

# Tamil TIMES

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President Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga – An Impressive Victory

## 'A Mandate for Peace and Change'

- ★ Shortest Race
- ★ Govt.'s Will For a Balanced Solution
- ★ The Assassination and its Aftermath
- ★ Was C.N. Annadurai a CIA Agent?
- ★ Postscript to a Famous Victory
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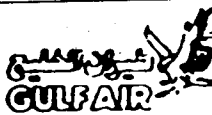
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*I do not agree with a word  
of what you say, but I'll  
defend to the death your  
right to say it.*

Voltaire.

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## A Verdict for Peace

No doubt that the United National Party's campaign in the recently held presidential election in Sri Lanka was disrupted by the brutal assassination of its candidate, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake. However that does not diminish in any way the crushing victory by Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga which is a magnificent performance by any standard. The sixty-two per cent votes she amassed and the record two million majority over her nearest rival speak eloquently about the massive mandate she received from the electorate. What is of singular importance in Mrs. Kumaratunga's triumph is that she received support not only from the majority Sinhalese population, but also from an overwhelming majority from the other communities, Tamils and Muslims.

In spite of the fact that some of her detractors alleged that a vote for Mrs. Kumaratunga would be a vote for the Tigers to divide the country, she fought her campaign with a clear message to the people - she would seek to bring an end to the war and continue with the peace process to achieve a lasting peace; seek to end institutionalised political violence and to restore human and democratic rights; the abolition of the executive presidency; and the eradication of corruption and waste and bring back decency in public life. In return, the people have given her a clear verdict.

There is no doubt that the bomb attack which killed Gamini Dissanayake, many other UNP leading members and several bystanders has resulted in a severe setback for the peace process. One hopes that this setback is temporary and the President and her government will continue their efforts to resurrect the presently stalled peace process.

Reports confirm that the LTTE leader has ordered his cadres not to engage in offensive operations against government forces during the week following Mrs. Kumaratunga's election as President. Government forces too seem to have avoided engaging in any offensive action against LTTE units during this period. Although a formal ceasefire is absent, the continuation of the avoidance of offensive operations by both sides will no doubt greatly assist in the resuscitation of the peace process.

In regard to the recommencement of the peace talks with the LTTE or with any other concerned parties, the government may well be advised to reconsider its chosen methodology of having such talks in the glare of publicity with dozens of foreign and local newshounds and TV crews descending upon the scene. The problem inherent in such a method is that the parties are likely to engage in public posturing and one-upmanship after each round of talks with a view to satisfying their own parochial constituencies and pressure groups. The media itself will seek to analyse and dissect every word and phrase uttered by the parties, not infrequently with malevolent or mischievous motives. Agreement on any issue may be characterised as a capitulation or sell-out; and disagreements may be magnified and misrepresented as a complete deadlock or breakdown of talks.

No major political conflict, whether it be South Africa, Israel and Palestine or Northern Ireland to mention a few recent examples, were sought to be resolved through talks being held in the full glare of publicity. Recent experience in attempts to resolve intractable and long standing conflicts has shown that the approach has to be patient and private discussions between the parties or their representatives. If need be, the services of well meaning mediators should be employed as in the case of Israel-PLO negotiations in which the Norwegians played a crucial and constructive role.

The rapturous welcome given by the population of Jaffna to the government's peace delegation during their first visit in mid-October, and the outcome of the recently held presidential election reinforced the view that there is a groundswell of support for an early resolution of the conflict through negotiations.



## CHANDRIKA'S RESOUNDING VICTORY

# Shortest Race to Presidency

Rita Sebastian, Colombo

For Chandrika Kumaratunga it was the shortest race from Prime Minister to Executive President, 81 days in her mercurial rise to the highest office in the land.

And keeping to the Bandaranaike tradition of making political history, her mother Sirima Bandaranaike was the world's first woman Prime Minister, daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga became the country's first woman Executive President.

Kumaratunga's confidence even before a single vote was polled that she had won by a million votes was more than amply vindicated. Kumaratunga secured 62.28 per cent of the total vote as against her nearest rival the United National Party's Srimala Dissanayake who secured 35.91 of the vote.

The UNP which had hoped to cash in on the sympathy vote, following the assassination of Presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake in a bomb explosion on October 24, and the substitution of his widow Srimala as Presidential candidate, made a poor showing reducing its August General election vote from 44.04 per cent to 35.91 per cent of the Presidential poll.

For the PA it was a resounding victory, winning all the 22 electoral districts conceding only the single polling division of southern Mahiyangana to the UNP.

In the eastern province Chandrika Kumaratunga got 90% of the Tamil votes polled. It was the minority Tamil and Muslim votes that made up almost 10% of the overall PA votes.

And what this election also did was to explode the myth of the 500,000 plantation vote bank regarded as the exclusive preserve of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) pledged to the UNP for over two decades.

In spite of CWC boss Thondaman, inducted to the PA government a week before the poll changing his 'neutral' stance and calling on the CWC membership to vote for the PA, the vote was almost equally divided between the two opposing camps, with the PA getting only a

few thousand votes more than the UNP. And this in spite of Deputy Minister P. Chandrasekera, former CWC General Secretary S. Sellasamy who has now formed his own plantation trade union and Minister Thondaman mounting a campaign to get the Plantation vote for the PA.

Addressing the nation soon after being proclaimed elected Kumaratunga said that the 'victory was the victory of millions who had suffered political intimidation, violence and terror tactics at the hands of the previous regime'.

She also told the nation that the massive mandate given by the people was an endorsement of her government's peace initiative.

## 'Clear Mandate for Peace Process' - Chandrika

From Rita Sebastian, Colombo.

'We have got a strong and clear mandate for continuing the peace process. It has been endorsed by 90 per cent of the people of the north, and by 85 per cent in the east. And what is touching is that the Sinhala people have also endorsed our peace process,' said President Chandrika Kumaratunga addressing the local and foreign media shortly after being sworn in as Executive President. It was her very first official function, said the President.

Responding to questions, President Kumaratunga said that there was no timeframe as to when the peace talks will be resumed, but she and her government had been strengthened in their resolve to continue with it. The second round of peace talks with the LTTE was suspended following the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake on October 24.

'It is not going to be easy and is not without problems specially in the light of what has happened,' said the President.

Asked whether she had a message for the LTTE, she said the verdict was a message for all who wanted to give heed to it, 'that people are against war and passionately want peace'.

Answering a question whether

This was significant she said in face 'of the low and inflammatory campaign by the UNP to incite racial violence to get a few more votes'.

It was the end of a 'dark era and the beginning of a new one of light and freedom' said Kumaratunga.

As executive President, Chandrika Kumaratunga will combine an awesome assembly of executive and constitutional authority. She has vowed however to abandon the powers she has won by abolishing the Executive Presidency by July 1995. Whether she will, and in what manner, will be the subject of public comment and controversy in the months to come.

Looking ahead the ethnic conflict will engage almost all the attention she can spare from re-energising the economy and re-writing the constitution. It is a formidable agenda. but then she is a formidable lady who will brook no obstacles in her way.

when she said she would pursue peace 'at any cost' she had the military option in mind, the President said that in pursuing peace she would 'not abandon the principles of equity and fairplay on all sides of the political divide'.

Asked how she could accommodate Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) President S. Thondaman in her cabinet when he was part of the government against whom she had levelled charges of bribery and corruption and abuse of power, she queried 'Are you telling me that Thondaman is corrupt?'

As for the abolishing of the Executive Presidency, Kumaratunga said she had already committed herself to abolishing it by July 1995.

Whether there were any state visits lined up... There were some and India would be one of the first countries she would visit, she said.

She also defended her right to have a private holiday if she chose. That came in the wake of criticism of her unannounced trip to Singapore shortly after she filed her nomination papers for the Presidential stakes.

President Kumaratunga also told journalists that she will retain the

Continued on page 6

## Reaction from Tamil Parties

The landslide victory for Chandrika Kumaratunga at Wednesday's Presidential election is considered by Tamil Parties as a strong mandate to continue peace efforts to end the ethnic conflict.

Ms. Kumaratunga obtained more than 70 per cent of votes in the three Eastern districts while in the Jaffna and Vanni district, where there was limited voting she managed to secure 85 per cent and 96 percent of the votes respectively.

Tamil Parties believe that the massive support from the voters in the South as well to Ms. Kumaratunga is a clear mandate to continue with the peace talks which were suspended immediately after the assassination of Opposition Leader Gamini Dissanayake on October 24.

A spokesman for the Tamil United Liberation Front said the party was very pleased about the outcome of the election and hoped that Ms. Kumaratunga would be able to live up to the responsibility cast on her and the promises she had made.

'This was a vote to end the war and bring about peace and normalcy to the country - a just and fair political solution to the ethnic problem', he said.

'It is our hope that all communities will be treated in an equal manner with no discrimination. It was definitely not a vote for the LTTE. That slogan has obviously been rejected by all the districts which opted for the PA,' said A. Thangathurai, the spokesman for the main Tamil political party.

Another TULF spokesman said

that had the LTTE allowed elections to take place in Jaffna almost one hundred percent of the voters would have voted for Chandrika, thereby increasing her majority by a further half a million.

Kumaravel Kandasamy of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) said the party was happy that the people had endorsed the peace process of Chandrika Kumaratunga.

'The people in the South have rejected racism and communalism,' he said.

Commenting on the UNP's allegation that a vote for the PA was a vote for the LTTE, Mr. Kandasamy condemned it as an opportunistic slogan coined up by the UNP.

M. Sudhakar of the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students said this was a great victory for the peace move. 'We thought all minorities would support Chandrika Kumaratunga. In fact, even the majority of the South also supported her, showing that they too want peace,' he said.

Former State Minister, S. Sellasamy, President of the Ceylon National Worker's Congress, a break-away group of the CWC, said Ms. Kumaratunga's victory clearly showed that all the people irrespective of race and religion had one issue in mind - peace.

He said the people had placed their faith in Ms. Kumaratunga because she had spoken very clearly, openly and freely, in all parts of the country about several major issues like the settlement of the North-East problem.

Ms. Sellasamy said at least 75 percent of plantation workers had voted for Ms. Kumaratunga this time, breaking away from the UNP which they had backed from the 1970s. He said the estate workers had voted against the communal propaganda of the UNP.

Kumar Ponnambalam, leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress, said it was a clean sweep for Ms. Kumaratunga, a wholesome and handsome sweep, but he believed the PA and the UNP should come together and put forward a solution to the ethnic crisis.

TELO Secretary, M. Sivajilingam said the massive vote given to Ms. Kumaratunga was a mandate to proceed with the peace negotiations and find an early solution to the ethnic crisis.

The EPRLF in a statement said the peace initiatives aimed at ending the ethnic conflict has been endorsed by broad sections of the Sinhala people.

'It is encouraging that the sincerity of Ms. Kumaratunga and that of the Sinhala people, has been reciprocated by the broad Tamil-Muslim national minorities. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the foundation has now been laid for the forging of a truly secular and democratic consensus that cuts across the ethnic divide,' the EPRLF said.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda hailed Ms. Kumaratunga's victory and said now was the time to implement the 13th Amendment to the Constitution without further delay.

He said the new President could have talks with the leaders of Tamil speaking people of the calibre of S. Thondaman, M.H.M. Ashraff, M. Sivasithamparam and also the leaders of the various Tamil groups like the EPRLF, PLOTE, EPDP and others who had given up their armed struggle to join the mainstream. It would be then seen who was opposing the amendment. Implementation also meant devolution of power, he said.

'The near 20 lakhs majority which Chandrika got is a slap in the face for the LTTE. It exploded in the LTTE's face like a volcano. The LTTE never, ever expected Ms. Kumaratunga to get this overwhelming majority. After the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake the LTTE expected a backlash but it never materialised. Now no-one can ever expect backlashes in the South. They are a thing of the past,' Mr. Devananda said.

### Jaffna Election - A Travesty

The travesty of an election in the island's northern province in August, had a repeat performance on Wednesday, when the islands off Jaffna and the army controlled areas of the peninsula voted in the 1994 Presidential election.

At the August 16 general election the northern electorate sent 10 members to parliament even though only 2.3% of the 600,000 electorate voted.

Since the LTTE boycotted the poll there was no poll in LTTE controlled territory.

The polling figures in the northern Jaffna district on Wednesday only contributed an addition to the overall percentages and nothing else. In the port town of Kankasanturai the People's Alliance polled 116 votes and got 91.3 percent and the UNP polling six votes obtained 4.2%. In the polling division of Nallur the PA polled 21 votes and secured 95% and the UNP polled just 2 votes. In some of the other polling divisions some of the other candidates secured just one solitary vote.

## A CRUSHING VICTORY WITH A RECORD MAJORITY

### 'A Mandate for Peace and Change' — President Kumaratunga

'The verdict of our people in the recent election leaves me in no doubt of the depth and intensity of their desire and commitment to peace. This must be, however, peace with honour for both parties to the conflict for it to be strong and durable', declared the new President Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga in an address to the nation on 12 November immediately after taking her oath of office following her crushing victory with a record two million majority over her main rival at the presidential poll held on 9 November.

After reading out the oath of office in all three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English, the new President addressed the nation in all three languages. Before speaking briefly in Tamil, she said, 'I will now attempt to speak in the language of the Tamil People'.

The following is the text of President Mrs. Kumaratunga's address to the nation:

'I assume office as the Fourth President of Sri Lanka at a momentous turning point in the history of our nation. The people have overwhelmingly demonstrated their collective desire for democracy and peace, for honesty and efficiency in Government affairs and for an economic policy which will offer to everyone the privileges so jealously guarded by a handful of cronies and henchmen. I have no words to express appropriately how deeply touched and overwhelmed I am and how humbled at the expression of the immense confidence and faith the nation has shown in me and my Government.

**Continued from page 4**

finance portfolio she held as Prime Minister. 'There is no need to play musical chairs in the short time left before the abolishing of the Executive Presidency' said Prof. G.L. Peiris.

As for appointing her mother Sri-ma Bandaranaike as the Prime Minister... 'It was I who decided. Why is it nepotism?' Asked what message she had for the opposition UNP, 'Close up and Sleep'.

And for her brother Anura Bandaranaike... 'I usually don't speak to the deaf and dumb.'

Answering a question on the government's foreign policy, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said 'we have neglected the family of Asia and we are going to pay much more attention to countries like China and Japan but that does not mean we are downgrading anybody else.'

The scale and dimension of the mandate that has been given to us knows no parallel in the history of elections of the democratic world. Yet, it is even more significant to note that all the peoples of Sri Lanka, in all their diversity, have spoken in one loud and unswerving voice. I take this opportunity to bow in homage before the courage, the political acumen and the quiet determination of our people in the resolve to triumph over the might of state terror and political victimisation.

I also take this opportunity to pay homage to my father and to my mother for teaching me that honesty, sincerity and commitment to the people of our land was worth much more than money could buy. I also pay homage at this moment to my husband Vijaya for the courage and for the support that he gave me right throughout our political life together. The unsurpassed dimensions of this victory cannot be understood merely in terms of an achievement of an individual or even in terms of a political party. Our people are well aware that whatever strength of mind, heart and will I possess are entirely at the service of the nation. I have long dedicated myself to the well-being of my country and today is an appropriate day for renewal of this commitment.

'This victory is not mine alone. It is the fruit of painstaking labour and resolve by every segment of the Sri Lankan community spread over the days of darkness which engulfed our land in the recent past. The proportions of this victory are indicative of the extent to which the people of a

country happily motivated and enthused can strive against overwhelming odds and achieve for themselves and for posterity emancipation from the harshest tyranny. It is to the vast mass of our people who have contributed to and kept alive in the face of terrific odds this struggle, in the darkest era in our country's contemporary history, that I pay warm and humble tribute on this occasion.

'In the words of my father, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike: "The indomitable, unconquerable spirit of our people has proved strong enough to challenge and eventually to prevail against the oppressive regime of the past seventeen years".

'It is appropriate at this time to take stock of the current national condition and to reflect on the reasons that underpinned this avalanche of popular feeling. The people of our country in displaying their strong resolve to give me and the People's Alliance a victory of this scale signifies their profound desire for change. Their vote is in essence, and, above all else, a vote for change. The changes which Sri Lanka's electorate look forward to are as diverse as they are far-reaching. Pre-eminent among the changes that our people yearn for is the rejection, absolute and uncompromising, of violence and terror they had endured in silence — the pain of senseless killings and disappearances of their loved ones.

'During that era that spanned almost two decades, human life became incredibly cheap. State terror raised its ugly head and continued unabated in its destructive path. A callous regime which looked upon political power solely for the attainment of its narrow and selfish ends, violated with impunity, all canons of decency, equity and fairplay and left behind a society yearning for a sense of security and fulfilment in the absence of all accepted norms and values.

'The people of Sri Lanka have said with patent clarity to all who care to listen, "gone are the days when might was right, when everything was negotiable and when the state refined and streamlined all forms of organised violence". The verdict of the people was in favour of supremacy of law, the enthronement of democratic ideals and values and the restoration of decency, morality and conscience to the process of government.

