her two small children in 1990. When she refused to be repatriated, she was simply arrested and taken to the Tatabath special camp in Coimbatore district. Her persistent requests that she be transferred to a normal refugee camp have been in vain. There are many such cases. And most of them are now talking in terms of going back to their motherland despite the harsh conditions obtaining there.

This correspondent was in Sri Lanka recently and visited a camp in Vavuniya sheltering those who were repatriated from India but who could not go back to their villages or towns because of the war between the militants and the Lankan forces.

The inmates of the camp did say that they had opted to get back because of the special circumstances prevailing in India after June 21, 1991. But they were not very happy about their decision. 'The government is indifferent. The militant groups collaborating with the government are highlighting our problems and succeeding in getting some occasional redressal. But we feel like aliens in our own land. In Jaffna life is very difficult, primitive... Elsewhere too there is this tension with the Muslims, the Sinhalese and the STF. We're in a blind alley. We don't know what to do.'

There was this young boy, 14-years-old who had fled the Vavuniya camp in the hope of finding a job in the central districts. He did secure a job in the construction industry for a time in a Sinhalese area. When his master was not paying his remuneration, he protested and the master promptly complained to the police. The boy was a militant infiltrator for the police, any Tamil for that matter is to the Lankan police, and he was beaten up mercilessly on his knees and hips. His brothers somehow traced him and brought him back to Vavuniya.

The memory of a young boy with a tonsured head, unable to stand steadily without some support, words dropping from his mouth in an excruciatingly slow pace, hardly audible, a hunted look on his face, unable to divine what he had done to warrant such a cruel fate is still rankling in my heart.

I also met his father, a lorry driver in Jaffna, who had come to Vavuniya at that time for a brief reunion with his family. 'I'm going back. What can I do here?'

'But surely you should be taking your family back with you to Jaffna. . . The conditions here are bad. . .'

'No I can't, I can't. . . At least life is secure here. . . We're destined to suffer for a long, long time to come. . .'

That digression was to drive home the point that no refugee can even contemplate going back to his or her native land whatever the conditions obtaining here.

So then they are trapped in an essentially non-win situation – the atmosphere in this country is very antagonistic with ever present threats of mass deportation hanging over them, but the island situation is even worse and hence going back is unthinkable.

And now the state government has thought it fit to prevent even the voluntary organisations – providing nutritional supplements to the camp inmates, running schools, coaching classes and so on – from entering the refugee camps. Evidently this move comes in the wake of the Congress-I charges of 'revival of militant activity in the state'.

But as a camp inmate of Gummidipoondi wonders, 'Who is the loser? It's only we the refugees. The NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) are supplementing the governmental work. Why should it be prevented? The government is welcome to screen us all and weed out the militants from our midst, if any. But it is not fair to deprive us of the services of these organisations. . .'

The British Refugee Council and several other donor agencies have already appealed to the state and central governments to lift the ban on the entry of the NGOs.

It may be noted here that the state government's efforts to repatriate the refugees on a massive scale ground to a halt last year following an avalanche of complaints to the UNHCR by a number of human rights activists and organisations of coercion and intimidation. The UNHCR has set up an office in Madras now, and they have a free

access to the camps. They are constantly monitoring the situation, and it would be difficult for the authorities to attempt any forced repatriation hereafter. (Incidentally, the Centre, which foots a percentage of the bill towards refugee relief work, is not responding to pleas from the state government for repatriation of the refugees evidently because of the political differences between the Congress-I and the AIADMK).

The UNHCR is expanding its sphere of work the world over. Mr. Anders B. Johnsson of the organisation says, 'Numerous are the instances in which basic rights are violated, probably on a more massive scale than ever before. . . Refugees, individually and collectively, are returned against their will; others cannot obtain asylum or access to procedures for seeking protection; still others are denied the very basis of survival and many suffer direct

physical violence, often in the most outrageous forms. . .'

And he goes on to assert that refugee protection, ensuring through all available means that refugees are afforded minimum rights essential to their existence and security, is a matter of top priority for the UNHCR.

Says Mr. S.C. Chandrachud, an eminent Lankan Tamil emigre and the prime mover behind the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation, 'India has been doing a wonderful job. Its refugee camps were among the best in the entire world. But the recent strains have made things difficult for our community. The point is that one should be able to distinguish between those who undermine the law of the land and those genuinely in need of protection and assistance. I only hope things will take a turn for the better in course of time. . .'

Continued from page 13

teachings spread far and wide across countries and states. A true Buddhist can not be a nationalist although he or she may support those national movements that can serve as vehicles of the universal humanist values for which Buddhism stands. For a Buddhist, there is no Holy War or Just War. But in the real world Buddhists have been involved in state-making and have often compromised their principles for the sake of patronage from states that oppressed the people. State patronage tends to divert the sangha from the truly Buddhist course and coopts it into supporting and justifying violations of peoples' rights. Once you compromise with the state you enjoy a lot of privileges including material benefits, but that is not Buddhism.

Buddhism has not been able to contribute in a significant way toward solving the basic problems of the people for 2500 years. Its universal values have been distorted by the very establishments which were supposed to practise them. Buddhist monks openly defend violence and display extreme forms of chauvinism and hatred toward non-Buddhists. Buddhism has failed for 2500 years, what makes you have faith in the Buddhist vision?

