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The truck-bomb attack in the heart of Colombo on left the rear side of the World Trade Centre in ruins.

* **DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS
PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT**

* **LTTE CHALLENGES USA
TERRORIST LABEL**

* **Colombo Bomb Attack**

* **Reflections on Sinhala
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பெட்டிகளிலிருந்து, முழு அளவிலான தனிப்பட்ட பொருள்கள் வரை. ★ கார், மற்றும்
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right to say it."

-Voltaire

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Devolution Proposals Presented to Parliament

A significant feature of the Government's Constitutional Reform proposals tabled in Parliament 24 October is the provision for the devolution of power as a means to give the people of the various Regions a better opportunity to develop their Regions and as a political solution to the ethnic problem. Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Prof. G L Peiris, who presented the proposals, said that a solution to the ethnic problem can be achieved through the participation of all communities in the administration of the Regional Councils.

The Government's proposal on constitutional reform along with several riders put forward by the constituent parties of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform were tabled in Parliament by G L Peiris.

The Government has expressed its opinion that the people of the Regions should have the right to take decisions on matters arising at the Regional level. Within this framework of devolution of power, a firm commitment to the unity and the sovereignty of the country has been established.

According to the proposals, Sri Lanka is "one sovereign and Independent Republic being an indissoluble union of Regions." The territory of the Republic shall consist of the Capital Territory composed of the Municipalities of Colombo and Sri-Jayewardenepura-Kotte and the Regions.

There will be a Regional Council for each Region. The proposals have put forward the formation of all-party Boards of Ministers at Regional level as a means of enabling regional power-sharing. The member who commands the support of the majority in the Regional Council would be appointed Chief Minister. Ministries would be apportioned in proportion to the number of votes polled by each political party.

Executive Committees will be set up under the Chairmanship of the relevant Minister. Each member of the Regional Council would be a member of one such Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall be charged with the administration of the subjects and functions assigned to the Ministry and the Minister shall exercise power in the name of the Executive Committee. The Government feels that all members of the Regional Council shall be afforded an opportunity to participate in Executive

Government through the Executive Committees.

Among the subjects and functions that would come under the purview of the Central Government will be national security, national police, security forces, foreign Affairs, immigration and emigration, national planning, finance and foreign exchange, income tax, customs duties and other taxes, national grid for the supply of electricity, minerals and mines, inter-regional rivers and inter-regional irrigation schemes, railways and inter-regional transport, inter-regional and inter-district highways, shipping and navigation, posts and telecommunications, national mass-media, Central Government broadcasting and television, national public service, national health administration, special and teaching hospitals, co-ordination of health services, national health standards, fishing beyond territorial waters, traditional migratory fishing within territorial waters, national policy on education, national schools, national universities, standards for national public certification examinations and the conduct of such examinations, standards for curricula and teacher qualifications and training, foreign trade, inter-regional trade, Buddhism, Pirivena education, archaeology, ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites declared to be of national importance, national archives and museums and national plans on environment, conservation and coast conservation.

Subjects and functions assigned to the Regional Councils would be Regional planning, taxes assigned to Regions, motor vehicle licence fees, court fines, Regional lotteries, Regional public service, health and indigenous medicine, education and higher education, educational services other than national schools and national universities, fishing within territorial waters, industries and regional industrial development, trade within the Regional, co-operatives, roads excluding those specified in the reserved list, transport, minor ports, housing and construction, local Government and local elections, social services and mass media, radio and television in conformity with national standards.

There shall be a national police service for the entirety of the country and a regional police service for each Region. Offences that would be exclusively in-

investigated by the national police service include offences against the republic, offences relating to the security forces and elections, offences relating to national security and essential services, offences relating to stamps, currency and property of the Central Government, crimes involving more than one region and inter-regional crimes. The regional police service is responsible to the Regional Police Commission in regard to the discharge of its functions. The Commission will consist of members representing the three major communities nominated by the Constitutional Council and one member nominated by the Chief Minister. In respect of the maintenance of public order, the regional police is responsible to the Chief Minister. Where there is a threat to the unity and sovereignty of the country, the central Government is empowered to deploy the national police or the armed forces to restore public order. The appointment, transfer etc. of national police officers will be the responsibility of the National Police Commission consisting of the National Police Commissioner and two members nominated by the Constitutional Council. Arms and ammunition to regional police services will be provided by the Central Government and the national police will provide specialized and technical assistance to regional police services upon request.

The Regions would have more responsibility in respect of Land. However, whilst state land is vested on the Region, land required by the Central Government shall be made available by the Regional Administration. Inter-Regional irrigation schemes will be under the purview of the Central Government.

Meanwhile under units of devolution, the Government has proposed that a referendum be held in the districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa on the issue of the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. If the people vote in favour of merger, a new-unit known as the South-Eastern Region consisting of the polling divisions of Kalmunai, Pottuvil and Samanturai will be constituted. Whether the Amparai polling division should be a separate unit or not will be decided at a referendum. If the people decide against a separate unit, the polling division will be joined to the Uva Province.

According to the Government's proposals, the Central Government has the authority to dissolve the Regional Council and assume power of the region in a situation where the Regional Administration is promoting armed rebellion or insurrection or engaging in intentional violation of its powers under the Constitution, which constitutes a danger to the unity and sovereignty of the country.

At a special press conference to discuss the specific provisions in the proposals Prof. Peiris highlighted some key elements in the proposed constitution. He said one of the key features of the proposals is the devolution of power to the region and noted it must be seen "as an opportunity for the development of the regions and as a political solution to the ethnic problem, leading to peace".

The Minister said that the government would consider any specific proposals from the United National Party on the proposals presented to Parliament on Friday, provided that those proposals have the agreement of the other smaller parties.

He said "the government believes that a long-lasting solution to the ethnic problem could be achieved with a new power sharing arrangement involving all communities". Drawing on some other significant features in the proposal Minister highlighted the provisions relating to Fundamental Rights; Judicial Review of Legislation; the abolition of the Executive Presidency; establishment of the Executive Committee System at regional level; and the establishment of the Constitutional Council.

The Minister said that "very significant strengthening of human rights" is provided in the proposals of the constitution presented to Parliament and noted that the presentation itself is a response to the country's experience of the past.

Minister Peiris stated that it is "a document that is going to be crucial as we move into the 21st century". He said that these forward looking proposals, while further ensuring the strengthening of Human Rights, provide for new rights that have been hitherto absent, such as the rights to Life, Information and Privacy. The Right to Life the Minister stated is provided as a "non-derogable fundamental right" and re-iterated that the restrictions will be only those "necessary in a democratic society".

The Minister observed that a particularly heavy emphasis has been placed on economic rights in terms of employment, housing and especially against gender-based discrimination. Minister Peiris observed that some of the provisions have gone even further than those enshrined in the South African Constitution.

Highlighting the fact that Judicial Review of legislation "is the acid test of Human rights", the Minister stated that the Courts of Law will have the power to strike down legislation which is in contradiction with human rights provisions in the constitution. The proposal also ensures the establishment of a Constitutional Council, which is to be constituted of representatives of all political

parties in Parliament. Prof Peiris emphasised the need for consensus building saying "it is a primary requirement of Sri Lanka today".

The proposals also ensures the abolition of the Executive Presidency, which he said was not suitable for Sri Lanka and that the "government has remained constantly committed to its abolition".

The proposals also envisages the establishment of an Executive Committee System at regional level. Emphasising the importance of this system for the country's developmental efforts, the Minister said that the composition of a Board of Ministers at a regional level will ensure the participation of all political parties elected by the people, unlike the present system. He noted that since the Regional Councils will engage in developmental work in the region, the participation of all political parties will be crucial in that process.

Within the proposal is the independence of the Public Service with the establishment and an Independent Public Service Commission.

Responding to a question by journalists on the role of the opposition, Minister Peiris said that the United National Party (UNP) had made some very significant recommendations during the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) deliberations, adding that the provision for an Executive Committee System at regional level was essentially a UNP contribution. He also noted that the UNP had participated in all of the 77 sittings of the PSC.

Minister Peiris said the government is fully committed to the implementation of the present proposals and said if in the interim any specific proposals are made by the UNP which has the consensus of the other parties, the government would consider those provisions to be included.

UNP's Stand

However the UNP appears to be divided. While leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, during his recent visit to India, called for the revival of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987 and the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, former leading Ministers like Ronnie de Mel and A C S Hameed are reported to be in support of the government proposals.

The UNP however appears to have moved away from insisting on the "unitary character of the state". It says that now it stands for a "united and undivided" Sri Lanka. Even this formulation appears to be resisted by some of the hardliners in the party.

The UNP in rider to the government's proposals wants further discussions on

the following five issues: nature of the state, unit of devolution, land powers, police powers and financial provisions for regional councils.

In the meantime, Tamil and Muslim parties have sought meetings with the UNP leadership to work out consensual arrangements on the five areas in which that party wants further discussions.

"We are interested in a national consensus and in obtaining the approval of parliament for such consensus," a spokesman of Tamil party said.

Tamil and Muslim party sources said for out of these five matters would not pose much problem, specially, the nature of the state. The UNP wants an indivisible Sri Lanka and that can be easily accommodated by substituting the word indissoluble with indivisible and making the consequential adjustments, they said.

"The UNP's rider submitted by Prof. Peiris, stated clearly that it is for extensive devolution of power. And the UNP appointed Mangala Moonasinghe Committee had recommended the Indian model of devolution. In India, land is vested with the state governments. Each state has a state police service headed by the IGP. In India the states enjoy wide financial powers. So these can be sorted out," the spokesman said.

Then the only remaining matter is unit of devolution. Here, so far as Tamils are concerned there are two options making the current temporary merger permanent with the referendum envisaged in the Indo-Sri Lanka Pact and the 13th Amendment and the government proposals of merging the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts to the Northern Province after a referendum, providing the Muslims of the Ampara district a separate regional council and permitting the people of the Ampara electorate to decide whether they want to remain a separate unit or want to merge with Uva.

Tamil party sources said the UNP seem to prefer the temporary merger of the North and East to continue and that would suit them. That arrangement will in fact promote national harmony as the north-eastern regional council will have significant Muslim and Sinhala minorities with ministerial representation.

"If the UNP can convince the Muslims, Tamils will be happy. But they would want the issue of merger settled once and for all by making it permanent," a Tamil leader said.

Justice, Constitutional Affairs, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris said on Tuesday that the government will seriously consider any arrangement worked out by the Tamil and Muslim parties with the UNP.

SLMC, which is pushing for a sepa-

TIGERS CHALLENGE "TERRORIST" DESIGNATION BY US

D B S Jeyaraj

William Ramsey Clark, the one time Attorney General of the USA, is again in the limelight as the leading Counsel for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with a brief to challenge and overturn the designation of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation by the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Described as a "bleeding heart liberal with a social conscience" the colourful Mr Clark has apparently taken on the establishment of which he was an erstwhile member in pursuit of many Causes including "lost ones". It is to be seen whether his espousal of the LTTE cause is another quixotic tilt at windmills or a brave St George type of rescue with the roles reversed. Instead of delivering

the damsel from the dragon it is "Sir Ramsey's task to deliver the monster, in this case the Tiger from the maiden or Madeleine Albright's designation as terrorist.

Enlisting the services of Ramsey Clark in combating the US State Department designation of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation is certainly a feather in the LTTE cap. The full credit for this must go to Visvanathan Rudrakumaran, the New York based Tamil Attorney described in LTTE literature as political adviser to the International Secretariat of the LTTE. Rudrakumaran, the son of former TULF Mayor for Jaffna Rajah Visvanathan completed his US Bar exams in Brooklyn where he may have made contact with Clark.

In any event the fact that a high profile former US Attorney General has been retained by the LTTE has certainly enthused Tiger Supporters greatly. Again to use an Americanism it is to be seen whether the exuberant Tiger supporters in North America will put their money where their mouth is and foot the legal costs that are certainly likely to be exorbitant.

The LTTE legal "dream team" led by Clark includes his associate, Lawrence W Schilling and Visvanathan Rudrakumaran, Princeton University Law Professor, Richard Falk, Georgetown University, Professor of Law, David Cole and US attorney Wakely Paul. Incidentally Mr Wakely Paul, a Sri Lankan Tamil was formerly in the Sri Lankan Attorney General's Department.