'Our people have voted decisively against corruption and the abuse of power which had taken deep root and spread right through the social and

political fabric of our nation. It had terribly bedevilled every civilised institution we held sacred. The people have demanded transparency and accountability in all spheres of government. They have insisted that political power is normally justifiable, only so long as it is used for purposes connected with the well-being of the people and the upliftment of their condition. We have brought to an end an era when politicians were a law unto themselves. The country has endorsed in the most explicit terms the measures which my Government has already taken to wipe out political violence and state terror and to restore integrity and honour to the politics of the country.

'The crippling burden of a high cost of living and the economic hardships caused by inadequate employment opportunities and a variety of other evils which have bedevilled the economy demand urgent action. We have been accustomed to an economic order which in the name of an open economy has enabled unconscionable benefits to accrue to a small coterie while the rest of society languished in poverty and squalor. Essential services including health and education were woefully neglected.

'One of the priority tasks of our new Government is to ensure that our economy is truly free and competitive. That there is honesty and transparency in all transactions. Clearly development perspectives would ensure expanded and vigorous growth of national production and thereby the generation of new employment and income opportunities for our youth. Foreign investment will be encouraged and protected. We will also ensure that the benefits of this development will reach the poorer segments of our population through equitable and efficient distribution of income transfers and increased employment.

'Our people have acted with extreme restraint, intelligence and political acumen in the face of strong efforts to push them into the abyss of dark, dangerous and wild attitudes of racial and religious bigotry and hatred.

'They have given a mandate for peace and human values. They have convincingly proved to the world that all the might of the bullet can be defeated by the ballot. Their commitment to democracy is poignantly courageous.

'The youth of our nation have responded to our call to eschew violence and take up with us the banner of freedom, of democracy, of human decency and prosperity for all. We pay

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## Postscript to a Famous Victory

By Ajith Samaranayake

August has been the kindest of months to the People's Alliance. On August 16 the massed ranks of the PA led by their new hope, Chandrika Kumaratunga, fired the first fusillade at the UNP bastion which had remained impregnable for the last 17 years. In spite of all the last-ditch attempts by all the King's Horses and all the King's Men, supported by scheming politicians muttering into their celltels, the UNP Government fell two days after leaving President Wijetunge in splendid isolation in his Palace. Now, not even two months after the last of the ramparts has been stormed the People's Alliance is in power in its own right both at the highest echelons of the Executive as well as in the Legislature. At the apex and summit is President Kumaratunga, who within a little over a year has magically undergone three reincarnations, from Chief Minister to Prime Minister to President, but who pledged herself last Thursday to discharge the duties of this high office 'not as a dictator but as the people's humble servant.'

Memories of the Left will, of course, go back to that other August in 1953 when the Hartal rocked Ceylon. Forty one years ago that August, the workers led by the LSSP and the CP brought the entire country to a standstill when they protested against the increase in the price of rice. There was no work done in government offices, buses and trains did not run and in the South jubilant militant women baked hoppers on the rail track. The Government was in retreat and the Cabinet met on board a ship docked in the Colombo Port. Eight people were killed in Police firing and Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake vacated the prime ministerial throne in favour of Sir John Kotelawela.

Three years later, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna Government led by the President's father, Prime Minister Bandaranaike, was in power on the momentum of the first mass uprising in contemporary political history. The MEP Government released the masses into the political arena and gave them a new dignity and sense of self-worth. This psychological sustenance was perhaps the most crucial factor of the MEP's accomplishments, for the people had

not felt really free even after eight years of so-called independence. They remained outside the pale of the anglicised upper classes who ruled the country in English and the westernised intelligentsia which formed public opinion in the same lingo. For any oppressed, ex-colonial people this mental and psychological release from the bondage of alien values is crucial to their self-discovery. This was the signal task which fell on the MEP Government

### Naxalite

By 1970 when President Kumaratunga's mother led the United Front Government to power on the crest of another popular wave the people had come into their own. The workers were self confident, the students and youth, nurtured by years of free education, articulate and politically conscious. The economic and social measures initiated by the MEP Government and continued by the first SLFP Government of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1960 were going on apace. A new awareness had emerged in literature and the arts and a new generation was knocking at the doors of power.

It is that new generation to which Chandrika Kumaratunga belongs. Though the daughter of two Prime Ministers she has not inherited political power as a family heirloom or assumed office with the ease of donning a new sari. She has had to struggle for it throughout from the time the SLFP was roundly routed in 1977. From the reign of terror which the UNP unleashed in the wake of the elections to the deprivation of Mrs. Bandaranaike's civic rights. The harassment of her husband Vijaya on the absurd Naxalite charge, his incarceration when she had to take him three meals on a single visit only to be rifled and messed up by hostile jailors so that he often went hungry, the mini-war that was the Mahara by-election in 1983 in which Vijaya was nearly killed, Vijaya's assassination and her own self-exile are all memorable landmarks in Chandrika Kumaratunga's struggle to

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obtain power not for herself but 'for my party and my beliefs' as she termed it in an interview with this newspaper only last Sunday.

And what are those beliefs? Chandrika Bandaranaike was intellectually nurtured in the heady atmosphere of the 1968 French rebellion when the revolutionary students who occupied the Odeon Theatre proclaimed 'When the General Assembly becomes a bourgeois theatre, we must make bourgeois theatre into a General Assembly.' The students believed that they could supplant the workers as the engine of the revolution but their revolt was foredoomed. A combination of the Leviathan State and the retrograde trade union hierarchy defeated that idealistic crusade but it was good to be in Paris then at the boulevards with their cobblestones pulled up to make the improvised barricades.

### Significant

Mrs. Kumaratunga does not conceal her belief in socialism, her early intellectual influence, but she is flexible and agile enough to temper the idealistic belief in the humanism of the socialist doctrine with the realities of a world where doctrinaire socialism, organised as a command economy and a cen-

tralised bureaucracy, has collapsed. But her constituency is still the workers and the peasants, the youth and the intelligentsia, the deprived and the dispossessed, to all of whom she now strives to bring the largesse of the open market economy hitherto largely confined to the mercantile class. Recognising the market economy for the reality that it is, the PA Government attempts to extend the benefits of that economy to wider sections while protecting the poorest of the poor with a safety net and not permitting the Welfare State to be rudely dismantled.

At bottom, the appeal made by the People's Alliance and its new leader Chandrika Kumaratunga is to the basic decencies of the people. To a people who had been bound hand and foot by an excessive Executive Presidency which bragged that the only thing it could not do was to change a person's sex and threatened in 1982 to roll up the electoral map for ten years, to a people disgusted with the aggrandisement of a few at the expense of the many and suffering from the fears engendered by armed gangs on the rampage with political blessing, the PA's call went home. It touched the basic decencies and good sense of the people, reactivated their sense of propriety and made them stand up in revolt

against those who had condemned them to this political hell, a revolt accomplished not by arms but through the ballot.

What is even more significant is that this appeal has cut across all barriers and touched all sections of the people. Whether Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim, urban or rural, peasant or intellectual, the people have responded in the mass in spite of all the ugly character assassination and the desperate jingoism which a cabal of recent UNP converts engaged in on behalf of their Presidential candidate.

### Mandate

The people's mandate, then, has been for the restoration of democratic values, a rejection of corruption in public life and above all for peace, not at any cost but on the basis of a shared dignity. After a long winter of enforced cynicism and charlatanism the people have responded with an upsurge of idealism for long suppressed. The very enormity of the popular mandate exemplifies the mass expectations which it enshrines. It is an enormous faith which the people have reposed in their leader, a salutary and sobering thought as that leader now ascends to the highest office in the land.

(Courtesy of the *Sunday Observer*).

## Govt. Has Political Will For A Balanced Solution

By Prof. G.L. Peiris, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

The Presidential election of November 9, 1994 represents a watershed in the history of the electoral process in Sri Lanka. Ours is an entrenched democratic tradition: we have been accustomed to the exercise of the franchise ever since 1931.

We have seen governments made and unmade at elections: the power of the ballot has prevailed against the mightiest of governments. Nevertheless, at no time have we witnessed so overwhelming a mandate given by the people of our country to any political leader.

When the government of J.R.

Jayewardene secured a 5/6 majority in Parliament in 1977, the popular vote he received did not exceed 51%. When J.R. Jayewardene claimed a magnificent victory at the Presidential election held in 1982, no more than 52.9% of those who exercised the suffrage, endorsed his candidature. The dimensions of Chandrika's victory this week bear no comparison. More than 62% of those who voted, favoured her candidature. She polled 4.7 million votes. Her nearest rival, Mrs. Srimala Disanayake of the UNP, trailed with 2.7 million votes, representing a meagre 35.9%. This is quite unique

in the annals of elections in our country.

Many features of this historic mandate warrant comment.

The first of these is the unanimity of public opinion in every part of the country. There was not the slightest variation or divergence from province to province, from district to district, from community to community, from the rural to the urban sector. Quite starkly and evidently, there was one constant view right across the board. The scale of the nation's confidence in, and enthusiasm for, Chandrika's leadership is reflected in the capture of every polling division barring one, by the People's Alliance which Chandrika led.

The most refreshing characteristic of the people's response was their emphatic and unhesitating rejection of the communalism the pettiness and the rancour which doggedly underpinned the UNP's election



campaign, especially during its closing stages. The appeal to the baser instincts of human nature was scarcely muted. Communal passions were sought to be ignited by the crudest of methods. Character assassination, not merely by nuance or innuendo but by the most explicit of defamatory assertions, constituted the hallmark of a campaign which was personality rather than issue based and smacked of spite at every turn. It is a signal tribute to the political maturity and perception of the Sri Lankan electorate that a campaign orchestrated on these lines was accorded the treatment it richly deserved.

One of the fundamental issues on which Chandrika and the People's Alliance launched and sustained their campaign was the dismantling of the Executive Presidential system, which is plainly identifiable as the centrepiece of Sri Lanka's current constitutional structure. Speakers on PA platforms, including Chandrika herself, cogently stressed the numerous aspects and overtones of the Executive Presidency which are altogether destructive of democratic and participatory values in our political culture. We made it clear that what we desired from the people was an unequivocal mandate for the removal of an institution which had a chilling effect on Parliament, the judiciary, the public service and the Ombudsman and served only the purpose of rulers bent on the naked exploitation of political power for their own aggrandizement. In this sense, the recent Presidential election had the complexion of a de facto referendum on the abolition of the Executive Presidency.

A significant consideration here is credibility and consistency. This is a far cry from the UNP's own political credo. In the initial stages of the campaign which preceded the Parliamentary election on 16th August this year, the UNP suggested that the Executive Presidential system is detrimental to our national interests and that its eradication is timely. Surprisingly, however, the UNP manifesto underwent a metamorphosis on this point and, in its final version, clearly adopted the position that the Executive Presidency is of benefit to the country and should be maintained, subject to structural modifications.

There was a further shift of opinion in the immediate aftermath of the August election, when the UNP

offered to co-operate with the PA government in securing a 2/3 majority in Parliament for the reform of the present Constitution with a view to suppressing the Executive Presidency.

Yet another aberration manifested itself when the UNP pointed out that their offer of co-operation would not hold good after completion of the Presidential election, and that they would thereafter support the retention of the Executive Presidency. To discover any vestige of coherence or continuity in these contradictory postures defies human ingenuity.

By contrast, the PA's policy in respect of constitutional reform is firmly anchored in conviction and in sincerity of purpose rather than in mere expediency.

There were sceptics who doubted that the PA would continue to demonstrate its resolve to do away with the Executive Presidency, once the total power it entails found its way into Chandrika's hands. It would seem strange to them that Chandrika and her government should forge ahead with renewed vigour to abolish the Executive Presidency, despite the sectarian political advantages which its tenure so visibly and abundantly involves.

This, however, is precisely what the PA has set out to do. The PA government has already secured the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform to undertake the preparation of a new constitutional instrument unfettered by the thrall of the Executive Presidency. The PA government has also adopted a definite time-frame with regard to the work of this committee. This was reiterated in the clearest terms by the President-elect when she spoke on the occasion of the declaration of the results of the Commissioner of Elections.

Chandrika and her government find themselves unacceptably thwarted by the Machiavellian legacy imposed on them by the J.R. Jayewardene administration. Mr. Jayewardene, having acquired a 5/6 majority in the Parliament of 1977 with a 51% popular vote at the general elections proceeded to use that majority to give the country the Second Republican Constitution of 1978. However, that Constitution contained 2 decisive limitations with regard to amendment substitution and repeal of the Constitution. The

limitations consisted of a 2/3 majority in Parliament and a referendum.

Mr. Jayewardene, as an integral part of this exercise, made it virtually impossible for any succeeding administration to change the Constitution of his making. He brought about this result by seeing to it that no future government was at all likely to command a 2/3 majority in Parliament. He did this by changing the electoral system, supplanting the Westminster-style first past the post system (which brought him into power with a 5/6 majority) with the wholly divergent system of proportional representation.

The underlying anomaly is horrendous in its proportions and in the magnitude of the ensuing justice. If Chandrika's government had the benefit of the system which put J.R. Jayewardene into power in 1977, reform of the Constitution in conformity with the criteria spelt out in the Jayewardene Constitution, would hardly present insuperable difficulty. It is the replacement of this system with proportional representation of the kind contemplated by the Jayewardene Constitution, coupled with the rigid stipulation of the 2/3 majority, that has produced the current impasse. The result, predictably, is grotesque.

This anomaly highlights the need for consensus as the key to the crucial work of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform. A principled and pragmatic way has to be found out of the present predicament which is the direct consequence of devious manipulations embedded in the Jayewardene Constitution.

As TULF Secretary-General Sambanthan picturesquely pointed out at a recent symposium (at which J.R. Jayewardene himself was present), the situation resembles that of a man with an albatross round his neck, confronted with a choice of drowning with the albatross or finding an unconventional way of ridding himself of the albatross and surviving.

If there is an unhealthy polarization of attitudes, conventional wisdom may prove inadequate to supply the answer. But the government has the courage of its convictions in refusing to allow an authoritarian and idiosyncratic Constitution to be frozen for all time against the clearly articulated wishes of the people. Chandrika's government certainly has the political will to arrive at a balanced practical solution.

# Hopes of Peace Lasted For Too Short A Period

by Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai,  
University of Colombo

There has been a strong sense of euphoria that gripped especially the people of the Jaffna peninsula in North Sri Lanka, consequent to the government's move to negotiate with the LTTE. But equally happily hopeful are those from among the Sri Lankan Tamils compelled to live outside the northern and eastern provinces. After a decade of frightful civil war and a still longer period of violence, peace was being given a chance. The reply was the promising prospect of both Tamils and Sinhalese living, if not in cordial amity, at least, with tolerance and acceptance of one another in the same island which although beset by unceasing war, wounds and deaths, the blurb of Air Lanka, the National carrier, still calls Paradise.

A round of peace talks between the newly elected government, headed by Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, and the intractable insurgents, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), took place through governmental emissaries and representatives of the leader of the LTTE, Mr. Velupillai Prabhakar-

an. Emissaries despatched from Colombo were, except for Lionel Fernando, the much liked former Jaffna Government Agent, new to the LTTE. In turn, the team selected by the LTTE was also devoid of the familiar faces of earlier negotiations such as Yogi or Anton Balasingham. This was desirable because neither side could have anticipated the positions that the teams would take, and at least gave hope of a fresh approach to and a new study of the aspirations and expectations of the LTTE speaking on behalf of the Tamils. Simultaneously even the representatives in the LTTE team would not have been able to anticipate the stand the emissaries of the government could take.

The first round of talks had apparently focused on preliminary routine yet grave concerns. And the LTTE did not let slip of the opportunity. They wanted the economic needs of the Tamils marooned in the Northern peninsula to be met. Other vital issues that were taken up had been the opening up of the Sangupiddy passage to Jaffna which would make travel much easier than across the

present Kilali passage and a ceasefire. On both these questions, the government had thought that Sangupiddy could not be made available along with the concomitant dismantling of the adjacent military camps; and that while cessation of hostilities could be considered, a ceasefire was impracticable. However, in regard to the other concerns of rehabilitation, repair and restoration of normalcy of the war-ravaged peninsula, the government's response was positively constructive.

A clear understanding derived from the initial talks is that Jaffna and all the other adjacent areas, usually the locale of the Tamils, had been seriously devastated owing to the ravages of the unending ethnic conflict that has wreaked so much misery, on helpless Tamil civilians. Of course, the Muslims meanwhile had been asked to vacate by the LTTE and they are now not there among the Tamil peoples.

Evidently, therefore much has to be done to bring about some semblance of normalcy, to allow the Northern cultivator and fisherman to eke out their existence, and also to usher in some of the trappings of modern-day life such as electricity and bus transport. No doubt, peace is a prime necessity, and the euphoria and hopes of the Tamils are understandable indeed.

The government too had been equally infected with a high degree of optimism. No surprise, then that another visit by the same emissaries was to take place on the 24th of October. This visit to Jaffna to parley with the representatives of the LTTE was to last only a day. But the government obviously is disturbed by the reactive stances that apparently had been taken in the meantime by some of the higher personnel from the security services.