In 1973, there was a big student uprising in Bangkok which led to a political change at the top as the dictators of Thailand fled the country. I was engaged in a dialogue with the students at that time. I told them the political change was only superficial and that we all should work for basic changes by following the Buddhist

path. The student leaders told me that we had given 2500 years for Buddha and the time had come to give Mao the due place. Mao and not Buddha, they insisted, had the answer to Thailand's problem. I told them that Mao and Buddha had similar aims but Mao believed in violence whereas Buddha believed in non-violence. Buddhism asks you to challenge your own inner self first before trying to challenge others but Maoism asks you to challenge others but not the self. They did not agree with me. For about three years, 'hundred flowers bloomed' but then the dictators returned with a vengeance in 1976. At this point, hundreds of students left Bangkok for the jungles to join the Thai Communist Party with the aim of making the revolution. They returned after some time quite disillusioned. These youths were basically Thai nationalists who found the Thai Communist Party to be more Chinese than Thai. Some of them have developed beyond the limits of their old beliefs and begun to be interested in the Buddhist approach.

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READERS FORUM

A SECOND REFERENDUM - WHAT FOR?

THE announcement by the Sinhala government to hold a further referendum in 4 months time, raises two major questions which have not been addressed so far.

1. Is there a legitimate reason for holding a second referendum?

The first referendum held in 1988 merged the eastern province with the north on a temporary basis. A second referendum was to be held one year later to confirm the arrangement but this time limit has long since expired. The intention behind allowing the first referendum to cover a temporary rather than a permanent merger was to minimise the blood letting that was going on. It was an exercise in semantics to save human lives rather than affecting the principle of a merger. It was widely understood at that time that the requirement for a second referendum would be waived and in fact the peace accord made no provision in the event of not holding a second referendum within the specified time limit.

So what we have is a merger achieved by a referendum of the people directly affected by it. These people are not agitating for a further referendum nor do they want any changes to the existing merged set up. A referendum is the ultimate weapon of democracy. U.K. carried out two referenda in 1978 with regard to separate assemblies for Scotland and Wales. The Scottish referendum was restricted to Scottish people and the Welsh referendum to the Welsh.

Referendums stand on their own right and override the constitutional provisions. They are used to modify existing constitution(s). Remember how many referenda were held during the period of Charles de Gaulle, the former French President, to overcome restrictions imposed by the French Constitution.

The request by the Sinhala political parties to hold a second referendum in the eastern province is not a legitimate ground for holding a further referendum because it is not their direct concern.

2. Even if there was a legitimate ground, who is to supervise the conduct of the referendum?

The original referendum was supervised by the Indians who were accepted at that time as honest brokers. After the killing of thousands of Tamils by the IPKF the Indians are no

longer qualified to be honest brokers. The recent killing of the Tamil leader Kittu by the Indian state pirates has further confirmed their disqualification.

All Sinhala political parties are unanimous in their wish to see east demerged. The supervision of the referendum by the Sinhala government will make a mockery of the rules governing referendums. Being a party to the conflict with a terrible track record in the east, any supervision by them will automatically invalidate the referendum. The result will have no international standing or legitimacy.

The only option available is to have the United Nations supervise the referendum. After all, they recently supervised elections in Cambodia and the conflict in Ceylon has a longer history. What of the ground rules - who are eligible to vote? The thousands who have died? The many more who are missing? Some 300 hundred thousand displaced?

How can the Sinhala colonists who were settled in the east by the Sinhala government after independence be allowed to vote in the referendum? Should the east be de-colonised first and the settlers sent back to the Sinhala homeland where they really belong? Where do we draw the line? The United Nations will be required to adjudicate on all these matters first and after that there may well be no need for a referendum after all.

P. Varothayasingham

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Sutton,
Surrey SM1 2TT.

COLONIZATION

RE the article 'The Meaning of Trincomalee and Sri Lanka's Future' by Rajah Hoole. I am glad you chose to publish this article to focus the problem of state sponsored Sinhalese colonization of traditional Tamil homelands instead of your usual anti-Tiger bashing. The article, barring the cheap jibes aimed at the Tigers by the author, is well written and deserves praise. It is not my intention to answer his mis-directed criticism of the LTTE. Suffice to state that if not for the LTTE the entire East and a greater part of North would have been over-run by Sinhalese colonization now.

It is not a hidden secret that immediately following independence all successive Sinhalese governments, whether green or blue, have made it a high priority state policy to colonize the North and East. It started with the old D.S. Senanayake who under the guise of land development launched the Gal Oya River Valley Develop-

ment Scheme in 1949 in the Batticaloa District. This was followed by Allai, Kanthalai and Padavia (Pavatkulam) in the Trincomalee District.

Even as late as 1988, after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the then Minister for Land and Mahaveli Development Mr. Gamin Disanayake by a government gazette notification dated April 16, 1988 declared Mullaitivu as a separate District and commenced the Weli Oya Sinhala colonization, after re-naming Manal Aru. In 1988 and 1989 alone more than 3364 Sinhalese families mostly ex-convicts, blessed by the Buddhist bhikkus and protected by the Sri Lankan Sinhalese army as usual, were settled in Weli-Oya scheme. The colonization still continues unabated with the help of the Sri Lankan security forces who stand guard over the Sinhalese settlers.

The state aided Sinhalese colonization had altered drastically the demographic composition of both the North and the East, specially the latter. An entire new district Amparai (Paddipalai Aru became Galoya, and Amparai became Ampara and now it is called Digamaduwa) was carved-out of the Batticaloa in 1961. Also two more electoral districts, Amparai and Seruvila, were created for the Sinhalese settlers in 1959. The demographic change could be seen from the fact that while according to the 1881 Census there were 75,408 Tamils and 5,947 Sinhalese in the Eastern Province, but according to 1981 Census there were 399,788 Tamils and 243,129 Sinhalese. Thus just under 100 years the population of Tamils had increased by only 430% while at the same time the Sinhalese increased by 3,988%! The current statistics after the holocaust of 1983 and Eelam War 1 and II might place the Sinhalese in the majority in the Eastern Province!

