

# Tamil TIMES

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★ கொழும்புக்கு அர்ப்பணம் மிகுந்த உன்னத சேவை. (16 தினங்கள்) ★ தேயிலைப்  
பெட்டிகளிலிருந்து, முழு அளவிலான தனிப்பட்ட பொருள்கள் வரை. ★ கார், மற்றும்  
20 அடி, 40 அடி முழு வர்த்தக சரக்குகளுக்கு விசேட கட்டணம். ★ மின்சார உற்பத்தி  
யந்திரம், யந்திர வகைகள், உபகரணங்கள். ★ சலவை யந்திரம், குளிர் சாதனப் பெட்டி  
போன்ற வீட்டுப்பாவனை மின்சார உபகரணங்களுக்கு வரிவிலக்கு.

உங்கள் பொருள்களுக்கு இலங்கையர் பலரும் விரும்பும் முதல்தர துரித விடுவிப்பு வசதிகள் அளிக்கப்படுகின்றன.

● உலகளாவிய விமான பொதி சேவைக்கு எங்களை நாடுங்கள். ●

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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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## ASSASSINATION OF NEELAN TIRUCHELVAM CONDEMNATION AND TRIBUTES

## On Silencing a Gentle Giant of Reason

"Oh for the touch of a vanished hand and the voice that is still"

-Tennyson "

"I would like to express my strong moral opposition to this measure..... We cannot glorify death, whether in the battlefield or otherwise. We, on the other hand, must celebrate life and are fiercely committed to protecting and securing the sanctity of life, which is the most fundamental value without which all other rights and freedoms become meaningless."

- Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam in Parliament on 15.6.99 during a debate on the government's proposal to reimpose capital punishment.

"The assassination of Dr. Tiruchelvam is sadly reminiscent of the series of attacks suffered by people who were envisaging a democratic peace process in any manner different from the one proposed by LTTE. This cowardly act underscores the urgent need for the Government of Sri Lanka to expedite the peace process and negotiations with all the concerned parties as soon as possible. The perpetrators of this ghastly act should be brought to justice."

- International Commission of Jurists, Geneva

"This is truly one of the greatest tragedies to ever hit the human rights community over the world. I am lost for words to describe this tireless giant of the cause of human rights."

- Dr. Willy Mutunga, Executive Director, Kenya Human Rights Commission

"The assassination of this humble, intellectual and refined son of the country is a great loss to our nation."

- The Venerable Baddegama Samitha Thera

"The human rights community is in mourning today. Sri Lanka and the world have lost a voice that rang loud and strong in defence of human rights..... The greatest homage we can pay Tiruchelvam is to continue his work to build a strong civil society where all the people of Sri Lanka can live in peace and enjoy their human rights."

-Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

"Neelan was a person of extraordinary talent, great intellectual refinement and unwavering political commitment for democracy, pluralism, secularism, justice and humanism. His was a voice of reason which compelled attention and inspired thousands of scholars, thinkers, activists and political leaders not just in Sri Lanka but all over South Asia."

- From a statement by a Group of Indian Intellectuals

"This crime has silenced the voice of a man who was committed to the path of peace, but it must not silence those in Sri Lanka who have the courage to follow Dr. Thiruchelvam's lead."

- Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy

"I strongly condemn the political murder of this highly respected, democratically elected Member of Parliament. It is all the more regrettable in view of the dedicated work in which Dr. Tiruchelvam had been engaged to achieve a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a man of principle and courage whose life and work epitomised the principles of peaceful ethnic co-existence and the rule of law, the very principles which must form the basis of a just and lasting solution to the war in Sri Lanka."

- Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer

"With his death, a powerful voice for reconciliation in Sri Lanka has been silenced. I hope that this tragedy will spur efforts to find an end to the fighting and to build a lasting peace in Sri Lanka."

- President Bill Clinton & First Lady Hillary Clinton

"Neelan did not take the easy path and make an illustrious career for himself in a prestigious seat of learning or an international organisation in some other part of the world. He chose to live and work in Sri Lanka with Sithie and the boys in the deep belief that he could make a contribution and impact on the world that he had known from childhood. And for that he paid a terrible price....let everyone including the international community recognise in this ultimate act of violence the hypocrisy and evilness of destroying precious lives in the name of freedom. Let those who censored by death the voice of this gentleman of peace and the extremists of all communities within our country and outside understand that Neelan's voice, his vision, his life will inspire us to say no to the hypocrisy, the hatred and the violence."

- Professor Savithri Goonesekera, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo, in her funeral oration at the Kanatte Cemetery in Colombo



# NEELAN TIRUCHELVAM ASSASSINATION

## Widespread Condemnation

Member of Parliament and internationally renowned constitutional lawyer, human rights and civil society activist Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, was killed on Thursday 29th July when a suspected LTTE male suicide bomber threw himself against the car he was travelling in, and set off a bomb. The incident occurred near his office at Kynsey Road in Sri Lanka's capital city, Colombo.

Thiruchelvam's assassination came a few days after the government of Sri Lanka made known its intention to carry through Parliament in the near future, the proposed constitutional reforms which include devolution of powers to the regions.

The son of former Local Government Minister M. Thiruchelvam QC, Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam had his education at Royal College, Colombo and entered the University of Peradeniya from where he obtained a law degree. He obtained a doctorate in law from Harvard University and has been highly recognised by the international legal fraternity.

Thiruchelvam has been widely regarded as having played a prominent role in the drafting of the Constitutional Reform Package of the Peoples' Alliance (PA) administration presently before Parliament.

Dr. Thiruchelvam played a prominent role in promotion and protection of Human Rights in Sri Lanka. He also assisted in an evaluation of the Draft Constitution of Kazakhstan in September, 1992 and also reviewed it. He participated in an early review of the Constitution making process in Ethiopia in November, 1992. He was a co-chairman of an international evaluation team on the peace structures in South Africa constituted by the National Peace Secretariat and International Alert. At the time of his death, he was Chairman of the London-based Minority Rights Group.

The condemnation of Dr Tiruchelvam's assassination and the glowing tributes paid to him has been unprecedented and widespread both within Sri

Lanka and internationally.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, US President Bill Clinton and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson led the international condemnation and the tributes.

A UN statement issued in the name of **Secretary General Kofi Annan** by its spokesman Manoel Almeida de Silva said "The Secretary General is shocked to learn of the assassination of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, who was actively involved in constitutional reform and who had tirelessly defended human rights and contributed to the search for a political solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka." The statement said "the Secretary-General condemns this act of terrorism in the strongest terms." adding that "There could be no better tribute to Tiruchelvam's memory than to bring an end to the senseless violence in that long-suffering country."

**US President Bill Clinton**, in a statement issued on the day of the assassination from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, where he was attending a summit on the Balkans, stated that he and his wife were "shocked and saddened" by the tragic death of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam. The statement said: "Hillary and I were shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Neelan Thiruchelvam at the hands of terrorists in Sri Lanka today. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife and family.

"Neelan Thiruchelvam was a constitutional lawyer and human rights advocate who was well-known and well-respected far beyond his country. He devoted himself to seeking a peaceful and just solution to the tragic conflict that has caused so much bloodshed in Sri Lanka.

"Hillary was deeply moved by her meeting with Mr. Thiruchelvam during her 1995 visit to Sri Lanka. With his death, a powerful voice for reconciliation in Sri Lanka has been silenced. I hope that this tragedy will spur efforts to find an end to the fighting and to build a lasting peace in Sri Lanka."

Statement by Mr. Philip T. Decker

of the **US State Department** stated: "It is with profound regret that we learned of the murder of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam on the streets of Colombo. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a respected academic and constitutional law expert, the Director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies and a member of Parliament representing the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), a moderate Tamil political party. He was killed by a suicide bomber on his way to work. Several bystanders were also injured.

"The attack appears to be the work of the terrorist LTTE, who have been waging a separatist war in Sri Lanka's north and east for more than 16 years. The United States has long urged the LTTE to cease its terrorist activities, to stop immediately the killing of non-combatants and civilians and to seek peaceful means of pursuing its political ends. We designated the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organisation in 1997.

"The United States has always supported, and continues to support, a peaceful resolution to the conflict through negotiations among all parties. we believe the Government of Sri Lanka has put forward realistic and sincere proposals for constitutional reform that could help towards this end.

"The United States extends its sincere condolences to Dr. Tiruchelvam's family, friends and associates, and to the other victims of this bombing and condemns in the strongest possible terms this outrage.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam had many friends and colleagues in the United States. He freely shared his knowledge and conviction of the possibility for a peaceful resolution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. He had taught at Harvard and was scheduled to teach there again this autumn. So, we in the United States also share the terrible sense of loss of his family and country."

Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs in the US State Department, Karl F. Inderfurth, in a message of condolence to Sri Lanka's Professor G. L. Peiris, Minister of Justice, Constitutional Affairs, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration on July 30 stated: "I was greatly saddened to learn of the murder yesterday of Neelan

Tiruchelvam. I know you worked closely with Neelan for years, especially since 1994 in the Special Parliamentary Committee as you formulated the devolution package. So, his untimely death must be a great blow to you.

While I did not have the long and close association with Neelan that you did, I was fortunate to meet him several times during my visits to Colombo. Each time after talking to him, I felt Sri Lanka, with people like Neelan, could find a way to resolve its ethnic difficulties peacefully.

"On behalf of the United States, I wish to express my condolences to you personally and to Sri Lanka for the loss of such a champion of peace and harmony. Neelan had a long association with the United States, as a Fulbright student, law student and teacher. We too are diminished by his death."

Speaking at a memorial for Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, Karl F. Inderfurth acknowledged that the Tamil leaders who have been assassinated by the LTTE "is a very long list, and tragically Neelan's name is now at the end of that list and almost certainly there will be other tragedies in the future." But Mr. Inderfurth asserted, "The fact is that those who are trying to kill, will not win. They will lose and the legacy of Neelan and others will prevail. There is no question that that will take place."

Mr. Inderfurth, who described Dr. Tiruchelvam as an "enormously special person said that his "legacy extends far beyond Sri Lanka itself. I think the fact that he has touched so many Americans at the very highest levels of our Government, the messages from the President and from the First Lady are reflective of a feeling, that not only Sri Lanka, but the world has lost a very good man, a man of peace." He said Dr. Tiruchelvam "serves as an example and it's something that I think we will look back on with great sadness, but also with a recognition that this was a life to inspire, that his vision lives, and that we will all be influenced by it for a long time to come."

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson condemned Dr. Tiruchelvam's murder as "a direct attack on efforts to bring about reconciliation and build a culture of peace and respect for fundamental rights" in Sri Lanka. She said that she was "saddened and shocked " by Tiruchelvam's murder and described as "one of the leading advocates of a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka", Robinson said: "The human rights community is in mourning today. Sri Lanka and the world have lost a voice that rang loud and strong in defence of human rights."

Pointing out that Tiruchelvam headed up the International Center for Ethnic Studies, an organisation devoted to bringing the different communities of Sri Lanka together, Robinson added, "The greatest homage we can pay Tiruchelvam is to continue his work to build a strong civil society where all the people of Sri Lanka can live in peace and enjoy their human rights."

Professor Asbjorn Eide of Norway, the senior-most and longstanding member of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, addressing the Sub Commission which was in sessions in Geneva on the day Dr Tiruchelvam was assassinated said: "There are some situations where the initial problem was caused by hegemonic policies of the State, but where later the main problem is the behaviour of militant opposition groups which turn into terrorist groups. The most obvious case in point is that of Sri Lanka. There can be no doubt that grave errors were made by the Sri Lankan Government in the first decades after independence, by the language policy of "Sinhala only" and by its inability to prevent extensive group violence against Tamils.

"I myself took up in this Sub-Commission the violations in 1983 for which the Government was responsible. However, as a response to the violation of their minority rights, at least one of the Tamil groups developed into an intransigent hardline terrorist group which cannot contemplate peace at any price. The government of Sri Lanka has mended its way, even against strong opposition by some parts of the Sinhala community, and is now pursuing a policy of devolution which will give the minority all the rights it can justifiably demand.

"The Tamil Tigers want nothing of it, however, and is completely inaccessible to reasoning. The main architect of the devolution package was Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, a world renowned expert on ethnic relations and the most competent and constructive representatives of the Tamil community. He was brutally murdered by a brainwashed suicide bomber, quite clearly at the instigation of the leadership of the Tamil Tigers. Let me strongly urge the Sri Lankan Government nevertheless to go ahead with the devolution package, which will be a milestone in constructive ethnic relations and a good model for similar situations in other countries.

This will also be the best way to honour Dr. Tiruchelvam who made the ultimate sacrifice for the Tamil cause and for the wider cause of peaceful group accommodation."

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said, "I was deeply shocked to learn of the tragic assassination in Colombo of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a member of the Sri Lankan parliament representing the Tamil United Liberation Front. He was also the Director of the Colombo-based International Centre for Ethnic Studies and of the Law and Society Trust and was a good friend of many Australians who have worked and lived in Sri Lanka.

"I strongly condemn the political murder of this highly respected, democratically elected member of Parliament. It is all the more regrettable in view of the dedicated work in which Dr. Tiruchelvam had been engaged to achieve a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a man of principle and courage whose life and work epitomised the principles of peaceful ethnic co-existence and the rule of law, the very principles which must form the basis of a just and lasting solution to the war in Sri Lanka.

"This senseless act of violence seems to have been the work of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). I call once again on the LTTE to step off the path of terrorism and urge all parties to work for a lasting political solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

"I also reaffirm the Australian government's position that it will not have any dealings with groups or individuals that do not unreservedly condemn such acts of wanton terrorism and dissociate themselves from violence as a means to further political aims.

"I extend my deepest condolences to Dr. Tiruchelvam's family and to his many friends and associates."

Condemning the assassination, Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy said, "This crime has silenced the voice of a man who was committed to the path of peace, but it must not silence those in Sri Lanka who have the courage to follow Dr. Thiruchelvam's lead."

"Canada expresses its sympathies and condolences to Dr. Thiruchelvam's family and colleagues, and we call on the Government of Sri Lanka to undertake a vigorous and rapid investigation

of this crime and to bring those responsible to justice."

Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia-Pacific Region Raymond Chan also expressed regret over the loss of Tiruchelvam: "During our meeting in Sri Lanka, in June 1995, Dr. Thiruchelvam and I discussed a wide array of societal and governmental problems that he was trying to address through his work at the ICES. His contributions to civil society in Sri Lanka will be sorely missed."

The **Indian High Commission** in Sri Lanka, in a statement issued said that "India strongly condemns the killing. This was an act of wanton terrorism". The statement further said, "he had dedicated his life to finding peaceful, constitutional and democratic solutions to difficult issues."

"We were shocked to learn this morning of the brutal killing of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, member of the Sri Lankan Parliament, an eminent lawyer and distinguished leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front," a foreign Ministry spokesman said.

The Indian national daily, "**The Hindu**" in an article headlined 'Murdering Democracy in Sri Lanka' observed that Sri Lanka and indeed South Asia has much to mourn in the brutal and senseless assassination Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam who had dedicated his entire life to the struggle to end the ethnic crisis. "It is grotesque and cruel irony that a person of such an enlightened democratic conscience - a stellar presence in the Sri Lankan Tamil political firmament - should have been felled by the fascist and murderous LTTE, who claim that they are the authentic political representatives of the Sri Lankan Tamil people".... "The LTTE has betrayed the democratic aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils and the peace process has suffered a tremendous blow from which it will be very difficult to recover.

"It is time for the Sri Lankan Tamil people and political groups outside the sinister shadow of the fascist LTTE to come to terms with the cold reality that until the LTTE is subdued and put beyond the pale of any negotiating process, the struggle to build democracy in Sri Lanka will be held hostage by the group of murderous delinquent hiding out in the jungles of the North-East."

The **Times of India** in its editorial stated, "Now, with the devolution package about to be tabled in the legis-

lature and signed into law, it is in danger of losing its position in its own land. As President Kumaratunga says, Dr. Tiruchelvam's killing indicates that the LTTE intends to eliminate the moderate Tamil leadership to impose its will on the Tamil population. The result can only be war without end. With its action, the LTTE has exposed itself as an essentially fascist organisation, caught in a time-wrap, which has no interest in the welfare of Tamils."

The **Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany** said it had received with profound sorrow the news of the assassination Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam on the morning of July 29, 1999. It said Dr. Tiruchelvam paid the supreme price for the values he defended. His contributions to national integration and nation-building will be cruelly missed in the future, the embassy release stated adding that "the Embassy has lost a close friend".

A later statement issued by a spokesman for the German government said, "News of the terrorist bomb attack, which recently claimed the life of the constitutional lawyer, human rights activist and member of the Sri Lankan parliament, Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, a man held in high esteem both at home and abroad, has been received by Germans too with shock and disgust. Their sympathy, and that of the Federal Government, go out to the victim's loved ones and political friends. Sri Lanka has lost a gifted and experienced politician who worked committedly and passionately for peace and internal reconciliation within your country, consistently rejecting the very violence which has now killed him.

"The Federal Government condemns this brutal murder, which, like other recent bomb attacks is the work of the LTTE, in the strongest possible terms.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam's murder confirms once again the importance of pressing ahead decisively with the peace process in Sri Lanka. Acts of terror and military clashes cannot resolve the conflict in your country. My appeal to all political forces and social groups in Sri Lanka is thus all the more urgent; that they put an end to the civil war and do everything in their power to swiftly reach a peaceful political solution to the conflict."

The **Embassy of Sweden** in Colombo in a message said "The Embassy of Sweden wishes to convey its deeply

felt sorrow at the assassination of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam. The tragedy is immense and overwhelming.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam was highly respected for his commitment to human rights and democracy. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a man of outstanding human qualities and his talent, academic achievements and deep knowledge of constitutional law are profoundly valued. "We offer our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to Mrs. Tiruchelvam, his sons, members of his family, the Government and the people of Sri Lanka."