On 1 October this year the US State department notified Congress of the Secretary of State's intent to designate 30 foreign terrorist organisations in such manner as required under the US Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. One week later on 8 October US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright designated by law 30 organisations including the LTTE as foreign terrorist organisations. She acted under the authority of the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act with the concurrence of the US Attorney General and the Secretary of Treasury. A formal announcement of the designations was placed in the Federal Register on 8 October itself. Later at noon on the 8th, Albright held a press briefing and an-

rate regional council for the three Muslim majority electorates in the Ampara district, is scheduled to meet the UNP to canvass its support to the proposals.

Meanwhile Tamils and Muslims in the UNP are urging its leadership to seize this opportunity to find a solution to the ethnic problem. They have reminded the leadership of the betrayal of the Tamil people by the UNP in the 1954 Kelaniya convention when the party adopted the Sinhala only policy. On that occasion, most of the Tamil leaders quit the party. They helped in defeating the UNP in 1956.

"If our leaders listen to the Sinhala extremists, Tamil members will have to quit the UNP again and the party will suffer the consequences. Our leaders must realise that every one of the extremists in the party have no popular backing. And most of them have their sons and daughters abroad. They will run away to live with them and issue statements urging others' children to fight the war and attain martyrdom," a dejected Tamil UNPer is reported to have said.

While political parties in Colombo are discussing the pros and cons of the government's constitutional reform proposals, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have totally rejected them. In their newspaper, "Viduthalai Puligal", the LTTE says that the government proposals have failed to recognise the concept of a Tamil homeland adding that the proposals would not in any way help to end the continuing conflict.

nounced her decision in Washington. President Clinton also endorsed this decision publicly while in New Jersey.

The initial LTTE reaction to this in the US was panic. A sense of despondency and impending doom set in. LTTE activists and supporters became cautious and withdrawn. Fearing FBI monitoring their activity their movements became secretive and low-key. Among the few undaunted was Rudrakumaran who maintains a healthy respect for the Western legal system. The LTTE international secretariat endorsed his decision to challenge the designation in a Court of law. Section 219 of the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act provides for such challenge and request for judicial review of what is essentially an executive order. This has to be done within 30 days of the order. US Tamil Attorneys, Rudrakumaran and Wakely Paul were entrusted with the task of mounting a defence in the USA.

It is said that Rudrakumaran was very disappointed by the lukewarm response of many US-based Tiger supporters towards this new development. Paranoid that their names were in FBI lists, most of these successful professionals seemed to fear acting openly. The growling Tigers of yore were now purring pussy cats or so it seemed. While being ready to provide clandestine financial backing, none of the visibly active Tigers, including the US LTTE leader Karunaharan alias Karuna were ready to identify themselves openly as LTTE. The problem was in whose name was the challenge to be lodged? And in what capacity was that person to be named? There were no takers on US or Canadian soil.

Once again the resourceful Rudrakumaran got out of a tricky situation by persuading the man in charge of the LTTE International Secretariat Mano to authorise such legal action. Incidentally, this again spotlighted a major change in the LTTE International structure. No longer was Lawrence Thilagar in charge. The new International head was Velummayilum Manoharan alias Mano. An engineer by profession, Mano has been in charge of the Paris LTTE for many years and has even suffered a jail sentence during this period. He is now the Head of the International Secretariat of the LTTE housed at 211 Katherine Road, London. Mano himself is based and resident in Paris.

Thus the challenge in the US courts was not to be in the name of any person living in North America as would have been more appropriate but on behalf of the International Representative of the LTTE Velummayilum Manoharan in Europe. There may have been a tremen-

dous difference if some US citizen or citizens challenged it on behalf of the LTTE as certain other rights including those under the first amendment to the constitution would have accrued to the challengers. Then again it may be that with the passage of time some brave Tamil soul may come forward in the future to undertake such a risk in the name of the cause. After all the brave Tamil expatriates who from the comfortable safe haven of the West urges their kinsfolk to carry on the fight with all their might should also do their "mite" for the cause and take a mere legal risk!

At the early stages Rudrakumaran also tried and tested quite a few approaches. One was to explore possibilities of collaborating with some of the other 30 organisations designated as terrorist. A few Jewish, European and Latin American organisations were considered. The Jewish organisations in question were extremely right wing. Later these options were abandoned. Attempts were also made to obtain the sponsorship of US civil liberties organisations. In this process Rudrakumaran struck a "bonanza" when Ramsey Clark was willing. After that V Manoharan formally endorsed Clark and Rudrakumaran as the authorised LTTE legal representatives in the USA.

All this preliminary spadework caused considerable delay and it was on the 29th day after the ban that the LTTE was able to file its formal notice of appeal in a US Federal Appeal Court on 6 November. The deadline for such action was only 30 days and the LTTE squeaked through. The appeal was made on the formal instructions of the LTTE International representative V Manoharan who stated "We feel we have a moral obligation to challenge the designation". The appeal was filed by Clark, Schilling and Rudrakumaran in a Washington US Court of Federal Appeals in the circuit of District of Columbia.

The application for relief by the LTTE against designation as a terrorist organisation under Section 219 of the Immigration and Naturalisation Act of 8 United States Code 1189(b). This new section in the Immigration and Naturalisation Act was created as a consequence of the LTTE and 29 other groups being designated as terrorist under the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. The LTTE seeks ultimate relief through an order vacating the LTTE's designation as a foreign terrorist organisation on either of the following bases.

The factual basis according to the appeal is because the LTTE is the de-facto government of a de-facto state. It employs legitimate political violence as a last resort in self defence. The LTTE is

a national liberation movement seeking to realise the right of the Tamil people to self-determination pursuant to a mandate given by the Tamil people in the 1977 elections, the last authentic election held in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. LTTE is an organisation representing the Tamil people who are being subjected to deadly violence, deprived of basic human rights, and systematically discriminated against by and persecuted as a people by the Sri Lankan Government dominated by the Sinhala people. LTTE presents no threat to the security of the United States and is not a terrorist organisation as defined under the laws of the United States and under International law.

Apart from the above-mentioned fact which is in essence of political justification, the LTTE legal team has also challenged the designation on legal issues. The appeal calls for a vacation of the designation upon a declaration that the court is unable to undertake a so called "judicial review" of the LTTE's designation under the relevant provisions as they contemplate judicial approval as an essential element of the statutory scheme, and is therefore invalid for either or both of the following reasons.

The first is that the court in question is being directed under the relevant law to engage in conduct beyond its jurisdiction and power. The findings of the Secretary of State about the "terrorist" activity of the LTTE has led to such designation. Review of such designation would require the court to review the Secretary's findings which present non-justiciable issues that are beyond the court's jurisdiction and power to resolve.

The second basis of the challenge is that sufficiently objective and specific standards for review of the Secretary's findings and designation are not provided particularly in view of vague and over-broad definitions of "national security", "the national defence, foreign relations, or economic interests of the United States," and "terrorist activity". This according to the LTTE lawyers imposes limits and conditions upon the so called judicial review that in effect would make this court an instrumentality of the Executive Branch required to "rubber stamp" executive action in violation of the Constitution's separation of powers.

The LTTE legal representatives also point out that the Secretary's designation of the LTTE as terrorist was purely EX PARTE. The LTTE did not participate in anyway in whatever proceedings that culminated in its designation as terrorist. Another point is the statutory stipulation that directs the Secretary to create an administrative record. The LTTE assumes the existence of such a record

but has no knowledge whatsoever of its contents. It did not participate or knowledgeably contribute to the making of that administrative record.

It must be noted here that it was on the basis of such administrative records considered classified that the designation of each organisation was effected. In fact when the designation was announced Albright herself said "we are aware that some of the designations made today will be challenged in Court. Due process under the law affords this opportunity. But we are also confident that the designations are fully justified. "The LTTE legal team however states that the due process of the law does not permit the court to approve the Secretary's designation of LTTE as a terrorist organisation on the basis of an ex parte, one-sided record and without affording LTTE full opportunity to be heard as requested. The LTTE lawyers contend that given the Secretary's public assurance of due process, judicial approval of the designation based solely on the ex parte record would be publicly misleading as well as a travesty and a serious injustice.

The LTTE lawyers have also made requests directed initially to the Secretary and to the Courts if she is unable or unwilling to meet the requests. The requests are as follows:-

A full and exact copy of the administrative record against it and a full opportunity to introduce evidence and confront and rebut evidence in the record. This would demonstrate that there is no substantial support in the administrative record for the Secretary's designation. The LTTE has also further requested that it be allowed to present pleadings and briefs to address the issues as they appear in the light of the administrative record after it is disclosed to the LTTE.

The LTTE has on the same grounds articulated above requested a copy of any classified information against it. Alternately without intending any waiver of this position the LTTE has also requested that such classified information be made available to an attorney on its behalf with appropriate security clearances. As a further alternative, the LTTE requests that it be furnished as complete and meaningful an unclassified summary of the information as possible.

The lawyers on behalf of the LTTE have also emphasised that the issuance of an order vacating the designation would depend on how the statute is interpreted and applied in this matter and also the procedures that are followed in presenting and resolving the case. Interim rulings may be required on such matters such as the extent to which LTTE will be given notice of the allegations

against it, disclosure of the administrative record and any other evidence received and considered by the Secretary, opportunity to be heard, to make factual and legal arguments and presentations including the presentation of witnesses and documentary evidence and confrontation and cross examination of adverse witnesses is required, state the lawyers.

The LTTE lawyers also conclude their appeal by stating that the statute concerned at face value and in application violates the United States Constitution and International Law and Treaties. They also say that in acting as they did to designate the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, officials of the State Department and other US federal officials have acted in violation of the US Constitution and International law and treaties. The appeal also seeks an order vacating the LTTE's designation as a terrorist organisation, interim rulings in its favour as necessary and appropriate, and such other and further relief as the LTTE may hereafter request or the Court may deem just and proper.

It is also noteworthy that the missive sent by Manoharan, the LTTE International representative authorising lawyers to appear on LTTE behalf in the USA also concludes with a direct appeal to the USA. Manoharan says "It is indeed regrettable that the American Nation which secured its own independence after a violent struggle for self-determination, and has ever since championed the cause of human freedom, has chosen to characterise and discredit the legitimate struggle of the Tamil people seeking to determine their political status, as a phenomenon of terrorism. We consider this indictment by the US Department of State unfair and unfounded. We understand that section 219(b) of the Anti-Terrorism Act provides an opportunity to challenge the designation in your court. We feel that we have a moral obligation to challenge it. We are also mindful that the courts in the United States play an important role in defending the rights of the persecuted and downtrodden. We believe that we can get justice in your court".

The conduct of the LTTE in this regard indicates that it is getting ready to mount a massive legal action spearheaded by the high profile, Ramsey Clark ably assisted by the dedicated Rudrakumaran. The text of the initial appeal suggests that various issues such as Constitutional validity, individual liberty, lack of disclosures, denial of utilised evidence, principles of natural justice, theory of the separation of powers, First Amendment, procedural problems and above all the political history of contemporary Sri Lanka etc are likely to be raised

during the course of this trial. It is very likely to be a replica of the Canadian trial of Manickavasagam Suresh detained under a Security certificate. After a protracted trial the Canadian Federal Court upheld the original order against Suresh on the basis that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Manickavasagam Suresh was a member of the LTTE and that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the LTTE engages in terrorism.

It was Rudrakumaran who paid innumerable visits to Canada and coordinated the defence of Suresh Manickavasagam in a bid to prevent the LTTE being labelled terrorist. With some variations, the preliminary examination of the issues in the US appeal reveals that a substantial portion of the proceedings in the USA are likely to be similar to that which occurred in Canada in Suresh's case. The well-heeled USA Tamils are likely to fund the case lavishly without playing an overt role as it is of paramount importance for them to get the terrorist designation revoked. If the USA upholds the ban then many of these people may be compelled to review their continuous support to the LTTE mainly because of self-preservation.

In that context some comments made by well-known lawyer and current diplomat H L De Silva on the Suresh case are worthy of recall. Mr De Silva pointed out that in the Canadian trial a principle of natural justice had been violated in the sense that the political history of Sri Lanka had been discussed in Courts without a Government version or a Sinhala version being put across.

On that basis it would be interesting to see what the Sri Lankan Government would do in the case of the USA. Will it play a non-participant role or would it seek through legitimate channels an opportunity to provide some input into the trial? More interesting would be the role of the Anti-Tiger lobby in the States. Sections of this lobby take justifiable pride in getting the USA to designate the LTTE as terrorist. So it is a moot point whether these sections would remain away from the trial proceedings or try and play a meaningful participatory role to consolidate the political advantage gained through the banning of the LTTE?