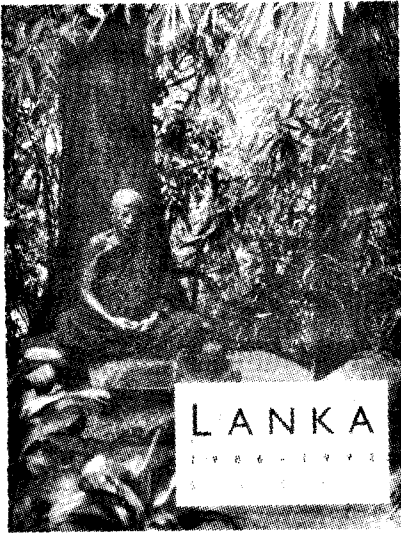
The Tamils should not entertain any illusion regarding the real intention of the Sinhalese government, any Sinhalese government. The Weli Oya colonization is meant to destroy the territorial integrity of Tamil homeland and subsequently undermine the basis for a separate state. Those doubting souls among the Tamils should read the article written by Mahalinga Herman Gunaratne titled 'DESTROYING THE BASIS OF EELAM' which appeared in the *Sunday Times*, Colombo of August 26, 1990.

Yours sincerely,

Rajan Thangavelu,

2075-51 Warden Avenue,
Scarborough,
Ontario,
M1T 3R1.

BOOK REVIEWS



'Lanka 1986-92'

by Stephen Champion

The book which is an outstanding photographic record (over 100 photographs) vividly captures the many facets of life in Sri Lanka, a country little understood in the West. In a kaleidoscopic pictorial depiction of the varying patterns of life in Sri Lanka, an island torn apart by the on-going ethnic conflict and the devastation of the consequential war, Stephen Champion deftly moves from the tranquillity of the terraced paddy fields of the island's picturesque hill country, the arid plains of the north, the merry-making at a popular cricketing occasion – the annual Royal-Thomian 'battle of the blues' – a fashion parade, a mannequin show, a gentleman of leisure relaxing with his golf clubs in his country mansion to the other end of the spectrum, namely, the gruesome sights of lamp-post killings in the North and East, the equally abhorrent killings in the South, the pathetic sight of a child crying amidst the debris of what was a few moments ago his home, make-shift limbs for the limbless wounded by a devastating civil war and even a macabre scene of a shop filled with corpses from where blood oozes from beneath its closed doors.

It is a fascinating collage of interesting 'takes' of true to life events which brings within one cover scenes of opulence and poverty, of happiness and misery, of tranquillity and violence, of peace and war. 'There is no such thing

as a war crime, war is the crime' – he rightly concludes in his preface.

Champion deliberately avoids the easy temptation of presenting Sri Lanka as a tourists' haven – '40 miles from paradise' as the tourist blurbs would have it (what a painfully unrealistic cliché!) – or as the land of historical monuments, of temples and dagobas with a recorded history of over 2500 years of Buddhism in its purest 'Theravada' form. There is no effort to romanticize or glamourise the country in elegiac style. He presents it in its raw, earthy form, with the good, the bad and the ugly all cleverly juxtaposed. To the uncritical eye, the book may appear as an ill-assorted medley of unrelated images; to the discerning, however, it is a piece of poetic photography where there is more in it than meets the eye.

Rated as one of the ten most travelled foreigners in the country's interior, he has, as he states, 'discovered the heart of Sri Lanka, bloody and divided.' As one who has visited Sri Lanka every year since 1985, Champion is more than qualified to present his depiction of the country with a stamp of authenticity and without a trace of bias.

The book is published by *Garnel Publishing Ltd., 8 Southern Court, South Street, Reading RG1 4QS, U.K.* and is priced at **£17.95**. It was exhibited by the British Council in Sri Lanka on 3rd March 1993. Stephen Champion was born in Worcester, England in 1959; he gained his Master's Degree of Fine Arts in the San Francisco Art Institute in 1985.

T. Pathmanathan.

The Ethical Essence of The Tamils

The immortal work of St. Thiruvalluvar incorporates the ethical and moral concepts of the ancient Tamils. Thirukkural is known as the Tamil-Vedam or the Ethical Bible of the Tamil people. On 9 July, 1993 a companion book to Thirukkural entitled 'The Ethical Essence of the Tamils' was ushered into the world, in the true Sangham style, by Mr. S. Sriskandaram. In the rendering of the 'Sacred Couplets' of Thirukkural into English the author has conveyed the beauty marked by brevity and clarity of the original. The brevity of words and amplitude of meaning which are the

characteristics of Kural are well depicted in his interpretation. Scholars from the West have translated Kural into English and other European languages; many of these are archaic in form and are not attractive to the scholars of the present age. His profound knowledge of Tamil and English has made it possible for a brief and crisp rendition of every one of the forty couplets he has chosen. His illustrative elucidation of this collection facilitates easy comprehension. The writing is couched in language that is extremely clear in style and meaning.

The book is a gift to those who do not know Tamil. The irony is that very many Tamils from Sri Lanka had been deprived of the legitimate right to stay in the motherland and pursue their education in Tamil and English. To this section of the population the publication of *The Ethical Essence of the Tamils* is welcome news. An introduction of a work that dwells on the ethical behaviour of the Tamils does remind us of our heritage.

Standards of ethics have changed and the 'Stomach and Pocket View of Life,' as described by C.E.M. Joad dictates the present day values of the world. In this climate a peep into the ethical code of the Tamils seems to be a necessity. Kural 41 in chapter V, which is outside the text, on the subject of domestic life is cited here to illustrate the social virtue of the householder.

'Il Vazhvan Enpan Iyalpudaya Moovarkum Nallatri Ninra Thunai.'