The **Delegation of the European Commission** to Sri Lanka was "shocked to learn of the senseless and cowardly assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam by a suspected LTTE suicide bomber on Thursday. We strongly condemn this terrorist act which can only make it difficult to find a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict in this country. The delegation of the European Commission expresses its sympathies and condolences to the family of Dr. Thiruchelvam."

The **World Bank Country Director** for Sri Lanka Mariana Todorova in a statement issued said Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam's death would be a tremendous blow to reconciliation efforts.

"We extend our sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam for their sudden loss. A man of great integrity and vision, his all too sudden departure is a tremendous blow for Sri Lanka and its reconciliation efforts. Dr. Tiruchelvam has been associated with the Bank for a long period of time in promoting ethnic cohesion and his work has been highly regarded. His advice will be greatly missed in the days ahead, both within Sri Lanka and in the international community at large, as the struggle for peace continues.

"The greatest tribute we can pay Dr. Tiruchelvam is to rededicate ourselves to the achievement of peace and ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Dr. Tiruchelvam has been a wonderful source of hope and inspiration to us all, and we will miss both his professionalism and friendship very much indeed."

**Amnesty International** strongly condemned the assassination of Member of Parliament (MP), Neelan Thiruchelvam, and paid tribute to him as a politician who contributed greatly to his country.

The statement issued on 29 July said, "Neelan Thiruchelvam, a member

of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), was killed on his way to work at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies when a suicide bomber threw himself at his car. His bodyguard and driver were wounded.

"The nature of the attack suggests it could be linked with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in which case it constitutes a clear breach of international humanitarian standards.

"A constitutional lawyer, Neelan Tiruchelvam entered parliament in August 1994 as a member of the TULF, a moderate Tamil party. He was a member of the parliamentary select committee on constitutional reforms, which devised an autonomy devolution package for north-eastern Sri Lanka. The package was aimed at settling the 6-year-old armed conflict between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE, who are fighting for a separate Tamil state called Eelam in north-eastern Sri Lanka. The LTTE, who were not consulted at the initial stages, have opposed the peace plan.

"The attack comes amidst speculation that a new constitution, which would include the devolution package, could be presented in parliament within the next two months. Progress on the devolution package, which requires a two-thirds majority vote in parliament, has been slow due to the withdrawal of support for it by the opposition United National Party (UNP) in October 1997.

"The LTTE have recently stepped up their intimidation of MPs and public officials. In May this year the Tamil Tigers ordered government employees in Jaffna to abstain from work on Tuesdays and Fridays. This order was subsequently withdrawn. In June, five MPs from different political parties, and who represent Sri Lanka's eastern Batticaloa district, were ordered by the LTTE to restrict their public activities. In 1998 the LTTE was held responsible for killing two mayors of Jaffna Town."

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) expresses great shock over the assassination of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, a prominent constitutional lawyer and moderate opposition member of parliament, Dr. Tiruchelvam's was murdered in a bomb explosion. The advocate was a strong believer in constitutional reforms and actively supported the devolution process as one of the means for ending the ethnic and political conflict that has devastated the island for many years.

Dr. Tiruchelvam was an outspoken human rights activist and a well known parliamentarian. He was also the head of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka. The constitutional reform process which he strongly supported is likely to come up in Parliament next month. This assassination constitutes a setback to the entire peace process.

"The assassination of Dr. Tiruchelvam is sadly reminiscent of the series of attacks suffered by people who were envisaging a democratic peace process in any manner different from the one proposed by LTTE. This cowardly act underscores the urgent need for the Government of Sri Lanka to expedite the peace process and negotiations with all the concerned parties as soon as possible. The perpetrators of this ghastly act should be brought to justice."

**U.S. Committee for Refugees** condemned the LTTE's "brutal" killing of "human rights activist and legislator" Dr. Tiruchelvam, and said the USCR staff "who knew Neelan are deeply saddened by his tragic death." It said "the LTTE's presumed killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam, apparently because he pursued a different path than theirs, is shameful. Such intolerance is, sadly, symptomatic of the state of affairs in Sri Lanka. It has to end." It said the killing of Dr. Tiruchelvam "is yet another disturbing instalment in the long and unhappy history of the conflict in Sri Lanka."

According to USCR, it was imperative that "Sinhalese and Tamil Sri Lankans and their political leaders find ways to resolve the conflict through dialogue, not violence."

The London-based **Article 19** (Freedom of Expression) in a statement said, "Dr. Tiruchelvam's murder by a suicide bomber has been attributed to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for an independent Tamil state in north eastern Sri Lanka. The LTTE have long waged a campaign of intimidation and killing to silence the moderate Tamil voices of those who seek to address longstanding minority grievances through peaceful, democratic means. Dr. Tiruchelvam's killing is but the most recent in a long line of killings of Tamil politicians whom the LTTE appear to have perceived as being opposed to their cause as Article 19 has documented in its reports on Sri Lanka.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam was a widely respected lawyer, academic and civil society activist both locally and internationally. He had worked for many years, under successive governments to try to find a peaceful, political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. He aspired to the creation of new constitutional form for the state that would provide redress for serious minority grievances while also accommodating the aspirations and protecting the rights of all ethnic groups in the country. Dr. Tiruchelvam was also a staunch defender of the right to freedom of expression and as a member of both the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Legislative and Regulatory Framework relating to Media, he advocated strengthening constitutional protection for free expression and other human rights.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam's violent and sudden death represents a most grave assault on basic values of free expression, human rights and democratic participation."

The Geneva-based **International Service for Human Rights** in its statement said, "With great shock, the International Service for Human Rights, received the news of the brutal assassination on July 29 of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, Director of the Colombo based International Centre for Ethnic Studies. The killing was apparently committed by a suicide bomber, member of a terrorist organisation in Sri Lanka.

"Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam is well-known to us in Geneva, where we always appreciated his genuine commitment as a human rights defender, and his higher expertise in human rights issues, in particular in the protection of minorities.

"The International Service for Human Rights condemns the targeting of human rights defenders all around the world, particularly during internal conflicts, as is currently the case in Sri Lanka. Not only Governmental forces and paramilitary groups linked to agents of the States, but also all non-States actors have to respect the basic standards of humanitarian law and international human rights law. We cannot and shall not accept that terrorist organisation represented here, at the UN in Geneva, would enjoy the same full-scale impunity which is increasingly reigning over its inter-governmental world"

Director of the Washington based **Human Rights Watch**, Mike Jendr-

zejczyk said, "we were appalled to learn of the killing of Neelan Thiruchelvam, a life-long campaigner for human rights and a tireless advocate for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka."

Alan Phillips, Director of the **International Director of Minority Rights Group** said "Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, the Chairman of Minority Rights Group, was assassinated on Thursday 29 July, by a bomb attack in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

"Neelan Thiruchelvam has paid a terrible price for promoting peace and justice. He was constantly in danger yet he steadfastly and quietly promoted the rights of Tamils and other ethnic minorities.

"He leaves many friends in the human rights community world-wide, who will ensure that his work continues from strength to strength and minority rights are achieved through peaceful dialogue. Minority Rights Group will always remember Neelan and celebrate his work.

"Internationally he was highly regarded as a legal scholar. He was well-known for his creative human rights work, he joined the Minority Rights Group's International Council in 1994 and this year was elected as its International Chairman. He was seen as quiet, unassuming and thoughtful though he held deep-seated views on the need to promote human rights and minority rights by constructive dialogue. He was totally committed to redressing the injustices suffered by ethnic minorities and in particular by Tamils in Sri Lanka, through peaceful but radical change. He used his scholarship, with a doctorate from Harvard in Law, to promote better conditions for Tamils and other ethnic minorities in international fora and was considered a major human rights figure in international circles including the United Nations."

**Kenya Human Rights Commission's** Executive Director, Dr. Willy Mutunga, said of the assassination of Dr Thiruchelvam, "this is truly one of the greatest tragedies to ever hit the human rights community over the world." Dr. Mutunga also said, "he was always full of vitality and introspective zeal and stated that we, no matter what our differences, could live together if we tried hard enough. I am lost for words to describe this tireless giant of the cause of human rights."

**Professor Amita Shastri** of the

## WITHIN SRI LANKA

### Tributes and Condemnations

**D**escribing the assassination of one its MPs and leaders as "an inhuman and dastardly act" the Tamil United Liberation Front in a statement said: "The brutal and cruel assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam member of parliament has come as a great shock to the party, the Tamil people and the country.

"Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam was a moderate who worked with dedication to bring about constitutional reform through a paradigm shift in the country's constitutional structure consistent with the country's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual character.

"His untimely death is an immense loss to the Tamil speaking people and to the country, and the void created by his demise would be difficult to fill.

"The TULF strongly condemns the assassination as an inhuman and dastardly act. Nothing constructive can be achieved by such senseless killings.

"The tragic death of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam once again emphasises the urgent need to evolve a peaceful political resolution to the country's national conflict.

The President Kumaratunga shortly after the assassination said, "The cruel assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, Vice President of the Tamil United

Liberation Front (TULF), earns my unreserved condemnation. Dr. Thiruchelvam had won the affection, and respect of not only the Tamil-speaking peoples but also all the communities in our country. He was a distinguished academic who had earned the plaudits of a broad spectrum of the international community.

Knowing full well the threats and dangers to his life, he carried on an untiring and inestimable effort through many years to find solutions to the ethnic crisis that we continue to face. Dr. Thiruchelvam has been tragically lost to our country and society at a decisive period in our political life, when his services would be most needed.

There is no doubt that history will record with much respect the services that Dr. Thiruchelvam rendered both nationally and internationally. All who are able to ascertain good and evil will treat this dastardly assassination with the contempt it deserves."

The message issued by the **Inter Religious Alliance for National Unity** said: "We in the Religious Alliance for Peace are greatly distressed by the news that Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam has been assassinated. Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam has stood up for the rights of all the people and also worked very hard for just negotiations and a political settlement of the ethnic problem in our country.

He is much respected as a man of great learning and integrity both in our country and abroad. Our country has lost a great national leader who has been devoted for the cause of a just peace and reconciliation. We condemn this cruel murder, which can only harm all people in our country."

"The **Liberal Party** is deeply shocked and greatly saddened at the brutal murder of the Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, M.P. We unreservedly condemn this brutal and cowardly act and the cold-blooded perpetrators of this heinous crime. Dr. Thiruchelvam was a tireless worker for ethnic harmony and peace in our country and Sri Lanka has lost one of her finest and best. His tragic death is a great loss to all Sri Lankans who earnestly desire peace," the secretary general of the Liberal Party Harim

San Francisco State University of California, USA, states: "This is to express the deepest sorrow and condemnation at the cruel assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, MP and PC in Colombo on 29 July 1999. He was a person of peace and non-violence who worked tirelessly, despite the dangers to himself, for a peaceful solution to the island's conflict. His constant effort was to expand the rights and opportunities available to all individuals in Sri Lanka, whatever group they belonged to. The untimely loss of this brave, warm, intelligent and gifted human being leaves an unbearable void not only in those who knew him and had the privilege of working with him; but is also an incalculable loss to the search for ethnic harmony and co-operation in Sri Lanka and for a greater humanity in the world at large." ●



Peiris said in a press release.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam's brutal murder clearly reveals the threat that peace holds for those whom, compromise and peace is undesirable. While awaiting the outcome of official investigations, Liberals believe the LTTE responsible for this dastardly crime."

The **Communist Party** of Sri Lanka in its message said: "We are shocked to learn of the brutal killing of the TULF Member of Parliament Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam. He shone both as a legal luminary and a leading social scientist who headed the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. But, in our view his main contribution was in the area of politics.

"A true defender of the rights and interests of the Tamil people he worked hard to bring about a political solution to the ethnic problem and restore national unity. In Parliament he made many valuable contributions particularly in the areas of human and democratic rights and the law.

"He was widely respected by all who associated with him both for his gentlemanly qualities and for his intellectual disposition. Whilst mourning the passing away of this patriotic son of Sri Lankan, the

Communist Party of Sri Lanka strongly condemns his assassination.

The **National Peace Council** condemns the assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, MP, by a suspected LTTE suicide bomber. We are shocked and grieved by this cruel act which has deprived Sri Lanka of one of its most outstanding leaders.

"Dr. Tiruchelvam was unique in combining political, academic and civil society activism with humanism and distinction. He strengthened the moderate mainstream of political life. He was a dynamic personality who tried to forge a mainstream political consensus regarding fundamental reform of the Sri Lankan polity." contribution through his knowledge and expertise would have been immeasurable and irreparable.

The **Sri Lanka Muslim Congress** and the National Unity Alliance strongly condemn the killing of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam P.C. and Member of Parliament. Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam's untimely demise is an irrecoverable loss to the entire nation.

The Tamil Speaking people will miss his experience and scholarship especially at the time when Sri Lanka is

trying to work out an acceptable solution to the ethnic problem. In Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam's death the country has lost not only a political leader with vision but also an able lawyer and an authority on constitutional affairs. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a moderate Sri Lankan who believed until his last breath that the Sri Lankan Tamil and Muslim communities could live in peace and harmony.

Dr. Tiruchelvam played a key role during the crucial discussions that the SLMC had with the TULF which resulted in the recognition of the Muslim political identity for the purpose of devolving power."

Statement issued by **The Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando, Bishop of Colombo** said: "I am greatly distressed by the news of the death of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam. He has been a close friend of mine for over 35 years. I have admired him both for his great erudition as a constitutional lawyer and for his integrity of character.

"He has firmly upheld the rights of all people in our country irrespective of race or religion. He was totally devoted to the cause of a just negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict of our country. He has constantly encouraged all of us who have been involved in peace making efforts.

"His loss is a severe blow to peace, democracy and freedom in our country. I condemn this dastardly act in the strongest terms.

"The Christian community which I head joins me in this expression of deep sorrow to his family and our country as a whole."

Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, **Prof G L Peiris**: "I was shocked and saddened at the news of the untimely and tragic demise of my friend and Parliamentary colleague Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam. His loss, at a time when his cherished dream - the realisation of a durable, just and honourable peace for all Sri Lankans - is finally at hand, is all the more poignant.

"His untiring efforts to seek a viable political settlement of our nation's ethnic conflict were to eventually bear fruit with the presentation of the constitutional Bill to Parliament, a first step to securing peace and stability in our troubled land.

"It is difficult to attempt to capture all that Neelan was, all that he stood for, in a few short sentences. He was many things to many people: a devoted husband and father, a loyal friend, a distin-

guished lawyer, an academic and intellect of renown, a tireless champion of his people's cause and a skilled orator both in Parliament and at public fora."

Statement by the **Sri Lanka Freedom Party**: "We of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party were deeply shocked and surprised to hear of the killing in cold blood of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam MP a great son of Sri Lanka of recent times.

Dr. Tiruchelvam who was a politician, a lawyer, a constitutional expert and a human rights activist was a thinker of world repute. We know that Neelan of pleasing appearance, with moderate views and unassuming qualities accepted that the only alternative was peace among the various sections of the people in the march towards one country and one people and the sharing of power within one country and was one who always worked for it.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party while condemning the brutal process of decimating at various times the Tamil National Leaders within and outside the Tamil United Liberation Front re-emphasises that a political solution is the only way to end the crisis within the country.

"We hereby express our profound sorrow of our party to all the members of the family of Dr. Tiruchelvam and to all members of the Tamil United Liberation Front on this sad occasion."

Statement by **Batty Weerakoon**, General Secretary, of the **Lanka Sama Samaja Party** said: "Neelan Thiruchelvam's death at the hands of assassins is a blow to us all. In a multi-cultural society as in Sri Lanka he brought pride to the nation as a whole and to the more localised culture into which he was born. His conscious sense of belonging to the wider political culture that encompassed the nation as a whole is what a narrow totalitarian mindset like that of the LTTE could not cope with.

The resultant consequence to him appears to be the inevitable fate of all Tamil intelligentsia that will not surrender to the LTTE through accommodation or silence. We saw this in the assassinations of several Parliamentarians in the more recent years. We saw this in the deaths of others too, as of Sarojini Yogeswaram, the Jaffna Mayoress.

To gloss over these deaths as the fate of romantics, as some Tamil intellectuals have recently done, is moral and spiritual cowardice. These so-called intellectuals have opted out of the essential conflict and adopted different de-

grees of accommodation in respect of the LTTE. Neelan Thiruchelvam spurned this kind of posturing. He stood his ground and fought for his positions through always in his own erudite and gentle manner."

Statement issued by **Mr. S. Thondaman, M.P.**, President, Ceylon Workers' Congress said: "On my own behalf and on behalf of the Indian Tamil community I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam and the colleagues in the Tamil United Liberation Front on the tragic death of the Vice President of the TULF, Member of Parliament and eminent academic personality Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam who became yet another innocent victim of a suicide bomber.

Dr. Thiruchelvam had been a close friend of mine from his younger days and has had a close association with the Ceylon Workers' Congress in a wide ranging area of legal and political interests where his Constitutional expertise had been readily made available when needed.

The outrageous manner in which his life had been snuffed out once again brings home the point that violence in whatever guise is not the path to peace and prosperity in our country. It highlights the need for all parties to strictly adhere to a moral code of conduct that innocent and harmless people are not targeted for elimination.

If this cruel and unfeeling regimen is not halted, Sri Lanka will end up bereft of the cream of its intelligentsia and personalities of leadership calibre leaving in its wake families - dependants - stranded in a situation of helplessness.

I take this opportunity to urge all concerned to follow the path of non-violence and adopt the strategy of negotiation to redress their grievances."