This had occasioned the first ever call to heel of the top level echelons of the armed services by any Sri Lankan government. Several commentators were surprised and have remarked on the ripples of disturbance Prime Minister Chandrika's candid comments had caused among some of

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homage to our youth for placing their hope in our ability to deliver the goods. The ravages of war in the Northern part of the country have inflicted an enormous toll in terms of loss of life and resources.

The verdict of our people in the recent elections leaves me in no doubt of the depth and intensity of their desire and commitment to peace. This must be, however, peace with honour for both parties to the conflict for it to be strong and durable.

My Government and I will continue our quest for peace recognising that the path is a difficult and tortuous one. We will ensure that our approach to peace will fully address the necessity to safeguard and strengthen the rights of the Sinhala people, while recognising dignity, self-respect and equality of

treatment for all communities. This will form the essential basis of a negotiated solution to the ethnic problem. Convinced as we are of the gravely harmful effects of the Executive Presidential system of Government and the vigour and vitality of the democratic way of life of our people, we have solemnly pledged to eradicate this blemish from the Constitution of our country.

In dedicating myself and my Government which I head to the accomplishment of these goals, I ask for the continued support and co-operation you have given us. The hope and faith you have placed in us is the beacon which lights our path. The guidance and support you extended to us gives us the courage and dedication to go on. Let us together climb those unreachable heights! Let us realise that difficult but beautiful dream!

the senior security personnel. It is true that war is too serious to be left to the Generals alone but without them if the talks fail, as it had happened before, then it has to be back to the Generals again. However, some among the higher cadres had come in already for serious criticism because of suspicious but profitable arms deals; and some had been found to have been implicated in lucrative smuggling of embargoed goods into areas under control of the militants. There, no doubt, was room to caution the top ranks of the security forces, although it may not have been tactical to do so just yet.

As one of the retiring Indian Army Generals recently had remarked, no government should for long entrust to the military, obligations and services that the civilian machinery should perform, because then the military could nurse the idea that they can do better, what the civilians had failed to do. The growth of such thinking is perilously portentous.

Furthermore, it is also good to avoid the development of a situation as in Pakistan where the military has overgrown into an indispensable factor in any political or national reckoning. In a civil society, the army should be definitely subordinate to the civil government, and should not call the shots in political and national affairs. Yet, with all this in favour of the Prime Minister's position in regard to the recent peace initiative the government needed to be somewhat wary in handling a numerically overlarge security service, equipped with oversophisticated weapons. After all, attempted coups have been known in many a decolonised country. At the same time, it is patent that there is no military solution to the violent ethnic conflict and a political solution has to be unavoidably worked out to usher stable peace.

But suddenly there came the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake, the principal opponent of Prime Minister Chandrika in the Presidential stakes on 24th October, which fouled the atmosphere. Worse, a few other political

leaders too from the contending side were killed as well as a number of ordinary folk, and many were maimed following a bomb blast at an election campaign meeting in north Colombo. This has sealed for a time at least any chances of talking peace. Much to the embarrassment of the new government, observers concluded that the undoubted suspects were none other than those with whom peace negotiations had been initiated in mid-October. Now talk of peace could turn to be anathema to most of the Sinhalese people and politicians, and it looks so.

The high hopes entertained by the long suffering northerners had lasted all too short a period. Get-

ting Sangupiddy opened out for travelling and any ceasefire implemented however were never quite certain, and now will remain almost remote likelihoods. If anything appears likely it is that the intensity of the ethnic civil war might escalate and remain hung round the island like an albatross. Death and violence, and certainly not civil society, will continue to be experienced in the Tamil peopled areas of the North. Peace talks have turned into a mirage, the first round of them could also be the last for some time. Nevertheless, if one wishes law and order, civil institutions and stable development in the country, peace has to be relentlessly pursued despite impediments.

## Assassination and the Peace Process: A Challenge to Chandrika's Leadership

by Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda,  
University of Colombo

Tragedy has struck Sri Lankan politics again. At a time when the country was limping towards peace, democracy and civility in the political conduct, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake and more than fifty others have been slain by that unnamed, yet ultimate agent of political violence – the suicide bomber.

This, as we all know, is not the first time that such a tragedy of gigantic proportions has occurred in Sri Lanka. Just last year, two leading politicians in the South, Lalith Athulathmudali and President Premadasa were assassinated, within the space of one week, obviously as a means of achieving certain political objectives. Having survived all the shocks of the crisis of April-May 1993, many right thinking Sri Lankans thought that the year 1994 heralded a new phase of politics in our country where violence and assassinations had no relevance or validity in the emerging political culture of renewed democracy. The shock waves of the bomb that blasted the lives of so many people at Thotalanga appear to have ripped apart

the edifice of Sri Lanka's political stability as well.

### De-stabilisation

Perhaps, de-stabilisation in the South is what the agents of death who planned and executed this bomb blast intended to achieve. If we subscribe to the widespread theory that the LTTE is behind this military action, we must also admit the conclusion that it was not merely an act of revenge on Mr. Dissanayake, the co-architect of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987. The LTTE could have easily killed Mr. Dissanayake when he had very little security cover as a mere opposition politician. A lone gunman, not a suicide bomber, could have completed the task without much theatricality. The timing of this particular 'revenge killing' points to its political objectives, too. Other than the de-stabilisation motive, those who planned the October 23rd carnage perhaps sought to effectively stop the peace process as well, initiated by the Chandrika Kumaratunga government.

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The greater tragedy now is that the politicians, particularly those of the part-time variety, are unconsciously completing the destabilisation agenda of the LTTE. Politicians in the South do not seem to have yet learned even the elementary lessons from the past political assassinations, believed to have been carried out by the LTTE. When both Mr. Athulathmudali and President Premadasa were killed last year, our politicians were out to gain immediate, narrow and partisan advantages, even going to the bizarre extent of accusing each other of the complicity in these killings was the heightening of the animosity between the ruling party and the opposition, plunging Southern politics into further chaos and instability. Unfortunately, we are now witnessing the same sordid history repeating itself. If Prabhakaran really wanted to de-stabilise Colombo politics, he must be thanking Colombo politicians for perfecting his task. One is tempted to conclude that prudent management of suddenly erupted crisis situations is one of the least known faculties of our politicians of all persuasions.

### Collective Political Target

As the LTTE has repeatedly proved in the past years as well as on 23 October, Southern politics is not determined in Colombo alone. Jaffna – or if we reduce it to a single individual, Prabhakaran – appears to set the tone and agenda of Southern politics. This all politicians in Colombo need to understand even at this belated hour and respond with political maturity. The actual target of the Thotalanga suicide bomber, was not restricted to Mr. Dissanayake or the UNP. The PA government, the peace process, and the emerging political stability – all these also constitute the collective political target of the LTTE. Yet, many of us in the South fail to understand this aspect of the tragedy, because our habit has been to immediately politicise the post-assassination developments for narrow political gains.

It is perhaps not a mere coinci-

dence that the assassinations of Athulathmudali, Premadasa and now Dissanayake have been timed for the worst moments of government-opposition relations – election campaigns. When the struggle for power becomes intensely bitter and acrimonious during election campaigns, there are many in the South who, unconsciously though, volunteer to be the political cohorts of the enemy afar.

Although our political leaders appear to be reluctant to admit, politicisation of assassinations in order to gain electoral and other political advantages has always spelled disaster. Take, for example, the assassinations of Athulathmudali and Premadasa. No proper investigations have been conducted into these two major political killings, either at criminal investigation or political level. Sri Lanka is perhaps the only country where the assassination of a President was not probed by a commission of inquiry.

### Politicisation of Assassinations

When political assassinations are politicised, in fact there is very little or no motivation at all to know what exactly happened. When all are engaged in the easy exercise of theory building as to who did it, the facts, truth, hard analysis and lessons to be learned become totally irrelevant. And then the agents of death will have a relatively easy job in planning the next strike, inside their rented lodging houses in Colombo's proletarian quarters. If at least elementary lessons were learned from the twin assassinations last year. Mr. Dissanayake should have been advised not to go to Thotalanga – the virtual underworld of Colombo – at that dangerous hour of midnight on a rainy day. Well, even to learn elementary lessons from such tragedies of monumental proportions, we need to de-politicise the post-assassination squabbles. And that requires a great deal of political maturity – a rare quality to find among human beings in times of heightened emotions and enmities.

Chandrika Kumaratunga's PA

government is as much a victim of the Thotalanga blast as is the UNP which lost its Presidential Candidate and a number of top party leaders. Having won the Parliamentary election on a popular wave just two and a half months ago, the PA government has done a number of good things in the area of democracy, human rights and good governance. At the same time, the Colombo middle class critique of the Chandrika Kumaratunga leadership has centered primarily on her perceived lack of professionalism and management skills in policy making as well as implementation. Now, the Prime Minister and her colleagues can no longer shrug off such criticism as mere trivia, because the bomb blast has magnified all the minor misdemeanors of the government into major political blunders. The political vulnerability of Chandrika's leadership emanates ironically from the fact that all aspects of her behaviour – including what she wears at public functions and her legendary disregard for punctuality – have been subjected to microscopic public scrutiny, precisely because of her immense popularity and charisma. And the explosion at Thotalanga and its aftermath is the first real crisis that has placed under test – a severe one at that – Chandrika Kumaratunga's leadership.

### Caught in a Peace Trap

The PA government invested during the past two and a half months most of its energy on democracy, peace and new ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. Thus, the blast that killed the Opposition Presidential candidate has also weakened the government's own election campaign. In a way, the PA government finds itself in a peace trap, a point very clearly understood perhaps only by the clever Mr. Prabhakaran. While it is true that the blow to peace process has also resurrected the argument that peace is a misplaced item in Colombo's political agenda, Chandrika Kumaratunga will have to stick to her peace promise. Any deviation from her original position at this moment is

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certain to undermine her political credibility beyond salvage.

If Prabhakaran actually wanted to derail the peace process, as the now familiar catch phrase goes, then what does he really want? The answer is quite simple: renewed war and the continuation of the conflict at an intensified military level. Perhaps, little do the military optionists in the South appear to realise that one does not give on a platter what the enemy wants – in this case, the war. Renewed war is most likely to re-legitimise Prabhakaran's claim that he is the only protector of the Tamil people in the North. Policy makers as well as opinion leaders in Colombo ought to realise that what Prabhakaran has derailed is not the entire peace process, but the particular peace track that the PA government opted to follow. A peace process to achieve even relative success and executed with the same seriousness as in war. Similarly, no peace process anywhere in the world has been exempted from setbacks and unforeseen derailments. Therefore, the PA government need not regret or apologise for its peace efforts in the face of setbacks.

### Whither Peace Process?

Meanwhile, the question being raised in Colombo and elsewhere in the country is: will the peace process be abandoned by the PA government? The cautious, though somewhat clumsy, response of the government spokespersons is that peace talks are only suspended at the moment and there is no intention to stall the peace process. It is to the credit of the Chandrika Kumaratunga government that enough care is taken to resist the military option argument. Even if forensic and other investigations prove the LTTE's culpability in Dissanayake's assassination, the government will not be in a position at all to take any steps that will amount to letting down the Jaffna Tamil people who have demonstrated a colossal faith in Chandrika's peace initiatives.

The timing of the present setback to the peace process is an unfortunate one, because all the rabble rousers locked in the Presidential election battle are exploiting their access to the electronic media to assail the PA government for its less than professional approach to the negotiations with the Tigers. A point repeatedly emphasised by the Bhumi Putra lobby in Colombo is that the Tigers have been executing a diabolical plan to wipe out the entire Sinhalese political leadership, in a bid to wrest control of the entire island. Meanwhile, in a bizarre twist to the ever-renewed conspiracy theories, M.H. Mohamed, former Speaker of Parliament and a leader of the UNP, even went to the extent of suggesting the existence of a joint conspiracy between the PA govern-

ment and the LTTE to kill the UNP's Presidential candidate.

The ultimate saving grace of conflict-ridden Sri Lankan politics is the greater political maturity of the Sinhalese people, who refuse to be persuaded by the demagoguery of a whole host of Bhumi Putra types. The inflammatory propaganda campaign of the UNP for six days when Gamini Dissanayake's body was still lying in state failed to arouse even a single act of revenge. The meaning of the political change occurred in August and social expectations for peace and democracy appear to remain strong, making it easy for the Sri Lankan society to absorb sudden political shocks of extreme magnitude. And that, and that alone, will augur well for the future of Sri Lanka's political stability.

## An Era of Consensus Needed

by Dr. Neelam Thiruchelvam

The cruel cycle of political assassination in Sri Lanka has claimed several new victims. Several prominent leaders of the United National Party including the Leader of the Opposition Gamini Dissanayake were killed in a bomb explosion which has shocked and revolted all Sri Lankans. Almost 18 months ago then President Ranasinghe Premadasa and his principal political rival Lalith Athulathmudali were killed during the Provincial Council Elections in April-May 1993.

The recent events have cast a dark shadow over a country which had been besieged by ethnic fratricide and political violence for almost two decades. A new mood of optimism followed the election of Chandrika Kumaratunga as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in the last Parliamentary elections in an electoral verdict which was widely interpreted as a mandate for peace and reconciliation. Prime Minister took several bold steps to relax the economic embargo, open up direct lines of communication with the LTTE at the highest level and sent a peace delegation to commence a process of political negotiation. The initial reactions to the talks

on both sides appeared to be positive and the second round of talk which was to commence on October 24, 1994 were intended to focus on issues relating to the cessation of hostilities.

The PA government which had been in a state of shock over the recent violence soon recovered and clarified its position on the issues of peace. The Prime Minister made it clear that there was a distinction between the peace process and the peace talks. The latter would be suspended until the investigations are completed while the former would be continued including measures for reconstruction and rehabilitation and humanitarian relief towards the north.

The immediate concern relates to the Presidential election. The PA suspended its campaign until the state funeral was over. This in effect meant that there would be only about seven days of campaigning left before the elections scheduled for November 9. Both political parties are unlikely to have large public rallies and will focus on media advertising, posters and house to house canvassing.

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## Assassination and its Aftermath

The presidential election campaign that was gathering momentum was thrown out of gear and pace with the assassination of the UNP's presidential candidate, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, and many of the UNP leaders in a suicide bomb attack at an election rally on 24 October.

For Sri Lanka racked by more than a decade of civil strife and horrendous violence, the latest assassination came as a cruel reminder that the culture of political violence in the country had not seen its end. And with the deadly bomb blast which killed over fifty and maimed over one hundred people, many of them mere bystanders, the days of emergency rule and round-the-clock curfews had returned to the beleaguered island.

The immediate political fallout from the assassination was a severe setback for the peace process initiated by the government of Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga. The government called off the visit to Jaffna by a team of officials for a second round of talks with the Tamil Tigers. To the long suffering people of the northeast of the island, particularly those of Jaffna who turned in their thousands to give a rapturous welcome to the government delegates during their first visit only two weeks earlier, the turn in the development of events must have represented an enormous disappointment. A sense of betrayal was felt among those of the Peoples Alliance government, and by Chandrika in particular, who had invested so much confidence in the peace process.

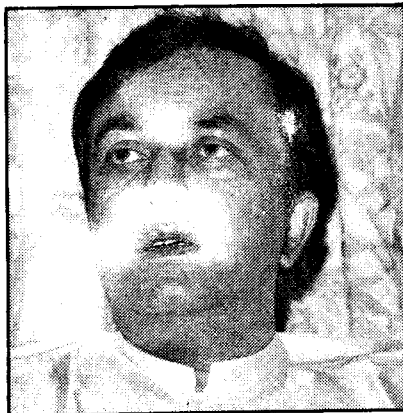
The editorial of *The Hindu* aptly commented on the resulting situation:

'The chances for peace have reduced further into the darkness that now envelopes the island's politics. . . . The derailing of the peace process reflects in the postponing of the second round of discussions scheduled in Jaffna between the Government's representatives and those of the LTTE. Undoubtedly, another tragedy is fast unravelling in Sri Lanka. For the first time in years, the Government in Colombo was demonstrating in an unambiguous idiom a commitment to begin a process of reconciliation of an alienated minority people. By lifting the economic embargo on essential commodities to Jaffna, the Government was signalling to the people in the embittered North that it cared. The fact that the Prime Minister, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga had appointed a Cabinet committee to examine all the aspects of the question of the Northeast and to formulate plans for the rehabilitation of that area,

reflected what she described as an attempt to build 'a political infrastructure for peace'.

Many have condemned the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake and his colleagues in unambiguous terms. 'It is most regrettable that at a time when our government was committed to wiping out all forms of political violence and introducing democracy and decency to Sri Lankan politics, the same despicable violence should strike again', said Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga. She added, 'The government while condemning this act in the strongest possible terms will take rapid action to ascertain the truth of this incident', and promised the people 'that the offenders whoever they may be will be brought to justice and will be dealt with impartially and effectively'.

Gamini was well known as a friend of India, and his assassination sent deep shock waves there. He was



**Gamini Dissanayake**

known to a large number of people in high positions in the government and outside. He was in India only two weeks before his untimely demise visiting the Hindu temple at Tirupathi presumably invoking divine blessings in his presidential campaign. Some commentators felt that it was his known affinity with India that cost him his life.

The Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao expressed deep shock over 'the dastardly act of violence' and conveyed the sympathies of the Government and the people of India to the bereaved families of all those who fell victim. The Indian Government expressed 'deepest shock and distress' at the violent death of Mr. Dissanayake and others in the bomb attack.

'Profoundly shocked and deeply grieved' by the death of a 'close friend and colleague', former Minister of External Affairs, Mr. K. Natwar Singh said: 'Mr. Dissanayake was a good friend of India and his death is a great

tragedy not only for his party, UNP, or Sri Lanka but also for India because in his international vision India figured prominently'.

The Catholic Archbishop of Colombo said: 'We deplore and condemn the dastardly act of the assassins who caused the death of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, Leader of the Opposition and presidential candidate of the UNP and many other leaders of the same party and bystanders. . . Our country has lost a number of political leaders in the recent past and the culprits have escaped detection so far. This senseless murder can be brought to an end only if the perpetrators of such criminal acts are discovered and brought to justice'.

Describing the 'untimely death' of Gamini Dissanayake as a 'personal loss to me as well as a loss of immeasurable dimensions to the country', the President of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Mr. S. Thondaman, said: 'In a civilised society there should be no room for the elimination of political personalities through recourse to assassination. Such outrageous, dastardly and revolting acts must be condemned in the strongest manner possible'.

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) said that it was 'shocked and outraged by the cowardly attack on Sunday which resulted in the death of several prominent leaders of the United National Party, including the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake. Mr. Gamini Dissanayake was a gifted and courageous political leader who repeatedly advocated a political approach to the national question. He maintained excellent personal relations with several TULF leaders. This is an action by irrational and anarchist forces to weaken the process of peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. We call upon the government to fully investigate this crime and ensure that the perpetrators do not succeed in frustrating the faith of all communities in the inextricable link between peace and justice. The TULF has also experienced the trauma of political assassinations and lost many of its political leaders'.

The United Nations Secretary General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali deeply regretted the death of Gamini Dissanayake and fifty other bomb victims in Colombo. 'In condemning all such terrorist acts, the Secretary General expresses the hope for an early resumption of the peace process in Sri Lanka', his statement said.

The US Government said that it extended its condolences to the victims

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of this attack and 'strongly condemns this appalling act of violence. The Sri Lankan people's desire to resolve their country's difficult ethnic problems and their long standing commitment to democracy make this new act of senseless violence especially regrettable'.

The Canadian Government said: 'Canada strongly condemns this premeditated, cowardly and brutal act. Democracy and peace cannot be held to ransom by thugs and terrorists'.

The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Douglas Hurd on behalf of the British Government said: 'It was with shock and sadness that I learned of the murders at a political rally of Hon. Gamini Dissanayake, MP, and other leading members of the UNP, as well as many members of the public. It is particularly saddening that these murders should have taken place at a time when so much was being done to try to end violence in Sri Lanka. I hope that this terrible act will not be allowed to deflect the people of Sri Lanka from the path to peace. Those responsible should realise that terrorism can never provide a solution'.

'The Norwegian government strongly condemns this act of violence. This unacceptable terrorist action which killed the Opposition Leader and about fifty others can bring negative effect on the peace process'.

For the first time since the days of strident 'Sinhala Only' in the mid 1950s, the presidential campaign witnessed the development of a sort of consensus between the two main parties, the PA and the UNP, in the south of the island on the question of settling the ethnic conflict through negotiations. The PA and Prime Minister were committed to the peace process that they had initiated. As for Gamini, he supported the government's move to talk to the Tigers. 'Any process that leads to the cessation of hostilities is welcome. The UNP is committed to searching for peace. Talk to the LTTE, move cautiously and build up the momentum', Gamini said in an interview before his death. He stood by the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987, but he did not regard it as the final word on the question of the resolution of the ethnic issue. He even sounded in certain interviews as if he was in favour of a federal solution.

In the days following the assassination, UNP stalwarts sought to gain political mileage in the presidential campaign by accusing the PA government of conspiracy with the LTTE in the murders. 'The LTTE scented Dissanayake's victory at the presidential poll and they assassinated him to help



**The severed head of the alleged assassin**

the government', the former Speaker Mr. M.H. Mohamed told a press conference in Colombo. He said that by releasing LTTE detainees, the government had assisted in the assassination.

Sarath Amunugama, UNP Member of Parliament and a close confidant of the slain Mr. Dissanayake said: 'The government is bending over backwards to prove that its negotiating partner had nothing to do with the assassination'.

Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, angrily denied the UNP's charge of conspiracy in the murder and complicity in a cover-up at a press conference on 27 October characterising it as a 'diabolical and malicious lie'. Describing the UNP as having been steeped in a 'culture of murder' she accused the previous regime of having 'done away with thousands of people' during its tenure, adding that she too faced death threats at the hands of the UNP. Both the UNP and the LTTE had been known for 'consistently and unhesitatingly murdering their opponents for political advantage'.

Mrs. Kumaratunga added that unlike the many previous cases of unresolved murders and assassinations the investigations of which had been bungled, the government would investigate the assassination of Dissanayake and other leaders of the UNP fully and seek to bring the perpetrators to justice. 'We are not prepared to whitewash the LTTE. We know that they have murdered many people including many Tamil leaders and their own people', adding that she herself had been warned in the past that she too was on the LTTE's hitlist.

In view of the developments accompanying the assassination, the talks with the Tiger leadership and the visit

of the government delegation had been suspended, Mrs. Kumaratunga said adding that her government was committed to continuing with the peace process with the Tamil people. She could not say when the suspended talks with the Tigers would be resumed.

Answering journalists at a press conference held on 26 October, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Frank Silva, confirmed that just three weeks prior to the assassination, the police intelligence had warned Mr. Gamini Dissanayake of an impending threat to his life and that he was provided with additional security. He added that Gamini Dissanayake was on the hit list to be murdered for more than a year and that he had been warned. Answering a pointed question as to from which group the threat to Mr. Dissanayake came, the IGP said that it was from the LTTE. However, until the investigations were progressed he did not want to accuse the LTTE of being responsible for the bomb attack just because a suicide bomber was involved.

The family of the late Mr. Dissanayake has requested from the government that assistance from Indian experts who carried out investigations into the assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi should be sought. It would seem that the government of Sri Lanka has no objection to this course of action.

The police have been given a free hand with instructions from the government to conduct a thorough investigation. The site of the bomb blast had been video filmed and photographed and would remain 'sealed off' covered with plastic sheeting until the completion of the investigations, and no one would be permitted to enter or tamper with the site without the permission of the Colombo magistrate.

Among the articles recovered by police at the scene of the crime were the badly mutilated severed head of the alleged woman suicide bomber, a piece from the denim jacket allegedly worn by the bomber packed with a large quantity of metal shrapnel and ball-bearings, traces of RDX C-4 plastic explosive, a 9-volt battery, pieces of wire, a hand bag with a bottle of nail polish, some personal effects and a photograph of Gamini Dissanayake.

The Judicial Medical Officer and the Government Analyst Department pieced together the mutilated face of the suspected assassin and quickly released the photograph to the media which was shown on national TV. Meanwhile, the CID of the police in Colombo confirmed that blood sample



and a piece of skin from the suspected assassin and some other remnants of evidence recovered from the scene of the blast had been sent to Scotland Yard for DNA and other relevant tests. The Police also released photographs showing the presence in the crowd of the suspected assassin at other previous UNP election meetings addressed by Gamini Dissanayake, thereby suggesting that those involved in the assassination carried out 'dry runs' prior to the bomb attack on 24 October.

One redeeming feature of the investigation by the police on this occasion is that they have not resorted to indiscriminate arrests of thousands of Tamils as had happened in the past after similar assassinations or bomb attacks allegedly carried out by the Tigers. Though there was some fear that communal violence might break out directed against the thousands of Tamils living in the south, particularly in Colombo and its suburbs, in the wake of the assassination and the reported involvement of the LTTE in it, not a single incident of such violence occurred. Some felt that violence might break out on the day (29 October) of the funeral of Gamini Dissanayake, it did not materialise. In fact Tamils felt completely secure enough and were seen going about their normal business without fear all over Colombo. 'The dark days of July 1983 are over and over for good, and they are unlikely to be repeated', said a Christian clergyman.

From the items recovered at the scene and the method used in carrying out the assassination, police investigators and commentators have drawn an exact parallel between the assassinations of Rajiv Gandhi and Dissanayake and sought to point the finger at the LTTE as the culprit for this bomb attack.

The editor of the *Lanka Guardian*, Mr. Mervyn de Silva, who in his other incarnation as Kautilya writing in the *Sunday Island* had this to say: 'The choice of target, the motive, the timing and the modus operandi established a patently obvious parallel, I thought, between the Gandhi 'hit' and the Dissanayake killing except that the number of 'innocents' dead was much larger here. The salient difference lies in the larger motive. The message is addressed to the government, while scores were settled with Dissanayake. The 50 dead in the city is a reminder to Prime Minister Kumaratunga that her capital is vulnerable'.

While other commentators in Colombo were speculating on the possibility of LTTE involvement, their Indian

## Free Media Movement Condemns Misuse and Interference

*The FMM strongly condemns the misuse of the state owned electronic media and the Lake House Group of newspapers by the People's Alliance presidential candidate Mrs. Chandrika B. Kumaratunga. The FMM has been informed that the mainstream independent print media too has come under strong government pressure to restrict free and fair reporting of the election campaign in the aftermath of the assassination of UNP presidential candidate Mr. Gamini Dissanayake.*

*The incidents stated herewith reminds us of the worst practices of the former UNP regime. The FMM unreservedly condemns restrictions placed on the media by the present Government which proclaimed media freedom as one of its main promises.*

- 1. After 17,000 copies of the Ceylon Daily News and 25,000 copies of the Dinamina of 28.10.94 had been printed, the PA Government had given orders to stop the printing. The lead stories were re-written by non Lake House staff.*
- 2. Strict orders have been given by the PA Government to Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, Sri Lanka Rupathini Corporation, Independent Television Network and Lake House Group of Newspapers not to publish stories that implicate the LTTE in the assassination of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake.*
- 3. Certain stories that were to appear in the Lake House Group of Newspapers implicating the LTTE had been pulled out under pressure from authorities.*
- 4. The state owned electronic media has been used for blatant election propaganda of the PA Government.*
- 5. The Chairman of the SLRC Mr. Vasantha Raja is blatantly conducting a personal campaign using his authority as chairman to slant all news coverage in favour of the PA.*

*The duties of the chairman which are clearly stated in the SLRC act restricts the chairman's functions to policy making. The Director General is the Chief Executive Officer.*

*The chairman using SLRC in the form of an interview by an outsider to counter various personal allegations made by opposition politicians publicly against him is unprecedented in the broadcasting history of this country. It is also unprecedented for the chairman to perform the duties of an interviewer which is not part of the responsibilities entrusted to him.*

- 6. The SLBC on its morning news bulletin of October 24th 1994, reported that Mr. Anton Balasingham of the LTTE had told the 17 journalists who were in Jaffna to cover Peace Talks, that the LTTE is not responsible for the assassination of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake. No journalist of that team neither met nor spoke to Mr. Balasingham. When questions were raised at the cabinet press briefing on this blatant lie broadcast by the SLBC, the Minister of Information, Tourism and Aviation, Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayaka promised an immediate inquiry. Up to date no action had been initiated to investigate this incident.*

*The Free Media Movement calls upon the PA Government to immediately refrain from interfering with the private owned media and misusing the state owned media. It also calls upon all groups and individuals interested in protecting media freedom to write to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Information, Tourism and Aviation expressing their protest on this grave infringement on media freedom.'*

counterparts were somehow more sure about it. The editor of *The Hindu* (5 Nov. Int.Ed.) said that 'the pattern of the slaying by a suicide bomber or a "human bomb" bears the deadly imprint of the LTTE, according to pre-

liminary assessments by the Sri Lankan police'.

The high profile editor of the much respected Indian fortnightly *Frontline*,

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# Building a People's Movement for Peace

The national peace conference on 'Building a People's Movement for Peace' that took place on October 25 at the BMICH unanimously adopted a peace pledge and a statement which reaffirmed a determination not to permit bombs to derail the peace process. The participants also condemned the crime that had cost over 60 lives including those of the Hon. Gami-ni Dissanayake, senior members of the UNP and security personnel.

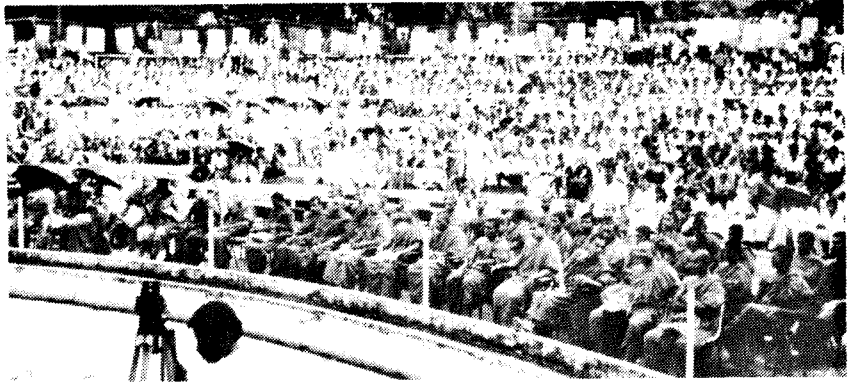
Due to the curfew on October 24 the first day of the conference had to be cancelled. However on the following day a large number of participants attended the conference from every part of the country, including Jaffna, and from a wide range of social sectors including the professions, business, Buddhist and Christian clergy, universities, NGOs and the media.

In addition several experienced foreign peace activists including the Most Ven. Maha Ghosananda (Sangha Raja of Cambodia and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee), Prof. Ed Garcia (Philippines), Ms. Mari Fitzduff (Northern Ireland) and Ms. Liz Philipson (United Kingdom), all of whom were part of an International Alert team, and Mr. Inge Grosland and Mr. Are Erikson of the Norway based FORUT attended the conference.

The conference was organised by the Peace Task Force, a group of concerned citizens and organisations with the objective of promoting the peace process in Sri Lanka. The conference was preceded by a peace march and peace rally held at the Vihara Maha Devi open air auditorium in which several thousand people from all parts of the country participated and gave expression to the common aspiration for peace.

Through a process of democratic participation the conference reached a high level of consensus in defining the vision, goals, strategies and programmes of a people's peace movement.

By a unanimous decision the Peace Task Force was mandated by the conference to strengthen its



A section of the vast crowd present at the Peace Rally

present membership and to establish a National Peace Council and a secretariat to network with peace bodies at the district level, and initiate peace activities towards consolidating a people's movement for peace.

The Ven. Maha Ghosananda, who is regarded as a founder and spiritual guide of the peace movement in Cambodia as a result of his peace work and 'dharma-yatras' involving thousands of monks and lay people, summarised the Buddhist teachings on peace which do not look to the past but to the present moment, truthfulness, kindness and gratitude, by which individuals who become peaceful within themselves also bring peace to their families, their communities and to the nation.

Addressing the conference, Prof. Ed Garcia praised the commitment to peace of the participants in attending the conference despite a difficult environment. Prof. Garcia who has worked with peace movements in the Philippines, South Africa, Guatemala and Columbia said that the peace process was never an easy one. There were no short cuts to peace. He pointed out that the people's movement in the Philippines had not sprung up overnight but had taken over 25 years to build. Organisational work had to be done sector by sector, he said.

Speaking of the conflict in Northern Ireland, Ms. Mari Fitzduff said that many people in that country had paid with their lives while working for peace. Drawing on her experience in working with Irish communities at the gras-

roots level she explained that the IRA had not previously wanted peace on the kind of terms it now appeared to be agreeing to. But they had responded to the demand for peace articulated by the people.

The conference was presided over by the Ven. Pallekande Ratanasara Thero, Ms. Jezima Ismail and by Fr. Oswald Firth who concluded the day's activities by reading out a peace pledge in which all the participants participated.

## Peace Declaration

The following is the text of the Declaration of the National Peace Conference held on October 25, 1994 at the Bandaranaike International Conference Hall, Colombo:

For all who agonise over the destruction of a war that has lasted for over a decade, for all who cherish the values of solidarity, equality and non-violence as the foundation for building a democratic social order in which people can live without fear, the achievement of a just and lasting peace is the central issue of the hour.

Despite the horrendous bombing that yesterday claimed the lives of a large number, including several political leaders, the cry of the people for peace and reconciliation is one that must be heeded.

At this National Peace Conference, we who are gathered here as citizens and representatives of people's organizations, workers, professionals, academics, entrepreneurs, business persons and NGOs, and who are committed to a just and lasting peace, do hereby resolve to adopt and implement a plan of action to build up a culture



Rev. Nandagoshia of Cambodia

of peace and justice before the force of vested interests and inertia move back in to continue with war making.

The political experience in our country since independence has shown us that we, the peace loving people of Sri Lanka, cannot rely on the established political system alone to achieve a democratic peace and national integration. A parallel people's initiative is needed that unites, networks and mobilises all the democratic forces in a strategic alliance for a just and durable peace.