The ideal householder is one who sustains the youthful student (Bramchari), the dweller in the wilderness (Recluse), and the absolute ascetic (Sanyasin).

In relation to this Kural, by way of highlighting an apposite exposition, the writer is impelled to quote Oliver Goldsmith:

'I was ever of opinion, that the honest man who married and brought up a large family, did more service than he who continued single, and only talked of population.'

Reference must need be made to the couplets under the captions: the need to be discreet and judicious; good conduct makes for excellence; restrain your tongue; don't backbite. An awareness of these precepts would pave the way for good and harmonious living.

A crying need, especially in the West, has been served by this work. The reading public will call for further companion books to Thirukkural from the author.

K. Jayaseelan.

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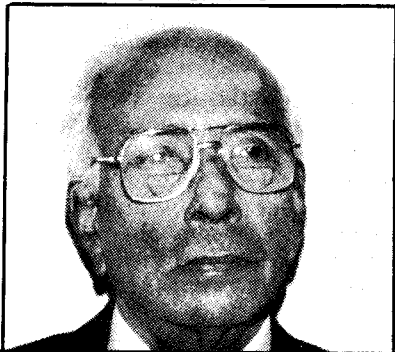
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WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couple on their recent wedding.

Kanahendran son of the late Mr. N. Paramanatham and Mrs. P. Paramanatham of 98 1/7 Manning Apartment, Manning Place, Colombo 6 and **Kalyani** daughter of Mr. A.V. Jayaratnam and the late Mrs. S. Jayaratnam of P.O. Box 174, Gaborone, Botswana on 10.7.93 at St. Nicholas Church, Tooting, London SW17.

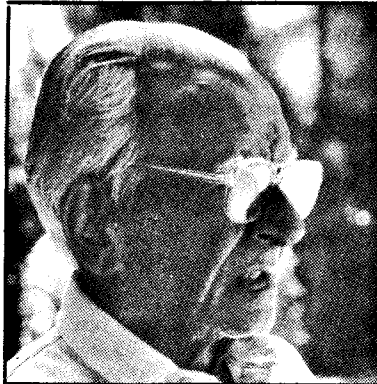
OBITUARIES



Dr. Vaithilingam Nadarajah (82), of Kayts, Sri Lanka attained Sivapatham on 28th July 1993. He was practising at Hulftsdorp, Colombo from 1937 to 1977. His wife Gowri of Uyarapulam, Anaicoddai, Sri Lanka predeceased him in 1970. He is the brother of the late Mr. Velayuthampillai of Moor Road, Colombo 6 and Mrs. Parameswary Navaratnam of Montreal, Canada. He had been living at Colchester, Essex for the last five years with his son Dr. Sivananthan. Besides Dr. Sivananthan, he leaves behind daughters Mrs. Kalyani Sivakumaran, Mrs. Pathma Thangarasah, Mrs. Baleswary Yogendran (all of Harrow, U.K.) and son Ravikandan (Los Angeles,

USA); daughter-in-law Dr. Chandra Sivananthan; sons-in-law Dr. Sivakumaran, Thangarasah and Yogendran; sister-in-law Mrs. Yogeswari Velayuthampillai (Kansas, USA), brother-in-law Mr. V. Navaratnam (Former M.P. for Kayts) and grandchildren Sivapriya, Abiramee, Ramanee, Anjana and Jayantha. The cremation was at the City of London Crematorium on 31.7.93.

The members of the family convey their sincere thanks to all friends and relatives who sent messages of sympathy and flowers, assisted in the obsequies and attended the funeral. They regret their inability to thank them individually - 17 The Glade, Welshwood Park, Colchester, Essex C04 3JD. Tel: 0206 861740.

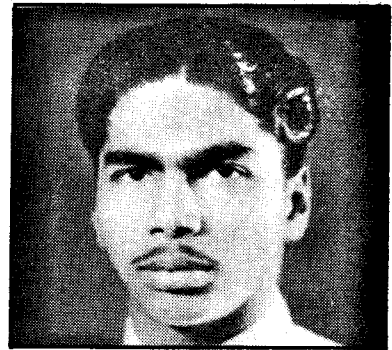


Mr. Selliah Velupillai, formerly of Local Government Service and Department of Elections, Sri Lanka; husband of Pearl Amirtham; father of Balakumar (Los Angeles, California), Premakumar (Ames, Iowa), Chandrakumar (Kenley, U.K.); brother of Shanmuganathan (Sri Lanka), and late Nagalingam (Colombo Commercial Company), passed away in London on 20th July 1993 and funeral took place on 24.7.93. - Flat 7, No. 652 London Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey. Tel: 081 665 5069.



Mr. Karthigesu Kanagaratnam (79), Retired P.H.I., Sri Lanka, beloved husband of Maheswary; loving father of Mahendran (Sri Lanka), Dr. Sarojini Yogaratnam, Rajendran, Rajini, Kulendran, Raveendran (all of U.K.) and Puvanendran (Canada); father-in-law of Sugirtha, Dr. Yogaratnam, Kamalini, Dr. Gunasuntharam, Pavalarani, Rathy and Jayanthi; grandfather of Pradeepan, Prashanthan, Sanjeevan, Dhamayanthi, Nirooshun, Yalini, Nimilan, Kavitha, Mayooraan, Soruban, Ruben, Prameela and Binduja; brother of Balasingam (Retired Station Master, C.G.R., Sri Lanka) passed away in Kokuvil, Sri Lanka on 5.8.93. - 17 Saville Road, Twickenham, Middlesex, U.K. Tel: 081-892 2084.