Statement by Rev. Duleep Fernando, Chairman of the **National Christian Council** said: "The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCC) expresses its shock and dismay at the brutal assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, Member of Parliament. Dr. Thiruchelvam was an internationally renowned constitutional expert, a brilliant academic, a thoughtful and eloquent parliamentarian and committed peace activist. For over two decades he played a vital, often unobtrusive role in conflict resolution and the quest for peace with justice. The tragedy is that Dr. Thiruchelvam had so much more to contribute to this country in all these

spheres.

He decided to stay in Sri Lanka and work for peace with justice in his own way and in the manner he believed was appropriate and right, even though a person of his outstanding ability could have acquired a position in the most eminent universities in the world.

The treacherous killing of Dr. Thiruchelvam, who was a statesman par excellence is a clear indication of those responsible, seeking to close whatever democratic space available, for the genuine articulation of the problems of the minorities. This would only lead to making the conflict further intractable. The NCC always condemns the use of violence and extra judicial means to achieve one's objectives. It stands unequivocally in condemning this cowardice act and calls upon the LTTE to refrain from such acts in the future.

The National Christian Council can think of no greater tribute to Neelan, than for all those who are shocked by his untimely death to rededicate themselves to the struggle for peace, the struggle for which Neelan has paid the supreme sacrifice.

The Council expresses its deepest condolence and sympathies to Sithie, Niruganan and Mithran Thiruchelvam."

In a press statement, **Vasudeva Nanayakkara MP** said: "Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam's assassination is yet another grave blow to the political democracy of our country. It is an unbearable loss to the intellectual world. His loss will be felt internationally. As the Chairperson of the Minority Rights Group based in London he occupied a position of no small international responsibility. His contributions in the field of human rights and his numerous efforts to develop the ideas and institutions of democracy here and abroad will be a lasting monument to his memory.

The convulsive violence given rise to by state repression created the necessary background for this tragedy as in most such other cases. In the face of his tragic death our indomitable faith in the ultimate triumph of democracy has become renewed and that is the most eloquent tribute we can offer, in his memory."

Statement issued by **K Premachandran**, Secretary of the **EPRLF** said: "We are deeply pained to hear that Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, the National list MP from the TULF has been assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber in the heart of Colombo. With his untimely

demise the Tamil people have lost another talented and dedicated intellectual, who unlike many others chose to remain in this country and offered his vast knowledge and experience to be utilised in the search for a reasonable and just solution to the National Question of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Thiruchelvam was greatly respected not only in Sri Lanka but also internationally for his academic knowledge and deep commitment to human rights and for his strong belief in democratic and peaceful means in resolving political conflicts. The main aim of the perpetrators of this cowardly act is to physically eliminate the moderate and democratic leaders so that the claim for sole representative of the Tamil people by the dictatorial leadership of LTTE could be achieved. The Tamil people are, once again made to bang their head in shame for allowing the emergence of such a brutal and barbaric force from amidst our community and for tolerating all the crimes perpetrated in the name of liberation."

The **Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE)** in a press statement said: "We condemn with disgust the assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam who emerged from the Tamil Community as a much-learned intellectual. He was deeply committed establish ethnic peace and worked resolutely for the resolution of the ethnic conflict. His assassination clearly demonstrates the forces rearing its head to resist and block all avenues available for consensus resolution to the national question. It also characterizes the barbaric fascist terrorism which is gradually destroying the Tamil Community.

Neelan Thiruchelvam worked with selfless dedication to realise the much cherished peace in the island. He has given us the message of hope to work for peace without giving into any form of extremism. He worked untiringly to obtain the support of all opposition parties to expedite the bringing of the Draft Constitution to the Parliament, whilst leaving room for amendments and check the declining confidence of the Tamil Community in the government. He has paid with his life for this dedicated effort.

Once Swami Vivekananda said "anybody who dedicates his/her logical intellect to the cause of peace and not for the bullets in the battle field is a messenger from God" as Neelan has always been to us.

We salute him!"

The **Catholic Bishops' Conference** in a statement said: "We pray that at least this brutal killing would touch the conscience of our political leadership and that of the militant groups to provoke a more firm and determined effort to seek out jointly a political solution."

The **Bar Council of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka** unanimously passed the following resolution at its meeting held on 31st July, 1999: "The Bar Association of Sri Lanka expresses shock and horror at, and unreservedly condemns, the brutal assassination of its member Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, President's Counsel and Member of Parliament."

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka conveys its deepest condolences to the wife and sons of the late Dr. Tiruchelvam and to the other members of his family."

Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda and Dr. Kumari Jayawardena on behalf of the **Social Scientists Association** issued the following tribute:

"It is with deep shock and outrage that the Social Scientists' Association (SSA) condemns the brutal assassination of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, parliamentarian, scholar and civil society leader. With this killing, political forces of ethnic extremism have silenced a voice of reason and sanity."

Dr. Tiruchelvam, in his intellectual, political and activist life gave expression to a range of key values and ideals that are essential for the re-building of Sri Lankan society torn asunder by a multiplicity of crises of which the ethnic conflict is most intractable manifestation. He was uncompromising in his commitment to ethnic reconciliation, inter-ethnic peace, pluralist democracy, human rights, social justice and decency in public affairs.

His was a mind of considerable intellectual energy and perseverance which shined under conditions of darkness and barbarism. It is no exaggeration to say that the terms of Sri Lanka's contemporary discourse of democratic political reform were largely germinated in his creative mind and his tireless interaction with all those who shared with him the ideals of a decent, peaceful world. Dr. Tiruchelvam earned much praise and some wrath for this singular contribution he made to enrich the political and constitutional thinking of Sri Lanka.

With the untimely demise of Dr.

Neelan Tiruchelvam, all communities of Sri Lanka have lost a truly visionary bridge-builder. South Asia has lost one of its most creative democratic-reformist thinkers. We pay tribute to a colleague who has always been an inspiring presence among us.

Let this tragic death of a man of peace and moderation become a moment for the resuscitating of political forces committed to national reconciliation."

The **Women Coalition for Peace** in a statement said: "Let Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam not have died in vain. Let us celebrate his multicultural vision and way of life even as we mourn his passing. As with the ground swell for peace that swept Israel in the wake of the assassination of Ytsak Rabin, let this assassination of a tireless and visionary campaigner for peace and ethnic harmony become a turning point in the bloody armed conflict that has plagued Sri Lanka for sixteen years. Let Dr. Neelan's death resuscitate the voices for peace and justice that have been silenced by the senseless cruelty and mindless talk and acts of those who advocate violence to save or defend nations be they Tamil, Sinhala or other."

"The Women's Coalition for Peace condemns the LTTE killers of Dr. Tiruchelvam, but notes that neither the LTTE nor the Tamil people have a monopoly on violence and extremism. Those who advocate the tyranny of a Sinhala majority and are willing to speak and act violently to this end are mirror images of the LTTE's ruthless intolerance, and disrespect for different cultures and opinions. Dr. Tiruchelvam's death should serve as a warning of the proliferation of a culture of intolerance and ethnic extremism in Sri Lankan society today. Neelan was killed because he worked actively towards bringing about a just political solution to the armed conflict through devolution and power sharing among Sri Lanka's diverse communities."

"The Women's Coalition for Peace urges all parties in the conflict to move forward and constructively with the work of devolution for which Dr. Tiruchelvam was killed, so that a lasting and just peace might be gained in Sri Lanka - an island that until recently was famed for its multiculturalism and the peaceful co-existence of diverse cultures and religious traditions. Women's Coalition for Peace."

## India's Intellectuals Condemn Assassination

Some of India's most prominent intellectuals have jointly expressed their shock and outrage over the assassination of TULF parliamentarian and scholar Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam.

The signatories to a short statement issued in Delhi include world renowned historian Romila Thapar, Hindu philosopher-activist Swami Agnivesh, social scientist Ashish Nandy, famed dancer Chandralekha and journalist Kuldip Nayar.

Their statement said: "We are deeply shocked at the assassination of Neelan Tiruchelvam by a suicide bomber reportedly of the LTTE and conducted in a manner characteristic of LTTE. We unreservedly condemn such cruel and senseless violence."

"Neelan was a person of extraordinary talent, great intellectual refinement and unwavering political commitment for democracy, pluralism, secularism, justice and humanism. His was a voice of reason which compelled attention and inspired thousands of scholars,

thinkers, activists and political leaders not just in Sri Lanka but all over South Asia.

"We in India who had the privilege to know Neelan have always admired him for his outstanding work on conciliation, peace and political devolution in Sri Lanka, his fierce opposition to ethnocentric nationalism, chauvinism and militarism, his efforts at promoting South Asian Solidarity and his great courage as well as immense personal charm."

"Neelan was eliminated by forces of extreme intolerance because they cannot coexist with democracy, reason and human values. His death only underscores the importance of fighting such forces in our entire region and of reaffirming our commitment to what Neelan stood for."

"We send our deepest condolences to Seethi, their two sons and Neelan's countless friends and admirers".

The statement was signed by:

(continued on next page)

## A Champion of a Just and Gentle Society

Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu

Yet another brutal murder and this time of one of the most articulate and effective spokespersons of liberal opinion in this country. Internationally recognised as such, Neelan Tiruchelvam was much more than the eloquent embodiment of moderate Tamil opinion. His vision and commitment was to a just and gentle society in which both political culture and structures would secure the diversity and pluralism of its peo-

ple. Neelan's was the voice of tolerance and reason on any number of issues of human rights, law and society and ethnicity. His contribution was at the intellectual and political levels and it was immense.

His name will always be associated with the pursuit of peace and unity in this country through a political settlement incorporating constitutional guarantees. That this was possible was an article of faith for Neelan and he gave his life for it. In his quiet and determined way, he was convinced that his was a sine qua non for the resolution of the conflict even if there were problems regarding its implementation.

It is indeed especially tragic that at a time at which the devolution proposals are expected to be presented to parliament, Neelan will not be there to define its vision and broader purpose, explain its design and detail and elaborate on necessary amendments with the quiet authority and intellectual brilliance which he alone commanded. There will

be no greater tribute to Neelan than the acceptance and implementation of a constitutional settlement to the ethnic conflict founded on the principles of democratic governance. Neelan knew that this was not only desirable but absolutely necessary for a just and durable peace.

His unshakable conviction in this respect was anathema to his fascist killers and to their propagandists who sustain a climate of conflict and of fear and loathing through talk of treason and treachery. Within the Tamil community from which this murder was sprung, it is time to resolve and to realise that so much and too many of great value are being destroyed by this senseless bloodletting. Liberation cannot be soaked in blood and guts and steeped in hate, if it is, in turn, to be of value.

All the ideas he espoused, the institutions he founded and nurtured and the politics he civilised are now confronted with the profound challenge of his ghastly death. He knew that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil was for good men to do nothing. And the community of the sensitive of which he was so distinguished a member, now have many, many more miles to go before they can sleep...

(Continued from page 16)

Romila Thapar, Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Praful Bidwai, Veena Das, Ambrose Pinto, Abha Bhaiya, Miloon Kothari, Sayeeda Hamid, Maya Daruwala, Kuldip Nayyar, Seema Mustafa, Swami Agnivesh, Kamal Chenoy Mitra, Prabir Purkayastha, Imrana Qadeer, Dunu Roy, Chandrekha, Sadananda Menon, Kalpana Kannabiran, Vasanth Kannabiran, K. G. Kannabiran, Sudesh Vaid, Kumkum Sanghari, Smitha Kothari, Rajni Kothari and Ashis Nandy.



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15 AUGUST 1999

"ANY man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind," wrote the metaphysical poet John Donne. The ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka continues to exact a heavy human toll. In my personal capacity as a Sri Lankan Tamil and in my professional capacity as a journalist writing on the ethnic strife, I have lost count of the number of people related or known to me who have encountered violent deaths. But no man's death as a result of the war in northern Sri Lanka has diminished me as that of Neelan Tiruchelvam on July 29.

Neelakandan Tiruchelvam, well-known as Neelan or Dr. Neelan, strove ceaselessly to achieve a peaceful solution to the Tamils issue. He dedicated himself to that cause with a sense of purpose, although he could have easily pursued a lucrative academic or professional career as a lawyer in Sri Lanka or abroad. He chose to remain in Colombo through very trying circumstances and pursue his vision of a lasting political settlement where all communities, including that of his own, the Sri Lankan Tamils, coexisted with justice, dignity and peace. His death is an irreparable loss to the country in particular and humanity in general.

I had a close personal relationship with Neelan. He was my friend, philosopher and guide. He was greatly instrumental in moulding my career. It was Neelan Tiruchelvam who facilitated my initial journalistic links with The Hindu and Frontline. Although I have been living abroad for the past decade, I have been in constant touch with him. I was perhaps one of the last persons to speak to him on that fateful day. I spoke with him until 8.40 a.m. He was killed at 9.15 a.m. Tiruchelvam is no more! I shall miss him sorely.

Generally known as Neelan or Dr. Neelan the 55 year old politico academic was certainly one of the leading intellectuals in South Asia. The first Sri Lankan to obtain a Ph D in law from the prestigious Harvard University Neelan was acknowledged as one of the foremost Constitutional experts in the world let alone Sri Lanka. According to the apologists of his assassins Neelan whose services were eagerly sought after by international academia had to be eliminated for playing a constructive role in constitution making in his

# NEELAN'S KILLING

## A Tragedy Beyond Belief

D B S Jeyaraj

own country. The man who was consulted in various global fora for his intellectual input was perceived by a virulent segment of his own community as a 'poisonous weed' that had to be eradicated.

July 27th 1975 was the date on which Alfred Duraiappa, a former Mayor of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka was killed by the Tamil New Tigers. It was hailed by some quarters then as a singular achievement that would usher in political liberation for the Tamils. Duraiappa, the alleged collaborator of the then Sirima Bandaranaike government, was depicted as a treacherous weed that had to be destroyed if the Tamils were to win their rightful place under the sun. The current LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran stated once in an interview with 'India Today' that one of his earliest involvement in a major military encounter was the assassination of Mayor Duraiappa. Much blood has flown since and many more lives have been 'weeded out' but the goal of Tamil Eelam seems elusive and distant as ever.

Now after 24 years and two days later Neelan Tiruchelvam has been killed. Once again the familiar chants are being parroted. This loss however is tremendous. Those Tamils blinded as they are by the scorching glare of pseudo-nationalism may not be in a position to behold this. But the time will come when the Tamil society by and large will wake up and realise that the killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam is a great tragedy and the resulting grievous loss encompasses the entire community.

The killing shocked and horrified national and international opinion. A precedent was created by US President Bill Clinton when he issued immediately a condolence message on behalf of himself and the first lady Hilary Clinton. The latter had met Neelan personally a few years ago when visiting Sri Lanka. Apparently Neelan had impressed her greatly a point emphasised

ow Sithie.

Apart from Clinton, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the UN Commissioner of Human Rights Mary Robinson also issued special messages. The UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination Against Minorities suspended usual proceedings to pass a special resolution condemning the assassination of Neelan. Most diplomatic representatives in Colombo issued statements. Human Rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Article 19 too criticised the killing.

The LTTE in its customary fashion has neither claimed credit nor denied responsibility. Yet two factors point significantly to the involvement of the Tigers in the murder. First, the human bomb has become the trademark of an LTTE-type assassination. The second and more important factor is the consistent hostility displayed by the LTTE towards Neelan Tiruchelvam. Tiger-controlled media organs in Sri Lanka and abroad have been attacking him for nearly four years now. Tamil politicians and newspapers in Colombo, seeking to curry favour with the Tigers, too have followed suit. As for LTTE propaganda, Neelan Tiruchelvam has been the most reviled Tamil politician and the pet object of hate. The LTTE's poet laureate, Puthuvai Rathinadurai, writing under the pseudonym Viyaasan, has constantly referred to him as a throg (traitor), who clings to President Chandrika Kumaratunga's munthanai (free end of the saree) and who must be destroyed. The LTTE had been preparing the ground for the assassination.

This is the method it has usually adopted: first it would denigrate Tamil politicians thereby creating a hostile climate and building up mass ill-feeling towards them, and then strike. Now, the LTTE-controlled media have started its second phase of the campaign. While the "official" LTTE has remained silent, its minions in the media have resumed their attack on Neelan

Tiruchelvam, describing him as a traitor. The Tiger mouthpiece in Canada, "Muzhakkam" (Thunder), for instance, has published a diatribe, which accuses Neelan Tiruchelvam, among other things, of intending to "implement the devolution package during his visiting professorship tenure scheduled for this autumn/fall."

The LTTE and its supporters have been critical of the constitutional reforms proposals, known generally as the devolution package, which seek to find a solution to the decades-old ethnic strife. It was the legal, constitutional and political expertise of Neelan Tiruchelvam that contributed to the formulation of the package. While Sinhala hardliners accuse him of promoting separatism by trying to push through the devolution package, the LTTE and its cohorts accuse him of betraying Tamil interests. These contrasting allegations made by the hawks on both sides are proof enough that Neelan Tiruchelvam was on the right track in seeking a negotiated settlement that would provide maximum devolution. The criticism of Neelan Tiruchelvam by pro-LTTE Tamil sections and the silence of the "official" LTTE show clearly who was behind the assassination.

Ironically, the Sinhala sections, which had earlier maintained that the package was detrimental to their interests, now state that the LTTE killed Neelan Tiruchelvam because he was trying to promote a package that was harmful to the interests of the Tamils. It is not difficult to discern that beneath the veneer of professed sympathy, the Sinhala sections want devolution denied and a hard line adopted against the LTTE. It would be doubly ironical to abort the devolution exercise on the pretext of the death of a person, whose political passion was to see it through.