The costs of the war are beyond measure. In terms of human life, more than 30,000 people have lost their lives in the decade that has passed. Several thousand members of the security forces and armed militants have also laid down their lives on the battlefield. The human suffering of those hundreds and thousands who have either been injured or have lost their loved ones and suffered mental trauma, especially women, cannot even begin to be estimated. More than 250,00 children live displaced in the country.

The economic costs of the war

are enormous. In 1988, 70,000 houses and 20,000 businesses had been destroyed. By 1993, more than 20 percent of the government's budget was being spent on defence. All the achievements of decades of development have been negated upon the ashes and ruins of civil war with the burdens falling most heavily upon the poorest.

### Mandate

We are convinced that the wealth of spiritual resources and the pervasive spirit of goodwill among our people are forceful enough to create the space needed for a breakthrough towards peace and heal the deep wounds left behind by this war.

We have come a long way, journeying together amidst many hardships, in search of peace for ourselves and for our future generations. With the mandate obtained at this National Peace Conference to strengthen its present membership and to establish a National Peace Council and an accompanying Secretariat to network with peace groups at the national and district levels and to initiate peace activities towards consolidating the people's movement.

### Examples of Peace Activities

1) **Peace Education:** Lobbying for peace education in schools, integrating peace education into the human rights component of the school syllabus, conducting seminars for media personnel.

2) **Inter-Faith Cooperation:** Involving religious clergy in peace work, teaching children about other religions, forming inter-faith groups at the local level to engage in peace work.

3) **Constitutional Reform:** Implementing the Official Languages Act, ensuring power sharing and devolution of power.

4) **Economic Development:** Identifying grassroots level economic projects involving multi-ethnic cooperation, dialoguing with oppressed economic sectors to devise viable alternatives.

5) **Resource Centre:** Collecting expert studies concerning inter-ethnic relations, summarising issues and publicising them, lobbying with policymakers.



Fr. Chandrakanthan

### Professor Thurairajah Memorial Fund

The untimely death of Professor Thurairajah, formerly Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Peradeniya and later Vice-Chancellor of University of Jaffna has shocked his friends, his former students and the academic community in Sri Lanka. He dedicated his life to better the life of others through higher education. To show our appreciation for what Thurai had done and achieved during his lifetime, former students of Hartley College, Faculty of Engineering, Jaffna University and friends have started a Memorial Fund to (i) Award scholarships in memory of Thurai and (ii) Dedicate a building such as a laboratory or library at the Faculty of Engineering. Similar funds are being organised by friends and former students in USA, Canada, Australia and Singapore.

Please make a contribution to the memorial fund as soon as possible, of a cheque for any amount you like and send to one of us.

Dr. K.Sivakumaran  
60 Blakes Lane,  
New Malden  
KT3 6NX

Mr. V.Santhalingam  
15 Thanescroft Gdns  
Croydon  
CR0 5JR

Phone:  
work: 071-322-2819 work: 071-921 2215  
home: 081-949 2614 home: 081-686 3356

Cheques to be drawn in favour of  
'Prof. Thurairajah Memorial Fund'.

# Tamils Should Wake Up

**Point of View**

**by Rajan Hoole**

An even darker gloom hangs over the future of this country and particularly of the Tamils following the recent bomb explosion in Colombo, where a suicide bomber ended her life together with the lives of 55 others, including that of the UNP's presidential candidate, Gamini Dissanayake.

Where this differed from such incidents earlier was that we were at the beginning of negotiating a settlement to our devastating civil war. Where the new government led by Chandrika Kumaratunga was concerned, the sincerity was beyond question. Nor were major snags envisaged on the government's side at this juncture.

A particular incident gives an indication of the Prime Minister's mind. She drove up to the residence of a Tamil group and went to talk to him without any security. The leader who himself faced a security threat thought her rather reckless. She spoke to him words to the effect, 'I am very desirous of

bringing an end to this conflict. I do not know how, but we have to get the Tamil groups together and talk to them. We will be talking to all the groups including the LTTE. But at this stage I do not have a settled programme.'

## The peace process

The most important element in the course for peace was that the ground in the South was becoming firmly prepared among the masses by a number of democratic groups through journals, publications and mass meetings. Traditional chauvinistic positions came under attack. Even the Buddhist hierarchy was not spared. Mrs Kumaratunga herself attacked chauvinistic positions during her presidential campaign. She accused those holding them of wanting to kill Sinhalese Buddhist youth on the battlefields of the North-East in the name of saving the Sinhala-Buddhist nation.

But on the Tamil side there was no public reappraisal, nor was there any movement, even say at the level of intellectuals, clergy or

students, to discuss matters pertaining to peace. It was clear that the LTTE would not permit even a glimmer of democratisation. The message was given to the people in a number of ways that the peace talks publicly endorsed by the leader would be an expedient managed entirely by the LTTE.

## Terror and dissimulation

Reactions of Sinhalese to the recent bomb blast gave us some insight into how polarised this country had become. But beyond that there was despair about the chances of peace. At the same time many of them continued to be open about what they felt. Among Tamils, reactions ranged from evasion to callousness showing also the atomisation of Tamil society. The first reaction in Jaffna to an incident such as the bomb blast is invariably one of fear and hopelessness.

These are reflections of a cultural transformation that has its origins in the legitimisation of a violent Tamil nationalism by the July 1983 holocaust and the use of the state terror against the community on the one hand, and the total control of the LTTE in the

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Mr. N. Ram, has absolutely no doubt about Tiger involvement: 'Who assassinated Gamini and more than fifty others so brutally on October 24? Only those with political blinkers or worse can entertain even a residue of doubt that it is the LTTE - and further, that it is the LTTE as an organisation carrying out orders from the very top.

'First, there is the question of **capability**. No other extremist, separatist, terrorist organisation in the region has demonstrated anything remotely approaching this capability to take out top and highly secured political leaders through military-grade explosives. Ranjan Wijeratne, Rajiv Gandhi, Premadasa and now Gamini... not one serious investigative or intelligence expert in India, Sri Lanka or Pakistan has the whiff of a doubt whose capability this represents....

'Secondly, the capability is multiplied manifold and rendered a great menace to democratic politics by the self-sacrificing **suicide element** fielded by the LTTE through its shadowy and little researched arm, the Black Tigers....

'Thirdly, there is the matter of **mod-operandi and signature**. The high grade RDX explosive, mixed with steel pellets, the battery operated detonating system, the deadly mode of concealment under a young woman's clothing, the severed head of the suicide bomber thrown to a considerable distance, the LTTE cadre's inseparable friend and motivating weapon the cyanide capsule, the other unmistakable parallels with the Rajiv Gandhi assassination....

'Finally, there is the question of  **motive**, as important to political analysis as it is to a police investigation. It has been no secret in Sri Lanka that Gamini was identified by the LTTE as an antagonist, as a highly capable political leader who stood in its extremist path and was close to India, as one who entertained no illusion about the ways of the LTTE and its supremo, Prabakaran. Gamini was a known, high priority LTTE target.... Eliminating Gamini takes out a major political adversary while simultaneously confusing and weakening the system'.

Commentators consider it significant that the LTTE leadership did not make an official denial of responsibility for the assassination although many had pointed their accusing finger at them. The normal practice of the LTTE in similar past instances is that a formal denial would be made by its London office or by its international spokesman based in Paris, Mr. Lawrence Thilakar. On this occasion, despite being approached by news agencies including the BBC, there was no disclaimer from either London or Paris.

An alleged report of the LTTE's denial of responsibility for the bomb attack attributed to the Reuter TV correspondent, Mr. Waruna Karunatileke, who was present in Jaffna on the morning of 24 October along with 16 other journalists has been vigorously refuted by the correspondent himself. The alleged Reuter report broadcast over the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and picked up by many news agencies has been the subject of a formal complaint by the correspondent concerned to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayake.



North on the other. The LTTE offered the elite enough space to safeguard their personal and institutional interests provided they fell in line with its regime. The process of adjustment also left its imprint on character. Sections of the elite and Christian clergy while being compromised with the oppressive regime in the North through directly legitimising it or turning a blind eye to its violations against Tamil people themselves, received a new unprecedented importance in Colombo and the world. They came to be treated as spokesmen for the oppressed Tamil people – with the state allowed to be the sole oppressor.

Such phenomena contributed to the legitimisation of the LTTE among the Tamil diaspora and in Colombo. It helped the Tamil elite to feel good while sympathising with the LTTE without raising key questions about the nature of the LTTE, its history, what it was doing to the Tamil community and what it meant for their future.

### The absence of political discussion

In this atmosphere it is hardly surprising that there is no serious discussion of crucial issues. The leading Tamil parliamentary party, the TULF, is mostly inert. Prof. Suriyakumaran is an experienced civil servant closely involved in the negotiations on the ethnic issue between national leaders from the 50s. At a recent seminar he gave an account of his experiences, the constitutional issues and testifying to the earnestness with which S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Dudley Senayake, Sirimavo Bandaranaike had approached the problem. The blame for the failures he said was not unmixed.

President Premadasa had talked to the LTTE until June 1990 when the war resumed. Suriyakumaran testified to the gravity with which Premadasa had addressed the vexed question of colonisation, even checking some leading military men who wanted to dodge the issue. Then asked what went wrong, Prof. Suriyakumaran reportedly admitted he was puzzled. Compared with his painstaking study of the

state and its workings, Prof. Suriyakumaran had evidently done little homework on the LTTE.

Much of what passes for Tamil opinion in the press, at seminars and at NGO sponsored peace conferences is just plain posturing that plays safe with the LTTE.

One of the important recent issues was the ceasefire called by the LTTE at the outset of negotiations. The people in the provinces had a traumatic experience with the ceasefire which ended in June 1990. For some months until then the LTTE ran these areas while the army stayed in camps. The manner in which it ended found an incensed army coming out and massacring civilians and hunting down even persons with innocuous dealings with the LTTE. It was clear that ceasefire to be meaningful had to be accompanied by a process of demilitarisation and a resumption of normal democratic activity with accountability. Only such could minimise the prospect of recurrence of what happened in June 1990.

Apart from this, other questions remained to be answered: whether a ceasefire would entail greater freedom and accountability for the people in hitherto army controlled areas? How it would affect relations between Tamils and Muslims which were on the mend after going through a bad period? The LTTE leaders' position during a recent BBC interview on the return of Muslims expelled from Jaffna cannot be encouraging for the Muslims as a whole. He maintained that the Muslims could return to Jaffna provided the army vacated the islands, whose Tamil refugees are supposedly in occupation of Muslim houses in Jaffna! What would have been the position if the Sri Lankan government had expelled the Tamils from Colombo and maintained that they cannot return because their houses were occupied by Sinhalese forced to leave Jaffna?

What happened in the event was that several articulate Tamil spokesmen and popular Tamil newspapers based in Colombo echoed the LTTE's call for a ceasefire without examining the issues.

In the provinces many were alarmed at the prospect of having to go through the same harrowing experiences again, but were in no position to voice their fears. Experienced Tamil leaders who privately expressed concern found it prudent to keep silent.

### The LTTE: some salient aspects

A good deal of the recent history of the Tamils has been recorded. Moreover Sabaratnam Sabalingam and Rajini Thiranaagama who were recording that history, paid with their lives. Why was this history so unpalatable to a 'liberation group'? Despite these tell-tale signs people long concerned about the Tamil problem from the south and abroad have found it difficult to internalise the character of the LTTE and grasp its mindset. After every tragedy where the LTTE is accused of culpability, there is confusion. People repeatedly ask why should the LTTE do such a thing when it was neither in the interests of the Tamils nor in its own interests.

Those who best understand the LTTE are the Tamils and particularly the very ordinary people from its heartland. Not least among the reasons why they will not speak out is that few would believe them.

Whether it was the killing of Vilmaleswaran, Panchalingam, Amirhalingam, Rajini or Sabalingam, as soon as these people grasped what had happened, they had a clear idea about who was responsible. They were also closely attuned to the nuances of LTTE behaviour, which did nothing to shake their confidence in their conclusions. Even in the killings of Rajiv Gandhi in India, Sabalingam in Paris and of leaders in the South, there was much confusion worldwide about the LTTE's responsibility. But in Jaffna there was no confusion.

Such knowledge as in these instances could be termed organic. It may be falsifiable in the Popperian sense. But the event of such knowledge turning out to be false would be comparable with all human senses through which the world is

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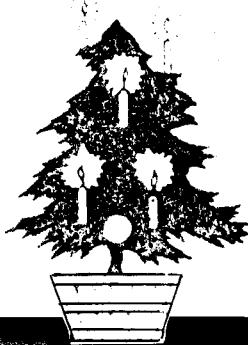
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conceptualised failing simultaneously.

Because of their very gut feelings about the recent bomb explosion in Colombo, and the uncertainties of life in Colombo from several quarters, many Tamils there would argue for the culpability of some group other than the LTTE. In Jaffna there was little confusion among crowds awaiting the negotiating team from Colombo that fatal morning. As they quickly dispersed home in the expectation of aerial bombers, they were heard to remark, 'These fellows (the LTTE) will never let us enjoy peace!'

### Glorification of suicide

A high rate of suicide has been known in Jaffna for sometime. The causes have ranged from a sense of failure in a very competitive society to seemingly trivial domestic reasons such as a harsh word carelessly uttered. Quite frequently the victim after swallowing poison had repented the action and tried to commiserate the family while life ebbed away. There was no attempt by any scholar to find causes in Sangam Tamil culture of 2000 years ago. They seemed too evident in very modern socio-economic conditions peculiar to Jaffna. But once the LTTE took over this tendency to suicide and gave it institutional form to serve its need, the disposition to historical romanticism appeared to become irresistible.

Often the decision to join the LTTE is itself an act of partial suicide. Once the decision is taken, it is generally too late for regrets unless the parents are well to do and influential. After being part of the group and imbibing its culture, many of the cadre would spontaneously volunteer for suicide operations. Like in a religious cult group the motivations are varied. Among members there would be some general tendencies, and yet some of the individuals exceptionally talented and steady in their motivation. The tasks too require varied skill. The more rare and exceptional ones may be required to operate alone for long periods and take decisions. The

more common operations would be of the kind where the volunteer has to get into an explosive laden vehicle, press the accelerator and hold the steering.

### Can a catastrophe be averted?

An unfortunate, but deeply ingrained habit of the Tamil intelligentsia, is to explain everything done by Tamils, however obnoxious, by a reference to state terror. Such are among sentiments surfacing in the Tamil printed media following the bomb explosion. It may be safe and politically correct, but utterly sterile. To maintain this position diversity has to be ignored, and the South characterised as essentially permanently demonic. Those in the South trying to understand the position of the Tamils and working for its amelioration need to be devalued and marginalised, as has happened for decades, in order that we could continue to seek out the siren of Tamil nationalism.

The reality today is that much commendable work has been done in the South, and there is a vibrant peace constituency as we never had before. In provincial towns that have seen violence in the past, Sinhalese people, not just some political groups, have come out to express shame and pledge that such would not happen again. There is a government very much influenced by these sentiments. There are also unprecedented openings to challenge and put an end to state terror. But Tamil politics has been moving so as to destroy all this, close all the space and give initiative over to state terror, chauvinism and murder on both sides.

We cannot just look at Tamil violence as acts of angry individuals, militants or terrorists. We are talking about a fully fledged multinational institution which may be more effective in some countries than the Sri Lankan foreign service. It is an institution which can suppress everything in Tamil society that is healthy and decent, while mobilising and utilising very efficiently all the alienation and everything that is base.

We stand in danger of losing this opportunity and in turn triggering

off a virulence of the kind not witnessed before. A question many sensitive Tamils have asked since mid-1986 is whether a society can breed something like the LTTE within its womb and come out in one piece? Or, is it necessarily fated to destruction? Many of us, despite our thinning numbers, have continued to say, 'No, there is hope'. If that hope is to be realised, we need to open out, pose the necessary questions, and deprive the LTTE leadership of legitimacy for doing what it has done. Only the Tamils can do that, and the Tamils should wake up to fulfil their responsibility.

(The writer is a member of the UTHR (Jaffna) and co-author of the 'Broken Palmyra').

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## Bangalore, Uttarakhand, Kashmir. . . Violence Erupts in States

T.N. Gopalan

Even in the best of times the integrity of the Indian Union has been considered tenuous.

How long the unity would hold out in the face of fissiparous tendencies breaking out almost everywhere has remained a subject of animated, rather anxious and apprehensive debate.

The issue seemed to have acquired renewed urgency in October when two serious agitations broke out — one in the hill-districts of Uttar Pradesh in the north and in Bangalore in the south while the situation continued to deteriorate in Kashmir.

While the Uttarakhand (the hill region) and the Bangalore eruptions were qualitatively different in nature, each with its own set of players and issues at stake, there was nevertheless a common thread — the people losing confidence in the centre as an impartial administrator, taking it out on 'soft' targets while New Delhi itself could only look on helplessly.

The anti-Urdu agitation which rocked Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka, for nearly a week from October 3, was more insidious than the incidents in U.P. in that Hindu fundamentalism has now started sweeping across the south of the Vindhyas too and so also the persecution of Muslims.