When the LTTE allegedly bombed the Central Bank in January 1996 the repercussions for it was severe. Paul Wilcox, US State Department co-ordinator for terrorism described it as "the most serious terrorist act world-wide last year was the bombing of the Central Bank in Sri Lanka" at a press briefing held on 30 April 1997. Two US nationals, six Japanese and one from the Netherlands were injured in that act. Also

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many US nationals including children were in the vicinity and exposed to grave danger at that time. It was that act which contributed greatly to the US ban on the LTTE. Supplementing it was the LTTE front organisation the "Ellalan Force" that has exploded bombs in hotels and has threatened the safety of foreign nationals.

The blunt truth is that the USA is not too "concerned" with Terrorism in Sri Lanka as long as its interests or nationals are not threatened. The domestic or national terrorism of a Country is not as important as extra-territorial or International terrorism which threatens or is likely to threaten US interests. There is no universally accepted definition for terrorism but the State Department relies on the United States Code 2656 f (d) which states terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience". International terrorist is defined as "terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country". The USA in the case of Sri Lanka is concerned primarily about the ramifications of International terrorism as allegedly practised by the LTTE.

In that context the LTTE has in recent times attacked and seized several foreign ships. Foreign national crew members have been killed and taken prisoner. A Hong Kong ship intending to transport Ilmenite from Pulmoddal to the USA was attacked and destroyed by the LTTE causing in the process an environmental hazard. This is something that could be construed as a direct violation of US economic interests. More important is the Galadari bomb attack coming in just a week after the US ban. A number of foreign nationals including eight Americans were injured.

There was speculation that the LTTE intended targeting the US green berets staying at Fort hotels. Although this seems implausible it is clear that US defence personnel did stay in the area. The US too has suspended that programme of military training and has reportedly withdrawn the persons involved. This again could be an indicator that the USA considers the LTTE a threat to its interests and nationals. If that assumption is correct it would be difficult for the LTTE to justify itself in a US court. On the other hand the reluctance of the government to ban the LTTE openly and unambiguously could help the LTTE. The fact that the home country has not indulged in such a step is certain to help clever legalistic arguments in favour of the LTTE. Another point in LTTE favour would be the resumption of a political dialogue with

the LTTE at this juncture. Although there may be strong domestic political compulsions for undertaking even a limited exercise of that nature a negative consequence of that would be points in favour of the LTTE vis a vis the USA.

The current designation will lapse in two years. There is provision for the courts to set it aside before that following a judicial review. The Secretary of State too can revoke the order in view of changed circumstances. If the LTTE enters into negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government that fact could be interpreted in its favour by its able legal team. The USA may even be constrained to lift the ban in order to deflect criticism of being a hindrance towards a peaceful settlement in Sri Lanka.

It must be remembered that the USA during the 100 day cessation of hostilities between the LTTE and the Kumartunga Government granted a visa to Lawrence Thilagar, the LTTE International Head then. Before Thilagar could come to the States the LTTE started fighting again. The US then wanted to disallow Thilagar's visa. Later it allowed him to enter the country subject to some conditions. The IRA too earned a reprieve this time by virtue of it declaring a moratorium on violence and backing the talks.

In the light of these experiences it is clear that resumption of talks with the LTTE could have a positive impact in favour of the LTTE in the US. Both the courts as well as the State Department may be forced to review the situation favourably then. After all the USA would like to think that its ban had helped exert pressure on the LTTE to enter negotiations. There are many Western Nations that balk at the possibility of a scenario where they ban the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government after a deal allows it de-facto rule of the North-East.

It is important to take note of three salient aspects in the LTTE appeal in the USA. Firstly it states that it is the de-facto government of a de-facto state. Secondly it claims that it obtained a mandate in the 1977 elections. Thirdly it says that it is struggling for self-determination pursuant to that mandate. Those who see the LTTE as a positive force would discover depths of meaning in this. The LTTE's non-insistence on a separate state and emphasis on self-determination could be viewed as a sign of compromise.

What must be remembered is that these formulations were drafted by sophisticated pro-LTTE persons in a Western milieu with the express purpose of pressing a case successfully in a Western court. These do not have the stamp of approval of the Supremo Prabhakaran.

It was only some time ago that Rudrakumaran captured the imagination of the peace lobby by indicating a willingness to settle on the Belgian model and seek powersharing at the centre. One could take a safe bet that Prabhakaran has neither read nor endorsed these concepts.

It is also questionable whether the LTTE can lay claim to the mandate sought and obtained by the TULF in 1977. The LTTE was nowhere in the picture then, and nor has the TULF abdicated or transferred this mandate to the Tigers. More importantly, the people who voted in 1971 thought they were doing so in favour of a Tamil Eelam to be achieved through non-violence. There was never a mandate for an Eelam to be achieved through armed struggle. The bitter truth is that notwithstanding the support it enjoys among sections of the Tamil people, the LTTE is yet to obtain a "democratic mandate". The LTTE may ridicule some Tamil parliamentarians as being elected with a few hundred votes. True enough but then the LTTE despite all its boasts is yet to obtain a solitary vote in any level through direct democratic voting.

The LTTE claim of being a de-facto government in a de-facto state is also worth perusing. After losing Jaffna and portions of the Wannai the LTTE has lost much of its earlier territory. At the same time it has gained control of fresh territory in the East. The important question is whether the LTTE can hold onto territory indefinitely and what type of government it provides. Is the LTTE able to provide the basic needs of the people in the so-called de-facto state? Is the LTTE providing a decent administration through its so-called de-facto government?

An important concern in this context is about the extent of human rights violations practised by the Tigers. It would plead inability on this count on the basis that it is only a fledgling state in the making and therefore not in a position to safeguard basic human rights. In fora like a US court it would arrogate certain rights unto itself on the basis that it is a de-facto government of a de-facto state. Obligations and responsibilities are avoided or violated on the grounds that a state is in the making. Rights and privileges are claimed on the grounds that it is a de-facto state. This arrogation of power without consequent responsibility has been described as the "prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages".

The law under which the LTTE was banned came into existence only some months ago. This designation is the first of its kind under that law. Also the Con-

(Continued on next page)

Colombo Bomb Attack Leaves 18 Dead, Over 100 Injured and Shattered Buildings

The truck-bomb that exploded in the early morning on 15 October in the commercial heartland of Colombo left 10 persons dead and over a hundred persons injured, including many foreigners who were staying in hotels nearby, and a number of show-piece buildings and top-class tourist hotels devastated.

Most of the dead and injured were civilians including among the dead being a 78-year-old Buddhist monk from a nearby temple who was instantly killed when one of the attackers tossed a grenade into the temple. 34 of the 107 injured in the explosion were foreigners.

The government of Sri Lanka promptly put the blame on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for the bomb attack. Only a week earlier, the government of the United States imposed a ban on the LTTE including it in a list of thirty other "terrorist organisations". However a LTTE spokesman from London, Anton Raja, speaking to news agencies denied responsibility for the bomb attack saying, "LTTE categorically denies carrying out these bomb attacks. We are not foolish enough to think that such an attack would benefit our struggle," adding that "We suspect that this is a setup because the government in the Wannu (in the north) are facing their biggest ever defeat."

Analysts in Colombo summarily dismissed the LTTE spokesman's denial as a "routine one" characteristic of the LTTE's denials in the past on similar occasions and saying that the attack bore all the hall marks of an operation by the Tamil Tigers. This attack, they said, appeared typical of the meticulously plan-

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gress virtually stampeded the State Department bureaucrats into expediting action against these groups by slashing and threatening to slash funding. The administrative records compiled were done in a hurry and may be found wanting. The LTTE has retained an efficient legal team backed by abundant financial resources. Since the law itself is new this is almost a "test case". The outcome of the LTTE challenge could be a precedent setter for the future. Therefore the results of this case will have a profound impact on American affairs in the future. The Tigers may be trail blazers.

ned bombing that the Tamil Tigers had carried out before, including another truck-bomb attack in January 1996 that destroyed the Central Bank complex killing more than 80 persons and injuring over 1,400 others.

Some commentators went so far as to say that the Tiger attack in Colombo on this occasion was an immediate and characteristic response to the action by the United States to demonstrate the capability of the LTTE. Some even suggested that the attack might have been directed at some 12 US Green Berets who apparently were occupying a hotel situated in close proximity to where the attack occurred. The Green Berets were in Colombo apparently on a mission to give specialist training to the Sri Lankan military personnel.

A retired Sri Lankan Air Force Chief, Harry Goonatilke, who has transformed himself as a self-styled military analyst said that the military had been concentrating their troops in their campaign in the north, but they would probably have to pay more attention to the security in Colombo. Referring to the bomb attack Goonatilke said, "It is an answer to the US declaring the Tigers as a terrorist organisation."

"They (the LTTE) are showing two fingers at America: 'Okay, you proscribed us, now what are you going to do about this.' Every time the government tries to marginalise and isolate the LTTE, they respond with violence to prove that they are a major player not to be ignored. The LTTE is doing this to prove that there cannot be an end to the conflict unless they are a part of the solution," Pakiasothy Saravanamuttu, a university don told a news agency.

Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ravinatha Ariyasinghe said, "There is no doubt that this is the work of the LTTE. It is particularly significant that they have carried out this attack in a location where it would have been well known that foreign nationals would be hurt. This reflects that they do not care about international opinion any more."

Though no foreigners died as a result of the attack, those injured included people from USA, Britain, France, Japan, Singapore, Jordan, Australia, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, India, the Netherlands, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi

Arabia, Sweden and Lebanon.

The 15 October bomb attack occurred at 7.10 am, local time, on a Poya Day which is a public holiday, when a truck laden with sacks of flour pulled up to a security checkpoint outside the Galadari Hotel, which is located in close proximity to many other tourist, commercial, banking and public sector establishments in the heart of what is known as the Colombo Fort. When the truck was challenged by the security guards at the checkpoint, several men in army-type uniform carrying automatic rifles and hand-held rocket launchers jumped out of the truck opening fire and killing the guards.

The truck then drove toward the back of the Galadari vehicle parking area which abuts the "Twin Towers" housing the World Trade Centre, which was declared officially open by President Chandrika Kumaratunga and began to function only four days earlier. Within a few moments, the truck burst into a giant explosion leaving a crater of at least 20 feet across and 10 feet deep in the car park and reducing over thirty vehicles into a tangled web of twisted metal and smoke billowing over the whole area of Colombo Fort and ripping the commercial heart of Colombo apart.

Other than the Galadari Meridian Hotel itself, several adjoining buildings, including many the high-rise building complexes like the World Trade Centre, Bank of Ceylon, suffered serious damage. The old parliament building which presently houses the presidential Secretariat, and the sprawling old Secretariat building constructed during colonial times and which houses the Treasury also suffered damage.

The bomb blast was followed by a two-hour long pitched gun battle between army and police personnel on one side and a number of men who had alighted from the truck before it exploded and were seen running away from it.

Five of the attackers are reported to have died - three of them were killed by troops in the ensuing gun battle, one by swallowing a cyanide capsule and another by detonating a body vest packed with explosives. The security forces also recovered a number of grenades, automatic weapons and suicide-kits.

It is said that between 15 and 20 men would have taken part in the attack, some aboard the explodes-laden truck as it turned into the Galadari car park, and others fanning out through the area firing rocket-propelled grenades, throwing grenades, and firing automatic weapons in an effort to deter any counter-attack by security service personnel that would impede the attackers' escape.

One of the attackers was shot dead

by troops on a nearby railway-line, three others were cornered inside the Lake House building - at least about 600 yards away from the site of the explosion - where they held out for several hours before two of the three committed suicide and the third was shot dead. Later police claimed that they had arrested three others who they alleged had been involved in the blast.

If 15 to 20 had participated in the attack as the police seem to think, then it is obvious some of the attackers had escaped capture.

The spokesman for the Sri Lankan High Commission was quoted as accusing the British government of being partially responsible for the injuries suffered by British nationals in the explosion. "The sad thing about all this is that the LTTE has its international headquarters here in London. Most of its funds are collected and distributed through London and it is the funds raised here that are being used to buy the guns and explosives used in Colombo. If somebody of British origin had died in the blast the British government would have been partially to blame because they done nothing to curtail the LTTE activities here. We are asking the British government to apply the same yardstick as they apply against the IRA. The time is significant because it is a holiday in Colombo and it was early morning. The city would have been deserted so it was very directly aimed at foreigners. It is a signal to the Americans and foreign governments that the LTTE does not care about foreign opinion."