Various theories are afloat about the motive and timing of the killing. While the most common one is that it is a signal to the proponents of devolution to abandon the process, others believe that it is part of an overall assault on the TULF itself. Another view is that the Tigers feared that Neelan Tiruchelvam would indulge in international propaganda against them during his tenure at the Harvard University and so launched a pre-emptive strike.

Neelan Tiruchelvam himself believed that the LTTE would not deploy a suicide bomber but only use a gun-

man/woman to kill him. He felt that human bombs were meant only for important and high-profile targets such as Rajiv Gandhi and R. Premadasa. It was perhaps a manifestation of his modesty that he considered himself a target of lesser importance. But when the LTTE used suicide killers to target Chief Inspector of Police Mohammed Nilabdeen in an abortive bid in Mount Lavinia and another to kill Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front's (EPRLF) para-military leader Razeek in Batticaloa, it became clear that the Tigers had reached a desperate situation wherein relatively less important victims too had become their targets. In that sense, it was inevitable that Neelan Tiruchelvam too would be targeted by a suicide killer.

The murder of Tiruchelvam makes it obvious that the Tigers are targeting the remaining TULF leaders, though these leaders are, day in and day out, calling upon the government to begin negotiations with the LTTE. This assessment arises not from the wisdom of hindsight alone. It appears that the Tigers revised their strategy because of TULF's changed perceptions. They seem resolved to wipe out TULF as a viable political entity. They will do this through methods of co-option, expulsion, exclusion and, finally, elimination. This decision to strike at the TULF leadership appears to have been made a few months ago. This is in a sense an indirect compliment to TULF. It is also an indicator of the LTTE's political insecurity and paranoia regarding the true feelings of the Tamil people.

The LTTE has become increasingly irritated by the TULF. It found that TULF's role in formulating the devolution package and its issue-based support to the Chandrika Kumaratunga regime bestowed upon the Government greater acceptance and credibility. It also found that despite the insistence of the Tigers that only they be regarded as the sole representative of the Tamil people, it was TULF that enjoyed global approval. Neelan Tiruchelvam himself contributed greatly towards enhancing TULF's image among foreign diplomats, journalists, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). What the LTTE did not realise was that by its own actions it was being alienated from the international community. This refusal to examine and reappraise its faults resulted in the cultivation of a bitter hatred towards TULF.

The Tigers appear to have decided to strike really hard at TULF. The objective was to make it cease as a functional entity. This approach was paralleled by a similar hardline approach against other Tamil groups. Several stalwarts of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and the EPDP too have been killed. In deference to a "final request" by the LTTE, several junior members of these groups have broken ranks and joined the Tigers. Also, many of these groups are riddled with internal divisions. There have also been many inter-group clashes. They have also indulged in several human rights violations against the Tamil people. Their stock among the Tamils is at an all-time low, and in the eyes of the Tigers they pose no political threat.

But TULF, with its slogan of "unarmed democracy", is a different prospect. So the LTTE is determined to do two things. One is to create conditions in the North-East that would make it difficult for members of TULF to contest elections there. Secondly, render the party defunct or at least dysfunctional. On the other hand, the Tigers may promote pro-Tiger independent groups to contest in that area. For this to happen, TULF has to go. And this is what is happening now.

The MPs from Batticaloa district have been asked to refrain from attending public functions and are also barred from meeting people. When the TULF MPs remonstrated by wondering how they could prevent voters from coming and seeing them, the Tigers said: "In that case we will come along with the people and meet you in the way you deserve to be met." The Tigers also issued a notice that the public should keep away from TULF because they may suffer harm. The MPs of Batticaloa are in Colombo now. The LTTE also issued an ultimatum that all TULF branches in Amparai district should be dissolved and that announcements to the effect be made in the newspapers before August 10.

In June, Sri Lankan investigators apprehended an LTTE member from whom information was extracted about the presence of a 10-member LTTE suicide squad in Colombo for specific purposes. Among the targets were TULF MPs R. Sambandan and Neelan Tiruchelvam, and former MP and current senior vice-president V. Ananda-

sangary. On July 2, the Internal Intelligence Department of the National Intelligence Bureau issued a specific warning to the Defence Ministry about the threat to the trio. On July 13, the threat was conveyed by Defence Secretary Chandrananda de Silva to Sambandan.

Neelan Tiruchelvam himself was away in Bellaggio, Italy on a Rockefeller fellowship between June 18 and July 18 when this information surfaced. He was informed of this upon his return on July 19. Since his life has been under threat for quite some time, he was not unduly perturbed. In any case, he was scheduled to be in the United States from late August until December for the Harvard University lecture on "Ethnicity, Constitutionalism and Human Rights".

Besides, whenever I cautioned him about his safety he had a fatalistic expectation about death. "No one can prevent it when it happens, we just have to go on doing what we have to do," he told me once. He also seemed to have a premonition about how he was going to die. "There are countless vehicles in Colombo now. There is a traffic jam at every junction. All security measures

become a mockery if my car is held up. None of the police assigned for my safety will be able to do anything." How tragically prophetic were those words. The lone assassin slipped easily between vehicles held up at the traffic snarl at Rosemead Place and blew himself up.

The killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam at this juncture was perhaps part of an overall campaign to terrorise TULF into political oblivion. At the same time, the ripple effect of the killing would certainly affect Tamil attitudes towards the devolution package. It is also an open secret that TULF's presence in Colombo relied heavily on the resources of Neelan Tiruchelvam. He donated his entire parliamentary allowances and perks to the party. Thus his death is certainly a death blow to the party's office.

There is also another little known factor that may have contributed to the Tiger antipathy. Neelan Tiruchelvam is one of the few Tamils who dared to spurn a "request" by the LTTE that he should support and work for it. Although the LTTE attempts to portray Neelan Tiruchelvam as some sort of a traitor with whom it would never have

any interaction, there was a time when it solicited his services. It was politely rebuffed.

The Tigers have also used statements and pronouncements made by Neelan Tiruchelvam with regard to the ethnic crisis when it suited them. It was Neelan Tiruchelvam who kept the TULF flag flying in Colombo between 1983 and 1989. Almost every foreign journalist interviewed him. Neelan Tiruchelvam would in his cautious, gentle manner make profound observations that vividly highlighted the Tamils' plight in Lanka. His international credibility was so great that almost every comment made by him received wide publicity and had a great impact. The Tigers then would quote and cite these in their own propaganda endeavours.

This situation, however, changed in the 1990s. Neelan Tiruchelvam was virtually blacked out in the LTTE media. His endeavours in and outside Parliament to alleviate the sufferings of the Tamils were deliberately ignored. Instead he was always portrayed in a negative light and depicted as a "demon" collaborating with the Govern-

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# Neelan: A Great and Noble Son of the Country & the World

Professor Savithri Goonesekere

In a voice choked with emotion, Professor Savithri Goonesekere, Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo delivered this eulogy to Neelan Tiruchelvam at the General Cemetery, Kanatte on July 31:

"We are present here this afternoon to pay our last tribute and collectively grieve for our friend, Neelan Tiruchelvam.

I first met Neelan and Sithie as fresh faced young and eager students at the Department of Law of the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. My husband Raja Goonesekere and our friends Ranjith and Yvonne Amarasingha forged with them from that time a friendship that has stretched over three decades. We as young teachers and they as young students experienced those Shangri-La days of Sri Lankan campus life. We shared a common intellectual tradition, a world of scholarship and friendship, and eventually became trusted and very dear colleagues and friends. So Neelan and Sithie passed with honours and accolades through the groves of academic and came into our homes and hearts. Over the years they shared our joys and successes; they were always there for us in times of sorrow and pain. It is not easy for any of us gathered here to confront the anguish of his loss.

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ment against the Tamils.

Although he knew that the Tigers targeted him, he did not criticise them. He never speaks harshly to anyone, not even to his worst enemy. In the case of the LTTE, Neelan Tiruchelvam had tremendous sympathy for its cadres although he was totally against its overall objective and methods. He was of the opinion that these youth were sacrificing their lives needlessly for an impractical and unattainable goal.

One instance of his magnanimity and integrity was when he told the Canadian national daily The Globe and Mail that the LTTE chief in Canada, Suresh Manickavasagam, was likely to be "interrogated aggressively" if deported. This remark by him was of great value to Suresh Manickavasagam's

For Neelan meant so many different things to each of us. He was a cherished and adored husband and father; a Kinsman; a friend; a valued colleague; a legislator; a mediator; a reformist, a statesman. To reflect on his life is to marvel at the manner in which he touched the lives of so many people, with his intellectual sensitivity, vibrance and understanding, and his profound sense of commitment and caring. The scholar and the intellectual of international repute radiated humility and cheerfulness at all times. These were among his most endearing traits which helped him have time for others and bound him to the many young people who he encouraged and supported throughout his life. His devotion to his beloved Sithie, Niggy, and Mithi extended beyond them and to all of us.

Neelan's intellectual stature in the country, in the region, and internationally is well documented and known. It would trivialise his life to mention the many accolades and recognition he won over the short span of his professional and political career. I would rather like to pay tribute to that other and very special unique facet of his personality. Neelan was above all a brilliant and articulate thinker, to whom scholarship was the very life he breathed. Despite

lawyers in obtaining an injunction against the deportation order. Although his detractors accuse him of collaborating, Neelan Tiruchelvam always fought for the Tamils' rights. He was uncompromising and fearlessly independent in that. Only his approach was not that of a rabble-rouser or a cheap showman. His was the quiet, behind-the-scenes approach of a democratic hue.

The brightest star in the Tamil political firmament is no more. His killing is a tragedy beyond belief. The Tamil people will take some time to realise that the assassination of Neelan Tiruchelvam is not only a personal loss to his family, friends, party and admirers, but an overwhelming tragedy that encompasses the community as a whole.

all the demands on his time, he would read the many books in his library, reflect on what he read, and then emerge with a flow of creative ideas that would be difficult for most of us to absorb and articulate. Sterile scholarship was not for Neelan. He represented that great intellectual tradition which recognises that thinking and ideas have no relevance and meaning unless they can contribute to the well being of people.

It is I think for this reason that Neelan did not take an easy path and make an illustrious career for himself in a prestigious seat of learning or international agency in some other part of the world. He chose to live and work in Sri Lanka with Sithie and the boys in the deep belief that he could make a contribution and impact on the familiar world he had known from childhood. And for that he paid a terrible price.

It is almost impossible to believe that Neelan and Sithie, with all the choices available to them, decided to live in this country and work hard for the peace, ethnic and religious harmony that they had seen shattered over and over again from the time of their own childhood and youth. Neelan was a Hindu Tamil by birth and tradition, and yet above all, a symbol of that vision of ethnic and religious tolerance and peace that we so desperately need to realise in this country today. I would like to pay my last tribute to this great and noble son of our country and the world from a translated piece of 'Subasithaya':

*"It is futile to have a hundred children lacking in goodness; Yet a single child of goodness and wisdom is the greatest treasure, A hundred stars together cannot lighten the darkness Yet a single full moon can shed light in a darkened world."*

Neelan shone brightly and uniquely as a great son of Sri Lanka; a statesman of peace, integrity and idealism in the midst of adversarial politics, and as a cherished family man, and friend and kinsman.

Everyone, including the international community must recognise in this ultimate act of violence the hypocrisy and evilness of destroying precious lives in the name of freedom. Let those who censored by death this gentleman of peace, and the extremists and hate-mongers of all communities with our country and outside, understand that Neelan's voice, his vision and his life

(continued on next page)



# An Intellectual and an Institution

Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy

A FEW days before his death, Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam gave a memorial lecture for one of Sri Lanka's leading lawyers. Before the doyens of the legal community, he spoke of the Tamil epic Silappadikaram and, using its symbolism, analysed modern constitutional law, including the concepts of the unitary state, democracy and human rights. According to those present at the lecture, this was Tiruchelvam at his best, weaving cultural symbols with the cold face of the law, giving it life and meaning. They said that it was a supreme moment of triumph, a brilliant presentation by one of South Asia's leading jurists. The speech also highlighted Tiruchelvam's twin interests and the motivating forces of his life - the law and the love for South Asian culture.

Tiruchelvam was the son of one of Sri Lanka's leading lawyers and Tamil politicians. From a young age he was trained in the law by his father. He excelled in the law school and then went on to do his Master of Laws (LLM) and SJD at the Harvard Law School, where he was a Fulbright scholar. He formed a life-long attachment to this institution and often went back to teach for a semester or two. The Boston Globe carried the grief-stricken statements of his colleagues at the Law School, including the Dean, upon hearing the news of his death. On September 17, the Law School will have a special commemoration to celebrate the life and work of Neelan Tiruchelvam. Close family members have been invited to be present on the occasion.

This tribute by one of the world's leading law schools highlights the fact that Tiruchelvam was first and foremost a scholar. His political activism was a result of deeply held beliefs arising out

(Continued from page 16)

will inspire us to say "No" to the hypocrisy, the hatred and the violence.

Sithie, Niggy and Mithi, and all of us will not say goodbye to Neelan and everything he stood for. His life, his ideas, his vision of goodness, sanity and harmony will and must resonate today and into the next century and millennium that he did not live to see." ●

of his scholarship and his love of ideas. He was a voracious reader. Despite his many commitments, he found the time to read the many books in his comprehensive library. What was fascinating about Tiruchelvam's approach to law was that from its very inception it was multi-disciplinary. His first thesis was a socio-legal study of Kandyan Law. Throughout his career he read books on history, anthropology, sociology and political science. He carried on a constant dialogue with the leading thinkers of South Asia, from Ashis Nandy to Gananath Obeyesekere. He drew them around him and their work and ideas infused the institutions of research that he set up in Sri Lanka.

Tiruchelvam's primary area of interest was constitutional law. Although his concern for human rights animated most of his work, he was interested in all aspects of constitutional law. His skills in this area were recognised internationally and he was asked to help draft constitutions in Central Asia and Ethiopia. It was his belief that constitutions should be consensual, not instrumental, and that they should represent the moral firmament of the society. It is this attitude that motivated his involvement in Sri Lanka's exercises in constitution drafting since the 1970s. Not all his ideas were accepted but he tried his best to persuade government after government that they should strengthen the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution and that a genuine scheme of devolution was the only way to meet the aspirations of the Tamil-speaking peoples of the North and the East. His idealistic belief that he could persuade Machiavellian governments to do the right thing was often criticised and ridiculed. Only those closest to him knew that such an attitude stemmed from his belief that moral persuasion and dialogue were the only way forward, not rancour, bitterness or armed conflict.

It is in the area of human rights that Tiruchelvam made his greatest mark and it is human rights activists all over the world who will miss his work the most. The research institutions he set up, the International Centre for Ethnic

Studies (ICES) and the Law and Society Trust, became important fora for human rights research and activism. Scholars and activists from all over the world, especially those from South Asia, gathered at regular intervals at these institutions to dialogue and discuss strategies of action. The two institutions have produced a plethora of books, articles and manuals on every aspect of human rights. Their journals and newsletters carry the latest developments and analyses on human rights questions in Sri Lanka and the rest of the world. Tiruchelvam was deeply concerned about the human rights situation in his own country; he was also passionately interested in the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi, for whom he sponsored a resolution in the Sri Lankan Parliament. He was concerned among others about indigenous people, the Chakma tribal people of Bangladesh, military rule in Pakistan and women's rights in Afghanistan. He fought all these causes and actively worked for the protection of human rights at the international level.

Tiruchelvam's commitment to human rights made him an integral part of international civil society. The outpouring of grief in statement after statement from well-known human rights groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the special commemoration meeting held in the premises of the United Nations in New York, testify to this fact. Their response to his death was captured at the sub-commission session of the Human Rights Commission when Mary Robinson, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Chairman Aisborne Eide made special references to Tiruchelvam in their opening presentations.

Tiruchelvam was also elected Chairman of the prestigious Minority Rights Group in London. The Group's commitment to his vision is so deep that it has opened a Website on his life and work. While academics continue to mourn him, it is human rights activists who have already made his name internationally famous. He will be another martyr in their cause and another reason for their increased activism against all forms of barbarism and intolerance.

Tiruchelvam's interest in the law was not limited to the Constitution. With his wife Sithie, he developed one of the foremost law firms in Sri Lanka, Tiruchelvam Associates, which is the

leading law firm in the field of corporate and commercial law. Tiruchelvam's interest in this area was also from the perspective of the underdog. He was very interested in the law's regulation of the economy and in developing negotiating skills so that Third World countries could deal with multinationals. When he was a director of research at the Marga Institute, he spent a great deal of time doing research into international contracts and the need for increasing the bargaining power of Third World countries. He was inspired by the New International Economic Order and the need for a legal framework for poverty alleviation.

Tiruchelvam's other abiding interest and passion was South Asian culture. While the love of law came from his father, the love of South Asian culture was inherited from his mother, Punidham Tiruchelvam, an extraordinary woman who was involved in Tamil cultural life and social service. Tiruchelvam's interest in cultural studies as a whole made him focus on ethnicity as a phenomenon. He set up the ICES, which has now gained worldwide reputation. A large part of the centre's programme was related to politi-

cal issues of power-sharing and ethnic equity. It engaged in projects that studied devolution, federalism, language policy, land settlement and employment equity. Publications emerged as he encouraged researchers to work hard.

His rapport with young people was extraordinary. He made each one of them feel special. He expected them to put in the 24-hour day that he put into his work. He inspired them with ideas, encouraged them to read books and, as Ruwanthie Chickera said at his funeral, he taught them that the only difference between a dream and reality was the will power to make it happen. Dozens of young people from Sri Lanka and all over the world have passed through the ICES and the Law and Society Trust in the last 20 years. When the news of Tiruchelvam's death hit the world press, phone calls and e-mail came pouring in. Many wept uncontrollably for the man who had often given them their first research idea, who had encouraged their natural creativity, and who was always swilling to give them responsibility. His legacy is worldwide and the enormous international response is partly owing to the activism

of these young people. I am certain they will not allow Tiruchelvam's name to be forgotten.