Not that the South has exactly been a paradise for the minorities, but surely Muslims have been more integrated into the mainstream than elsewhere in the country, they have indeed played significant roles in local political mobilisation programmes, to wit the Dravidian movement and there is much less suspicion about their 'bonafides' than in the North.

Sociologists tirelessly point out, it is even a cliché here, since the impact of the Mughal invasion has been minimal apart from of course the Islamisation of a small section of society, the Hindu-Muslim relationship is relatively on an even keel. The partition holocaust left the South untouched, it may be recalled.

But then things do change. Pressures of continued economic underdevelopment or skewed development, expanding population and thoroughly incompetent governments have all contributed to tensions, frictions

and misdirected violence in South India too. Add to this foolish pandering to minority sentiments with an eye on the vote-bank, witness creation of the Muslim-majority Malapuram district in Kerala by Marxist-led government and the oil boom in the Middle East — indeed a classic mix for communal conflagrations.

Ironically it is Karnataka with a population of around 1.5 crores, a majority of them Kannadigas, usually described as a docile lot, less volatile and less politically aware than their other neighbours, which has become the first victim to the communal virus.

While Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, too has been another flash point, perhaps for even a longer period because of a complex interplay of forces including the legacy of a Muslim ruler, problems there generally tend to remain confined to the capital city.

On the other hand anti-Muslim tendencies seem to have taken a firm root in the Kannadiga psyche in the last few years. The blatantly communal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has indeed established a strong presence here — and only Karnataka in the South, elsewhere its hold varies from being negligible to inconsequential.

Muslims constitute hardly ten per cent of the total population and they lack leaders of stature. Though they have not done well by themselves, thanks to some of the factors mentioned earlier, increasing Kannadiga self-assertion found in the minorities, the Muslims especially, a convenient whipping boy. (Tamils too had experienced the bitter taste of the Kannadiga wrath during the anti-cauvery tribunal riots two years ago).

In November 1987 vested interests in the Muslim community had orchestrated a big demonstration against the Deccan Herald, a leading English newspaper of Karnataka since it had carried a short story allegedly hurting Muslim sentiments.

Mohammed, the idiot, the story, translated from Malayalam, did lampoon all kinds of religious beliefs but there was nothing specifically disrespectful of the prophet as was alleged.

Anyway mob hysteria was aroused, and the office of the newspaper laid siege to. The publisher gave in abjectly and apologised in sack cloth and ashes. There was some stoning some tear-gassing, but there were no killings. However, the incident left a bad taste in the mouth — that some hoodlums could hold the press to ransom was to have some serious implications later on. Incidentally, a Cong-I leader, allegedly a notorious smuggler, had led that demonstration. It should also be of interest to note that the Malayalam original had not created even a ripple in Kerala itself where Muslims are an important factor in the polity.

Three years later when the BJP leader, Mr L.K. Advani took out his famous rath yatra demanding the building of a temple for Lord Rama in Ayodhya after demolishing the Babri Masjid which had been built there, riots broke out, of all places, in the far away Karnataka.

Ram Jyoti processions, coinciding with the Dasara festival and deliberately routed through Muslim areas and streets in which mosques stood inevitably gave rise to repeated clashes, from near Bangalore to Mysore. More than 80 lives were lost, a majority of them Muslims.

The BJP did gain in the process, polling 28.3 per cent in the Lok Sabha elections in 1991 and winning four seats. Having experienced the sweet taste of success, the Hindu fundamentalists went on the offensive at every possible opportunity thereafter.

There were riots in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992. Then there was the hullabaloo over the hoisting of the national flag in the Idgah Maidan in Hubli, where prayers are held only twice a year but whose legal status is under dispute.

When the BJP hoisted the flag at the Maidan amid some fuss by the police, who perhaps feared communal clashes, Muslims reacted back and fell victims to the BJP designs. This year there was an encore and five BJP activists were killed in the police firing. But the party's political stocks went up — the only party standing up for patriotism in the face of unpatriotic minorities and a weak-kneed government and so on.

This time round just the introduction of a 10-minute bulletin in Urdu, in order avowedly to bring the Urdu-speaking Muslims into the national

mainstream, sparked off a carnage claiming 25 lives and injuring 343 others besides of course destroying properties worth crores of rupees.

The ten-minute programme launched on Oct.2 and beamed by the Bangalore channel of the Doordarshan (as the India TV establishment is called) would cut into the Kannada programme and thus 'affect the development' of the language, it was feared, and even supposedly respectable organisations like the Kannada Sahitya Parishad demanded the withdrawal of the bulletin.

While the motive of the government of India (which has complete control over the TV network) was not above board, with elections in the state only a few months away, the Urdu bulletin is rightly seen as an attempt to mollify the minority vote bank, the Kannada reaction was ridiculous in the extreme, to put it mildly.

The Hindu fundamentalist organisations promptly stepped in and what started off as a Save Kannada campaign turned into a Destroy Muslims agitation. Of the 25 persons killed as many as 17 (most of them Muslims) were stabbed to death in various parts of Bangalore, an indication of the nature of the communal frenzy whipped up during the agitation.

Ultimately the bulletin was withdrawn. Even the Election Commission saw the introduction as an unfair electoral practice. The Muslim director of the Bangalore TV station was transferred out. Those behind the murderous campaign, many of them 'eminent Kannada litterateurs', remain unfazed. 'If the agitation took a communal turn, we can't be held responsible,' they say. 'We are clear about our issue. . .'

The Cong-I is understandably nervous about the developments and only hope that the Muslim vote-bank would still remain with it. According to an opinion poll carried out in September, the Cong-I was still way ahead with the Janata Dal and the BJP running neck and neck. What will happen now is anybody's guess. Of greater concern are the fresh wounds inflicted on the Muslim community.

The agitation of the eight hill districts (out of a total of 65 districts in the entire state) is a different kettle of fish altogether, but there again the complete abdication of responsibility by both the central and the state government and the consequent alienation of the people

are striking and akin in many ways to the situation obtaining in Karnataka.

The demand for a separate state comprising the backward districts is a long-pending one, and even the Uttar Pradesh Assembly passed unanimously a resolution suggesting to the Centre the formation of such a state.

Even as the Centre was dilly-dallying on the issue, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the UP Chief Minister and projected as the new Messiah of the Backward Castes, stirred up a hornets' nest by extending the 27 per cent reservation (in jobs and educational institutions) to the hill areas too.

The problem is that while in the plains the backward castes are the predominant section and hence the reservation formula enjoys tremendous backing there, in the hill districts the backward castes form a mere two per cent of the total population.

Such an irrational formula is seen as an attack on the hill peoples' right to education.

'This will only mean the GM's castemen coming to the hills and occupying the already scarce seats in the educational institutions,' say the people.

But Mr. Yadav was adamant. He would not back down. If his already tottering government was going to fall, all the better — with the halo of a martyr behind him he could sweep the polls in the plains; of the 425 seats in the State Assembly, only 19 come from the hill region, and even in the last elections the Samjwadi Party of Mr. Yadav won only one seat in the area.

The man who trembles before the maverick Dalit leader Kanshi Ram, a junior partner in his government and bends backward to please Prime Minister Narashima Rao to ensure the continued support of the Cong-I, refused to bow down before the Uttarakhand agitationists.

The anti-reservation cry and the plea for a separate state have telescoped into one big agitation now.

Mr. Yadav unleashed his police force on the activists time and again. More than 20 persons were killed in police firing and 200 others injured in September last. Again, on the Gandhi Jayanthi day, at least 15 Delhi-bound rallyists were killed, over 100 injured, many others missing in Muzaffarnagar besides there were wild allegations of rape and

molestation of the women activists by the Provincial Armed Constabulary.

You had this gem from the District Magistrate — 'You see, it is a human tendency. When a woman is seen at a lonely place in the jungle, any man will be inclined to rape her. . .'

Presently the administration has come to a standstill in the famous Dehra Dun and other areas. The centre would not give in to the demand for a separate state for fear of more such clamour elsewhere nor would it care to advise the Mulayam Singh government to be more sensible on the reservation issue in view of the realities in the hill district nor yet dare dismiss it for fear of incurring the wrath of the Backward Castes though the U.P. Cong-I unit's president and former Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari is demanding the dismissal.

'When Uttarakhand will become Kashmir, only then the state of Uttarakhand would be conceded,' proclaims a banner of the rallyists in the districts — a pointer to the shape of things to come.

In Kashmir itself militants are stepping up the attacks, and the security forces had to lay a prolonged siege to apprehend just two militants holed up in a residential area and the government is not even able to publicly go through with the process of revising the electoral rolls what with the government officials refusing to cooperate and militants threatening all concerned with dire consequences.

Though the centre is constantly talking of holding elections, almost to a man all the Kashmiris are dead set against such a course of action without some commitment on the issue of autonomy.

Apparently the centre believes the Punjab model will work here — a low-voter-turn-out election there five years ago actually proved a turning point in the battle against the Khalistanis. But what the mandarins seem to fail to understand is that the separatist movement there was never a mass movement and hence quelling the rebellion, especially when the various outfits were engaging themselves in mindless terrorism, did become a feasible task.

But in the case of Kashmir right from the beginning the accession of the state to the Indian Union has

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## Was C.N. Annadurai a CIA Agent?

by T.N. Gopalan

Was the historic anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu in 1965 CIA-inspired? The irrepressible Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan who was the Collector of Madurai district then seems to believe such indeed was the case and has said so to his biographer K.Govindan Kutty, predictably raising a lot of hackles.

Like a pack of wolves the Tamil Nadu politicians have pounced upon Mr. Seshan for making such a sacrilegious statement and demanded unconditional apology from him besides the deletion of the offending passages from the book titled 'Seshan: An Intimate Story', to be brought out by the Konark Publishers.

Presently as many as four different High Court injunctions have been issued at Madras against the release of the controversial book on pleas from Chief Minister Jayalitha, DMK president M. Karunanidhi, MDMK general secretary V. Gopalasamy and sons of Mr. Annadurai.

While Mr. Seshan himself, for a change, appears conciliatory, declaring his 'unlimited respect' for the late DMK-founder and denying that he had at all made any insinuations of Mr. Annadurai's links with the CIA, the publishers are reported to have refused to remove the passages in question.

In fact despite the court injunction some copies of the book are said to be available for sale in some bookshops in New Delhi. The controversy is unlikely to die a natural death, and Mr. Seshan himself might be unable to set foot in Tamil Nadu yet again unless he obliges his critics by unconditionally withdrawing his remarks against Mr. Annadurai.

### Continued from page 25

been a matter of dispute, and, misguided or otherwise, the Kashmiris are totally alienated. Any election now could spark off more killings, feel many well-meaning observers. Even the very loyal Farooq Abdullah is demanding a package before the elections are held.

All the same the Rao government is lumbering on, hoping for some straws or other to clutch at and swim ashore in the forthcoming nationwide elections. With what results, one has to wait and see.

It must be remembered here that notwithstanding the chequered course of the Dravidian movement and almost the total extinction of the Dravidian values and beliefs, most certainly of the Tamil nationalism of the kind propounded from the platforms of the Dravidian parties between the forties and the sixties, the anti-Hindi plank is a potent one, and more than that the father figures like Periyar and Mr. Annadurai are almost sacred cows in the state.

To make even mildly critical comments on Periya or Mr. Annadurai is nothing but inviting the wrath of and vitriol from the myriad Dravidian outfits the state is flooded with.

In fact referring to Mr. Annadurai as anything but Anna (elder brother) in public is itself a risky venture, never mind his contributions to Tamil society or achievements might be found rather dubious if any dispassionate analysis is undertaken.

A few years ago a senior official of the state government was hauled over the coals for days on end in the DMK's official organ, Murasoli, for daring to refer to the DMK-founder merely as 'Mr. Annadurai' and not as Anna. In the Tamil press the reverential appellation is the norm though the English newspapers prefer to use the full name, of course much to the annoyance of leaders like Mr. Karunanidhi who could only wring their hands helplessly at this lack of respect for the great pioneer of the self-respect movement and the elitism of the 'Brahmin press'.

It may be remembered here that Mr. Karunanidhi succeeded Mr. Annadurai as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu outsmarting senior leaders like Mr. V.R. Nedunchezhiyan and K. Anbazhagan, and it was he who made a cult figure of Mr. Annadurai, erecting statues for him and so on, all in an attempt to proclaim his loyalty to the late leader and position himself as the latter's natural heir.

The matinee idol MGR who displaced Karunanidhi had even more greater compulsions to flaunt his devotion to Mr. Annadurai, his party itself was named after the great leader.

Mr. Seshan, an arrogant bureauc-

rat who exults in bullying others and is generally portrayed as a crusader for probity in public life despite his shady past and many questionable and opportunist actions as the Chief Election Commissioner, unwittingly stepped on a mine-field when he told his biographer that the anti-Hindi agitation in Tamil Nadu had been inspired by the CIA and that Mr. Annadurai himself was part of the game.

The agitation itself had been sparked off by the then Lal Bahadur Shastri government's decision to make Hindi the sole official language of the nation in blatant violation of the assurance of Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru that English would be continued to be used as the official language so long as the non-Hindi-speaking states so desired.

It was a spontaneous outburst, led primarily by the student community and, in a short time, the entire state was up in flames. Ultimately the centre had to give in. The North Indian leaders never again thought of taking even one step towards making Hindi the sole official language.

The agitation was indeed a watershed in the history of Tamil Nadu, perhaps of the Indian Union itself. But no political party including the DMK had anything to do with mobilising the people on the issue.

Perhaps all the bottled up Tamil nationalist feelings burst out in an almost volcanic eruption, for the first and last time in the recent history of Tamil Nadu.

DMK did of course support the agitation and subsequently cashed in on it too.

Thanks mainly to the inept handling of the agitation by the then Congress government in the state, the DMK was catapulted to power in the elections which followed two years later.

The Congress in the state never recovered from that blow and has been almost completely marginalised.

Be that as it may, the day the Indian Express carried a preview of the book, mentioning the remarks of Mr. Annadurai, all hell broke loose. Initially Mr. Seshan sat tight and even reportedly sought increased security during his future visits to Tamil Nadu.

On the eve of the formal release of the book at New Delhi, Ms. Jayalitha in her capacity as general secretary of the AIADMK sought an

injunction since the book contained 'blasphemous' and 'defamatory' allegations against the late leader.

In viewing the urgency of the matter, a judge of the Madras High Court held a special sitting at his residence on Sunday and promptly granted the injunction.

Even as Ms. Jayalalitha was gloating in her 'victory' and scoffing at the DMK demonstrations and MDMK and book-burning in New Delhi, Mr. Seshan came out with his mollifying statement referred to earlier. Three more injunctions too have been granted. The book release has indeed been stalled - though some copies are in circulation - but the issue-starved Tamil Nadu politicians will now allow the controversy to die down and perhaps get the passages in question excised before it is sold legally.

Amid all the brouhaha no one seems to have remembered that there is something called freedom of expression - while describing the anti-Hindi agitations as CIA-inspired or saying that Mr. Annadurai was, wittingly or unwittingly a pawn of the agency's hand, might sound ridiculous in the extreme or even perverse, still everyone is entitled to have his or her say in the matter. Creating Rushdies and Taslimas all round is not going to be conducive for a democratic society. But nothing of this sort was ever said in the media except for comments from the likes of Mr. Arun Shourie in New Delhi.

Even a person like Mr. B.S. Raghavan, a retired IAS official who had served in the central secretariat during the anti-Hindi agitation, gleefully jumped onto the bandwagon and lashed out at Mr. Seshan wondering how come a mere district collector sitting 2,000 miles away from the headquarters of intelligence bureaus could pronounce authoritatively on the information passed on to the government.

Even subsequently Mr. Seshan as Cabinet Secretary could not have come across any such information, he affirmed.

If a Chief Minister conveniently donning the role of a party functionary could warn the Court of 'serious problems of public order' from the agitated followers of the great leader if an injunction was not granted straightaway, a retired IAS official too could perhaps pillory Mr. Seshan after the latter sought to defuse the crisis through some placatory remarks.

'Annadurai perhaps did not know it, but he was becoming an effective plaything of the American's intelligence machinery . . . ' the book has said, persisted Mr. Raghavan after Mr. Seshan's half-hearted backtracking, and it only meant that Annadurai was dumb enough to allow himself to become not just a plaything, but an effective one at that, and was witlessly watching the other leaders of the movement qualifying as CIA agents. 'Can there be anything more disrespectful or disparaging?' he cried out in anguish.

'And how dare Mr. Seshan describe the spontaneous near-revolt of the Tamils as "fits of fury" indulged in by "illiterate and semi-literate mobs"? What a monumental lack of sensitivity?'

Sensitivity or otherwise, freedom of expression has received yet another rude jolt - perhaps the only matter of satisfaction for the discerning is that a bully has met with his match at last and it will be sometime before he regains his composure.

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The PA's original campaign focused on issues relating to ethnic reconciliation, corruption and the alleviation of suffering of economically disadvantaged groups. Even with Mr. Dissanayake as a candidate, the arithmetic seemed to favour the PA. In the recent parliamentary elections PA had a majority of less than 400,000. The PA's allies could mobilise an additional 400,000 Tamil and Muslim votes and thereby effectively double Chandrika's majority.