IN MEMORIAM

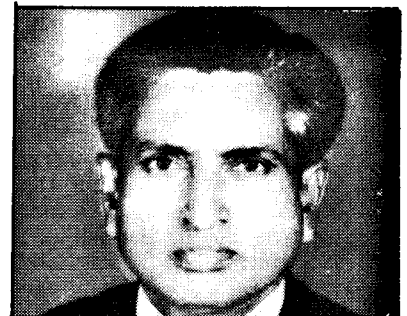


In loving memory of **Mr. Apputhurai Gunaratnam** of Point Pedro, Sri Lanka formerly Divisional Superintendent of Post Offices, Sri Lanka; on the third anniversary of his passing away on 28.8.90.

Sadly missed by his loving wife Rani; children Thirukumaran (Australia), Vasuki (Sri Lanka), Devaki (Australia), Sutharsan (U.K.) and Saratha Devi (Sri Lanka); daughter-in-law Vasanthi; son-in-law Radhakrishnan; granddaughter Mayurica; sister and in-laws - 67B St. Ann's Road, London N15 6NJ. Tel: 081-802 5601.



In fond memory of **Mrs. Sinnathangam Suppiah** (Retired Headmistress, Arunasalam Vidyasalai, Alaveddy, Sri Lanka) on the fifth anniversary of her passing away on 20.8.88. Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her children Sivathasan and Sivarupavathy; daughter-in-law Sivadevi; son-in-law Sivabramaniam and grandchildren Kuhan, Nirupa, Meera and Parathan - 303 Hempstead Road, Gillingham, Kent M37 3QJ.



Mr. Mayilvaganam Velummayilum J.P., U.M., Attorney-at-law and former Chairman, Urban Council, Point Pedro, Sri Lanka passed away on 31.8.89 and the fourth anniversary of his demise falls on 31.8.93.

Sadly missed by his loving wife, children Thayanandarajah (U.K.), Nithiyandarajah (New Zealand), Mayilvaganarajah (U.K.), Chitra, Anandarajah, Krishnarajah and Jayanthi (all of Sri Lanka) in-laws, relatives, friends and a host of grateful constituents - 59 Edgware Gardens, Edgware, Middx. HA8 8LL. U.K.



Mrs. Yogamany Kandiah departed on 2.9.91. Fondly remembered on the second anniversary of her passing away by her beloved husband; children Chandrakumaran (Canada), Chandrakumary (Bury, U.K.), Chandrasekaran (Epsom, U.K.), Chandramalar, Chandrakanthi, Chandramohan (all of Canada), and Chandrakala (Australia) sons-in-law Rajasooriyar, Wigneswaran, Sivasekaran and Pathmanandavel; daughters-in-law Usha, Shantini and Mirunalini; brother Yogarajah and several grand children - 49 Courtlands Drive, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT19 0HN, U.K.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

August 29 Violin Duet by Dr. Lakshmi and Aravind Jayan at 14 Willis Road, off Whitehorse Road, Croydon, Surrey.

Aug. 30 9.00am to 8.00pm J.S.S.A. Cricket & Netball Festival at John Billiam Sports Grounds, Woodcock Hill, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. Tel: 081-390 1491/952 7293/767 5769.

September 2 6.00pm Lecture and Discussion on 'Human Rights' at School of Oriental & African Studies. For details Tel: 071-278 3990 (S. Wijesinghe).

Sept. 3 Feast of St. Gregory, The Great.

Sept. 3,4 7.00pm & **Sept. 5** 6.00pm Pastor D.G.S. Dhinakaran conducts Salvation and Healing Meetings in English & Tamil at Rainbow Theatre, Finsbury Park, London N4. Tel: 081-470 4990/888 7766/366 0583.

Sept. 4 5.00pm **Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Menaka** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. T. Sripathy of 29 Albomont Road, Winchester, Mass. 01890 at Winchester High School Auditorium, Skillings Road, Winchester, Mass., USA.

Sept. 5 Chathurthi.

Sept. 8 Feast of Birthday of Blessed Virgin Mary.

Sept. 12 Ekathasi.

Sept. 13 Feast of St. Edward, The Confessor. Pirathosam.

Sept. 14 Feast of the Exalted Holy Cross.

Sept. 15 Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. Amavasai.

Sept. 16 Lecture & Discussion on 'Is non-violent struggle for change possible and desirable? Can violence be justified? At School of Oriental & African Studies. Tel: 071-278 3990 (S. Wijesinghe).

Sept. 18 Feast of St. Luke. Puradasi First Sani.

Sept. 19 Vinayaka Chathurthi.

Sept. 25 Puradasi Second Sani.

Sept. 25 6.30pm Carnatic Vocal Recital by Smt Renuka Shriananda at the Wembley High School Hall, East Lane, Wembley, Middx., Tel: 081 205 8214.

Sept. 26 Ekathasi. 4.00pm London Tamil Congregation celebrates 54th Anniversary of the founding of the Christa Seva Ashram in Inuvil, Chunnakam at a service at Rivercourt Methodist Church, King Street, Hammersmith, London W6.

Sept. 27 Feast of St. Vincent de Paul.

Sept. 28 Pirathosam.

Sept. 29 Feast of Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

Sept. 30 Full Moon. 6.00pm Lecture & Discussions on 'Refugees - Definition, Trends & Agreements'. Tel: 071-278 3990 (S. Wijesinghe).

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071 381 3086/4608.

Sept. 4 9.00am to 1.00pm Iyengar Yoga Seminar conducted by Yogacharya Sri B.K.S. Iyengar.

Sept. 24 7.45pm Odissi by Sanjukta Panigrahi and musicians from India.

Sept. 25 7.00pm Bharatnatyam by Anuradha Jagannathan from India.

Tamil Development Network Issues Booklet in Norwegian

Tamil Development Network of Norway has issued a booklet in Norwegian titled 'Norwegian Assistance to Rehabilitate and Develop the Tamil Homelands in Sri Lanka'. It has distributed copies of the publication to Government Departments, Political parties, Members of Parliament, NGOs and others.