The UN Secretary General Kofi Anand condemned the bomb attack in Colombo saying that he was appalled by this terrorist attack which targeted civilians. British Foreign Minister Robin Cook, "I was not distressed to hear reports of the latest bomb outrage in the centre of Colombo. We strongly all acts of terrorism in Sri Lanka and elsewhere." Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, in a statement said, "The Australian government has made it clear on many occasions that it condemns unequivocally all acts of terrorism. We do not live in a world any longer where people are prepared to tolerate acts of terror, and acts of terrorism are matters of deep and abiding concern to the people and the government of Australia." The President of Maldives, M.A. Gayoom, in a message to the Sri Lankan President said, "It was with deep shock and sorrow that I learnt about the bomb blast in Colombo. The government and the people of the Maldives deplore all acts of terrorism." Calling it a "cowardly and senseless attack", the German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said, "The Federal

Government and I personally will continue to support efforts of your government to arrive at a peaceful solution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka." The US State Department, though acknowledging that "no group has claimed responsibility" for the bomb attack in Colombo, said: "If the LTTE was responsible for this indiscriminate attack, it's a further demonstration of the threat caused by the LTTE to the security of American nations". Consequently, there was a "justification for their being designated by the Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as a terrorist organisation," the statement added.

Joseph Pararajasingham, a Tamil parliamentarian belonging to the TULF said, "The government must seriously rethink its policy. We cannot prolong the war. The LTTE is forcing the hands of the government in the battlefield as well as crippling the economy. The government should think of talks with the LTTE."

The explosion destroyed the facades, windows, all glazed parts and lower-floor interiors of three five-star hotels - Galadari Meridian, Inter-Continental and Hilton - and severely damaged the 39-storey World Trade Centre which has been hailed as a symbol of Sri Lanka's growing prosperity amidst the continuing war with the Tamil Tigers.

Preliminary estimates of cost of repairing the damage from the blast ran into hundreds of millions of dollars, this being in addition to the potential damage it would cause to the tourist industry on which the island depends considerably for its foreign exchange earnings.

While some commentators in Colombo think that the tourist industry would suffer following the latest bomb attack in Colombo, the official view would appear to be otherwise. Tourism Minister, Dharmasiri Senanayake told a press conference in Colombo only two days after the incident, "There has been not a single cancellation up to now. On Thursday (16 October), 494 tourists arrived in the country. In fact there have been requests for some additional charter flights." Those perpetrators had in mind to disrupt the economy through tourism. Within hours of the blast, guests at the affected hotels were re-located in the five-star hotels. There was partial damage to the Hotel Inter Continental, but it managed shift guests to rooms in the unaffected parts, he said.

The government also has announced that it would contribute to the immediate repair of all the affected hotels.

In the wake of the bomb attack for which President Kumaratunga blamed the LTTE, she told a press conference in Colombo on 18 October that the development of the country had been thrown

back by three months by the attack. She also said that her government was willing to suspend all military action against the Tamil Tigers and commence talks with them provided their leaders were prepared to begin peace talks and discuss the government's devolution proposals. In a TV broadcast, she said that the fact that the Tamil people have genuine grievances to be resolved was no excuse for committing acts of terrorism. The government was willing to address these grievances and solve them by democratic means.

Meanwhile the government took a decision to entrust the task of ensuring the security of the island's capital to its armed forces. For co-ordinating operations to prevent acts of terror, a special committee has been set up comprising personnel of the three wings of the military. Military personnel are to be put in charge of patrolling the streets of Colombo round-the clock.

UN Experts to Defuse Minefields in Jaffna

United Nations experts and sophisticated equipment are being brought to the war ravaged northern peninsula to detect and defuse some 10,000 landmines and anti-personnel mines which are believed to have been planted in the area over the past 10 years both by the LTTE and the security forces.

The international move to clear the minefields of Jaffna comes amidst reports of continuing landmine tragedies at the rate of about 20 casualties a month - the latest victims being a woman and her daughter who were killed in Manipay in an explosion when they were trying to settle down following their return to Jaffna from the Wannai.

UN officials revealed that a German landmine defusing expert Gerhard Bornmann had visited Jaffna last week for an initial survey on the extent of the problem and how it need to be tackled.

They said the German expert would go back to Jaffna soon with other experts and the required equipment to launch the full scale clearing operation, with assistance from some Non Governmental Organisations.

The UN is going ahead with clearing operations in Sri Lanka and other countries though international moves to ban the production, sale or use of landmines have been bogged down by objections from several countries including the United States. Sri Lanka is also not officially supporting the ban on the basis that the Government cannot agree to it unless and until the LTTE also agrees.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SINHALA COMMISSION REPORT

Neville Jayaweera
Former Civil Servant and Ambassador

I have yet to read the interim report of the Sinhala Commission but having read some of the press reports and comments concerning it, feel prompted to make a contribution to the discussion which seems already to have got under way.

Oppression of Buddhism

I would now like to venture a few comments on the broader question concerning the oppression of Buddhism.

Some of the views expressed before the Commission seem overwhelmingly to claim that Buddhism in Sri Lanka was oppressed during colonial times. I do not believe that any individual who has even a rudimentary knowledge of the history of our country and is at the same time honest will contest this claim. To deny it, one had either to be abysmally ignorant, or incurably stupid or unconscionably dishonest and I am not aware of anyone, Christian or otherwise, who is a plausible candidate for such dubious awards. However, to get a balanced perspective on the issue we must also admit to two other facts.

Firstly, that Sri Lankan Buddhism was not singular in being a victim of colonialism. Whenever in the world the long arm of colonial domination reached, local belief systems and cultures were eroded, partly through the normal process of modernising but sometimes deliberately and systematically, out of the malevolent desire on the colonisers part to rub out the local culture. Some of the most horrendous aspects of this enterprise have been documented for us by writers like Franz Fanon, Albert Memmi and Amílcar Cabral. However, reading them, one realises how comparatively benign colonialism has been in Sri Lanka, despite the deep inroads it made into our local cultures.

The other fact we need to remember about colonialism is that however loathe we may be to concede it, it was not the unmitigated disaster we often make it out to be. In many societies it also played an enormously liberating role. It liberated them from oppressive feudal structures, it weaned their peoples away from ignorance and primitive superstitious, it put

an end to barbaric practices such as widow burning (sathi) and female circumcision, it diluted into their midst liberal concepts like the Rule of Law and Parliamentary Democracy and it served as the instrument whereby even stone age cultures were ushered into the twentieth century. For that matter, even the critique we mount against colonialism and its varied vices grew out of concepts and values which were a part of its mixed legacy. So, colonialism despite its obvious misdemeanours and drawbacks, deserves more than unmitigated condemnation.

Sinhala-Buddhist Ethos

Sinhala-Buddhist Ethos and if there is whether it should be protected. To both these questions I would answer with an unqualified "yes" and proceed straight way to adduce reasons for saying so.

I hold strongly to the view that there is an invisible centre or a moral hinter-

The general trend among leading Buddhists today seems to be to ask for more state patronage and more legal instruments for protecting Buddhism. Paradoxically one cannot help observing that the decline of Buddhism in Sri Lanka also coincides with increasing state patronage and government intervention.

land to every society which gives to it a cohesion, an identity, and a dignity which it would not otherwise have. Dismantle that centre and the Society cohering around it disintegrates rapidly. This invisible centre or moral hinterland, which sociologist Edward Shils refers to as the "Central Zone" of a culture, is not something that could consciously be brought into being as would a constitution of a country. It is rather a product of a long process of evolution, an amalgam of languages, myths, rituals, legends, shared experiences, values and superstitions, all comprising an organic, dynamic whole. Its boundaries are hard to define and its content even more difficult to conceptualise or embody in a doctrine. It subsists over historical time not because it can be validated through logic or reason but because its preservation is as essential to the survival of its members, as is breathing itself. Lacking a precise definition, this invisible centre or moral hinterland rarely enters the domain of ra-

tional discourse but persists as the unexamined major premise of all the interactions that take place within it. Though it often assumes the character of the sacred, it is and of itself not a religion, but invariably takes its rise in a system of religious beliefs or revelations. While such an ethos is always characterised by a dominant religion, confessing another religion does not exclude membership in or sharing the venues of the ethos, provided of course they do not conflict with the tenets of that other religion.

Sinhala-Buddhism is the invisible centre or the moral hinterland of the predominantly Sinhala areas of Sri Lanka, giving to them a coherence, an identity and a dignity which no human artefact such as a constitution or the Fiat of a government can ever impart. However, pursuing the same line of reasoning we are also led to conclude that there is likewise a Tamil-Hindu ethos which gives to the predominantly Tamil areas of Sri Lanka a coherence, and a distinct identity of their own. To deny this would be not only hypocritical and immoral, but would expose the Sinhala majority to the charge of oppression in much the same way they indict the colonisers for oppressing the "Central Zone" or the Soul of Sri Lanka and if we are to preserve that entity as an organic whole we have to discover modalities whereby we can

preserve both traditions, arrangements whereby they can both coexist to their enrichment. Sadly this we have failed to do during the past decades, putting in peril thereby the survival of that entity we call Sri Lanka.

Sakyamuni Thathagatha

This raises the question to what extent the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos actually reflects the central teachings of the Sakyamuni Thathagatha. I would like to say straightaway, with great respect and solely out of a sincere desire to make a contribution towards the survival of an ethos in which, though a totally committed Christian I include myself, the way we have set about protecting Buddhism these past five decades, far from preserving it and making it more and more an integral component of the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos, have actually eroded it, rendering it (the ethos) increasingly devoid of the values taught by the Thathagatha and in fact making it a caricature thereof. Paradoxically the perpetrators of this destruction have not been imperialists and foreign missionaries as is often claimed, but Buddhist themselves, mainly politicians posturing as saviours of Buddhism as well as acknowledged Buddhist leaders, both lay as well as clergy, who have either confused the ex-

ternalities of religion for its essence or have used Buddhism as a vehicle for perpetuating their egos and fulfilling their petty ambitions.

I think therefore that the real threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos comes not from outside but from within, not from the machinations of colonialists or from the endeavours of Christian missionaries, but from the drying up of the Thathagatha's true teachings amongst its own members. If I say so with respect, in our strivings to protect Buddhism we have lost the Buddha and in our claim to extol His teachings we have lost sight of their true meaning and content. Not least, in our search for scapegoats on whom we may put the blame we have effectively concealed and diverted attention away from the real culprits.

True Religion

I believe that true religion is to be found in a quickening of the inner life and in the integration of personality at the deepest levels of consciousness, around strongly held spiritual beliefs. Speaking for myself, I have found that inner resource by admitting Jesus Christ into my life, but followers of other religions must discover within their own beliefs a principle of inner integration adequate for their own lives. The proof that we have actually tapped into such a resource and that our lives are being nourished by it, is to be found not in our intellectual knowledge of textual religion or in the practice of rituals or in external observances but in showing forth in our daily lives qualities that are universally recognised among all religions as "good" such as love non-violence, forgiveness, gentleness, kindness, peace, joy, sharing and giving, selflessness, equanimity, integrity and humility. Where these manifestations are absent, regardless of our knowledge of religious texts, regardless of the good deeds we perform to be seen of the world, regardless of the visits we make to places of worship with monotonous regularity, regardless of the frequency with which we undertake pilgrimages, and regardless of the images and monuments we cause to be built or worship, our religiosity is but an empty charade, a loud sounding cymbal signifying nothing.

If we are to be honest with ourselves we must admit that these are precisely the qualities that we have been shedding these past fifty years, individually as well as collectively across our nation.

May I therefore suggest to the Sinhala-Commission, which I believe is now engaged in writing its final report, that while addressing the crucial issue of how to protect Buddhism and preserve the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos, tasks which I think are absolutely fundamental, it will

resist the popular temptation to look for exogenous causes and scapegoats. Let them rather look for causes nearer home. The high tide of colonialism has long receded and the proselytising enterprise of the main-line churches which enjoyed State patronage for over five centuries has also withered. In looking for causes to account for the palpable decline of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and the ensuing threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos let them therefore not be misled into exercising straw demons. Rather let them take account of and find ways to end the spiritual drought among Buddhists themselves.

State Patronage

The general trend among leading Buddhists today seems to be to ask for more state patronage and more legal instruments for protecting Buddhism. Paradoxically one cannot help observing that the decline of Buddhism in Sri Lanka also coincides with increasing state patronage and government intervention.