Many of the young people and interns who came to the ICES were feminists, who were drawn to its feminist research programme. Tiruchelvam was particularly interested in feminist theory and its contribution to legal paradigms and he closely followed their work. When he died, the news was contained on all the leading feminist e-mail networks with special tributes, a rare privilege for a man in a very woman's world. His last act at the centre was to encourage me with words and ideas to deal with some of the long-term issues raised by the problem of women, ethnicity and armed conflict, a lecture I was to give in Geneva as part of an ICES lecture series. He had inaugurated this lecture series against all odds to correspond with the meetings of the U.N. Working Group on Minorities. He was delighted when Mary Robinson agreed to chair this meeting, put together by a Third World NGO. He read my script in detail and gave me extensive notes, as he had done throughout my working life. He was the "safety net" for many people and many insti-

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tutions. Despite his severe commitments, Tiruchelvam gave every research colleague and intern his full attention, read their work and made detailed suggestions. That is how seriously he took the world of ideas.

Tiruchelvam's interest in ethnicity was not only political but cultural. He pushed the ICES to organise cultural events. He loved films and, as a result, the centre organised a South Asian Documentary Film Festival for many years. Contemporary films were screened at the ICES. He invited musicians and dancers from different parts of South Asia to give demonstrations and lectures. Leading exponents of Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music have passed through the portals of the ICES Colombo.

Tiruchelvam's interest in culture was not limited to specific events; it was also about everyday life. If a visitor came from abroad, he or she was given the typical "Neelan tour". They were taken to the Gotami Vihara, where the chief priest often showed them the George Keyt paintings. They were then taken on a tour of the Dutch remnants of the Fort area and, finally, at dusk, they were taken to the temple in Dehiwela, with the Buddha with the Sapphire Eyes. The priest would light the lamp near the eyes of the Buddha and after that sight, enlightenment always had a special meaning.

His love for culture was not merely confined to the culture of Sri Lanka but of entire South Asia. He collected books and compact discs on all of South Asia. He loved South Indian bronzes; Moghul miniatures and the Sakyamuni Buddha adorned his office. He would hold conferences in the ancient cities of South Asia and before he went to these cities he would study their history and culture. At the conference he would give all the participants a guided tour of the monuments and places of worship. Nothing made him happier than discovering the history and culture of South Asia.

Tiruchelvam and his wife were generous to a fault; they were hospitable to everyone. Tiruchelvam had time for every human being who came to see him - rich or poor, strong or weak. He would go to extraordinary lengths to help people. If he believed someone's story he would leave no stone unturned in his effort to help them. A young couple was weeping in a corner at his funeral house. I asked them their name. They said they were Wijesinghe. They

said that for every problem they would call Tiruchelvam for advice. There were hundreds of such people, including my mother and her many widowed friends. He would always have time for them and he always came up with suggestions and solutions.

Despite his love of scholarship, Tiruchelvam was also a man who believed that ideas should be put into practice. For this, against the advice of friends and family, he joined the world of politics. He tried to ensure that the ideas he had for constitutional law and multi-culturalism were sustained by his involvement in politics. He enthusiastically joined any attempt to change constitutions and ethnic politics. He tried to influence constitution drafting. He was instrumental in setting up the Official Languages Commission; much of the legislation was drafted in his office. He greatly assisted the Ombudsman and the Human Rights Commission and was helping to prepare a draft Equal Protection Commission.

Since his father was a leading Tamil politician, Tiruchelvam entered politics through the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). He was deeply concerned about the Tamil people and their aspirations. He implored the Government to act with restraint in conducting the war. He was always for a negotiated solution. But being a pacifist and being non-violent to the core, he put his energies into drafting constitutions and creating human rights institutions in government as well as civil society.

Tamil politics nurtured Tiruchelvam and it was Tamil politics that killed him. He would spend a lot of time caring for individual Tamil victims of the war and emergency regulations. He would voice strong criticism (even if it was done in private) and helped the government agents in the various war-affected areas articulate their grievances about the needs of the civilian population. Several hours were spent on the telephone pleading his case with the powers that be. He was not always successful but he never stopped trying, believing that dialogue and discussion were the only way forward. The Tamils have lost a powerful voice that articulated their grievances within the democratic fabric of Sri Lanka.

His involvement in political life encouraged many of his civil society activities. He was a great believer in parliamentary democracy and the independence of the judiciary. He believed in the primacy of electoral politics. At

the ICES, he inaugurated a programme of elections monitoring for all of South Asia. The ICES brought together leaders of civil society and he took them to monitor elections in Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and even Sri Lanka. When the process of constitutional drafting was on, he gathered all the leading intellectuals of the region at seminars and discussions to get their inputs into the process. He was passionately committed to non-violence and a democratic process. That was more important to him than ethnic ideology. He used the democratic process to further the interests of the Tamil-speaking people but he was interested in all aspects of democratic life. His institutions of civil society were actively engaged in ensuring that his democratic vision would have concrete manifestations.

Several people believed that Tiruchelvam was the most brilliant product of his generation. He was not only an ideas man. He created dynamic institutions both in civil society and in the government. His commitment to institution-building was unparalleled in South Asia. He was a creative, imaginative person who was also blessed with a practical, analytical mind. His death must not end with the triumph of mediocrity and barbarism in a country often filled with despair. It is important that his legacy be continued and that those whom he relied upon help make his vision a reality.

With the death of Tiruchelvam, the world has lost a man who dreamed impossible dreams and made them a reality. Sri Lanka has lost a democrat and a peace-maker; the Tamil people have lost a man who deeply cared for their security and their aspirations; his colleagues have lost their inspiration and his commitment to excellence; his friends have lost his generosity and nurturing ways and his family has lost a loyal and caring husband and father. We are all poorer without him. As a columnist recently wrote: "We always kill the best." But in responding to his killing we must heed the views of his son Mithran. When a reporter of The New York Times asked him what his father would have felt about the assassination, Mithran replied that his father would not have been angry, he would have only been sad.

(Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy is United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Director, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo.)

# Neelan, the Unobtrusive Peace-maker

Jehan Perera

The month of July has become like the "ides of March" of Shakespeare's Rome. "Beware the ides of March." This year's July had almost come to an end without an abominable crime when it happened. A suicide bomber blew up the car carrying one of Sri Lanka's most distinguished offspring, Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam.

Dr. Tiruchelvam was unique in combining political, academic and civil society activism with humanism and distinction. He strengthened the moderate mainstream of political life. He was a dynamic personality who tried to forge a mainstream political consensus regarding fundamental reform of the Sri Lankan polity. But above all, he was a very fine human being who intended no harm to others and embodied the higher human qualities.

It was during the fearsome period of the JVP insurrection and the Premadasa Presidency, that I frequently called his son Nirgunan to obtain some information about political developments at the national level. Nirgunan was then in his midteens, old enough to know what his father and colleagues were talking about, and young enough to share those secrets with a friend. I remember Niggy, as he was known, once starting to say something deservedly nasty about a politician, then stopping himself. "My father has told me not to speak ill of others," he said. True to this precept, neither did I ever hear Neelan Tiruchelvam speak ill of others.

Dr. Tiruchelvam was one of the least pushy and most refined intellectuals this country has ever produced. He was not a populist. He worked behind the scenes. He was pre-occupied with designing institutions and frameworks within which a multi-ethnic and plural society could be governed, efficiently and equitably. Thanks to the efforts of a few people like him, today the country is moving forward, even if slowly, to a new constitutional framework. In this framework the distinct identities of the different peoples inhabiting this land can be given political ex-

pression while the country remains united. Hopefully, the country will then be able to get away from the present ugly realities.

In the past several decades, but especially the last two, the Tamil people have faced tremendous violence - from the Sri Lankan state, from Sinhalese hoodlums and from Tamil militant organisations. The common cry of Tamil community leaders in Sri Lanka is that they want peace, but it must be "peace with justice". This cry has invariably been directed against the government. But the cruel murder of Neelan Tiruchelvam demonstrates that this cry has also to be directed elsewhere - at the LTTE. There was no justice in killing Neelan Tiruchelvam. But with the exception of the Tamil militant parties, the local voice of condemnation of this horrid crime has been muted.

The most debilitating fear among the Tamils is somewhat similar to that which existed among the Sinhalese for a relatively short period of time during the JVP period and Premadasa presidency. Those who stood out from the common mass even a little bit felt a nagging fear that "big brother" was watching, and might target him or her for murder.

But even at the worst of times, Sinhalese society retained sufficient free space for dissent and conscience. The funerals of Vijaya Kumaratunga and Lalith Athulathmudali were massive expressions of public revulsion against the barbaric assassinations of democratic leaders. The difference is that the Sinhalese never had to deal with the phenomenon of a political force that claimed to their "sole representative."

The claim to be the "sole representative" is incompatible with democracy. On the contrary, it is a throwback to centuries ago, when the doctrine of the "divine right of kings" prevailed. But that is an age that is dead and can never be revived except through coercion by terror and force of arms. It is at this altar of a dead past that Neelan Tiruchelvam was killed, the latest in a

long line of leaders of the Tamil people felled by the LTTE.

It is time that the LTTE realises that its claim to be the "sole representative" of the Tamil people is also not practical and does not promote Tamil interests. For instance, there are certain interests that can be better represented in Colombo, by Tamil parties which have their representatives in Colombo, than by the LTTE which is isolated in the Wannu jungles. An example would be the food crisis in the Wannu. Other examples would be in designing a constitution that safeguards Tamil interests and in obtaining foreign mediation.

Ironically, Neelan Tiruchelvam stood for two of the very fundamental ideas that the LTTE has put forward as being pre-requisites if they are to engage in negotiations with the government. LTTE spokespersons have called on the rival Sinhalese political parties to reach agreement among themselves before talking to them. Neelan Tiruchelvam was a strong campaigner for a bipartisan government-opposition approach to a political solution. He was personable enough to be welcomed to the home and hearth of those at the highest level of national politics on every side of the divide.

In addition, Neelan Tiruchelvam was a strong campaigner on the issue of foreign mediation, which the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran himself called for last year. The presence of many foreign dignitaries at his funeral, and the statements of condolence from US President Clinton and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan showed the immense credibility he had with the international community. By killing him, the LTTE has weakened the totality of forces that could help to bring about a solution favourable to peace with justice for the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

While the LTTE may be by far the most powerful force battling for the Tamil cause, they are not the only force. There are others also, including even Sinhalese, and it is necessary to harness all their support to achieve success. Those who seek peace with justice in Sri Lanka from the podium and the pulpit would be failing in their duty if they do not call the LTTE to account for the assassination of Dr. Tiruchelvam. It is in the interests of all the peoples of this multi-ethnic and plural society that the LTTE responds to this call. ●



# The Man with the Qualities of a Mahatma

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

**A**lthough there have been many Gandhis among the dead and living, there has been only one Mahatma Gandhi. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi earned the title Mahatma for his high-mindedness, wisdom, selflessness and firm belief in peaceful method of winning justice and freedom for all the oppressed people in India. He stood against all forms of oppression that denied justice, equality and freedom to any group separated by caste, gender, ethnic origin, race, language, religion, culture, or region. He opposed violent methods for achieving any goal even if it was just and deserving. He also believed firmly in the unity of all Indians. In short Mahatma Gandhi symbolised the essence of being great.

The principles and practices that Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam followed in his public and personal life and the goals he has been striving to achieve through peaceful means make him fit to be described as having had the qualities of a Mahatma. The tributes that were paid by eminent leaders and international organisations worldwide soon after the news of his killing by a LTTE suicide bomber on July 29 also affirm this title to Neelan. He was not a head of state and was not even holding an influential position to have attracted so many tributes which customarily given to such notables.

Unlike Mahatma Gandhi who was killed by the bullet fired by a Hindu fanatic at a prayer meeting, Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam had to die in the most gruesome manner that no civilised human could consider as just another casualty in the ongoing war. Neelan himself did not think the LTTE would waste a suicide bomber to eliminate him. But alas his end came in the same manner as that of another Gandhi, the Indian Congress Party leader Rajiv Gandhi.

Like Mahatma Gandhi, Neelan Tiruchelvam had no long-term political ambition, he was only interested in finding an acceptable and implementable political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic problem that would be fair and

just to all the ethnic groups and which would allay their fears and accommodate their aspirations. He had announced long before his assassination that his only interest in being a member of Parliament was to assist in this difficult and challenging exercise. His intention was to continue his academic career that was interrupted with his preoccupation on constitutional reforms and work on a wide range of fields related to human freedom and human development.

Neelan obtained the master's degree (L.L.M. 1970) and doctorate in Laws (S.J.D. 1973) from the most prestigious Harvard School of Law. His scholastic achievements made him a highly respected person throughout the academic world. He had held academic positions in Sri Lanka and at the famous universities of Harvard and Yale. He was also a Fulbright Fellow in 1969-1971. He was associated with the Human Rights Programme as its first Edward Smith Visiting Fellow and later as visiting lecturer. Neelan had also close links with the Faculty of Law at Cambridge University. He had taken up a one-month Rockefeller fellowship in Bellagio, Italy at the time of his death and had accepted a visiting professorship at Harvard. He was to take up his assignment in Harvard in two weeks time.

Some major works carrying his name as a author, co-author or as a editor include, Ideology of Popular Justice - A Socio-Legal Inquiry (1982), Ethical Dilemma of Development in Asia (1982), Judiciary and Plural Societies (1987), Hungary in Transition - From Socialism to Capitalism (1991), Democracy and Human Rights (1996) and Civil Disobedience (1997).

Neelan was known to intellectuals in many countries as a constitutional expert and human rights and civil society activist. His political philosophy was based on human rights, democratic values, pluralism and respect for diversity. Being a sincere altruist, his concern was not only for the minority Tamils but also for other groups who

did not enjoy equal rights either for political or social reasons. His expertise in constitution drafting was globally recognised. He was invited to evaluate and review the draft the constitution of Kazakhstan. He was co-chairman of the International Evaluation Team on the peace structures in South Africa. Neelan also won international fame as a promoter of the role of civil society as a democratising instrument of governance and was invited by many countries to deliver lectures. He had been an international observer in many countries, including Chile, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, South Africa, Nigeria and Nepal. He enhanced his expertise on conflict resolution through shared experience with scholars and practitioners from Northern Ireland and other countries afflicted by internal unrest.

All these achievements seem to have been irrelevant and indeed a disqualification for honour to those who believe in achieving their political goals through the promotion of ethnic hatred and the use of brutal force against anyone considered to be a hindrance to their strategy of achieving a separate Tamil state. To them those who try to build bridges across the ethnic divide and restore peace in the war-torn are 'traitors' to the 'cause'.

When the second world war started, Mahatma Gandhi persuaded the Indian Congress which was spearheading the non-violent freedom struggle to suspend all acts of non-cooperation against the British rule and support the British people. He declared, "we do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin." This was the attitude of Mahatma towards a country that was far away from India and whose government at that time had no intention to grant self-rule. He would have given advice on foreign policy matters had any member of the British government approached him. He had no inhibitions to discuss with them even unofficially and in fact had no enemies although he did not agree with the views and methods used by the rulers or even fellow countrymen like Chandra Subhas Bose, who abandoned Congress and formed the militant Forward Bloc.

Bose had a fiery temperament and advocated violence to overthrow British rule. He and his followers did in fact join forces with the Japanese and fought against the British, while Gandhi was sincerely sympathetic to them when

their allied military strength was being challenged in Europe and in the Far East. Gandhi's stand was based on justice and truth without any modicum of hatred colouring his attitude and vision. Neelan Tiruchelvam had the same quality that made him to mix with other political and ethnic groups and discuss freely matters of importance not only to the Tamils but also to other communities and to the country at large without sacrificing his basic principles and aims.

Gandhi during the freedom struggle had many friends among British civilians and politicians. No one dared to accuse him of unfaithful to the aspiration of the people he was leading. Who else only the bigots would think that Neelan by associating with Sinhalese scholars, politicians and human rights activists was unfaithful to the Tamils. Gandhi worked tirelessly to unite the Hindus and Muslims and never identified himself as exclusively a Hindu. On many occasions he claimed to be a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Judaist as well.

The greatness of Neelan is also evident not only from his commitment to non-violence, social justice, racial and gender equality, humanism and humanitarianism but also from his own personal life as he chose a Muslim lady to be his lifelong partner. The final rites were performed according to the Hindu practice by his two sons at the General Cemetery, Kanatte on July 31. He was a faithful Hindu to the very end and had practised in his private life too what Mahatma Gandhi had preached several years ago. His respect for other religions while he followed his own was in the true spirit of Hinduism. The fact that two persons of different faiths have lived happily under one roof also illustrates his broad-mindedness.

Neelan never spoke ill of others. He was a humble and a soft-spoken person, dedicated to the noble principles to which he was committed. Neelan never hated any individual or group, although he was aware that the LTTE would one day gun him down for his efforts towards finding a political solution to the ethnic conflict within a united Sri Lanka. He hoped to achieve this by creating the appropriate legal framework for devolution and participatory democracy that would also provide the solid foundation for national reconciliation and achieving lasting peace. Neelan's commitments to hu-

man rights, multi-party democracy and pluralism were also well known. These apparently went against the LTTE's goal and their chosen method of achieving its aim.

