

Dr. (Mrs.) Rajani Thiranagama nee Rajasingam.



Dr. Rajani, Thiranagama Head of the Department of Anatomy University of Jaffna was assassinated by unknown gunmen on the 21st September Thursday evening near the Faculty of Medicine on her return from work.

The body was kept at the Faculty of Medicine and the University on Friday with the students taking it in procession. It was brought by the students in procession from Tinnevely to Nallur where the funeral took place on Saturday 23rd September "in her ancestral home. She was also the Treasurer of the University Chapel (St. Thomas Church).

Tributes were made by the Vice-Chancellor the Deans of Medicine, Science, Arts, & the Students Unions, Medical Students of the University and Mr A. Kadirgamar. The Bishop of Jaffna The Rt. Rev. D. J. Ambalavanar preached at the funeral service and the Rev. Isaac Selvaratnam, performed the rites assisted by the Rev. Dev Anandaraman, and the Rev. J. Sarvanathan. An Appreciation appears else where on this paper.

She leaves behind her husband Mr. Thiranagama, two daughters, her three sisters and her parents Mr. & Mrs. A. Rajasingham to mourn her loss.

Tributes paid by :

1. Rajan Hoole.

23rd September 1989.

Dr. Rajani fell victim to an assassin, a young lady and a mother of two little girls. She wanted to work for the improvement of this community and returned with her doctorate barely 3 years ago. We know how difficult it is for an expatriate to think of returning after being cut off for a number of years. One imagines assassins at every street corner to start with, and then what about the children's education? Rajani returned from Britain on the 3rd of September, barely 3 weeks ago, after a 3 month spell of research. Even at this time Rajani could have chosen to remain in Britain, a five star refugee and a full time scholar. She had all the connections ranging from the Amnesty International to the British Refugee Council. But she had a strong sense of justice. She knew that many under dire threat and less fortunate in terms of educational attainment will not be given refugee status by western governments. She more than many others felt this strongly because she befriended many, young and old, from the depressed sections of this society, who themselves and their close relatives, were subject to arbitrary violence without reprieve. No one cared for them. The legal obligation to protect them was only verbally acknowledged in Delhi and in Colombo. Beside her own students, many such people looked up to her.

She was many things to many people. Many students and employees who found her sympathy and understanding of

an unusual order, regarded her a stern but loving mother. To me apart from being a friend, she was sometimes a wondering and uncertain child. She vacillated between the certainties of religious belief and a feeling that the world was a mystery in which like evolution as it is conceived, human effort could make few changes in a sea of randomness. In recent months, she had quite often spoken despairingly of the situation in our country. She wondered if human effort would be of any avail against the colossal evil that stalked the land.

Let us take something that Rajani felt about deeply during these past few weeks. This concerned the militarisation of our children. One side was putting them under arms by unlawful conscription and the other by using questionable forms of inducement. To what purpose? To kill each other. The powers in Delhi and Colombo, their legal protectors, were shamelessly running with the hare, and hunting with the hounds. These young persons from the deprived sections of our society were a sizeable part of our future generation.

Who killed Rajani is at present not important for us. We do not know whether it was an accident, deliberate, a mistake or a slip up. Let us merely recognise that there is a good deal of evil around that must be fought by God's grace. We must not give ourselves to hatred, anger or despair. Let us leave to God what is His. He has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay". We are told: If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of

fire on his head.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"

2. Mr. A. Kadirgamar

(Principal emeritus,
Jaffna College)

Words of appreciation and words of consolation are most inadequate at this time to fill the void - the deep and gashing void - that has been created in your lives by the sudden, unexpected and cruel death of our beloved Rajani. We can only pray that God grants us the consolation which only He with His infinite mercy and grace can grant. In the meantime we shall uphold the family in our public and personal prayers.

Hers was certainly a very successful, accomplished and purposeful life. From kindergarten to Ph. D - if one word could portray her life and work - it is Distinction. Academic distinction and excellence of the highest order all the way. As a toddler, kindergarten child, school girl at Jaffna College with brief bouts at Chundikuli Girls' College, University and Post-Graduate career, practising doctor, researcher, teacher and university don, she never stumbled once and took all her courses and examinations here and abroad in her stride in minimum time with ease and characteristic poise. Her life was one deep, long, unabated breath of thirty-five years in the academic, religious and social concerns which could only be hushed by a cold, calculated bullet which was her mysterious tryst with destiny.

The zest for life was so very evident in Rajani's entire life. It will surprise the present generation who only are concerned with tutorials, notes and examinations to know that Rajani in her school and university life besides a very successful career in the academic with books, notes and examinations participated actively in all the sports, dramatics, music, literary, oratorical, religious, cultural and social activities that were available to her in school, University, Church and community and won most of the prizes that were available to her in such activities in school. She was a brilliant after dinner speaker. She was the Sri Lankan University representative at the Worlds Student Christian Federation Conference that took place at the BMICH some years ago when she was at the university. There were more than sixty countries represented in that conference and I was witness to the forceful contribution that Rajani made at the conference and we were all very proud of her. Her interests were truly versatile.

She was loyal to her church always. Even though of a mixed marriage she had the commitment to have her daughter baptised in the Cathedral Church Vaddukoddai. She was a founder member of the St. Thomas, Church of the Jaffna University Chaplaincy and last Sunday she worshipped there with my mother and sister. She took time for worship inspite of her very heavy schedule of work at home and university and walked humbly with her God.

Rajani had two very pleasant colleagues in the medical career from the same class at Jaffna College, one now a successful practitioner in London and the other in USA. They were an excellent trio. However, Rajani who could have been as safe and comfortable abroad just for the asking, chose the hard and bitter road of being with her very own here - her family, her Church, her students, her Jaffna, with all its tragedies, blood, sweat and tears! while being here she kept in touch with the best in her field of research and teaching in the West and always returned to Jaffna to share her expertise with her own academic community of staff and students. Her students will always be deeply grateful to her and will certainly feel the great loss in an already very disturbing situation with the acute dearth of academic personnel in the Faculty of Medicine in the Jaffna University.

In the very prime of life, in the midst of feverish social concerns and care, at the height of her intellectual powers and deep sensitivity of head and heart, Rajani leaves us with no warning whatsoever, bereft and forlorn. She now joins that mighty throng of the hundreds,

may thousands in our land; who have been killed young - in their teens, twenties and thirties for various reasons! We continue to cry and our throats have gone hoarse, "Why? O Lord why? and "How long O Lord, how long?"

Two thousand years ago a young man of 33 with his ministry hardly begun died a horrible and violent death on the cross at the hands of his very own whom he came to serve and we have under similar situations facing unexpected, sudden and violent death of the young, prayed over and over again the prayer: "By thine agony and bloody sweat, Good Lord, deliver us!" and have in the same breath echoed the well known victorious stanzas of faith: "Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son, endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won!"

May God in His mercy accept the life and work of Rajani and we commit her life as an offering to God. May the good Lord enfold her soul into His eternal loving care and protection.

May God console all those who will miss her physical presence here.

A. C. M. Press Jaffna.