During colonial times Buddhism had no state support and was in fact marginalised and oppressed. Notwithstanding, our daily lives, our inter-personal relationships, our family and social values and not least our public institutions reflected standards that bore out our claim to be a Buddhist country. With Independence however all that changed dramatically. Increasing state support for Buddhism, including a constitutional provision for its protection since 1972, has become integral to our political culture. Furthermore, our media, electronic as well as print are rich and abundant in their daily offerings of nourishment for the Buddhist faithful. Our landscape is now adorned with graven images of the Thathagatha with viharas and the sacred Bo-Tree on a scale that perhaps exceeds anything any time in our long history. Not least, the faithful can now undertake pilgrimages to sacred places for worships and spiritual renewal on a scale undreamt of in earlier times.

Spiritual and Moral Void

Paradoxically, however, far from producing a spiritual and moral renaissance throughout our land, these privileges and facilities seem to have merely set back Buddhism and the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos in a most dramatic and frightening way. Today, religious and nationalist rhetoric regardless, the whole nation is drifting aimlessly in a spiritual and moral void immensity of which simply beggars description and nobody seems to know what to do. Not only is our once tranquil nation torn apart by conflict with no healing yet in sight, but the conflict seems to be widening and deepening daily, sucking into the abyss more and more layers

of our country's youth. Everywhere we turn we see cynicism and moral decay. Over the past few decades our public institutions have been systematically denuded of morality and scruple and where once we were driven by a sense of moral seriousness, we now languish in cynicism and apathy.

The purveyors of this decadence are not colonialists, imperialists or missionaries but our own home grown Buddhists. So how do we reconcile these facts with the increasing protection given to Buddhism? Do we merely ask for more and more of the same medicine when even to the most blinkered it should be self evident that the therapy has failed or do we launch on a completely new line of thinking? Is it possible that Buddhism has no answer to these vexed issues or is it that we have been promoting the wrong things in the name of protecting and promoting it? I rather think that it is the latter.

Renaissance

If we are to see a renaissance of the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos, within which though a Christian, I am proud to claim my own roots and the preservation of which is as important to me as to any other. I believe we need to get away from xenophobia, stop looking for scapegoats and turn the search light upon ourselves. We need first to face up to the spiritual drought within our collective self, a drought which no amount of external rituals and observances can compensate for or conceal. To undertake such a task we need more than anything else leaders, both lay leaders as well as leaders of the Maha Sangha. We need leaders who can transcend the limitations of party politics and can place the long term interests of the whole nation above the prospects and temptations of power. We need men and women who are endowed with a depth of understanding and vision, those with moral courage and not least whose individual lives can stand up to rigorous moral scrutiny. Above all we need leaders; especially from among members of the Maha Sangha, who can with authority summon the Sinhala-Buddhists to a programme of relentless self-criticism and collective catharsis. Then perhaps we might be able to take the first steps towards building a new society, within which all communities races and creeds who comprise the rich Sri Lankan mosaic may dwell in dignity, harmony and peace.

I sincerely hope that the Sinhala Commission will give the start by recommending ways whereby that deep surgery which the nation so desperately needs may be undertaken. I wish them well.

There is a strong correlation between parochialism and economic backwardness in plural societies. Many economically backward countries in Africa and Asia, which are in turmoil as a result of internal conflicts continue to remain underdeveloped with worsening living standards for a vast proportion of their citizens. Having lost their relatives and friends and some displaced several times from their habitats, they live in constant fear and without much hope as refugees in their own countries. Many tribes make up the populations of these countries, each concerned about its own interest paying little attention to the interests of other groups. They are also settled in clusters in different parts of each country, except in the major cities giving distinct tribal identities to these territories.

When my African colleagues told me nearly two decades ago that when it comes to acquiring tangible benefits, the order of priorities of many citizens is first his or her interest, second that of the family, third that of the tribe and last that of the country, I then thought that Sri Lankans had a progressive outlook and the country would soon join the group of newly industrialised countries. How wrong I was in my self-satisfying perception became strikingly apparent after the eruption of the bloody ethnic conflict that had killed and maimed lakhs of Sri Lankans, destroyed property worth several billions and rendered nearly a million people homeless. In particular, the most appalling feature of the self-serving attitude was seen in the way some profited from the prolonged conflict in Sri Lanka, without any concern of the consequences of their actions to others and to the country's economy. The comparison between the tragedies in Sri Lanka and in the other countries where tribal conflicts are retarding economic progress and human development may differ only in degrees but the economic consequences are equally devastating.

It is important to note that economic hardship is a main cause for internal strife. Once a major civil war breaks out in an underdeveloped country, the task of alleviating the economic hardships by promoting sustainable growth becomes increasingly difficult. Sri Lankan leaders have failed to recognise this basic fact. Indeed, if they had the vision they would have acted prudently avoiding the emergence of the factors that gave rise to the ethnic conflict. Even after its emergence, they have failed to deal with the causes

PLURALISM, A MUST FOR PROSPERITY AND PEACE

By Dr. S. Narapalasingam

earnestly and expeditiously.

A political solution through devolution is being sought "in order to provide a firm foundation for the renewed effort to achieve peace" that is so vital for stability and prosperity. It is obvious that the devolution proposals though absolutely essential must be accompanied by determined efforts to build a new path that is broad enough for the various diverse groups to march together towards the connected goals of peace and prosperity. The narrow path that was built with parochialism as its base must be abandoned for pluralism will remain the reality in the various regions in whatever form these are constituted for devolving powers. These will have mixed populations in varying proportions. The centre will have some powers under any devolution scheme with regard to the allocation of resources for development and the harmonisation of policies and development efforts. The necessity to embrace pluralism at the central level too is very obvious. Unless this is done, the purpose of devolution will be lost.

Those who point out that the system of provincial councils has not brought peace instantly to Sri Lanka, have not realised that there is a process here. The success of any functional scheme is judged by the way it is made to work with the aim of achieving the objectives for which it has been adopted. Herein lies the acid test whether or not the people have confidence in its effectiveness. The repetitive past failures in this regard have become the biggest obstacle in formulating a devolution scheme acceptable to the minority groups. The perception of many Tamils is that they will be deceived again unless there are adequate safeguards to assure that the real objectives of devolution will not be ignored in practice by the application of any overriding powers vested with the centre. Persisting suspicion among both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities is supporting parochialism. The recognised need for confidence building measures has so far remained a concept and no practical steps have been taken to fulfil it.

Ethnic Parochialism

Parochialism in Sri Lanka exists mainly in two forms. One is the familiar

Sinhala and Tamil chauvinism. There is the Buddhist identity, which the Sinhala chauvinists have linked it with the race. The proponents of this kind of parochialism since inde-

pendence have been the prominent leaders of the Buddhist clergy, supported by those political leaders who needed their support to win elections. There are also the Sinhalese leaders in various Buddhist societies, who consider that their religion should be given due recognition, not by teaching and practising its precepts but through State patronage and entrenched provision in the country's constitution. They too have assumed the role of being the custodian of the religion, which in their minds is in need of protection in Sri Lanka. But to this day no one has stated precisely from where the threat to its extinction is expected! Could it be from those who are not adhering to the teachings of Lord Buddha, the greatest liberal and reformer during his time who preached against mythical beliefs. He wanted the followers to accept beliefs that were rational. This required relating these to their conscience, as mortals sharing the same planet with other beings.

Ethnic division and consciousness were present even during colonial rule. In the former British colonies, the rulers encouraged the divisions to serve their own interests. This is well known as the divide and rule policy. But the different groups did not fight fiercely then, for various reasons. One was that the foreign rulers were very strict on the enforcement of law and order. Any sign of slackness or bias with regard to the latter would have tarnished their reputation as the staunch advocates of the rule of law. It would have also given the impression to the natives that their supreme authority could be challenged. Another is that the different groups were aware that no tangible benefit could be gained by fighting among themselves, since the ruling power rested firmly with the foreign masters. Aspirations of the people and the economic conditions that prevailed then were also very different from those that emerged after independence.

The same ethnic divisions that were dormant under colonial rule, gushed into the open after independence by the communal politics that emerged and dominated the political landscape in Sri Lanka. The political leaders did not have the vision and the courage to insist on the politics of inclusiveness. Except for the progressive parties, which embraced

the old ideologies of Lenin, Marx and Trotsky the other parties did not have political ideologies that united the masses for achieving the goals that were common to all the different ethnic groups. The Marxist and Trotskyist parties were truly committed to the achievement of their goals, which did not have any hidden communal bias. This was because the common goals emerged from their sincere belief in the solidarity of the working class, without which the exploitation of the workers for the benefit of the powerful few could not be prevented.

Had the socialist parties in Sri Lanka unitedly put forward a policy framework to the people that did not follow the authoritarian and "ungodly" models of communist regimes elsewhere but recognised their basic needs, rights, cultures and freedoms, they would have succeeded in preventing the dominance of parochial politics. This was crucial because they were being confronted not only by the powerful capitalists but also by other formidable forces, particularly the various religious establishments. The majority of the rural people were under the influence of these powerful groups, who were determined to safeguard their vested interests at any cost. The feudal allegiance of the landless to their powerful landlords was exploited to prevent any erosion of the power of the rich. It must be noted that the political support base of the left parties was largely in the urban centres, while the bulk of the island's population lived in the rural areas.

The two main political parties, the UNP and the SLFP, which actively sought the support of the people in the urban and rural areas did not put forward a common liberal agenda that focused primarily on economic and social development for the benefit of all the people in the different communities and in the different provinces. The SLFP initially had been able to establish its political support base mainly in the rural areas with the help of the Buddhist clergy and influential persons in the villages, like Sinhalese teachers and practitioners of native medicine. This compelled its leadership to cling on to parochial politics, even after they realised later its destructive influence on communal harmony, peace and economic progress. The UNP abandoned its image as a national party that cared for the welfare of all the communities solely to confront the SLFP. Thus, both the two main political parties, the SLFP considered to be bent towards

manifestos, government policy statements, development plans and the like. These were not set out from sincere conviction but to be seen as not abandoning totally the minorities in their rule and to retain international respectability. The actions of the past governments were contrary to their stated goals, indicating the presence of hidden agenda.

However, there had been few exceptions. The goal of self-reliance in the supply of essential food, which the previous coalition government under the leadership of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike sought to achieve by providing incentives to local farmers to increase domestic production of many food items, benefited the farmers all over the island. The land reform executed by the same government was also without any communal bias. Despite the discriminatory policies pursued by this government in education, employment in the public sector and regional development, the farmers in the Tamil areas appreciated her policy on more than one occasion. She was given a rousing reception by the farmers when she visited Jaffna. Because of undue controls and shortcomings in other economic policies that hindered overall development and growth causing widespread unemployment and economic hardships, her government was defeated badly in the 1977 general elections.

Those countries that succeeded in uniting the people and achieving impressive balanced economic growth with the attendant increase in the living standards of all their citizens had accorded emphasis to the common economic interests of all the communities. Obviously, these focused primarily on raising the standard of living of all the people in an equitable manner through the co-operative effort of all the different communities in the development process. Importantly, people were made to realise that all would gain from such co-operation through awareness programmes. The newly industrialised countries in Asia and the Far East had the political leaders, who were conscious of the inherent dangers in practising parochial politics. They had the foresight to accord high priority to balanced economic development beneficial to all ethnic groups.

Parochialism in plural societies has the potential not only to create internal strife of the kind present in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, but it also hampers economic progress. Resources being scarce in the

emphasised here because none of these can be had without the other two.

Parochialism Among Tamils

The other kind of parochialism, which has been in direct conflict with pluralism in Sri Lanka and in turn obstructed social integration and progress is seen in the behaviour of the elite Tamils. Many Tamil academics have approached this embarrassing subject only from a broad perspective. The Tamil community is assumed to compromise three distinct groups. They are the Tamils having roots in the North, popularly known as the Jaffna Tamils; the Tamils from the East, commonly known as the Batticaloa Tamils; and the Tamils from the upcountry, whose ancestors came from South India during the British rule to work as labourers in the tea and rubber plantations. Among these three groups, parochial thinking has been strongest in the first group - the Jaffna Tamils, and virtually absent in the last group - the upcountry Tamils.

The economic power that the Jaffna Tamils commanded through feudalism and casteism was sustained under colonial rule. Their desire to acquire land and other assets overrode other social considerations. Status in the society was primarily determined by the extent of possession of wealth, the means of acquiring it were unimportant. The fact that the opportunities for them to prosper either as private entrepreneurs or as employees in the public sector were deliberately curtailed through government policies and administrative measures had been the principal factor that initially gave rise to their discontent and anti-(Sinhala) government sentiments.