The new candidate Srimala Dissanayake although not as well known as her husband is nonetheless admired for her grace and dignity. She is a competent lawyer who has been closely associated with Gamini in his public life. She issued a responsible statement calling upon the public to exercise restraint and to avoid violence in the aftermath of this brutal killing. Even if there is some shift in public support, it is unlikely that it would significantly alter the electoral outcome. The leadership struggle has weakened the cohesiveness of the United National Party and had its impact on the electoral campaign.

The PA has clearly indicated that it intends to abolish the executive presidency within a period of about eight months. A Select committee of Parliament has been constituted to undertake comprehensive reforms of the basic features of the constitution including if necessary the repeal and replacement of the existing constitution. Amongst the issues that the select Committee will focus on are the executive presidency, the dem-

volution of power, judicial review of legislation and fundamental rights. Although Gamini Dissanayake was disappointed that the executive presidency was not abolished prior to the elections, he was nonetheless supportive of the appointment of a Select Committee and its broad terms of reference.

The unending cycle of violence and the continuing civil war has had a demoralising impact on the Sri Lankan entrepreneurial and professional class. The new government has not been able to settle down and to charter an independent course. There are many critical areas of policy such as the future of the plantations, the privatisation of state enterprises, the reform of financial institutions and a reassessment of the role of labour in private sector development which call for urgent attention.

The acute polarisation of public opinion in the south needs to be overcome if bipartisan support is to be mobilised for the programme of political and economic reform. The mood in Colombo at present is bleak and there has been within a few days a loss of confidence within the political and professional elite. This downward trend needs to be reversed if Sri Lanka is to address its complex ethnic, political and economic problems with imagination and clarity of purpose. Decades of distrust, animosity and violence cannot be ended in a few days or weeks. The Presidential elections must represent an end to the internal struggle for power, and signal a new era of consensus building.

# LAJJA - SHAME

## Two Reviews of a Banned Book

### REVIEW 1

by Sandip K. Dasverma

In a response to famous Bengali author Sunil Ganguly's assertion that Lajja does not have lasting literary value, the Dr. Nasrin admitted that it was hurriedly written for the purpose of highlighting the plight of minorities. The novel has many inconsistencies. For example, it says Sudhamoy was an assistant professor in the medical college before retirement but describes only his being a private practitioner. Sudhamoy is supposed to have resisted going to India until the end but on page 26 says he wanted Suranjan and Maya to go to Calcutta when Suranjan was a politically rising star as the joint secretary of the student union. It says they forced him to move to another city, Dhaka, without any reason or relevance to the story line.

However, anyone who has read the book has to admit that the purpose has been more than achieved. In fact, she has made a profound impact as the writer of a social-political novel. If not in the same class as her predecessor the late Sharat Chandra Chatterjee in literary value, she has excelled in social message and relevance. She has attacked the Jamaat, BJP and VHP practically in the same breath and with equal conviction. Reading the book gave me the feeling of being exposed to fresh air and compensated for the effort I made to get the book.

The mission of the book has been achieved and the evident empathy for the victims of religious bigotry is unique, considering that the writer comes not from the persecuted but the persecuting community. One can realize her total identification with the victim from the statements made by Suranjan and his father. It is like an Israeli author writing a saga on the woes of the Palestinians, sympathetically and successfully. My hat is off to Dr. Taslima Nasrin for doing this wonderful job. I suspect her ability to empathize and appreciate the minority oversensitivity comes from her background as a feminist in a society as traditional and old fashioned as Bangladesh's.

I have not read any of her feminist writings, but I am told they are very hard-hitting and bold. They have picked up such a following and surfaced such issues that conservatives are afraid to tackle her in that arena. No wonder the Jamaat-Islami and its fellow travellers are out for her blood. It was their strategy to first demand the banning of Lajja and then to charge that it is religiously blasphemous because no one can now read its contents. It is the responsibility of secular-minded people to nip in the bud this venomous propaganda against Dr. Nasrin. The fundamentalists have already demanded her death. The challenge for secularists is to prick the bloated balloon of fundamentalist lies.

There are also rumours rife that she is a BJP setup. On page 73, in countering the arguments of a fellow leftist that he declare himself as not a true Hindu but a half Mussalman, Taslima says through Suranjan: 'There is no difference between fundamentalist Hindus and fundamentalist Muslims. See, the Indian BJP leaders are friends of the Jamaat leaders of Bangladesh. In both countries the fundamentalists are trying to grab power. Nijami, a prominent Jamaat leader, announced the other day in a public meeting that Congress, not the BJP, is responsible for the communal riots in India.' In my opinion, if a BJP setup can write these lines, there is a lot for the BJP to be upset about.

Lastly, Dr. Nasrin breaks new grounds. She challenges in a subtle way the secularists of India and Pakistan to do their jobs. When a character in her book says, 'It's a pity that after 21 years of independence we have to plead for communal amity,' I as an Indian feel like hanging my head in shame that we have to do the same after 47 years. The plight of Muslims in India is still worse. They don't even have an 'India' to escape to. In Bangladesh, hated as Behari Muslims and in Pakistan denounced as Muhajirs, they have no place to go.

The challenge for all secular Indians is to go beyond mere symbolism towards effective action which will increase awareness of facts like higher illiteracy among Indian Mus-

lims and abolish myths like the notions of higher birth-rate and polygamy among Muslims. It is said that the test of how civilized a nation is, is in how it treats its minorities. An ancient civilization and culture from which we claim our heritage should enable us to do better. Remembering the days of Netaji's INA or the Tebhaga Andolan of Bengal or the Gandhian mainstream, we can draw a lot of inspiration. Recent Indian elections show we are moving in the right direction, but we still have a lot of ground to cover.

Our forefathers had said:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः  
सर्वे सन्तु निरामया  
सर्वे पदाणि पश्यन्तु  
मा कश्चित् दुःखभाग भवेत् ।

(May all live happily,  
May all be healthy,  
May all see good,  
May there be nobody in misery.)

We can do better. We can create a society which does not discriminate on the basis of caste, religious community or language. Dr. Nasrin has shown us a new depth of empathy. Do we have the humane idealism and will to accept her challenge?

### REVIEW 2

by Quazi Anwar Hussain

It came as a surprise to me that Lajja had been banned in Bangladesh. I found the novel very timely, considering the communal atrocities that had recently been engulfing the Indian subcontinent (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma and Pakistan) and various other parts of the world (e.g. Bosnia, Azerbaijan, the Kurdish region, Sudan, Los Angeles, etc.).

As a Bangladeshi Muslim, I felt somewhat proud that the writer is from the majority Muslim community. Prior to that, when I had heard that some atrocities were being committed against Bangladeshi Hindus following the Babri Masjid incident in India, I felt ashamed. This was especially so because previously, while explaining the context of the overall religious and communal situation in the Indian subcontinent to some of my American colleagues, I was bragging a little bit that Bangladeshis are, in general, less communal and more secular-

mind. The banning of Lajja shattered that image of mine about my own people.

Even though I am not a devout or practicing Muslim, I was born and raised in a religious family. I have profound respect for Islam, particularly in the thoughtfulness of its provisions relating to social, economic and family issues, and how Muhammad (peace be upon him) was so far ahead of his time in addressing the rights of women in society. Because of such respect for Islam, my Muslim sense of honour and fairness was deeply hurt at the news of Lajja being banned. I immediately started wondering why it was banned. As I read the book, I did not find anything objectionable of a magnitude to justify such a response.

The present situation started with Taslima Nasrin receiving a prestigious Indian award for her much-acclaimed book Nirbachito Column (Selected Columns). In reading the book, I liked her writing style as direct (sometimes too direct for my taste), penetrating and powerful. I

also liked the general theme, depicting the pitiful condition of lower class women in Bangladesh. However, too frequently the writer attacked Islam in an insensitive way without, in my opinion, understanding the complexities of the issues. For example, she often equated the erroneous (even though often well-intentioned) practices and interpretations of Islamic provisions as the real ones.

Because of her insensitivity towards the religious sentiments of others, the genuine message that she wanted to convey may not be assimilated by those who need it most. Her insensitivity has alienated not only the malicious power-hungry politicians, but also a good section of Bangladeshi Muslim intellectuals who genuinely want to see Muslims turn away from communal practices and prejudice. The banning of Lajja is a symptomatic reaction that confirms this alienation, however sad it might be.

I wish that Taslima Nasrin would use her powerful pen with more sensitivity in the future. I also wish

that the government and people of Bangladesh would join the civilized communities of the world in permitting free publication and discussion of issues affecting the society, remembering that the Prophet Muhammad said that the differences of opinion among his followers were signs of strength and, hence, must not be curtailed.

One more appeal to Bangladeshi Muslims: The best service we can provide to Indian Muslims would be to treat the Hindu minority of Bangladesh with sensitivity, care and understanding. Islam requires us to do that. Lip service alone is not enough. We must genuinely understand that protecting the rights of minorities is not only a sacred duty of the majority community, but it is also essential for creating a just and orderly society. This will also improve regional peace and harmony, permit reduction of military expenditures, and free scant resources for essential development projects. A helpless Hindu minority must not be the scapegoat for Bangladesh's inability to get its act together.

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எங்களிடம் நீங்கள் விரும்பும் நவீன டிசைன்களில் பெண்களுக்கான திருமண கூறைப் புடவைகள், பணாறஸ், காஞ்சிபுரம் பட்டுப் புடவைகள், மைதூர் சில்க் சேலைகள், காஷ்மீர் சில்க் சேலைகள், ஜப்பான் நைலக்ஸ், நூல் சேலைகள், பிளவுஸ் துணிகள், ரெடிமேட் பிளவுஸ்கள், அழகு சாதனப் பொருட்கள், அலங்காரப் பொருட்கள், பட்டுப் பாவாடைத் தாவணிகள், பரத நாட்டிய நகைகள், ஆண்களுக்கான பட்டு வேட்டிகள், நூல் வேட்டிகள், லுங்கிகள் (கிப்ஸ், சங்கு மார்க் சாரங்கன்), குர்த்தா செட், பேண்ட், சேட் டூக்கள், ரெடிமேட் ஆடைகள் அனைத்துக்கும் 'வஷ்ரா சில்க்'

சிறுவர் சிறுமியருக்கான நவீன ரெடிமேட் ஆடை வகைகளுக்கும், அமெரிக்காவில் இருந்து விஷேடமாக இறக்குமதி செய்யப்பட்ட

சிறுவர்களுக்கான புன் செட் ஆடைகளுக்கும் நாடவேண்டிய இடம் 'வஷ்ரா சில்க்'

வையகத்து மங்கையரின் வணப்பு மிகு தோற்றம் அது 'வஷ்ரா சில்க்' தரும் அழகுத் தோற்றம் 'வஷ்ரா சில்க்',

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### MATRIMONIAL

**Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional, preferably doctor, vegetarian, for daughter, fair, 30, M.Sc. (Biotechnology), Ph.D. completed London; employed in U.K. Send horoscope, details. M 755 c/o Tamil Times.**

**Parents seek suitable partner, professional in late thirties, for daughter, US resident. M 756 c/o Tamil Times.**

**Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional partner for daughter, 25, ACCA finalist. Send horoscope details. M 758 c/o Tamil Times.**

**Engineer, 41, seeks bride up to 40, any religion, widow or divorcee welcome. Companionship view to marriage. M 759 c/o Tamil Times.**

### OBITUARIES



**Mrs. Thilagavathy Sripathy of V.M. Road, Point Pedro, Teacher at Ramanathan Hindu Ladies College, Bambalapitiya Distant Education Senior Tutor, National Institute of Education; beloved wife of Tampoe Sripathy (Moratuwa University, Katubedde); daughter of late R. Duraisingam (RVDB, Amparai) and Parvathy Duraisingam (Toronto); sister of Jeyasingam (Toronto), Dr. Gunavathy Vivekanandarajah (Batticaloa Hospital), Balasingam (UK), Selvavathy (Oman), Umavathy (UK), and Raajasingam (Toronto); sister-in-law of Stichadevi (Toronto), Dr. Vivekanandarajah (Batticaloa Hospital), Jagajani (UK), Dr. Sri Vidyadharan (Oman) and Padmasini (Toronto) passed away on 14.10.94 and her funeral took place on 18.10.94 in Colombo - 14 Ewelme Close, Dursley, GL11 4NE, U.K. Tel: 0453 548925.**

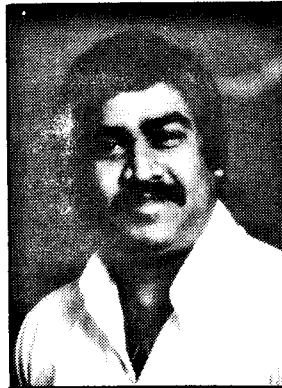


**Vigneshwary Ganesharatnam beloved wife of Rajaratnam Ganesharatnam; loving mother of Aruna and Urmila; daughter of late Mr. S.U. Somasegaram (Director of Education) and late Mrs. V. Somasegaram; sister of Mrs. R. Shanmugam (Jaffna) and Mrs. L. Swaminathan (Canada); sister-in-law of Mr. S. Shanmugam (Canada) passed away in Sydney on 20.10.94 and was cremated on 22.10.94 - 40 Dean Street, South Strathfield, NSW 2136, Australia. Tel: 02 742 5566.**



**Mrs. Muththammah Paramasamy (74), of Ariyalai, Jaffna; beloved wife of the late Mr. Muththucumarasamy Paramasamy (Alli Paramu); loving mother of Uma Mahalingam (UK), Gunalaxmi (Canada), Thanapalasingam, Padmanathan (both of UK), Yoganathan (Dubai), Vimala (Sri Lanka), Varatharajan (Germany), Kirupaharan (France); mother-in-law of Vimalavathy,**

**Sukumaran, Calaranie, Ranjitamalar, Inthumathi, Selvaratnam and Bavani passed away peacefully in London on 11th November '94 and was cremated on 16th November. Her children and all members of her family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted in various ways in the funeral arrangements - 10 St. James Gdns, Alperton, Wembley Middx. HA0 4LJ. Tel: 081-902 5384/690 1946/961 0671.**



**Mr. Kandasamy Indrakumar, youngest son of Mr. & Mrs. Kandasamy of Neeraviady, Jaffna; beloved husband of Anushia (Canada); loving father of Ramana; son-in-law of the late Nagendran and Mrs. Nagendran (Canada); brother of Sathiseelan, Sathianathan (both of Canada) and Sriranjani (Kenya); brother of the late Sakthivel passed away in Toronto, Canada on 17.9.94. Friends and relatives, please accept this intimation.**

### IN MEMORIAM



**In loving memory of Mrs. Gnambikai Perumal Pillai on the first anniversary of her passing away on 12.12.93.**

**Greatly loved, deeply missed and always remembered by her children Dr. Ravi Pillai, Usha, Jeeva and Ranjit; sons-in-law Desmond and Michael; daughters-in-law Shanthi and Vasuhi; grandchildren Rajesh, Shahila, Meera, Arun and Arjun.**



**In loving memory of Mrs. Annamah Rajasingam on the second anniversary of her passing away on 8th November 1992.**

**Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her children Dr. Kanagasingam, Kunasingam (both of UK), Poopalasingam (Brisbane, Australia), Jeyakumar (Norway) and Thanaluxmy (UK); daughters-in-law Saras, Rane, Gowri and Saro; grandchildren Gowri, Ranjini, Mano, Jeya, Jeyanthi, Nirmala, Bhavani, Shanthi, Kumar, Sugu, Ravi, Brahma, Jano, Vasanthi, Baskaran, Mala, Lala, Priya, Vathana, Kanchana, Yamuna and Usha - 4 Southway, Raynes Park, London SW20 9JQ. Tel: 081-542 5803.**



**Richard Jeyarajasingam.**

**Born 20.11.28**

**Called to Glory 27.11.1990**

**How little we knew that evening,  
The sorrow that day would bring.  
The call was sudden, the shock severe,**

**To part with the one we loved so dear.**

**You left us we know not why  
But this we know you could not die.**

**For you that path stood open  
To the realm of Heaven.**

**Where the light shines through  
Death's deep rift  
Eternal life is God's own gift.**

**Fondly remembered by  
Ranee and Children.**



**FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**November 26** 9.30am Ramathan College Old Girls' Association organises poojah to remember Sir P. Ramanathan at Archway Murugan Temple, 200a Archway Road, London N6 5BA and lunch afterwards. Old Girls, Staff and their families invited. Tel: 081-861 5332.

**December 2** Amavasai.

**Dec. 3** Feast of St. Francis Xavier.

**Dec. 6** Sathurthi.

**Dec. 8** Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

**Dec. 10** Thiruvembavai starts: 7.00pm. S.C.O.T. Pre-Christmas Evening, Dance & Dinner. Live Music by Sunset at Wandsworth Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London SW18. Tel: 081-904 6472.

**Dec. 13** Eekathasi.

**Dec. 15** Pirathosam.

**Dec. 17** Full Moon.

**Dec. 19** Thiruvembavai ends.

**Dec. 25** Christmas.

**Dec. 26** Boxing Day: Feast of Stephen: 7.00pm. League of the Friends of the University of Jaffna presents Annual Dinner & Dance at Harrow & Wembley Progressive Synagogue Hall, 326 Preston Road, Harrow, Middx. Tel: 0923 225850.