Despite these fundamental differences, he wanted the government to negotiate with the LTTE. He also encouraged third party mediation to get the negotiating process move forward without the prospect of collapsing prematurely as happened in 1990 and 1995. LTTE's another proposal for the rival two main political parties to reach agreement among themselves before talking with them was also actively pursued by Neelan. He campaigned vigorously for a bipartisan approach to a political solution.

The National Christian Council in its statement condemning the assassination noted: "The treacherous killing of Dr. Tiruchelvam, who was a statesman par excellence is a clear indication of those responsible seeking to close whatever democratic space available for the genuine articulation of the problems of the minorities. This would only lead to making the conflict further intractable."

The tribute paid by Professor Savithri Goonesekere, Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo to Neelan on July 31 at Kanatte revealed another of his extraordinary quality that many should know to appreciate his greatness. She said: "Neelan was above all a brilliant and articulate thinker, to whom scholarship was the very life he breathed. Despite all the demands on his time, he would read the many books in his library, reflect on what he read, and then emerge with a flow of creative ideas that would be difficult for most of us to absorb and articulate. Sterile scholarship was not for Neelan. He represented that great intellectual tradition which recognises that thinking and ideas have no relevance and meaning unless they can contribute to the well-being of people."

Neelan was well ahead of our time and particularly those who form opinion without studying the relevant facts but from propaganda and blind faith. In this category are those who seem to think that Neelan needed the influence of a powerful agency to get assignments in prestigious universities like Harvard in the US! This is not just laughable but shameful exhibition of ignorance. It appears that these persons do not want to use rationale or look ahead but

like to live behind the times with their prejudices intact.

Neelan's murder as mentioned by "Cat's Eye" in The Island of August 4 is reminiscent of the tragic event that occurred when Greece was invaded by Romans. While the ruthless Roman forces invaded Greece, Archimedes continued to draw his mathematical designs on the ground, seemingly oblivious to the horror that surrounded him. A Roman soldier, came over, looked at the design, could not understand its meaning so he just chopped off Archimedes' head.

Neelan Tiruchelvam's capacity for work would have astonished those who read the tributes that were published in the local and foreign press. He was a lecturer in law at the university in Colombo and was admitted to the Bar in 1968. After his father's death, he was also managing his firm - Tiruchelvam Associates. Besides being a leading member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform, he also served in various Consultative Committees on Justice, Finance, Planning and Ethnic Affairs. In all the commissions and committees he served, he had played a key role. As member of the Law Commission, he helped in upgrading and modernising many areas of Sri Lankan Law.

He devoted much of his time in the recent past on constitutional reforms and on the enactment of the Equal Opportunity Law for preventing social and gender discrimination. As a member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Legislative and Regulatory Framework relating to Media, he advocated strengthening constitutional protection for free expression and other human rights.

In 1994, he became a member of the International Council of the London-based human rights organisation - Minority Rights Group International. He succeeded Sir John Thomson as chairman of Minority Rights Group's council. In the United Nations working group on minorities, he was instrumental in establishing an annual debate on key minority issues.

The contributions he made in Parliament in recent years went a long way to influence opinion among the Sinhalese to accept power-sharing and devolution for resolving the ethnic conflict. Neelan did not refrain from criticising the government when he felt that there were fundamental mistakes. He

was highly critical of the lack of governance in the country and violations of human rights. He appealed for greater political responsibility from all parties. His aim was to design institutions and frameworks within which multi-ethnic and plural society could be governed efficiently and equitably.

Neelan also believed in institution building. His work as a director in the International Centre for Ethnic Studies which he helped to create and in the law and Society Trust focused on this aspect too. His contributions towards strengthening public accountability institutions such as the Human Rights Task Force, the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Official Languages Commission have come to light now. At the time of his death, he was involved with others in the human rights community in setting up an Equal Rights Commission.

Equally important was his contributions that went to project an image to the world that the Tamils were not another bunch of extreme nationalists resorting to violence to assert their authority. The international community has already branded such groups who want to replace modern civilised ways of living by their own brand of authoritarianism as fanatics. With the demise of Neelan a void has been created that will be hard to fill. Without the determination and wisdom of Neelan, it is difficult to see how the community could be saved from being in a perpetual state of conflict with the state.

When can we produce an expert of Neelan's calibre having the same concern for human rights, social justice, democratic values, collective rights of all groups and their peaceful co-existence? Probably the present thinking is that we do not need such liberal men and women. If this is the case, what kind of society can we expect in the near future. How will an inward looking jingoistic society prosper in the modern world? Surely, these questions cannot be dismissed as trivial and have no significance for society's political, economic, social and cultural advancement. The wide condemnation of the killing of the highly respected Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam by the international community should open the minds of those who have pursued the disastrous strategy of achieving their political goal through hatred and violence. ●

# Enormity of Neelan's Loss is Shocking

Suriya Wickremasinghe

Secretary, Civil Rights Movement Jt. Secretary, The Nadesan Centre for Human Rights Through Law

**A**mong Neelan Tiruchelvam's rare characteristics was his extraordinary generosity of mind and spirit. Where others would be indignant, Neelan would be sad. Where another would react with anger, Neelan's response would be pain. Deeply sensitive, and never one to hold forth about himself and his feelings, his pain was all the more acute for being borne in private.

Neelan always looked to the good in people and found it distasteful to dwell on the bad. Where we could not overlook unsavoury things in a person's past, Neelan would seek out positive elements in their present role. This would at times exasperate those close to him. "Neelan, how could you forget..." would be the refrain - and the answer to our remonstrances would be just that quiet smile. His gentle personality, unfailingly kindly and considerate, gave a special dimension to his contribution to public life.

It would take a whole book to attempt to do justice to Neelan's contribution to the cause of human rights. This was exceptional as regards its quality, its quantity and its range. To mention just some examples - he was involved in constitution-making not merely in Sri Lanka but elsewhere (eg in Kazakhstan). He had a special interest in election monitoring in which he participated in several countries of the world. He created and nurtured human rights institutions and had a great gift of involving others in their work, young people in particular. He moved a resolution in Parliament in support of Aung San Suu Kyi and the restoration of democracy in Myanmar, for which he secured backing from both sides of the House. He was deeply concerned with women's rights.

Neelan was an active member of the Civil Rights Movement. As early as 1982 he was one of five speakers at CRM's public meeting on Fair and Free Elections at the YMCA Forum which was full to overflowing. The others were Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, S. Nadesan QC, Fr Tissa Bala-

suriya and Senior Attorney H.L. de Silva. Neelan's last visit to CRM was for a meeting of persons committed to the unconditional abolition of capital punishment.

Just three days later, on 15 June 1999, he wound up a speech in Parliament with an earnest plea against the proposed reimposition of the death penalty. "Sir, I would like to express my strong moral opposition to this measure", he said, and then proceeded to briefly and lucidly enumerate arguments against it. Earlier in the same speech, Neelan gave voice to his anguish at what was his main preoccupation, the terrible consequences of war on ordinary people, and the need "to bring an end to the human suffering, the displacement, the destruction and the senseless loss of lives both of combatants and of civilians". He went on to say:

*"We cannot glorify death, whether in the battlefield or otherwise. We, on the other hand, must celebrate life and are fiercely committed to protecting and securing the sanctity of life, which is the most fundamental value without which all other rig-hts and freedoms become meaningless."*

Throughout the years Neelan's contribution to CRM, and to The Nadesan Centre for Human Rights Through Law of which he was a founder member, was vital and consistent. He would participate in our meetings and discussions, send us his suggestions, respond to queries for information or advice, and readily undertake to speak to others in furtherance of our concerns. He was always, despite a myriad other demands on him, ready to give of his time and attention to discuss a problem. Neelan would, moreover, go out of his way to express his appreciation of an initiative he felt was praiseworthy, thus providing important encouragement to those more directly responsible.

When I consider how sorely Neelan will be missed by CRM and the Nade-

(continued on next page)

# Neelan Tiruchelvam, A Political Tribute

Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda

Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, a politician with formidable intellectual power and personal charm, was assassinated on July 29 at a relatively young age of fifty-five. It is a cruel irony in Sri Lanka that many politicians, particularly Sinhalese and Tamil, live with an acute awareness of the fact that they are less likely to die a natural death. Dr. Tiruchelvam was not unaware of the threat to his life; but he did not expect a suicide-bomber to be "wasted" on him. On that count, this consummate politician and political strategist proved himself wrong.

The culpability of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in this brutal act of political violence is not in doubt. It is a sad stroke of fate that the life of this noble man of non-violence and peace was snatched away in the most gruesome manner. Neelan may have felt the pain of his death, perhaps, for a flash of a second. But, Sri Lanka is certain to suffer, for years to come, the severe pain of his departure from the political and intellectual world. Neelan was the most active person in Sri Lanka in a range of spheres - constitutional and legal reform, peace, conflict resolution, and democratic institution-building, civil society and legal and social science scholarship. He was the main political link between Sri Lanka's Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities; the bond that held together Sri Lanka's human rights community and a key link between Sri Lanka and the international community. He was also the only parliamentarian who could initiate an all party-dialogue for a political consensus to settle the ethnic conflict. In that sense, he had more

(Continued from page 11)

san Centre I am dismayed. And then when I think how comparatively small a part of Neelan's life were to these two institutions, the enormity of the loss this shocking and contemptible assassination has caused to the whole human rights community, and to so very much else besides, is delineated in its stark magnitude. ●

than the necessary minimum credentials to be on the LTTE-hit list.

The week in which Neelan was assassinated also marked the sixteenth anniversary of Sri Lanka's 'Black July'. The anti-Tamil riots of 1983, which began on July 23 of that year, peaked on July 29. Those who made and executed the decision to kill Neelan on July 29, 1999 may or may not have been aware of this coincidence. Nevertheless, it provides some answer as to why Neelan was assassinated on that particular day.

There is another development that completes the political context against which this killing occurred. Speculation was rife in Colombo that the Chandrika Bandaranaike administration was planning to place before parliament its draft constitutional proposals in mid-August. The devolution proposals, which form part of the draft constitution, address the core political issues of the ethnic conflict within a semi-federalist framework. By presenting them in parliament, the Kumaratunga administration was obviously seeking to gain a new political momentum over two of its rivals - the United National Party (UNP) in parliament and the LTTE in the battlefield. It is no secret that Dr. Tiruchelvam has been the most active Tamil politician involved in the framing of the draft-constitution, specifically, its devolution proposals. He was also perceived as the key political actor who could effectively mediate a consensus for a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict. And indeed, this quiet man had transcended narrow ethno-nationalist politics to such an extent that he, and he alone, symbolized in his person the possibility, however distant it may have been, for a national consensus on conflict resolution and peace.

Therein, indeed, lies the uniqueness of Neelan, the politician. Therein lies the real meaning of that cliché when applied to someone after death: "He is irreplaceable". It is difficult to fill the void created by the assassination of Neelan Tiruchelvam, not merely because of his formidable intellect, his

capacity to strategize political manoeuvres, or his powerful inspiration to colleagues and friends. Neelan is irreplaceable because, to my knowledge, he is the only contemporary Sri Lankan Tamil politician who had the capacity and commitment to re-conceptualize Tamil politics in democratic emancipatory terms within the framework of a pluralist Sri Lanka. Perhaps, most of Neelan's friends were unaware of this. But his enemies knew it. While his enemies in extreme Sinhala nationalism pilloried him in the press, his enemies in extreme Tamil nationalism cut his life short.

Neelan's intellectual and political life was intertwined with the path of post-colonial Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms in Sri Lanka. Although Neelan was six years older to me, we belonged to the same generation of Sri Lankans whose biographies were shaped by the idiosyncrasies of Sri Lanka's post colonial state. I come from a rural Sinhalese-Buddhist family of the socially marginalized and Neelan belonged to an urbane family of Colombo's elite - the contradictions of which are so vividly captured in Shyam Selvadurai's recent novel, Cinnamon Gardens. But, our biographies intersected at the site of Sri Lanka's post-colonial nation-state. I was beneficiary of the Sri Lankan state's social welfarism and a victim of its blindness to aspirations for political emancipation among social margins. Neelan was a beneficiary of the Sri Lankan state's liberalism and a victim of its blindness to emancipatory desires among ethnic minorities. When we met as intellectual colleagues in the late eighties, we had a lot of notes to compare.

I had grown up - away from the politics of radical agrarian authoritarianism and he had transcended the politics of ethno-nationalist exclusivism. We were searching for an intellectual framework within which equality, social justice and ethnic as well as social pluralism could be inscribed as emancipatory impulses in a democratizing project. Neelan was the first Tamil politician I met who had developed a conceptual apparatus to critique not only Sinhala nationalism for its majoritarian hegemonism, but also Tamil nationalism for the limits of its emancipatory politics. He believed that the discourse of ethnic victimology, so central to all streams of Tamil nationalism, could not offer an emancipatory future for Sri

Lanka's Tamil community. Tamil nationalism, as he thought, had to be re-inscribed through a new framework of ethnic inclusivism and pluralism. He anticipated Sinhalese nationalism too to find this auto-critical politics of reflection. I am not sure whether Sinhalese and Tamil nationalisms are yet ready for such an excruciatingly painful exercise in critical self-reflection. In that I find some meaning in the rationally inexplicable killing of Neelan.

It is in this context that one has to understand and assess his intellectual and political practice. He maintained a live dialogue with the democratic forces of all ethnic communities and the democratic community abroad, because he was not a nationalist in the sense of Tamil nationalism with which we are so familiar. He created and nurtured the International Center for Ethnic Studies and the Law and Society Trust primarily to set in motion an intellectual dialogue so that the Sri Lankan intelligentsia, through research, reflection and debate, would re-define the terms of their political debate. He actively took part in the exercises of drafting consti-

tutions and laws, because he believed that political structures and institutions were necessary to facilitate the social and political practices of democracy and pluralism ensuring diversity as a fundamental reality in the modern nation-state. He wanted to make the state accountable to its own citizenry.

That is why he devoted a considerable share of his intellectual energy and resources of his legal knowledge to create and strengthen institutions such as the Human Rights Task Force, the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Official Languages Commission. At the time of his death, he was actively involved in drafting legislation for equal opportunity and non-discrimination. All these efforts of Neelan reflect his intellectual realisation that nationalism, whether Sinhalese or Tamil, had only a dated and limited agenda. If I were to paraphrase Neelan's political thinking, he held the view, which I shared with him, that contemporary ethno-nationalism, whether majoritarian or minoritarian, can only highlight the felt grievances of a community; it cannot provide political emancipation to the community

it represents.

In life as in death, Neelan has been described as a "moderate Tamil politician." Knowing Neelan for a few years, I find this expression most insulting to the foremost democratic political thinker who the Sri Lankan Tamil society has ever produced. In a way, it is a pity that he had neither the time nor leisure to write a book on political and constitutional theory in the way Roberto Unger, his colleague at Harvard did. But, Neelan, the busy lawyer and active politician, knew his Roberto Unger, Benedict Anderson, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Norberto Bobbio, Avishai Margalit and to mention an old name, Hannah Arendt well. He also knew his Marx and Foucault. That is precisely why he was not a nationalist, but a citizen of the world. And Sri Lanka's extreme nationalism, whether Sinhalese or Tamil, can hardly tolerate a citizen of the world. In Neelan's tragic death, I find the mirror image of my intellectual friends and myself.

(Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda teaches Political Science at the University of Colombo)

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# Neelan's Death, A Great Loss to Tamils and Country

Professor K M de Silva

*"The deep pain that is felt at the death of every friendly soul arises from the deep feeling that there is in every individual something which is inexpressible, peculiar to him alone, and is, therefore, absolutely and irretrievably lost"*  
- Schopenhauer

On July 15, 1989 two Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) Members of Parliament, including its leader Appapillai Amirthalingam were shot dead by an LTTE assassination squad. M Sivathamparam, the deputy leader escaped with severe injuries. Neelan Tiruchelvam was expected to be there on that occasion but was either late for the meeting or had decided not to go, and thus narrowly missed an encounter with the LTTE's assassins. Now just over 10 years later the LTTE assassinated him, using a human bomb for that purpose, a technique of eliminating intended victims that they had perfected, since the early 1990s, and the use of which has become their grisly trade mark, locally and regionally.

We in this little island have grown accustomed to violent deaths, including those of close friends. The photographs I saw of the mangled remains of Neelan Tiruchelvam's car are among the saddest memories of my life. He had been a very close friend for over 20 years, a very generous and compassionate human being.

At the time of his assassination Neelan Tiruchelvam was a distinguished public figure, in the prime of his life. He was a respected Member of Parliament. He first entered Parliament in 1982, and was there till the latter half of 1983; thereafter he returned to Parliament in 1989 and remained a MP till the time of his death. The pages of Hansard will show that his speeches were consistently among the most thoughtful delivered in Parliament over that period. He was a director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) since 1982. There were other institutions of which he was either the head or the live wire, such as the Law and Society Trust located close to the Colombo office of the ICES.

On the international scene he was a regular participant at the conferences held in Aspen, Colorado, by a distin-

guished group of public figures, mainly of the western world; he had been a member of the London based Minority Rights Group for many years, and was chosen Chairman of its board of directors less than a year ago. Locally he was one of the key figures in the preparation of the draft constitution which the current government has endeavoured to introduce to Parliament since 1995.

This present tribute to his memory is not meant to be an assessment of Neelan Tiruchelvam's role as a politician. That will be done at some later date. My concern is principally with some aspects of his creative role in the intellectual life of Sri Lanka.