In order to understand the kind of parochialism that prevailed in the North, it is necessary to examine in depth the way the society functioned there. Parochialism is strong in matters that concern the accumulation of wealth. The wealth and the accompanying power were gained in a selfish manner, since individualism took precedence over the narrowest concept of parochialism. The too common incidents of encroachment into neighbours land and subtle methods of denying prosperity to others were all part of the psyche of the typical Jaffna man.

Parochialism is also seen in the formation of groups according to various territories and persons are labelled accordingly. In the olden days marriages were fixed within the same caste and

bers in Canada and European countries continue to retain their past distinct spatial identity. Accordingly, various groups have been formed and rivalries continue sometimes accompanied by violence.

Mr. K.A. Reddiar in his exposition published in the Tamil Times of 15 May 1997, has deplored "the domineering attitude of the Jaffna Tamils towards the Tamils in the Eastern Province and their self-serving economic interest." Their attitude is not exclusively towards any section of the Tamils identified as having roots outside Jaffna but also prevails within the so-called Jaffna Tamils. Even now in private, the section that claims to have no kinship with the Tamils from the several islands in the North consider the islanders to belong to an "inferior" stock. Old attitudes die hard as these seem to prevail among the older generation of expatriate Tamils. With regard to their self-serving economic interest, this too is not something that can be associated with the exploitation of powerless groups for the collective benefit of the Jaffna Tamils. Many honest persons will admit that exploitation takes place even within family circles. This is more prevalent among those exposed to urban way of life than among the rural peasantry.

The apprehension of the Muslims in the Eastern province that they would not be treated fairly, if they come under the administrative units dominated by the Tamils is also attributed to the domineering attitude of the Tamils. Muslim analysts have drawn attention to the suspicion of the Muslims in recent expressions of amity between the two communities. They have drawn attention to recent actions of Tamils as proof that they will not get a fair treatment if the devolved power is exercised by a council dominated by the latter. Suggestion has been made to have built-in clauses to protect the interests of Muslims in units where they are the minority community. SLMC is keen on having a Muslim dominated council in the South-East by amalgamating Sammanthurai, Pottuvil and Kalmunai areas in the Eastern Province for the same reason.

Mr. Reddiar has concluded very pointedly in his second article, published in the Tamil Times of 15 September 1997, on Tamil unity by stating that "without real (not opportunistic and transient) unity and equal opportunities for all, including the upcountry Tamils to prosper, whatever political gains achieved after enduring the enormous human suffering and incurring the huge losses both in human and economic terms will not lead to continued social and economic advancement of the Tamil community as a whole." In effect, the point that he has driven is that pluralism must be cardinal to all

policies and administrative practices of the relevant regional unit(s) for the collective prosperity of the Tamil community.

Pluralism, Peace and Prosperity

Pluralism is recognised and observed when public matters that do not have the potential to yield economic benefits to any group are undertaken. It is not a coincidence that many interconnected problems that culminated in the present crisis are economic in origin. Truth often hurts but to admit it requires courage. For reconciliation and lasting peace, mistakes must be admitted and measures taken to avoid them. The truth is that both the Sinhalese and the Tamils have demonstrated their domineering attitudes towards weaker groups by the kind of actions mentioned above. Attitudinal changes require both determined efforts and time. Both formal and informal education have an important role to play in bringing about this change.

The stark reality in the modern world is that where there is concentration of power and wealth, there is the threat to peace. This is the precept that must influence the thinking of those responsible for the well-being of the people. Both power and wealth have to be shared equitably if peace is to be sustained. Any group, not necessarily ethnic that feels that its members are denied the same opportunities to prosper as those who use their power to accumulate wealth for themselves by unfair means will at some stage revolt against the very system that has permitted the discrimination. Even powerful dictatorships have been overthrown for the same reason. Many African leaders had justified their one-party States as essential to avoid the formation of several political parties based on the tribal divisions there. They claimed that a multi-party system along this line had the potential to retard the development of their countries. But this system too had generally failed, because the powerful few accumulated wealth for their own benefit leaving the majority in a state of utter despair.

There is, therefore, the imperative to accord the highest priority to the development of the economy that would satisfy the felt needs of all groups in all regions of the country. Both the IMF and IBRD must assume some responsibility for the internal conflicts that have wrecked the economies of many developing countries and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Their stereotype conditions, that focused primarily on macro-economic and monetary aspects and the overall budgets of governments for providing financial assistance have not contributed to poverty

alleviation and balanced development of the regions. A radical change in the approach to development is necessary to focus the interest of the people on economic development rather than on matters that polarise the people.

The concept of regional development becomes important for this purpose. When there is the perception that all stand to gain from the development efforts, the peace that has eluded Sri Lanka for long will come to stay permanently. Regional development within the frame of united Sri Lanka requires the kind of economic co-operation that exists in any union of states. In the present inter-dependent world even the powerful economies have found it necessary to co-operate within a union for stability and sustainable economic growth.

As a matter of urgency some practical steps should be taken to create a conducive climate for development. The scars caused by the ferocious conflict require determined efforts and time to heal. Without initiating the healing process, reconciliation and rebuilding trust vital for creating this climate is impossible. Government's preoccupation with its "politico-military" strategy to resolve the conflict has deflected its efforts away from taking practical steps to sustain the confidence of the people in its commitment to development, peace and prosperity. Human rights violations and anti-social practices are not confined to any one community. Widespread corruption also retards development. Unlike in some other countries, there are no powerful apolitical and non-communal organisations to exert pressure on those who as leaders are accountable for these despicable actions.

The culture of violence and corruption is not the kind of environment that will help to promote economic development. Under such conditions, achieving sustainable peace is a complex and continuing process. The leaders in all the communities should accept the present realities, instead of harping on the past situations and focus their time and efforts on developing the regions. People have paid dearly as a result of being misled to believe that they can prosper once the ancient historical conditions are re-established. Their self-destructive processes must end to save the people and the country being driven back to the olden days when wars were common. □

"If we ban whatever offends any group in our diverse society, we will soon have no art, no culture, no humour, no satire."

- Erica Long

Index on Censorship (No.4, 1995)

SINHALA COMMISSION REPORT, AN INVITATION TO FEUDALISM?

By Ameen Izzadeen

I think it's back to feudalism. The Sinhala Commission interim report presented to the Mahanayakes of the Trinikaya on Wednesday after it was brought atop an elephant by commission members dressed in Kandyan style, is a subtle invitation for feudal style governance or dictatorship where the minorities will have to live at the mercy of the majority.

The report and its recommendations, harping much on what the commissioners call historical facts - their interpretation of history - are more reflective of the extremist opinion of the section of the Sinhala community than highlighting the real grievances of the Sinhalese.

That the Sinhalese were denied their due place under colonial rule is undisputed and granted. Even the extremists Tamil elements would agree. But these wrongs were to a large extent righted with the introduction of political reforms, beginning with the 1931 Donoughmore constitution. Unfortunately this very process triggered an antithesis, creating panic and fears of discrimination in the minds of the Tamils.

It is not disputed that a section of the Tamils were a privileged lot under the British but this does not mean the downtrodden Tamil civilian coping with the oppressive caste system and other economic burdens was any better off than his Sinhala brethren - if I may be allowed to use a term of fraternity. The socio-economic and political yoke around the downtrodden Tamil led to the armed rebellion against the state. It is the civilians on both sides of the communal divide, who are affected most. One cannot also ignore the plight of the Sinhalese in the villages close to the theatre of war.

The pogrom on Tamils took place in 1983 but can anyone deny that no Tamil was killed or harassed for the mere fact of him being a Tamil before 1983?

Pre-1983 violence against Tamils which I witnessed as a child and what followed after 1983 - massacres of innocent Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people, - make me

query why men cannot treat fellow men as equals in Sri Lanka. Who is responsible for the massacres and the mayhem? The answers still elude me and the Sinhala Commission Report, it appears to me, has made them a mirage.

The report, in my opinion, is more an anti-package exercise than a document containing grievances of the Sinhalese. The Sinhalese and the National Joint Committee have all the right to highlight the grievances faced by the majority community. In newspaper advertisements and speeches at the 17 September ceremony where the report was released, several Buddhist monks of the highest order and other dignitaries pointed out with examples of grievances of the Sinhalese. They include the Deegavapiya land issue, the rights of the Sinhalese who lived in the north, the cutting down of historically significant Bo trees and the fear of losing the identity of the world's only Sinhala state. The speakers also outlined their desire for peace and pointed out that the minorities lived peacefully under Sinhala kings.

The urged the government to keep in mind the more than 2,000 years of history of this land when handling matters of national importance, like the constitution.

Well the written history - whose authenticity is always a subject of intellectual debate - may suggest that Tamils and Muslims co-existed peacefully with the Sinhalese. Yes, within the socio-political and economic order of that era, it seemed a sine-qua-non for survival. It was long before this country was colonised, the introduction of democratic values like equality and freedom and the Sinhalese elite took over the political leadership from the British.

"The Buddhists who get worked up over real or imaginary wrong doings of others are injuring themselves first. They are also creating an oppressive atmosphere which is not conducive to any spiritual growth. A person with even a little sensitiveness can feel this oppressive atmosphere in Sri Lanka today..... If Buddhism is merely an empty shell devoid of love and compassion, the earlier it disappears the better it is for the world."

- Dr.E.W.Adikaram,
a Buddhist scholar

Many were the scenarios that have passed by the landscape of socio-political and economic order of the world. Today the situation is different. What we need is a system for peace that will fit today's environment.

In the light of this, the question that arises is whether the Sinhala Commission citing history is asking all of us to revert to a feudal, political and social structure where a Sinhala Buddhist king would command the obeisance of all his subjects. Or does it want a constitutional clause that the head of state should be a Sinhala Buddhist and this country never be identified as a pluralistic one.

The need of the hour is not any move that would increase the communal hatred in the minds of the people but efforts that would bring the people together. On this score, the Sinhala Commission has failed in its civil duty, through its reports tackle logically the constitutional obstacles to an adverse economic consequence of the devolution package.

One of the speakers at Wednesday's ceremony, opposing the package said the country was a unitary state even during the colonial period. But he failed to mention that sovereignty lay elsewhere. It seems having a foreign sovereign as head of state is acceptable to the proponents of the Sinhala Commission but power sharing with a people of this country to restore peace is demonic.

We conjure up a tear-drop or an inverted mango-like land block when Sri Lanka is mentioned. Our nationalistic feelings constitute this image and we refuse to compromise on it. A liberal and fair-minded nationalist may, however say "take anything but not part of the land" which he considers his country. A federal system which would not change the geographical shape of Sri Lanka is acceptable to a liberal nationalist.

Within this framework, a devolution package or a constitution which contains it could be seen as an attempt to bring about peace. Whether peace would dawn as a result of this is another question but the attempt has to be encouraged if the spirit of it is aimed at peace. If the Sinhala Commissionists and the members of the National Joint Committee are

opposed to the devolution package, the democratic system - which some of them termed western scrap unsuitable for Sri Lanka - demands that their right to be heard should not be denied.

Let them do their work, and the government its. The people will decide.

(Courtesy of Sunday Times)

AN "ELEGY" FOR THE EASTERN PROVINCE?

D B S Jeyaraj

(Continued from last issue)

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress led by M H M Ashraff mobilised public opinion within the Muslim Community of the North-East earlier by proposing a Muslim majority Council comprising all Muslim majority Assistant Government Agent (AGA) divisions of the north-east. The singular hallmark of this proposal was that this Council was to consist of territorially non-continuous areas. Muslim divisions such as Kalmunai in the Amparai district, Kathankudi in the Batticaloa district and Kinniya in the Trincomalee district although being far apart physically would all form one composite unit.

The reasons for this is simple demography. Almost all Muslim settlements in the Eastern Province are situated in the littoral. This coastal belt is known in Tamil generally as "Eluvankarai" or "the coast of the rising sun". Lands to the West of the Batticaloa lagoon in the hinterland are known as "Paduvankarai" or "the shore of the setting sun". The Paduvankarai region was almost homogeneously Tamil once. Now Sinhala settlements have sprung up all over. Still a basic Tamil environment prevails in most parts of that region. Muslims have some lands and livestock projects in this Paduvankarai region. But the Muslims did not have a permanent abode in that region short of a few hamlets. The overwhelming bulk of Muslim villages were in the littoral or "Eluvankarai" region.