**Dec. 28** Eekathasi: Feast of the Holy Innocents.

**Dec. 30** Pirathosam: Feast of the Holy Family.

**At the Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London**

**W14 9HQ. Tel: 071-381 3086/4608.**

**Dec. 2** 7.00pm Bharatha Natyam recital by Anuradha Jagannathan.

**Dec. 7** 7.00pm Sitar recital by Vijay Kumar Jagtap.

**Dec. 10** 5.30pm Discourse on 'Women in Mahabharata' by Sri Mathoor Krishnamurthi.

**Dec. 19** 7.45pm. Christmas at the Bhavan - Carols, Music, Dance & Refreshments. All Welcome.

## Narthana Kalalaya Presents Suboshini



Waltham Forest Assembly Hall was filled to capacity on 27th August '94 for the debut in Kalashetra style of **Suboshini**, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kugaprasad and pupil of Smt Pathmini Gunaseelan. Pathmini is an exponent of repute not only in Nattuvangam and Bharatha Natyam but also in Karnatic Music of which she is a Sangeeta Vidwan. She is a product of the prestigious Bharatha Soodamani and Madras Music Academy and these qualifications put her in good stead as a choreographer.

The performance commenced with Pushpanjali and Alarippu. Suboshini's eye movements along with mudra expressions gave advance notice of what the audience was about to see. In Jathiswaram which was set to Raga maliga, Suboshini danced

with the confidence of a full fledged dancer. Varnam was set to Kambothi Raga and this was followed by Padams 'Arabi Maanam' and 'Kailai nathan'. The latter was set to Kalyani Ragam and was sung majestically by Sri Pon Subaschandran who had travelled from Norway for this event. 'Chendai' accompaniment made the Padam even more enjoyable. Lord Nadarajah performs the Thandavam naturally to the accompaniment of Chendai and Suboshini's Thandavam was immensely enjoyed by the appreciative audience. Meera Bajan was sung melodiously by Gana Bhooshanam Ambika Thamootheram and along with it the cymbal control, jathi arrangement and nattuvangam of the guru enabled the dance to attain a high standard. The arangetram concluded with Thilana which kept the audience spellbound till the very end.

Sri Muthu Sivarajah on Miruthangam, Smt Kalaivani Indrakumar on the violin, percussionist Sri Sithamparanathan, flutist Sri Thayaparan and Smt Thayalini Skandamoorthy on the Thambora contributed to the success of the event.

The guests of honour were Ms. Judith Shettatt, Dr. Yogachandran and Dr. Nithyananthan. It is hoped that Suboshini continues to develop her expertise in this ancient art form and perform, preserve and propagate it.

**Dr. Kanchana Sivalingam.**

## Tamil Cultural Evening at Reading

There are around sixty Tamil families living in Berkshire County and they run a school on Sundays at Apollo Centre, Silver Street to teach Tamil language, music, drama and dance. The school also caters to a wider geographical area extending to Oxfordshire and the other adjoining counties.

To celebrate the third anniversary of the establishment of the school, the parents and the teacher Yogam Nagendran organised a cultural evening at St. Andrew's Church Hall, which was very well attended inclusive of several members of the host community. All of them had an enjoyable time and the Kavadi dance was a popular item.

Mr. N. Sithamparapillai, General Secretary of S.C.O.T. was the Guest of Honour. He spoke of the Tamil cultural heritage and

said that the splendid events that day were yet another assurance that it would flourish unblemished into the future.

Mr. Geoff Munday, Youth and Community Advisor, Berkshire Council was the Chief Guest.

Mr. S. Rajkumar, Chairman of the School Committee, thanked the Berkshire Council for their support.

Further information about the school could be obtained by telephoning 0734 666773/694375.

## Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Jana and Dharini



Nupura Kendra's guru Shrimathi Subhartha Sivadasan has produced yet another Arangetram. The Arangetram of Jana Kogulanathan and Dharini Jeganathan was held on Sunday, 25th September at the Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon.

The programme for the evening began with the usual Thodaya mangalam and Jatheeswaram. It was refreshing to watch the dancers perform the Begada Raga Jathiswaram set to five different thalas. One could see the dancers had been trained to be 'on their toes' and their stamina was tested in this dance.

The Varnam was set to a very rarely sung raga Vachaspathy. This beautiful Pirathimathima raga was a good choice for the Varnam 'Velanidam poi cholladi'. The Varnam was choreographed in such an interesting way that both the dancers took

**Continued on page 32**

Continued from page 31

equal opportunity in presenting the Nritha and Abhiniya section of dance. This was a change from the normal path of performing the Varnam. Subathra had deliberately made this change to the Varnam in order to give the audience a new audio-visual experience.

It was pleasant to see a new item in the evening's repertoire - the Keerthanam. This raga maalgai Keerthanam 'Saaranga maruhane' was set to 16 ragas which was a feat for the singer Shrimathi Shivasakthi Sivanesan. There were 4 ragas each in the Pallavi and the Anu-pallavi and 8 ragas in the Charanam. The dance set to this keerthanam (by Inuvil Veeramani Iyer) was as intricate as the song. The bhava and poses were excellent for this dance piece.

Dharani danced as child and adult Krishna in the next patham 'Krishna nee', a Tamil version of the Kannada original. She achieved the bhava which was important to this Padham. Jana danced a Shiva Thandava for the next Raga maalgai Padham 'Aahaasa Lingam'. Jathis were important to this dance and she danced different poses of Lord Shiva excellently to the percussive variation created by different drums. The finale for the evening was a fast and vibrant Hamsanandhi Thillana ably choreographed by the guru. Subathra has produced a new pair of dancers to the London Dance Circuit whose ability was seen and confirmed by their Arangetram that evening. I hope that the duo Subathra-Shivasakthi will give us another enjoyable performance soon. It would be wonderful to see Subathra yet again give us another dance of similar calibre. The evening's musical support was given by Sivasakthi Sivanesan and Shivashankar (vocal), Kirubaharan on Mirudhangam, Chandrashekar on Violin, Thayaparan on Flute and Sithamparanathan on Morsing. The performance was compered by the well known Vimal Sockanathan. Congratulations to Dharini and Jana and to their guru Subathra Sivadasan.

Dr. Ratnam Niththyanathan.

### Kavin's Musical Coup

Saturday, 15 October was a red letter day for young Kavin. Selvan Kavin Satchithanathan, son of pious parents devoted to Karnatic culture, had his Mridangam Arangetram that day at Lewisham Theatre, London when he took on the daunting task of accompanying vocal music by Gayana Gandharva Sri T.V. Ramprasad from India, along with Dr. Lakshmi Jayan on violin, his Guru Sri Bangalore R.N. Prakash on Ghatam, Sri K. Sithamparanathan on Morsing (and Smt Kala Yogarajah on Tampura). As I was quite impressed with the standard of this youngster, I made it a point to attend the 'Samarpanam' which followed on 30 October at the London Sivan Kovil in Lewisham. My impression was confirmed when I heard his rhythmic variations at 'Balanendru Thavi Azhathen' of 'Thaye Yasoda' song. The accompaniment was

apt for the main music, Kavin coping well with the most complex Swaraprasthara for 'Om Saravanabhava'. The Thani Avarthanam which followed revealed the clarity of his rendering and it was a treat to listen to his interaction with his Guru's Ghatam play, which is indeed a matter of congratulations for the latter as well.

P.P. Kanthan.

### Stanley College Old Students' Annual Dinner

Stanley College Old Students' Association (UK) had their second annual get together at St. Michael's Church Hall, Harrow Road, Wembley on 1st October '94. Proceedings commenced with the traditional lighting of the oil lamp by the President of the Association, Mr. S. Yogarajah. There was an evening of entertainment provided by Premasutha Thavanathan on the veena accompanied by Jason and Jonathan Pararajasingam on the miruthangam, a ballet performance by Ruby Jegatheswaram and a Bharatha Natyam recital by Kavitha Sivasubramaniam whose picture appears below.



The evening drew to a close with dinner and a raffle draw. Mr. Sivasubramaniam, retired Principal of the College and his wife were the Chief Guests.

### Skanda Celebrates Centenary

Skantha Varodaya College, Kanderodai, Sri Lanka completes in 1994 a hundred years of service to the community. The Sri Lankan government proposes to issue a special postage stamp to commemorate the occasion. The Old Students Association (U.K. Branch) celebrated it with a Memorial Meeting, reunion lunch and a variety entertainment on Sunday, 23rd October 1994 at Holy Cross Convent School Hall, Sandal Road, New Malden, Surrey.

Mr. K. Sivapalan, Emeritus Principal, Trincomalee Hindu College delivered the

Founder Memorial Address. He referred to the selfless service of the great Kandiah Upaththiyayar, who a hundred years ago met the great need for a school providing English education by establishing the Kanderodai English Institute to which students flocked in large numbers from all parts of the peninsula. It was renamed Skanda Varodaya College in later years and became a leading educational institution in the island under the principalship of Mr. C. Subramaniam (Orator). He wished the college many more years of service to the community.

A variety entertainment by (a) Arthi Yogendran, Sobitha Sathianathan and Jananee Sivagnanasundaram on the Veena (b) Mrs. Saraswathy Nadarajah on the Flute followed. Mas. Jonathan Pararajasingam ably provided Miruthangam accompaniment to all the above items which were greatly appreciated by the audience. The grand finale was the Bharatha Natyam performance by Kavitha Gunasunderam whose picture appears below.



The final item was the election of office-bearers for the ensuing year. For membership and other information please contact Secretary, Mr. K.G. Elangovan, Tel: 081-881 6471 or Treasurer, Mr. R. Vimalendran, Tel: 081-681 2052.

### Manual of Saivism & Saiva Siddantha

A book released by The World Saiva Council with Head Office in London, as the authorised Manual of Saivism & Saiva

Siddhanta conforming to the South Indian tradition, on 25th June 1994 at the International Saiva Conference held in Paris was reviewed by Dr. S. Gangadaran M.A., Ph.d., Professor & Head, Department of Saiva Siddantha, Madurai Kamraj University, Tamil Nadu. It is priced at £15/US\$25 plus 15% for postage. Contact telephone numbers are 081-531 6435/0277 223981. The review appears below.

'Saivite Hinduism' is a manual prepared by the British Saiva Siddhanta Centre in consultation with other world Saiva scholars and was released by the World Saiva Council on 25th June, 1994 in Paris. This handbook conveys the essence and immense wealth that is contained in thousands of books in Tamil, Sanskrit and other Indian languages. It contains articles that seek to explain the essence of Saivism to the new Saivites, outside India, who have lost their own heritage and to others who may become interested in it.

This useful handbook of 300 pages contains three sections, preceded by 'Saivite Hinduism in a Nutshell' and succeeded by eight appendices dealing with tables and data on Thrumurai, Meikanda Sastras etc in comprehensive detail. Section I deals with Hindu philosophic systems, along with the hymnal and philosophic literature of Saiva Siddhanta, followed by an in-depth treatment of the Tamil Saiva Bhakti Movement. Chapter I gives an exposition of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and of some doctrines such as the Law of Karma and concepts such as Grace, and Pancha Kritiyam, the importance of Na-Ma-Si-Va-Ya, and Moksha or fulfilment as freedom and integration with Lord Siva. The remaining two chapters deal with the role of Saivism in the Bhakti Movement, followed by biographical and religious accounts of the four founders of Saivism: Sambanthar, Appar, Sundarar and Maanickavaacagar. Section II deals with practical aspects of Saivism with extensive guidelines on Siva-Yoga, Meditation, etc while Section III gives the message of the Periapuranam, expounding its holy stories as practical illustrations of Saiva Bhakti-in-action.

The value of this Saiva handbook is enhanced by the addition of appendices on a range of topics including: Saiva Rituals, Bibliography, etc., which will prove useful to Saiva Tamils living abroad. Produced as an authorized manual of the World Saiva Council by its Board of Saiva Scholars headed by H.H. Swami Siva Nandhi Adikalar, this handbook is a must for every Tamil Saivite, throughout the world.

## CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

The news of the suspension of the peace talks in Sri Lanka due to the killing of 53 persons including the opposition leader Gamini Dissanayake was received here with disappointment and disbelief. There is consensus among Tamil immigrants here that Chandrika will negotiate a settlement through a system of greater devolution and power sharing. It is the prayerful wish of the 100,000 Tamils here that the Chandri-

ka - Prabakaran talks should resume early.

The Tamils turned hard working by the natural habitat of the North-East and made politically conscious by the barren policies of the past Sinhala leaders are now emerging as a community to be reckoned with in Toronto and Ontario. This is local election time for Boards and Municipalities in Ontario. Two Tamil candidates are in the running. By the next local election, four years hence, every one here will be qualified to vote and it is a modest expectation that at least 20 candidates will be vying for positions in School Boards and Municipalities.

The vast majority of Tamil immigrants are concentrated in and around Toronto - 90,000 now. Therefore no weekend passes by without some event. The summer was dominated by Seniors' activities - picnics and day tours. Toronto now has over 500 business establishments that are looked after by a trade chamber called the Canada-Ceylon Tamil Chamber of Commerce. The Annual Trade Fair this year was held on 17th September at Stephen Leacock Collegiate with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Hon. Ed Philip, MPP as the chief guest. This Trade Chamber together with SACEM and Senior Tamils' Centre is presently working to establish a Community Loan Fund (Credit Union) to help establishments that are unable to obtain credit from regular financial institutions. The Community Loan Fund is a government sponsored project with a 100% guarantee on invested principal up to \$15,000. It is expected that the project will be in full operation in 1995.

The outstanding event of the month here

## Kalabhavanam Scores Again



A Rasika attending the Muthuswami Dikshitar Day music recital conducted by Kalabhavanam on Sunday October 30th at the Willis Road mini-auditorium was heard to remark 'I feel as if I am in one of the Sangeetha sabhas in Mylapore or T. Nagar in Madras'. He was not alone in feeling that nostalgia. The musical atmosphere that evening was so exulting.

It was an achievement on the part of Kalabhavanam to have got together on the same stage five seasoned vocalists in London - Srimathis: Saraswathi Pakiarajah, Nageswari Brahmananda, Mathini Sriskandarajah, Sivasakthi Sivanesan, and Manorama Prasad - to render some choice kritis of Dikshitar (among them some Navavarana and Nvagraha items) with textual clarity and flawless traditional style.

was the dinner held on the 29th of October in aid of Tamil Rehabilitation. This was organised by the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils. Four Federal members of parliament headed by Dr. Doug Peters MP and Secretary of State attended. A follow up memorandum urging Canadian intervention for a sustainable political solution for the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka was presented to the members of parliament to be delivered to the Hon. Prime Minister of Canada. Mr. Derek Lee MP expressed the hope that the Sri Lankan conflict will be on their cabinet agenda in 1995. Mr. Rajan Thangavelu of the World Tamil Movement presided.

Aloy Ratnasingham.

## Sri Lanka Speaker Meets UK Tamils

During his recent visit to U.K. Mr. K.B. Ratnayake, Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament attended a meeting arranged by the Hartley College Past Pupil's Association at the Harrow Hotel, on 16th October '94. After meeting the invited guests and Hartleyites, Mr. Ratnayake addressed the gathering. He was introduced by the president of the association Dr. K. Sivakumaran and Mr. K. Pooranampillai, Emeritus Principal, Hartley College. Mr. Ratnayake reminisced on his days as a student at Hartley College during the late thirties and early forties, his early political life and referred to the present situation in the north. Although the meeting was not of a political nature, he impressed on those present that the Prime Minister Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunge was making every possible effort to solve the situation in the North.

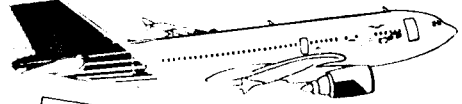
At the start of the programme Sri P.P. Kanthan, a well known connoisseur of Carnatic music and singer, gave a short talk on the life of Dikshitar illustrated with singing some passages. This was well appreciated by the audience. Accompaniments for the vocalists were provided on the violin by Dr. Lakshmi Jayan and Smt. G. Padmasikamani, and on the mridangam by Sri Bhavani Shankar and Sri Muthu Sivarajah. Bhavani's appearance on the Kalabhavanam stage was the first and it is hoped he would appear more often.

The Dikshitar Day programme was so impressive that many admirers wish many similar memorial programmes on Papanasam Sivan, Gopalakrishna Bharatiyar, Thyagarajar and other well known composers are followed.



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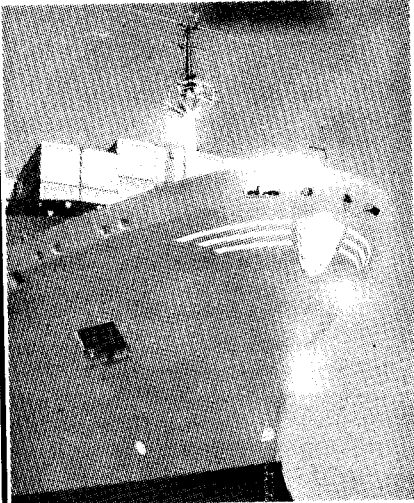
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