When I first met Neelan just over 20 years ago he was an earnest young lawyer intent on combining his law practice with the work of a senior researcher at the Marga Institute in Colombo, specialising in the impact of law on society and vice versa. His years at Harvard had left him profoundly unhappy about the teaching of law in the University of Colombo and at the Law College. Even at that stage Neelan Tiruchelvam had his links with the TULF. His father, a Federal Party and later TULF lawyer-politician, was the only member of that party and of the

TULF ever to hold Cabinet office in a Sri Lankan government (1965-1968). The elder Tiruchelvam had died in 1976 and did not live to see his son's career in public life blossom as it did from the late 1970s to the time of his death on 28 July 1999. What brought us together for the first time was our work on the Presidential Commission on Development Councils of which we were appointed members in 1979, he as a nominee of his party and I as a nominee of the President.

In 1981 we were both invitees to a Ford Foundation sponsored conference held in a game park some 200 kilometres or so from Nairobi to look at the problems of ethnic conflict in the

world. This conference eventually provided us with an unexpected opportunity to build a research institution; one of its by-products was a decision taken to establish a research institute for the study of ethnic conflict with funds provided by the Ford Foundation. After much discussion it was decided to look at Sri Lanka as the possible location for such an institute. The Sri Lankans at the conference worked as a team to convince others at the conference that we could build a world class research institute.

Among the preliminaries to the establishment of such an institute was to secure the support of the then government to locate it in the island, a task that was assigned to me, while the legal issues involved including discussions with the Ford Foundation in Delhi, were handled by Neelan with his customary thoroughness. At a meeting held in Trincomalee later that year, the decision to establish the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Sri Lanka was confirmed. Neelan Tiruchelvam was one of those who persuaded me to accept the position of Executive Director of the ICES and Chairman of its Board of Directors and with that began twenty years of close and friendly association. He and I were the two Sri Lankan directors at the foundation of the ICES, the others being from the US, Nigeria and India. The peculiar feature of the ICES is that it has two units, one in Kandy and one in Colombo, a convenient division of labour which accommodated the wishes of the two Sri Lankan directors.

Our work at the ICES, since its establishment in 1982 was conducted against an unpropitious background of a worsening of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict - the riots of 1983 among other episodes - the Indian intervention and its unintended and unforeseen consequences and the second JVP insurrection, all of which brought in their wake pressures and tensions that could have torn the institution apart. Dealing as we did with topics and issues which were intrinsically controversial and divisive one could have expected sharp differences of opinion to develop into equally sharp divisions within the management committee that ran the ICES under the general direction of our international Board of Directors. There were, of course differences of opinion stemming from differences of outlook and ap-

(continued on next page)

# Neelan - A Feminist Salute

## Cat's Eye

Assassination too often targets the very best a society has produced, a person who has symbolized humanity at its finest, a person who had a vision of a better society free of all the horrors of racism and religious and ethnic tension. The most notable examples that come to mind are the slayings of Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King; their lives inspired people all over the world, but the manner of their deaths still reverberates in the conscience of humankind. We kill our best.

In Sri Lanka, where terror and assassinations have occurred so often, the killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam has jolted our conscience more than ever before. For he was much more than a member of parliament and political leader; he was a leader of civil society, an intellectual, a jurist of repute, a champion of human rights and the rights of minorities and above all an indefatigable worker for peace in Sri Lanka. Many of the tributes to him have highlighted his contributions and his great achievements in institution building and in promoting peace and democracy. Cat's Eye pays tribute to Dr. Neelan while recalling aspects of his contribution to gender equity - a point

not noted in the other tributes.

While many distinguished men in Sri Lanka society theoretically accept gender equity, only a few are active and come out boldly to support women's struggles. Neelan was one of the few.

We recall his support in all the research programmes at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies on women's issues including their current research on violence against women. We recall his sympathy for feminist legal theory and his backing for scholars working on these themes; we recall his support for individual feminist scholars, directing them to current books and articles and showing interest in their work. We recall his persistence in parliament raising the issue of Aung San Suu Kyi's detention and reminding local women's groups to lobby for her release. We recall his invitation to two Irish academics for discussions and public talks (on the Irish peace process), one of whom was from the Irish Women's Coalition for Peace.

Because of Neelan's encouragement and support, the ICES has run major programmes on Women and Governance in South Asia., Women and Religion in South Asia, doing seminal research and work in this area. The

national, institutional and personal. Nationally, the process of peaceful negotiated termination of the current war in the north and east will become even more difficult than they are now. There is no one in the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, either living in the island, or abroad, with the same combination of qualities - physical and moral courage, strong convictions expressed in soft tones, personal integrity of a very high order and a sense of fairness in all his dealings - that made him such a convincing voice in the despairing search for national reconciliation.

At the time of his death he was, without a doubt, the most distinguished public figure of his generation in Sri Lanka's Tamil community. His loss is not something that can be confined to the Tamil community-the whole country; the whole country is diminished by his assassination. ●

ICES along with the Law and Society Trust have been major arenas where feminist scholars have gathered to discuss their work. Recently, the Law and Society Trust put forward an initiative for an Equal opportunity Commission which included gender equity as one of its main tenets. Not only have special research projects on gender been incorporated in the work of his institutions but he insisted that all major programmes at these institutions contain a gender component. Among his closest friends were women who are leading feminists.

When his death was announced, tributes came pouring in from all over the world and were included in all the major feminist networks. He always listened to women's voices and incorporated many of their ideas in his work. He was particularly interested in the conceptual aspects of feminist theory and its contribution to scholarship in various fields. He was an avid reader of the Cats Eye and made many references to its analysis in public. Once when he was left out of a woman's conference that interested him, he asked pointedly, "Why have I not been invited? I am also a feminist".

Well Neelan, we are proud and honoured to have counted you as one of us. We will be inspired by your work and when peace comes to this land we will help build some lasting monument in your name.

To many people in Sri Lanka, Neelan was known as only a politician, portrayed negatively by interested parties in the petty politics that govern Sri Lankan life. But he was much more than a politician. Neelan loved ideas, and he was an avid reader. People marvelled at the fact that despite his extraordinary commitments in terms of time, he had read the latest newspapers, journals, the internet and books not only in the law but also other disciplines. He even had time for fiction. Those who work with him recall fondly that he had ten ideas a day and that the institutions he built could only implement three or four. His boundless energy and his constant attention to the voices of young people made him an inspiration to many. He pushed their energies to the edge and made all of them feel that they could reform the world, all that was needed was will power and hard work. These young people were not only Sri Lankans of

(continued on next page)

(Continued from page 26)

proach but all of us took care, not to allow these differences to undermine the institution which we were in the process of building. But all our efforts at restraint would have been to no avail if Neelan had been an abrasive personality.

Neelan Tiruchelvam was an extraordinarily busy person whose work and business took him to all parts of the world. However busy he was he always had time for his colleagues in the ICES and in the discussion of their problems. Neelan's untimely death is a grievous loss to me, personally, and to our institution.

Throughout the two decades of my association with him I found him a colleague whose judgement could be trusted, and an unfailing source of encouragement during periods of trouble,

(Continued from page 27)

all ethnic communities but from all over the world. Their outpourings of grief were so clearly evident for those who manned the phones and e-mails at his respective institutions but also at the Tiruchelvam household.

Neelan was the kindest of men. He would never say no and he would go to extreme lengths to help family, friends and even strangers. His limitless generosity combined with that of his wife, gave sustenance to scholars, activists and politicians.

Despite his love of other disciplines, the law was his first love. He was a brilliant lawyer and it is significant that his last public speech was in memorium for another lawyer before the community of those interested in the law. His love of constitutional ideas was not a petty partisan exercise. He studied Constitutions as living embodiments of the moral firmaments of a society. He felt deeply about these issues and he wanted to structure a noble and just society. His interest in this subject had made him research far and wide and he was killed just weeks before he left Sri Lanka to teach law and local government at Harvard University, his alma mater. The Boston Globe carried the reactions of grief stricken colleagues and friends at Harvard, including the Dean of the Law School.

His death reminds us of Regi Siriwardene's poem the Roman Soldier. While the ruthless Roman forces invaded Greece, Archimedes continued to draw his mathematical designs on the ground, seemingly oblivious to the horror that surrounded him. A Roman soldier, came over, looked at the design, could not understand its meaning so he just chopped off Archimedes' head.

And what of the perpetrators? When does impunity end? CAT'S EYE has always been and continues to be for a negotiated settlement to

## Another Voice of Reason has been Silenced

Kethesh Loganathan

Neelan certainly would not have wanted his death to exacerbate ethnic tensions, further widen the ethnic divide

Yet another voice of reason and sanity has been silenced by the forces of nihilism. Neelan Tiruchelvam, short in height, but standing straight and tall in the midst of a fast decaying polity and a disintegrating society, is no more. His demise is a stunning blow to the peace constituency as well as to the secular, democratic forces in Sri Lanka committed to restoring peace with equality and justice in the face of jingoism, intolerance and the cult of violence.

That Neelan Tiruchelvam was killed by a suicide bomber would make it difficult even for the LTTE to deflect responsibility from itself. Of course, as to whether a denial from the LTTE, given the modus operandi it used in the assassination of Neelan Tiruchelvam, would be taken seriously is another matter.

On the other hand, this would not have been all that obvious had Neelan been, for instance, gunned down by an assassin. Given the spiralling violence which has embraced our society in a vice-like grip, the sources of violence are many. So are the motives. But where the LTTE has been identified as the perpetrator, then it is meaningless to be looking for mo-

tives. It really does not matter. Suffice it to say the LTTE will eliminate anything and anyone who stands in the way of its perceived 'manifest destiny' as the sole repository and representative of the Tamil nation and statehood.

Neelan Tiruchelvam who sought to advance the project of constructing a multi-national Sri Lanka based on co-existence and a just peace therefore, in the eyes of the 'sole' beholder, was a 'traitor' and a 'collaborator'. This seemingly simple logic is what drives the LTTE.

So, should the LTTE be condemned or not? The mainstream Tamil media, while condemning the heinous act, maintained its habitual stoic silence in not naming the 'Name'. There were however, some exceptions. The English and the Sinhala media, on the other hand, have not only condemned the LTTE, but have gone further and also condemned the Tamil people for failing to do so. This has also become the 'talking point' amongst the Colombo-based (and Kandy-based) intelligentsia.

It must be said at the outset that silence in the face of LTTE terror is not acquiescence. Neither is silence in the face of 'state terror'. The Tamil and the Sinhala peoples have experienced both forms of terror and have, often, borne it with a deafening sound of silence. But, silence in such situations is often a manifestation of helplessness, hopelessness and collective fatigue - not one of consent or approval.

the ethnic conflict, with or without third party mediation. However, such a settlement should not contain impunity for human rights violations and war crimes by either side. ●



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To posit the case that the Tamil people have, by their silence and failure to turn up en masse at Neelan's funeral, condoned the assassination of Neelan Tiruchelvam, is untenable. It is as untenable as blaming the Sinhala people for not having protected their Tamil brethren from the state-sponsored July '83 pogrom or for not rising against the JVP terror that was unleashed in 1988-89 and which required a sustained campaign of counter-terror to quell it. In any case what is the mode of dissent from the Tamil people that would be acceptable to those who demand it? While Tamil political parties could issue statements or intellectuals could write articles for the print media or appear on 'talk shows' in the broadcast media, how do the Tamil people express dissent against a dictatorial regime like that of the LTTE?

It also needs to be noted, in the specific case of Neelan's assassination, that given the security blanket in Colombo city, a typical Tamil in Colombo, irrespective of whether he or she is a resident or displaced person, would have thought it over ten times before ultimately deciding to stay at home - or, go to a temple nearby. As a matter of fact, the Ramakrishna Mission Hall at Wellawatte was packed to capacity, at the time of Neelan's funeral, with a predominantly Tamil audience to hear a discourse on a system of healing of ailments arising from stress, anxiety and psychological trauma. This then is the prevailing tragic reality.

But, what clearly cannot be accepted and should be challenged and confronted politically, ideologically and morally is any attempt at justifying and condoning such heinous

crimes against humanity by the elite and opinion-makers on both sides of the ethnic divide. The broad masses should not be held hostage to the moral bankruptcy of their elite.

Another aspect that should be recognized as a reality is that Neelan did not have a popular, mass base. In fact, he had no pretensions of being a politician; nor would he have enjoyed being tagged with the label of a populist. The vast majority of the Tamil people could not understand why the LTTE would send a suicide bomber to assassinate someone who was neither a 'political' giant in the mould of Amirthalingam and a revolutionary like Pathmanabha, nor a Tamil functionary of a 'Sinhala' party in the mould of Alfred Duraiappah or the head of a despised Tamil para-military like 'Razeek'.

In fact, it was after the condolence messages and condemnations, coming from world personalities such as Bill Clinton and Kofi Annan started pouring in that, perhaps, the Tamil community began to realise the person Neelan was, the extent to which the LTTE felt threatened by his international stature and standing and the enormity of the blunder made by the LTTE in assassinating him. It must also be conceded that the LTTE does enjoy significant support from the Tamil people, although it stems largely from the absence of a credible and an effective alternative from within the Tamil polity. What support the LTTE enjoys is also an emotive reaction to the failure of successive Governments, including the present one, to resolve the ethnic question in a manner that is just and equitable - and, most importantly, peaceful.

Hence, what the Tamil people re-

ally expect from the LTTE is to secure for them their identity, security and socio-economic progress by negotiating a just, honourable and a durable settlement. What the vast majority of the Tamil people do not want is for the LTTE to engage in an endless bloody war that shows no signs of abating and with an entire generation (and future generations) being condemned to deprivation, destruction and death.

Similarly, what the ruling PA government, the UNP 'alternate' government, the emerging 'third force', the JVP, and the Sinhala extremist NMAT/SVV should recognise is that they simply cannot continue to carry out their adventurist, partisan politics in the name of the Sinhala people. Vast sections of the Sinhala people are clearly for peace (as a recent opinion poll revealed) and may not be averse to even supporting substantial autonomy for the North-East provided, of course, such a settlement guarantees permanent peace and the unity of the country. Ultimately, attributing blame and advocating retribution is not the solution to the bloody war and the ethnic strife that has drenched both sides of the ethnic divide with blood. By the same token, the perpetrators will have to come to terms with peace or go the way of their victims. Neelan certainly would not have wanted his death to exacerbate ethnic tensions, further widen the ethnic divide or intensify internecine conflicts.

May Neelan Tiruchelvam attain the peace that he so desperately wanted others to enjoy. May his soul merge with divinity and bless this troubled and blood-soaked land of ours.

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**OBITUARIES**

**Dr Chelliah Mylvaganam**, retired Consultant Surgeon of Sri Lanka, Zambia and the West Indies; beloved husband

of Indra; the loving father of Dhushyanthy (Sri Lanka), Kaushalya (UK), Ajantha (Sri Lanka) and Shobhana (USA); father-in-law of Kumar Boralesa (Sri Lanka), Peter Jeyaraj (UK), Charmaine (Sri Lanka) and Dr Ravindran (USA); most beloved and precious grandfather of Shamilka and Dhinuka (Sri Lanka), Pravin and Pramila (UK), Shalindra and Amrit (Sri Lanka) and Lakshmi and Raman (USA) passed away peacefully on 29th July 1999 at 30/16 Longden Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka and was cremated on Saturday, 31 July 1999 at the General Cemetery, Kanatte, where he was laid to rest. The members of his family thank all relatives and friends who paid their respects who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of grief and sorrow.

Contact: Tel. 587339 & 595201 (Sri Lanka), 0181 642 0870 (UK), 732 506 9036 (USA)

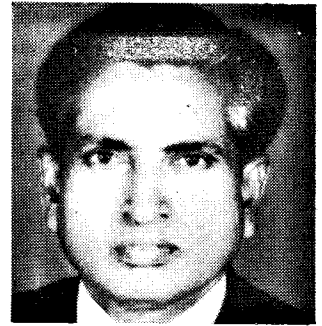
**OBITUARY**

**Mrs. Rohini Wijeyadevendram**, beloved wife of the late Mr. Chelvadurai Duke Wijeyadevendram; daughter of the late Mr. S. Thillaiampallam and Mrs. Annammah Thillaiampalam (Boston); loving mother of Surendran (UK), Subathra Yoganathan (Boston), Dr. Ravindran (New Jersey), Vasundra Pathmarajah, Ravi Chandran, and Yasodra Ravindran (all of California);



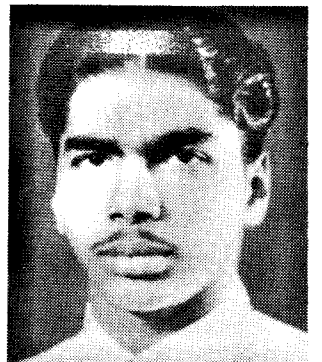
mother-in-law of Shymala, Surendran, Subbiah Yoganathan, Shobana Ravindran, Dr. Canagaratnam Pathmarajah, Bhavani Harichandran and Satkunananda Ravindran; precious grandmother of Amrit, Vinod (UK), Rajiv, Janaki (Boston), Lakshmi, Raman (New Jersey), Kavitha, Meera, Anjana; Amitha, Prasanna, Arun and Vickram (California); dear sister of Pavani Manickasingham, Manonmani Vyavanadan, Sivaramalingam, Kanthimathy Balasingham, Srikanthan, Sripathy, Sriharan, Senthimany Chanmugam and Srigananathan (all of Boston); niece of Mr. S.R. Senthinathan and sister-in-law of Sivam Senthinathan, passed away on 4th August 1999 in California, USA.

The members of her family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them during the period of bereavement. - W. Surendranathan, 8 The Approach, Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK8 8BJ. Tel: 01908 569 567/ T. Sripathy, 31 Albamont Road, Winchester MA 01890 Tel: 781 729 0968/ W. Harichandran, 2346 West Av., K9, Lancaster CA 93536 Tel: 661 722 0263.