This Eluvankarai region, as much as many other regions in the eastern province, is heterogeneous in population. Tamil and Muslim settlements were adjacent to each other. A cluster of Muslim villages will have a Tamil village or villages interspersed within. Likewise a cluster of Tamil villages would have a Muslim Village or villages interspersed within. This demographical attribute has been compared to that of the "Kulal puttu" ("bamboo pittu" in the Sinhala language), a traditional item of food the main ingredients of which are flour and the white of the coconut - a layer of flour is followed by a layer of coconut and so on. In other words, one or more Muslim villages are sandwiched between two or more Tamil villages or vice versa. Those not familiar with the "Kulal puttu" could

think of a ribbon cake.

In any event this geographical reality is a fact of life in the east. At times of Tamil-Muslim conflict the position becomes complicated with members of one community being vulnerable when travelling through an area dominated by the other. Still all the violence and displacements in the East have not been able to alter this reality.

Thus when Ashraff mooted the idea of a separate Muslim Council he was forced to rely on the principle of territorial non-contiguity as demarcating a territorially contiguous Muslim majority area was impossible. So the Muslim Congress was compelled to demand a unit where all Muslim divisions regardless of geographical continuity would be encompassed as one. The inspiration for such a concept was India. The French possessions of Pondichery, Karaikkal, Yenam and Mahe in India were not territorially contiguous being in the present Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh states. They were administered as a single entity by the French. After de-colonisation Independent India resisted the temptation to dismantle these territories and absorb them into the surrounding states.

Instead the enlightened Indian government under Nehru acknowledged the "historic specificity" of these areas and allowed them to function as a separate non-contiguous Union territory with a single Parliament seat and a separate legislature with chief minister. Likewise the Portuguese possessions of Goa, Daman and Diu despite being territorially non-contiguous became a single Union territory first and is now a full-fledged state.

Ashraff ignoring the historical background of Pondichery and Goa cited these as examples for his territorially non-contiguous council based on an ethno-religious identity. This demand was promoted by sections of the Sinhala establishment earlier as it obviously undermined the Tamil demand for a Tamil Eelam or even a devolution unit consisting of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Tamil opinion on the other hand was enraged as it saw the demand of Ashraff

as a deliberate ploy to sabotage broader Tamil aspirations. The Muslim insistence on a separate council was viewed with disfavour. Various alternatives such as cultural autonomy, devices to rotate the chief ministership of the North-East with the Muslims, power-sharing formulae with Muslims being ensured of 33% jobs etc. were suggested yet Ashraff like Jinnah of Pakistan remained uncompromisingly intransigent.

Although unpalatable from a Tamil nationalist perspective the reasonableness of the underlying motives for Ashraff's demand cannot be denied. The Muslims who are 33% in the current Eastern Province would only be 17% in a merged North-east. There was also the spectre of armed Tamil militancy that was threatening Muslim interests on a very crude and blunt level. Also lurking was the traditional antipathy towards "Jaffna" domination. The state and its agencies exploited this situation and began fomenting Tamil-Muslim violence. Intolerant attitudes by the Tamil militants exacerbated the situation further. Muslim youths in various Tamil outfits began to drop out or were "cleansed". Armed Muslim groups like "Jihad" and Muslim homeguards began to emerge. Muslim groups openly collaborated with the armed forces in massacring Tamil civilians like in Pandiruppu. Tamil armed groups began targeting Muslim civilians, the most notorious of these being the Kattankudi Mosque massacre by the LTTE. It was a recipe for disaster.

In such a context support for Ashraff was inevitable among the Muslims of the North-East. His goal of a Muslim council captured their imagination even as the Eelam demand grabbed the Tamil mind two decades ago. The Muslim Congress pact with the PA in 1994 allowed it to dominate the North-East Muslims. Subsequently the Congress became an important component of the government. Ashraff began enjoying state power at the centre and started exercising it. He has been developing the Amparai district Muslim areas with a single-minded resolve.

Realising perhaps the impossibility of achieving a non-contiguous territorial council Ashraff has in his discussions with the TULF agreed to a compromise. He has modified his original demand to that of a South-Eastern Province comprising the present electoral divisions of Pottuvil, Sammanthurai and Kalmunai. This would result in a Muslim majority of 59% in that unit. The Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts along with the Muslim population in those districts could merge permanently with the Northern province subject of course to a referendum. The current government proposals

incorporate this TULF-SLMC understanding.

The position of Ashraff is that the SLMC is not opposed to the current Northern and Eastern Provinces being separate. In that case the Eastern Province Muslims do not need a separate arrangement. But if there is to be an extra-provincial arrangement then the Muslims need a special accommodation to support it at best and not oppose it at worst. Actually Ashraff wanted a separate Tamil dominated North, a separate Tamil majority East comprising the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, a separate Muslim majority South-East and a separate Sinhala dominated Digamadulla. The TULF objected to a separate East and as such the provision for a referendum to decide merging with the north was retained.

Ashraff however found himself criticised on several fronts for his compromise. The Southern Muslims did not want any special Muslim council as they feared that their "peaceful co-existence" with the Sinhala people would be jeopardised. The Muslims of the North and the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts found themselves "betrayed". According to the new arrangement they would be only 12% in a Tamil majority region. The South-East Province would only have 43% of the Muslims in the north-east whereas the 53% Muslims would be at the "tender" mercy of the Tamils. Muslim Farmers in the proposed South-East were also jittery. The waters for irrigation were either in or flowing from what are now the Sinhala areas of Amparai district. There has been a lot of problems in the past about sharing water resources. In that context there was reasonable anxiety about the future.

On the other hand the Tamils of Amparai district also felt "betrayed" by the TULF. These Tamils hailing from traditional villages like Thirukkivil, Thambiluvil, Akkaraipattu, Karaitheevu, Veeramunai, Pandiruppu etc have been extremely ethnocentric in the past. Given the threat of Sinhala colonisation and the lack of autonomous political power vis a vis the Muslims the Tamil frame of mind was understandable. Stalwarts like Ariyanayagam of Thirukkivil, Sivagnanachelvakkurukkal of Akkaraipattu, "Notary" Kandiah of Kalmunai, Velmurugu master of Pandiruppu etc were active functionaries of the Federal Party and later the TULF.

It was Ariyanayagam who composed the Tamil national anthem of old "Engal Eelath Tamil Thiru Naadu" that was sung at all Federal Party meetings then. It was modelled on Bharathidasan's "Engal Thiraavidap Ponnaadu" sung by T R Mahalingam. Besides the doyen of

Tamil scholars Swamy Vipulananda himself hailed from Karaitheevu. The Tamil heritage of The Amparai district was from time immemorial and had very strong nationalist roots. In 1959 the Federal Party allowed enhanced Muslim representation at the expense of the Tamils in Amparai district in the interests of "The unity of the Tamil speaking People".

Although these Tamils continued to be pro-FP that party did not show much interest in their welfare as there was no chance of Parliamentary representation. In 1977 Pottuvil being made a double-member constituency enabled the TULF to field M Canagaretnam successfully. The man crossed over to the UNP within three months of election. After his death his sister Mrs Ranganayaki Pathmanathan became appointed MP. In 1989 Thiviyanathan of the TELO was elected from the Amparai district under the TULF umbrella. In 1994 division among Tamils resulted in votes getting fragmented. Amparai was denied Parliamentary representation although Mavai Senathirajah of the North was able to garner 24,000 preferences contesting on the TULF ticket.

The Tamils of Amparai district are rightfully perhaps incensed over the TULF action of allowing them to be part of a "Muslim majority council". They feel betrayed. These sentiments are shared by their Muslim counterparts in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts. This was very embarrassing for both the TULF and Muslim Congress. It was clear that no Tamil party could go to a Tamil village in Amparai and canvass in favour of a South Eastern Council. Likewise Ashraff was finding it very awkward to promote a separate South-East Council to Muslims of Amparai without being subject to the charge of having betrayed Muslims in the other districts of the North-East. Thus the new decision to do away with the second referendum in the Pottuvil, Kalmunai and Sammanthurai electorates has removed an "impediment" to both parties.

Now the creation of a South-Eastern Council is predicated on the merger of Trincomalee-Batticaloa with the North. Again the Muslim Congress will find it difficult to campaign in this referendum. But the fact that the birth of a South-Eastern Unit depends on the success of a merger with the north at this referendum is likely to push Ashraff to canvass actively for linkage with the north in this. Failing to do so and remaining neutral may affect his political credibility. In any event the Tamil percentage of 58% in Trincomalee and Batticaloa is likely to see a merger with the North succeed if the situation is normal.

The question again is whether it

would not turn abnormal. Will the armed forces discharge their duty dispassionately and impartially? Or will they tamper with the electoral process and sabotage a verdict in favour of a linkage with the North? Will there be tacit instigation, aiding and abetting of anti-Tamil violence in the East by the armed forces?

More important is the question of what the LTTE will do? Earlier during the UNP period the government in power had concentrated on pacifying the East. 42% of the total armed forces had been deployed in the East. As such it had been possible for reasonably free and fair elections to be held in the East. This helped the TULF and SLMC to gather a harvest of votes. Later Chandrika Kumaratunga virtually swept the East in the Presidential elections.

The current PA strategy of focusing on the north has changed the ground situation in the East. Personnel stationed in the East have been re-deployed in large numbers to the northern and Wannu fronts. Camps and check posts have been closed down in large numbers in the East. On the other hand recruitment to LTTE ranks has increased in the East. This has led to large chunks of Eastern territory coming under the control of the LTTE. Almost the entirety of the "Paduvankarai" hinterland is under the Tigers. So too are pockets of the littoral notable of which is the extensively adjacent zone of Vakara in Batticaloa and Verugal in Trincomalee. Batticaloa town too is within artillery range of the LTTE.

Although estimates may vary it is said that about 70% to 85% of the land mass in the East is under LTTE control of differing degrees. In such a situation the LTTE is in a powerful position. It can make or break the referendum. It could prevent Tamil people from voting thereby rendering the referendum ineffective or worse still bring about a verdict against the north-east linkage. The LTTE according to a recent statement is totally opposed to the division of the traditional Tamil homeland in any form. In short it does not want any re-demarcation of Eastern boundaries. Against that background it becomes clear that it would disrupt any proposed referendum.

It must be said that other Tamil political parties such as the EPDP, PLOTE, TELO and EPRLF etc are also opposed to the North-East linkage being altered. They all want an indivisible North-Eastern Province. Only the TULF along with the SLMC is for an adjustment of boundaries or so it seemed until a few weeks ago.

The Batticaloa branch of the TULF passed a unanimous resolution opposing any re-demarcation of the Eastern

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An urgent appeal to expatriate Sri Lankan medical specialists to work on short term contracts in the Teaching Hospital in Jaffna and the medical faculty of the University of Jaffna in the north of the island has been launched by the North-East Region Schools' Past Pupils Federation (NERESPAPP).

The appeal is the outcome of our close consultation with senior officials of the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority of the North and Academics of the University of Jaffna and those who presently in charge of the Jaffna Hospital. NERSPAPP

feels that politics apart, there is a responsibility to see that no adverse decisions are taken to jeopardise the interests of the student population of the University and patients who attend the hospital. If the Medical Faculty is adversely affected by a shortage of needed specialist staff, the closure of the medical faculty may become an option which would be great tragedy.

The Federation has pointed out that the specialised areas where staff position is very acute are:

Jaffna Teaching Hospital: General surgery, Paediatrics, Orthopaedic surgery and Pathology.

Faculty of Medicine - University of Jaffna: Pathology and Pharmacology.

V. Ambalavanar and K. Arunasalam, President and Secretary of the

NERESPAPP

in their appeal states, "The alarming situation at the Teaching Hospital and Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna has caused much concern to the people of North Sri Lanka and to all who are interested in their welfare and in the development of the Teaching Hospital and Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. There has been a shortage of senior pro-

Urgent Appeal for Medical Personnel

fessional staff at both these institutions and this pronounced shortage of qualified personnel has been observed to be deteriorating with monotonous regularity. What is worse is the fact that there has been little or no response to the repeated advertisements inviting applications to fill the numerous vacancies.

"In order to arrest this serious situation that has arisen, the North-East Region Schools Past Pupils' Federation convened a special meeting. The Chairman of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Authority of the North and some of his senior officials were present on invitation at the first meeting. There was a free exchange of views and a broad based agreement was reached on the need for immediate remedial measures to be taken and on the course of action

conducive for one type of referendum then it could not be conducive for the other too.