Those interested in getting the English version are requested to contact: Tamil Development Network of Norway, Sondre Tollbugt. 2, 9008 Tromsø, Norway. Tel: Intl. Code 47 83 10344.

Girija Presents Rebecca



The Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Rebecca Nalini Selvarajasingam was held on 1.8.93 at The Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon. Rebecca had the tutelage of the art under her able guru Mrs. Girija Varothayasingham, who is herself a performing artiste.

It was pleasant to note the excellent theatre arrangements made and the care taken to details like receiving the guests and invitees. The programme was eye catching and it was well worth noting that a product of this quality could be made in Sri Lanka. Rebecca's debut repertoire entirely consisted of items in Tamil, which is a healthy sign that children of Tamil parentage are encouraged the propagation of

their mother tongue. Two items of dance were noteworthy. The Patham 'Enke pokirai maane' was christian based composed by The Rev. S. Wesley Ariarajah and music by Tanjore S. Kalyanaraman and Shrimathi Bhushany Kalyanaraman is a new evolution which enriches Tamil culture. The second item was the Niruthia Vaadhia Virunthu, based entirely on percussion instruments and footwork. This new concept of choreography by Girija and Jathees composed by Somasundara Desigar and beautifully executed by Rebecca was appreciated by audience. The Chief Guest, Dr. John Marr and the special guest Mrs. Pushala Gopal referred to this item in their speeches.

The Vazhuvoor style of dance was seen throughout the entire performance. It allows the individual dancer to have a broad outlook of performing the art of Bharatha Natyam. This outlook was appreciable in Rebecca's performance which is also the guru's achievement in passing on the great Vazhuvoor tradition.

The supporting artistes consisting of Vocal: Shri Somasundara Desigar, Mirudangam: Shri Paramasamy Kirubakaran, Veena: Smt Sivatharini Sahathevan, Flute: Shri Selvanayagam Thayaparan and Morsing: Shri K. Sithamparanathan contributed towards the success of the performance.

Dr. Ratnam Niththyananthan.

Thiagarajan's Thenisai

S.C.O.T.s Charity Concert on 27 June at the Convey Hall provided a feast of opportunity for London's Karnatic Cognoscenti to listen to O.S. Thiagarajan's first concert in London. Endowed with an innate gift of a resonant voice which combines majesty and melody with astonishing felicity, Thiagarajan kept the 'House-Full' audience enthralled by his soulful music and his total involvement.

Starting the concert with Bairavi Ata Tala Varnam, he rendered Periasamy Thooran's invocatory piece in Raga Saranga 'Gananathane'. A neat elaboration of Raga Sriranjani was followed by Kovai Subri's song 'Petridalam Maname'. The Swaraprasthara was well structured and brought out the artiste's perfect grip on the Tala. One of Saint Thyagaraja's 'Divya Nama' compositions, 'Dasarada Nandana' was then introduced, adding variety to the concert.

The artiste's talents fully flourished in the next item. The Kalyani Raga Alapana brought out the far-reaching ramifications of the Raga and 'Virana Brova' of Tharangambadi Panchanathayyar in Adi Tisram was chastely rendered, with the Neraval and the Swaraprasthara crisp and well-proportioned. Then followed a brisk rendering of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar's piece 'Vijayambike' in Raga Vijayanagari. Both the core and the peripheries of the Thodi Raga were thereafter comprehensively explored, followed by Thanam and a masterly exposition of Pallavi in Tala Adi. The programme concluded with Saint Thyagaraja's 'Vinayaguni' in Raga Madhyamavathi and Mangalam.

M. Manjunath's accompaniment on the violin was distinguished and R. Ramesh's Thani Avarthanam produced a magical effect, with superb fireworks of guru Karaikudi Mani

Continued on page 28

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Brand. The Thampura support was provided by Shamini Thiruchelvam.

At the end of the concert, when I went to the dais to congratulate Thiagarajan, his humble response was that he was a small figure in the world of Karnatic music. Small may be, but one with a big future indeed!

P.P. Kanthan.

Dharshini's Arangetram



The Arangetram of Dharshini, daughter of Karuna and Kirupa Gandhi of South Harrow, U.K. held at Gade Theatre, Rickmansworth, Herts., was a very successful debut. The young dancer has learnt the art of Bharatha Natyam thoroughly from her able guru Dr. (Mrs.) Kanchana Shivalingam.

The Arangetram was studded with unusual items of dance which made the evening a great treat. The selection of such pieces gives credit to Dharshini's guru. The first three items, Nritya Aradhana, Jathiswaram and Nandhi Chol were pure dance forms. Nandhi Chol in Ragam Vasantha was a full dance dedication to Him.

Dharshini's Varnam and two Pathams brought out her facial expressions. The Patham 'Then Paadum' on Murugan of Kathirgaram and the Ragamalikai Virutham on the birth of Jesus Christ were compositions by Ambika Thamotheeram, the mother of Dharshini's guru Kanchana.

The Keerthanam 'aadukinrar' in Maandru Ragam and the Thillana in Behag were excellent pieces. It is commendable that all the dance items were in Tamil.

The chief guest Padmasri Chitra Visweswaran who complimented on the care that had been taken on the minutest details of the programme was pleased that the dancer had been solely trained in the United Kingdom to such a high standard.

The Arangetram started on time and kept the audience spellbound by fast rhythmic

pieces till the very end. All credit goes to the guru, Kanchana, and the galaxy of supporting artistes; Ambika Thamotheeram: Vocal, Bavani Shankar: Mridangam, Kalaivani Indrakumar: Violin, Dr. T. Nimalraj: Flute, Muthu Sivaraja: Tabla & Morsing and Kalainithi Logeswaran; Tambura for the excellent performance.