**IN MEMORIAM**

**Mr Mayilvaganam Velummayilum J.P., U.M.,** Attorney-at-Law and former Chairman, Urban Council, Point Pedro, Sri Lanka passed away on 31.8.89 and the tenth anniversary of his demise falls on 31.8.99.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife; children Thayanandarajah (UK), Nithianandarajah (New Zealand), Mayilvaganarajah (UK), Chitra (Colombo), Anandarajah, Krishnarajah and Jayanthi (all of Madras); grandsons Cameron, Ewan and Atharson; son-in-law Kamaleswaran (Colombo); daughter-in-law Sumitra (UK) Devi (New Zealand) relatives, friends and a host of grateful constituents - 'Hillcroft', 14 Howards Wood Drive, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 7HN.



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

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Rani; children Thirukumaran (Australia), Vasuki (Sri Lanka), Devaki (Australia), Sutharsan (UK) Saratha Devi (Australia);

continued on page 31



continued from page 30

sons-in-law Ravindran,  
Radhakrishnan, and  
Sashikanth; daughter-in-law

Vasanthi; grandchildren  
Ashvini, Yathurshini, Prushoth,  
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#### IN MEMORIAM

**Mr Selvarajah Kiritharan,**  
Engineer, London; also of 'Notary  
Walawu', Thunnalai North,  
Karaveddy, Sri Lanka passed away  
suddenly on 22nd August 1996 and  
the Third anniversary of his pass-  
ing away falls on 22nd August  
1999.

**'Though Times, Passed, Kiri, Your  
memories of love, should bear  
Your Affections, would ever  
Be written in our hearts'**

Affectionately remembered by his  
loving parents, Mr Naganather  
Selvarajah, Mrs Kamalakumari

Selvarajah of London; loving brother and family Mr  
Selvarajah Muraleetharan and Dr. (Mrs.) Sukaniya of 3  
Clarendon Road, Melbourne, Australia; loving sisters and  
family Mrs Subathini Ramesh and K. Ramesh of  
University, Thanjavur, Mrs Shanthini Shanmuganathan  
and S. Shanmuganathan of 1238 Greenford Road,  
Greenford, Middlesex, UK, loving sister Miss Sharmini,  
Law Faculty, Colombo; loving grandmother, uncles, aun-  
ties, nephews, nieces and other relatives and friends - 28  
Bridgewater Road, Alperton, Wembley, Middx HAO 1AJ.  
Tel: 0181 422 4627.



#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- Sep 1** Karthigai.  
**Sep 2** Shri Krishna Jayanthi.  
**Sep 3** Feast of St Gregory  
the Great.  
**Sep 4** South London Tamil  
Welfare Group (SLTWG)  
Women's Front meets. Tel:  
0181 542 3285.  
**Sep 5** Eekathasi.  
**Sep 7** Pirathosam.  
**Sep 8** Feast of the Birthday  
of Blessed Virgin Mary.  
**Sep 9** Amavasai.  
**Sep 11** SLTWG drop in.. Tel:  
0181 542 3285.  
**Sep 13** Vinayagar Sathurthi.  
**Sep 14** Feast of the Triumph  
of the Cross.  
**Sep 15** Sashti; Feast of Our  
Lady of Sorrows.  
**Sep 17** Feast of St Robert  
Bellarmine.  
**Sep 18** Puradathy Sani (1).  
**Sep 19** Feast of St Januarius!  
6 p.m. Skanda Varodaya  
College O.S.A. presents  
'Mellisai Malai' & Dinner at  
Waltham Forest Theatre,  
Lloyd Park, Winns Terrace,  
Walthamstow, London E17.  
Tel: 0181 814 2365/651  
6129/01322407 376.  
**Sep 21** Eekathasi; Feast of St

Mathew.

- Sep 22** Pirathosam.  
**Sep 24** Full moon.  
**Sep 25** Puradathy Sani (2);  
S.L.T.W.G. Drop in. Tel: 0181  
542 3285.  
**Sep 27** Feast of St Vincent de  
Paul.  
**Sep 28** Feast of St  
Wenceslaus.  
**Sep 29** Karthigai.  
**Sep 30** Feast of St Jerome.  
**At Bhawan Centre, 4A  
Castletown Road, London  
W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381  
3086/4608.**  
**Sep 2** (for one week)  
Exhibition of Bengali Art in co-  
operation with Bromley-by-  
Bow Centre. All Welcome.  
**Sep 3** 7.30pm Shri Krishna  
Jayanthi. Bhajans, puja and  
prasad. All Welcome.  
**Sep 13** Ganesh Chaturthi.  
Bhajans, puja and prasad. All  
Welcome.  
**Sep 17** Onam Festival.  
Malayalees of the UK. present  
Onam Evening. Tel: Kerala  
Bhavan Tel: 0181 688 6216.  
**Sep 18** 7.15 p.m Hindustani  
Vocal by Nawab Siraj Ud  
Dhawla.

### Mr Edward Somakander Ponniah (Soma) – An Appreciation



Mr Edward Somakander Ponniah affectionately known as Soma among his relatives and friends passed away in UK an year ago, after a long and fruitful life of four score and six years. He spent his early years in Colombo and was educated at St Joseph's College, where he excelled in Science and Mathematics. He won a gold medal for having ranked first in the island at the Junior Cambridge Examination held in those times. He graduated in Science from the University of London and began to teach in Holy Trinity College, Nuwara Eliya. Later he joined the staff of Jaffna Central College, where he showed his prowess as

an excellent mathematics teacher. After a couple of years as a teacher, he joined the Labour Department as a Labour Officer, from where he retired as an Assistant Commissioner of Labour. During the service in the Labour Department, he served mostly in the hill country plantation districts of Badulla and Hatton. He was an expert in Industrial Relations and Soma was sought after by leading trade Unionists like Mr Thondaman and late Perisunderam. He was very fair and equitable in the settlement of disputes, strikes and became popular with western planters such as late Mr Harvey during his period of office.

During his retirement from public service, he served as Registrar Cum teacher at the Academy, affiliated to St John's College, Jaffna.

He was a person of great talent and ability, a bibliophile and voracious reader. He possessed a small library of very selective rare books ranging from science to philosophy and was adept in playing contract bridge. He had a wide circle of friends and relatives who loved him deeply. He was much devoted to his family, a loving husband and a caring father. He loved to give of his best to others and to enjoy his life which Providence provided in full measure. These nostalgic thoughts prompt within me a verse which the beloved departed soul speaks,

**Don't grieve for me, for now I am free,  
I am in God's realm that's made for me**

**Be not burdened with sorrows or tears,  
I have found eternal peace and have no  
fears  
My life has been full, and I savoured  
much,  
Good times, good friends, and Loved  
ones I cherished.  
And now tho' unseen, with you I'm in  
Eternal Touch.**

V. T. Ratnalingam (S.L.A.S.)

Retired Director, Ministry of Textiles, Sri Lanka.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his wife Nellita (Bubby) and loved ones. - 79 Sydney Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2QJ. Tel: 0181 643 8087.

### Tear Drops 1999

The Medical Institute of Tamils presents its fourth Tear Drops programme at 6 p.m. on 30th October 1999 at Thurrock Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane, Grays, Essex.

The aim of this programme is to obtain funds to be distributed among the needy victims of war, especially children. It is proposed to donate half of the proceeds to the Annai Illam project, a charity based in Kilinochchi to benefit the war victims of Vanni. The rest of the proceeds will go to fund jointly with SCOT, an orphanage in Trincomalle. Young artistes are invited to participate in the programme of music, drama and thought provoking speeches.

The Guest Speaker would be Sister

Continued on page 32

**Continued from page 31**

Christobelle, Director of the Annal Illam Project.

Those interested in taking part in the programme are kindly requested to contact any one of the following.

**Dr Kukathanan Tel: 01277 632749**

**Dr Poologanathan Tel: 01708 443433**

The programme is supported by Western Jewellers, Tooting.

## Prof Vithiananthan Remembered



The tenth death anniversary of the late Professor Suppiramaniam Vithiananthan, Tamil scholar, community leader and first Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna was observed at a public meeting held at the Scarborough Town Hall in Canada on 15th May 1999. Many scholars, past students, admirers of the professor and grateful members of the public filled the hall to capacity.

The function commenced with an exhibition of the life and achievements of the late professor. Prof. K. Theivendirarajah, the Chairman of the organising committee of the function welcomed the gathering and Mr Sami Appathurai chaired the meeting. Kavignar Kandavanam spoke on the great service rendered by the professor to the community and posterity and launched the book titled 'Vithianantha Sudar'. A well documented video presentation highlighting some of the achievements and memories of the late professor brought flashback memories of the World Tamil Conference held in Jaffna and several other events that took place in various parts of Sri Lanka before and after his demise. Several scholars and public men from various parts of the world contributed to this 'Wonderful memory lane'.

Mrs Selvam Sridas thanked all those who had contributed generously towards the campaign to donate books to the Jaffna University library in memory of the late professor. Over 750 books were donated in this campaign.

Earlier on 8th May, on the 75th birth anniversary of Prof Vithiananthan a speech contest was held in three divisions, in which the competitors delivered speeches highlighting his valuable contributions

and those winning the first three places were selected. Those winning the first places were presented gold medals and the others were awarded plaques at this meeting.

Mr S. Kanagaratnam presented an analytical outlook on the late professor's role in the revival of the culture and higher education of the Tamils. The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr Arul Namby Vithiananthan.

## Dr Ravi Sockanathan Heads Urology Committee



Dr Ravi Sockanathan, a specialist Genito-Urinary Physician at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and a part time Primary care Physician with special responsibility for Medical Urology has been elected chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Association of Shared Care Urology. The main aim of the society is to enhance the high standard of clinical practice in both primary and secondary care urology in the NHS by education, teaching, audit and performance monitoring.

## Parosha Chandran's Quest for Human Rights



The evidence is heart-breaking, the crimes are appalling – and the guilty must be brought to book. The atrocities committed in former Yugoslavia are well documented, but the search for justice is just beginning. UK born, London-based barrister Parosha Chandran has just returned from a three-month stint with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague where she has been helping to examine

evidence collected by United Nations investigators working in Bosnia. She had to study horrific details of mass graves, the systematic killing of children, rape and torture.

'What is so shocking is the extent of the brutality that human beings can commit against each other. The type of crimes are really acts you cannot imagine people are capable of. It really makes you reflect on life and how lucky you can be just by virtue of where you were born' she states. Despite the horrors contained in the statements and photographs, Parosha does not flinch from the challenge and relishes the huge significance of the work she and a team of legal eagles from around the world, have been doing.

'The United Nations War Crimes Tribunal is the first international criminal court since Nuremberg. It is setting an example to the world that the appalling violations of people's human rights and freedoms will not go unpunished' she asserts.

In just a few short years, Parosha, whose parents Raj and Qudsia Chandran are GPs in Nottingham, has become one of Britain's leading experts on human rights law. So much so, she has been commissioned to write a book on the Human Rights Act 1998, designed to be a practical guide for lawyers and judges. Keep it up, Parosha and make the world a safer place to live in.

## Vedanta Teacher Visits London



We in the west constantly receive news via the media regarding suicide bombings, nail bombings and kidnappings. If each and every one of us understood the Vision of Vedanta the Science of Life unfolded by ancient Rishis and detailed by innumerable great thinkers, we can have a peaceful life.

This is the message propagated by a Sathu from Tamil Nadu, who was in London recently. Swami Datwananda, a fluent Tamil speaker draws inspiration from great masters like Swami Chinmayananda and Swami Dayananda Saraswathi. He has been engaged in Vedanta for the past 22 years all over the world.

Swami conducted a series of lectures in UK at the Croydon Tamil Community Centre. In his lectures, Swamiji explained

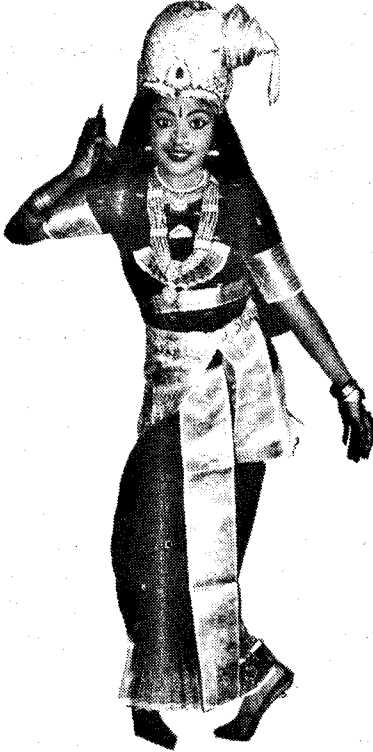
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the values enunciated in the sacred lore that brings about a healthy individual. He lives in an Ashram in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, managed by a registered Trust - Vedanta Foundation. Further details may be obtained from Madurai 539845/UK 44 181 689 7503/ Lyon (France) 33 478 082342.

Wimal Sockanathan.

## Inthuja's Bharatha Natya Arangetram



Inthuja daughter of Mr and Mrs Ganesharaj of Kalubowila, Dehiela and pupil of Guru Nalayini Rajadurai of Thirumalai Kalamamtram, Bambalapitiya had her Bharatha Natya Arangetram on Sunday, 11th July 1999 at the Ramakrishna Mission Hall, Wellawatte before an appreciative audience.

The Chief Guest was Mr Sundaram Divakalala, Secretary, Ministry of



### Vazhuvoor Style Bharatha Natya Classes

by Mrs. Nandini Suthahar, daughter and pupil of well known teacher, Kalabooshanam Mrs. Thiripurasun-dari Yoganantham. For particulars please contact: Kalaimanram, 139 Lynton Road, Rayners Lane, Harrow, Middx HA2 9NH. Tel: 0181 422 7031.

Education, Cultural Development & Sports, North East Province and the Guest of Honour was Prof S. Chandrasegaram, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo. The Special Guests were Rev. Fr. Maria Xavier, Mrs. R. Sivagurunathan and Mr. R. Sivagurunathan.

The first half of the programme were the traditional items of Mallari, Alarippu, Jatheeswaram, Sabtham and a varnam in Thanjasee Raga and Aathi Thala. After the interval Inthuja did a scintillating performance of two Keerthanams in Mohanam and Pakeswary and concluded with Thillana and Mangalam. Inthuja's debut was well received by the audience.

## Secombe Theatre Presents Tamil Drama Festival



The Secombe Theatre in Sutton, UK will be hosting a Tamil Drama Festival presenting three plays by the Tamil Performing Arts Society (TPAS) on Sunday 18th September 1999 at 6.30pm. This is the second time that an English Theatre is presenting a Tamil Drama Festival, the first was when Paul Robson Theatre in Hounslow presented a performance by the same group.

TPAS will stage three plays viz: Kannaadi Vaarpugal, Peyarvur and Paramantha Kuruvum Seedarkalum. Kannaadi Vaarpugal is an adaption of one of the most popular plays of this century, was originally staged in Jaffna in 1978 and was acclaimed the most thought-provoking play of the time. It was staged in several parts of Sri Lanka and was the first play ever to be recorded, televised and broadcast several times in Sri Lanka. This is a new production of the play, directed by Mr. Balendra and is being staged for the first time in the UK. Peyarvur depicts the exodus from Jaffna in 1995. Paramantha Kuruvum Seedarkalum is a dramatisation of a collection of short stories written by the famous Italian priest Veera Ma Munivar and enacted by 32 children of the Brent Tamil School.

TPAS is a leading Tamil theatre group in London and has performed around 2000 times in several parts of the world. Despite

being an amateur group, it has succeeded in maintaining their momentum in this sector of the entertainment field for many years.

## Mrs Rohini Wijeyadevendram – Eulogy

Rohini Wijeyadevendram, oldest of ten children, was born in Manipay, Sri Lanka in 1925. She had her preliminary education at Chundikuli Girls' College and subsequently at Ramanathan College, Jaffna. Her formative years were spent at Thirunelveli North, Jaffna.

At age 20, she married Duke Wijeyadevendram, who retired as Deputy Director of Small Industries, Colombo, in 1975. Her father's premature death prompted her to take the added responsibility for caring for her siblings as a foster parent at age 22. Driven by her deep devotion and endless dedication to her family, she succeeded in guiding their lives and in securing suitable spouses for them.

She mothered six children and life's roulette wheel dealt her an early hand of widowhood in 1980. Her persistence and perseverance in her children's matrimonial affairs ensured success in establishing their lives. They are well settled in the US.

She established her home in Boston with her youngest daughter Yaso in 1982. During the past two decades she was in constant communication with all of her kith and kin around the world and offered sincere advice for their well being, when it was required. Being aware of the matrimonial predicament of first generation immigrants of Sri Lanka, she selflessly strove to promote marriages within her community. She was gifted with a remarkable memory for names and this talent aided her immensely in her pursuits.

She was afflicted with an incurable malignant metastatic disease in early 1998. Undaunted she continued the fullness of life travelling extensively to meet her family and friends and utilised her skills in bringing people together. She exhibited extreme tolerance for pain and silently endured her physical and mental distress until her demise.

She led a humble and simple life and she will be remembered for her labour of love, compassionate ways and constant concern for the welfare for the near and dear.

May her soul hasten towards union with the Lord.

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Kana Kuyil Sripathy Nadeen Gregory  
Kana Kuyil Yogakiri Lavanya Thilakam  
Krishna Thavam Inthu Pathmabaskaran  
M. Sathiamoorthy Sinthu Pathmabaskaran

Date: 19th September 1999. Time: 6.00pm  
Venue: Waltham Forest Theatre, Lloyds Park,  
Winns Terrace, London E17

Donations: Family (2 Adults, 2 Children) £20.00  
Adults: £10.00 Children Under Twelve: £5.00

(All Charges Inclusive of Dinner)

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