Janadhanan, Sunrise Radio.

Kalabhavanam Programs

Vocal

Kalabhavanam Fine Arts Centre introduced a child prodigy Padma Ramadas, 9-years-old, at their monthly programme of music on 4th July last at 14 Willis Road auditorium. Padma who is a native of Madurai, now living in London with her parents displayed her rare gift in singing classical Tyagaraja compositions with ease and strict adherence to sruthi tala. Her rare modulations and tremolo were admired by the audience. We understand young Padma who is a carefree singer is now undergoing scientific study under Sangeetha Vidwan Sivasakthi Sivanesan at the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan.

Flute Duet

In their scheme of promoting young musicians around London Kalabhavanam introduced two young flutists Ranjith Kanagasundaram and Prayanth Alagaratham to an appreciative audience on 25th July at the Willis Road auditorium. Ranjith and Prayanth are disciples of Rudrani Balakrishnan a well known artist who plays on a number of string and wind instruments expertly. The young musicians played some classical Tyagaraja compositions without any noticeable flaw at the same time winning the admiration of the audience. Such exposure before a knowledgeable audience is an important aspect in the training of music students. Mridangam support was given by the well known artist Somasundara Desikar who is fully fledged vocalist as well. Kalabhavanam is in a happy position to attract the cream of musical talents.

The Billy Graham of India Visits London

Pastor D.G.S. Dhinakaran, International Evangelist and known as the Billy Graham of India is coming to London for three salvation and healing meetings in Tamil and English at the Rainbow Theatre, Finsbury Park, Junction of Seven Sisters Road and Isledon Road, N4. Pastor Dhinakaran often draws crowds of up to 300,000 in India. Many experience miraculous healings and answers to prayer through the power of God.

Admission free and all are welcome.

For details telephone: 081-470 4990/888 7766/366 0583.

Bishop-Elect the Rev. Dr. S. Jebanesan of Jaffna

The Consecration of Bishop-elect Jebanesan on 28th May 1993 in the Vaddukoddai Cathedral of Jaffna is of special joy, pride, and significance not only to his family and the war-torn people of Jaffna but for the many Tamils here in Melbourne, in Australia and in

the Tamil diaspora that now spans some 40 countries or so.

Many of us remember Bishop Jebanesan as the quiet one in the very articulate family of Rev. N. Subramaniam and Chavakachcheri's Kanaga Acca, a mother of great beauty, charm, vivacity and hospitality. Most of us have happy memories of Jebanesan as a good friend, churchman, modern-day apostle, scholar, an administrator with consummate communication skills, as a teacher and principal of Jaffna College, the Peninsula's oldest and finest educational institution. A truly courageous man, Jebanesan, among other brave professional men and women, elected to give up safety and security for himself, his wife and children and stay behind to help teach and nurture the 800,000 refugees trapped in the peninsula.

Even his doctoral thesis is indicative of this remarkable man - not another thesis on 'Science and Religion' or 'God and the Universe' etc., but on 'The Batticotta Seminary', one of the corner-stones of Jaffna's intellect and civilisation. This Seminary at Batticotta (Tamil 'Vaddukkoddai' for round fort) was founded in 1822 and is perhaps the oldest University College in the East and Far East. Its pioneering and far-sighted American Missionaries, Rev. Dr. Daniel Poor and Rev. Dr. Richard Hoisington preached and published in classical Tamil. They taught and inspired the outstanding C.W. Thamotheerampillai, Carol Viswanathan, J.R. Arnold Sathasivampillai, William Nevins Sithamparapillai, Wyman Kathiravellupillai and Evarts Kanagasabaipillai.

Together they began an intellectual ferment in Jaffna. They printed and produced an abundance of the 2500 year old Tamil grammar and literature; Christian literature, hymns and lyrics in Tamil; brought about the monumental English - Tamil dictionary by Winslow (American Missionary/Scholar); established the Christian English-Tamil Christian Weekly 'The Morning Star' that continues to this day. The seminary helped to mould generations of intellectual giants whose descendants are members of Melbourne's Christian Fellowship, in Australia and all over the world.

Dr. Jebanesan's latest research gives us who have been displaced since July 1983 a sense of history, identity and solidarity for which we are truly grateful. On all our behalf we send him, his wife, children, father, brothers Sugunananthan, Manopavan, Sukumar and sister Shanta Jeganathan our congratulations, felicitations, blessings and prayers for his Consecration and for the coming years.

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Continued from page 5

tion of the status of women would do much to contain the population explosion and eventually normalize population growth. Children would greatly benefit from better health care and education made possible by the peace dividend.

Rapid economic development in all areas of the country is essential to promote the political and social rights of all Sri Lankans.

A return to order and tranquillity will attract foreign attention to Sri Lanka. On the international capital markets, the country's requirements are relatively modest. What Sri Lanka urgently needs is a climate of political and economic stability to attract foreign investment. The World Council also encourages the international com-

munity to provide generous aid to help in the transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy.

The long-term interests of the country require that Sri Lanka vigorously adopt a policy of sustainable development as recommended by the United Nations. Pursuing economic development without causing adverse ecological effects requires prudent and efficient use of the country's scarce resources.

Regional Autonomy Under Federal System

Many countries have prospered under federal forms of government. Sri Lanka would do well to apply the principles of federalism to suit its unique needs. The aspirations of people in the North and East can to a

large extent be satisfied by granting them some form of regional autonomy. The terms of a federal union can be negotiated to include regional autonomy in such areas as land use, education and culture.

Federalism lends itself as a flexible system wherein provisions can be enshrined in the constitution to safeguard the interests of the Sinhalese majority, while protecting the interests of the Tamil and Muslim minorities. All provinces could receive some measure of autonomy.

Conclusion

It is well-known that Sri Lanka is a tropical island of great beauty. Its richness of culture and the warmth of its people have charmed visitors the world over.

Whatever their cultural differences, all Sri Lankans are bound together by their common humanity. While respecting the religious and cultural identity of each group, it is important to recognize the wide mutuality of their interests and the ties that bind them economically.

The World Council for Global Cooperation appeals to the Government of Sri Lanka, the LTTE, all other political groups, members of the clergy of all religions, and all people of goodwill to support a plan to achieve peace and prosperity throughout the nation.

Continued from page 19

justice for her people. But by going on a fast suddenly, without even consulting her cabinet colleagues, sensationalising the issue and evoking chauvinist sentiments among Kannadigas, she has only further complicated the matter.

With her fast entering the fourth day, people started believing that perhaps she was serious about her demands. There was tension in the two states and AIADMK men ran amok destroying public properties. Life came to a standstill in Tamil Nadu and Union Irrigation Minister V.C. Shukla rushed to the fasting site, near the MGR memorial, to talk her out of the fast.

Then as suddenly as she had launched her fast she wound it up on the fourth day, July 21. All that she got in the bargain was a promise from the Centre to set up two committees, one for the implementation of the award of the Tribunal and another for monitor-

ing the flow of water in Cauvery. When Karnataka refuses to accept the award itself where is the question of implementing it? And when there is already enough mechanism to gauge the water flow, what purpose would the new committee serve? Anyway how does all this help take the water to the crops in the delta?

Now Karnataka has set its face against the committee too. Still says there is no water to spare. By voting against the Cong-I in the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha and releasing to the press a strongly worded letter she wrote to the Prime Minister, Jayalalitha has further exacerbated the matters.

Well her party is planning to screen video-shows of her fast in Ranipet and Palani by-elections scheduled for August 19. It all boils down to that then. A political gimmick to arrest the slide in her popularity, because of corruption, maladministration and so on. Whether she will succeed in her objectives remains to be seen.

● DMK Internal Squabble

Meantime, the DMK, tipped to comeback to power thanks to the severing of the alliance between the Cong-I and the AIADMK and the wayward actions of Ms. Jayalalitha, is being wracked by internal squabbles. In a surprise move the high command, (read Mr. M. Karunanidhi,) has expelled deputy general secretary and senior leader Nanjil K. Manoharan and also sought to sideline the rising star V. Gopalaswamy, and his supporters in the southern districts. Vai.Go, as the latter is popularly known, is gifted with fiery oratorical skills and is lionised by thousands of DMK cadres who believe that he is the right person

to lead the party after Mr. Karunanidhi disappears from the scene. But the DMK president and his nephew Maran seem to have other plans. Not so subtle moves are afoot to project M.K. Stalin, Karunanidhi's son, as the next leader and put Vai.Go 'in his place'.

Only because Mr. Manoharan objected to this undemocratic process he had to go. So also senior party leaders of Madurai who have fallen foul of another of Karunanidhi's sons, Azhagiri, are also being given a short shrift. Though for the records the DMK president denies that he is promoting his own clan.

Continued from page 9

al gadgetry advertised on TV. Isn't that unfair by the poor as well. 'We will look into that. We have asked even the private channels to have advisory boards to help them.'

And what about this ban on 'X' rated films? 'I never banned them. That's how the media has interpreted it. I was told by the film industry that some cinemas only screen 'X' rated films. None of the local films have access to these cinemas. That is what I am trying to change.'

'Cinema is an art form. A creative work in whatever medium it comes out must embody a meaningful vision of life. Why should I impose a ban on such works? Would you consider various corrupt, lewd films as works of art?'

Lokubandara has worked out guidelines for the media. 'It's function is to inform and educate.' Of course Lokubandara wants it done responsibly.

He is articulate in English as he is in Sinhala, but it is in Sinhala that he talks to you. After all English is an alien tongue. And he would be the last man to prefer it to Sinhala.

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	10 Dec-25 Dec (Ticketed after 01 Nov)			£630	£382
	01 Dec-09 Dec & 25 Dec-30 Apr			£485	£295
COLOMBO VIA DUBAI	01 Jul-14 Sep & 01 Dec-07 Jan	£340	£233	£625	£428
	15 Sep-30 Nov	£315	£219	£490	£335
COLOMBO VIA KUWAIT	01 Jul-15 Sep & 01 Dec-31 Dec	£295	£203	£505	£345
	15 Sep-30 Nov & 01 Jan-30 Jun	£245	£169	£395	£263
COLOMBO VIA SOFIA	01 Jul-30 Aug	£236	£157	£385	£255
	01 Sep-30 Nov	£205	£137	£365	£242
BOMBAY/DELHI VIA COLOMBO	01 Sep-30 Nov (No stop over in Colombo)			£370	£226
MADRAS/TRIVENDRUM VIA COLOMBO	01 Sep-30 Nov (No stop over in Colombo)			£425	£259
SINGAPORE VIA COLOMBO	01 Jul-14 Sep & 01 Dec-07 Jan	£358	£246	£550	£378
	15 Sep-30 Nov	£270	£188	£510	£353
SYDNEY VIA COLOMBO & SINGAPORE	01 Jul-30 Nov	£490	£337	£975	£668
	01 Dec-07 Jan	£575	£394	£975	£668
SYDNEY OR MELBOURNE VIA COLOMBO	01 Jul-30 Nov	£460	£316	£915	£618
SINGAPORE AND KUALA LUMPUR	01 Dec-07 Jan	£475	£327	£945	£648

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