In such a situation an LTTE "Okay" of sorts has to be obtained first. Until that happens there does not seem to be any chance of full Tamil backing for any referendum. Therefore an impasse has set in unless the security forces either marginalise the LTTE or the government co-opts the Tigers into the negotiating process. Both seem highly unlikely at present.

Thus political arrangements aimed at resolving the problem through a re-demarcation of the East flounder without any chance of getting off the ground. The Eastern Province is only a microcosm of the situation in the country at large. What seemed an "elegy" for the East is now becoming once again the Eastern Imbroglia. It would remain so until and unless all communities living in the island learn to shed past fears and go forth into the future with trust, confidence and goodwill. Even contemplating such a possibility seems an impossibility right now. ●

to be pursued. It was also decided to address and approach the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence and the University Grants Commission to solicit and obtain their co-operation and assistance to enable senior qualified staff to be recruited on the basis of contract to fill in the vacancies in the Jaffna Teaching Hospital and the Jaffna Medical College. A special Committee was elected at this meeting to pursue action in this regard.

"The remedial measures that need to be taken were discussed by the Special Committee at several meetings and it was decided to address a letter to expatriate Sri Lankan medical specialists inviting them to offer their services to be employed in Jaffna on short term contracts. It was also decided to include the following remedial provisions as under.

- (1) Provision for Members of the Faculty to have easy and affordable access for transport within Jaffna as well as between Jaffna and Colombo.
- (2) To ensure provision and easy access to telecommunication facilities between Colombo and Jaffna for Members of the Faculty. In this regard it would be necessary to install at least one (1) direct dialling facility each for the Teaching Hospital and the Medical Faculty, in addition to the direct dialling telephone lines which have been promised to Jaffna University and Jaffna Teaching Hospital.
- (3) Salary scales of expatriate medical specialists who would agree to come on short term contracts should be provided at attractive levels in order to meet the additional expenses such personnel would require. It would appear that this would be possible in certain instances under existing regulations where there is provision to double the regular salary scale. In addition, private practice may be permitted outside the normal working hours.
- (4) It would be desirable to emphasise the necessity for expatriate consultants provided adequate security as well as freedom of movement without undue security checks and restrictions. In this regard, it is expected that the Chairman/RRAN will pursue necessary action with a view to easing pressure in respect of security checks even in respect of the local staff of the Teaching Hospital and the University as well as the University students.

"We have been informed that Her

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Province and reiterated that the current North-Eastern temporary merger should remain permanent. It also emphasised that any possible political settlement should be discussed with the LTTE and Tiger approval obtained. It also wanted the government to stop referring to the LTTE as "terrorist". The Trincomalee branch of the TULF did not oppose the re-demarcation but did not want the referendum to be held now because of the ground situation. The SLMC and the TULF have both attached riders to the select Committee report on a draft Constitution that the referenda in the East should not be held now.

This in itself is a contradictory position. If the new Constitution is to be ratified under existing Constitutional provisions or even endorsed through a Consultative referendum device described as a "Constitutional Revolution" by government quarters a nation-wide referendum including the East should be held. If the Constitutional changes are accepted then mini-referenda in the East have to be held. If the ground situation is not con-

Among the harshest criticisms of those of us in the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) has come, surprisingly, from close associates and friends. Their services, proffered voluntarily at considerable risk, had been crucial in our coping with exigencies which followed the murder of Rajini.

One of them who is in close touch with the pulse of the ordinary people, said: "Whether in the 'Broken Palmyra' or elsewhere subsequently, you people had failed to say clearly and unambiguously who killed Rajini. Even on the very day she was murdered, bicycle mechanics and tea boutique keepers were saying that it was the LTTE who killed her.

"It is always the case that whenever the LTTE commits a crime, the ordinary people are not fooled and are prepared to talk about it. But the intelligentsia through misguided fear or to protect their narrow interests, shuffle the truth, muffle it and quench it. Once this happens fear descends, and everyone stops talking. The few who persist are singled out and put out of the way.

"Thus it happens again and again, with the most influential sections of society actively confusing the truth, the political significance of public indignation is blunted and lost. This service regularly performed for the LTTE by the intelligentsia has been key to its survival.

"The reality among the ordinary Tamil people is that they are basically disillusioned with the LTTE and there is much

Suffocation of Truth and its Political Implications

By Rajan Hoole

anger that is being bottled up inside. Until the State, the Tamil intelligentsia and opinion-makers create conditions where they could freely unburden themselves, the politics of destruction would continue to thrive".

I will examine here the general validity of the charge in the light of experience, and where we are concerned, confine myself to a few remarks.

It was soon clear to nearly everyone in Jaffna that the LTTE had killed Rajini. But given the fact that the LTTE had not claimed responsibility for killing her, we thought it gave us leeway to mobilise the support of the university community, the local public and that of activists at home and abroad to commemorate the life and work of Rajini, what she had stood for and make clear why she was killed. The keenness of student leaders, that of several members of the staff and employees of the University of Jaffna was crucial to this plan.

Decisive help also came from local activists outside the University who in time became the mainstay of the University Teachers for Human Rights

(Jaffna), activists in the South and activists in Britain who knew Rajini and the work of the UTHR (J). On finding that one month was too soon, the commemoration lasting three days was fixed to begin two months after the murder, on November 21, 1989.

Once it clearly dawned on everyone that the LTTE were the killers and that the Indian Army was pulling out, it fell to UTHR (J) to organise the commemoration under its aegis, while at the staff unions lent their support. It was an ambitious plan, a long filing and as it turned out, a game of brinkmanship. But it worked.

Once the international participation became known, it became difficult for the LTTE to oppose it openly or to pass messages of intimidation. In addition to delegates from the South, foreign delegates came from India, Pakistan, South Africa, Holland and Britain. British delegates included the late African Marxist, Tanzanian finance minister and political exile Abdul Rahuman Babu; and the late Martin Ennals, former head of Amnesty International and later of International Alert.

The LTTE started showing an interest openly only when the delegates began arriving on November 20. On November 21, while there was a public presence in the University for the commemoration addresses in the auditorium, LTTE cadre entered the student union offices and wanted to interfere with the slogans on placards that were being prepared for the commemoration march through Jaffna city the following day. Among the issues raised in the slogans were the use of terror, intimidation and murder against the community; the use of child soldiers and conscription by abduction resorted to by the pro-Indian groups.

The student leaders acquitted themselves commendably in resisting the LTTE's demands without giving in one inch. The commemoration ran its course as planned while the LTTE had to be content filming the proceedings for use in future intelligence work. Its nervousness about the proceedings was reflected in its long statement of denial distributed on the occasion after a two months silence, leaving little doubt as to who the killers were.

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Excellency the President has approved the following proposals:

- Offering of contractual appointments to expatriate Consultants on attractive terms.
- Free housing or special rent allowance in lieu of housing.
- Periodic free travels by air to Colombo and back to work station.
- Easy access to telephone facilities.
- Payment of risk allowances if Government regulations permit such payment to other public servants working in the Peninsula.

The implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Indigenuous Medicine.

"We therefore, make this fervent appeal to all overseas Branches of Member Associations to contact Sri Lankan expatriate medical specialists and persuade them to agree to serve even for short term spells at the Teaching Hospital and the Jaffna Medical College. Contract periods of three (3) months or more would be most useful and welcome.

However, any shorter periods may also be of some benefit to the local population and to the medical undergraduates as well. We would welcome the services of expatriate medical specialists in virtually all fields. It is felt that the need is great in respect of certain specialised areas, which are set out in the annexed table.

"It has to be emphatically stated that what is at stake is not only the immediate health and welfare of the people of the North and the interests on the current batches of medical undergraduates, but also the continuance of the Jaffna Hospital as a Teaching Hospital and the continued functioning of the Jaffna Medical College itself. We should take note that any adverse decisions taken about the future of the Jaffna Medical College at this stage cannot be easily reversed even if the situation eventually improves."

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We had hoped that the occasion would give us the needed strength to remain in Jaffna, continue the work of the UTHR(J), and maintain the University as a bastion of values that Rajini had lived and worked for. This was not to be. The commerce between the Premadasa regime and the LTTE was too virulent in its effects to allow for it. In just under a year from the commemoration, the last active member of the UTHR(J) at home, narrowly evaded LTTE abduction squads trailing him and fled the North in riff-raff disguise.

In January 1990, on the initiative of an English activist who came for the commemoration and was active in the British Labour Party, the late John Merit of the London Observer arrived in Jaffna to 'do' a story on Rajini against the current situation in Jaffna. He had been fully briefed of what we knew. Himself a Roman Catholic, he posed the question to Bishop Deogupillai of Jaffna. "Who killed Rajani?" The Bishop replied that the people say it is a party close to the Indian Army. Merit responded, "Whom do you say Killed Rajani?" "I have to believe what the people say", said the Bishop.

We were as taken aback as John Merit was.

It was the time the Indian Army had begun its pull-out from Jaffna. I say this not to fault the Bishop. He was among the more solid figures in Jaffna, had absolutely no sympathy for the LTTE and the bad press he had received in the South over the years was totally undeserved. It was simply based on the paranoia reserved for any Tamil who spoke up against the actions of the state.

I related this because it clearly illustrates the fate of truth in Tamil society under the force of tactical and survival compulsions of the elite which the speaker quoted at the outset complained of. In a healthy society speaking the truth is a universal virtue. In Tamil society today one who speaks the truth comes to be regarded as an idealist. Whatever fate befalls such persons is their own lookout.

The LTTE, from the outset, as we came to know from well-informed Tamil doctors in North America, had given clear instructions to its networks on handling the murder. On the one hand, it was to be public praise for Rajini and blaming the pro-Indian party. Privately, every opportunity for character assassination was to be used.

At home the LTTE had a healthy respect for the native intelligence and thus kept quiet. The London based LTTE controlled 'Tamil Nation' immediately came out with a picture of Rajini on the cover, cunningly pointing to the pro-Indian party as the killers on the basis of the initial

reaction of Rajini's circle in Britain.

The 'monthly' of the Toronto-based World Tamil Movement, about March 1990, carried as its main feature a piece representing Rajini as the precursor to the Birds of Freedom - the Women Tigers. This theme was wisely dropped in Adele Balasingham's later writings on the subject.

The October 1995 "exodus"

The most traumatising of attempts to cover the truth concerns the LTTE's forced exodus of the civilian population in Valikamam on October 30 1995. The LTTE had itself already decided to withdraw in the face of the army advance on Jaffna and had already removed its property. At 6 pm on the day it issued a threatening order importuning the civilians to move out within ten hours, threatening to blow up the connecting bridge over Chemmani lagoon. Those who remain it said, would have to face the consequences of unrestrained war.

During the night, in pouring rain, people jam-packed the exit roads jostling, cursing and pushing each other. Elderly died of exhaustion, and infants dropped by weary mothers perished in flood waters. Apart from privation and starvation, people suffered loss of identity, basic human self-esteem, and lived with enormous guilt over parents, elders and domestic animals they left behind.

As they fled, the LTTE broke into their homes, looted their goods and transported them out in lorries. At one point it made the civilians going on foot to use the railway bridge, so that LTTE lorries carrying their looted goods could use the road exit without hindrance. The experience left the civilians angry, humiliated, and utterly helpless.

The LTTE in the meantime pulled all the stops and launched a world wide propaganda campaign claiming that the people marched out en-masse in demonstration of their unwillingness to live under the alien Sri Lankan government.

We (the UTHR(J)) published a detailed report on the Exodus challenging the LTTE's version, basing ours on several first hand experiences. This created a stir, and it became essential to discredit us. Two similar statements in English and Tamil angrily dismissing our account and calling us names, signed by more than twenty academics from the University of Jaffna, then displaced to Kilinochchi, were circulated to the press in Colombo and abroad.

An article was also published on the subject by Fr. Emmanuel, former Vicar General of the Roman Catholic church in Jaffna, saying that the "Exodus" was in effect a life saving miracle. Drawing on a Biblical expression, he likened the

movement of a huge crowd through a narrow exit road to 'a camel' going through the eye of a needle', which was accomplished with grace and minimum inconvenience, thanks to the LTTE police.

A privately-owned Tamil daily in Colombo which published the statement signed by the academics attacking us, declined to publish our response. A prominent Tamil alternative weekly made a sarcastic reference to some in Colombo claiming that the "exodus" was made under duress.

But to the people who underwent the trauma, it remains a torment to this day. It is like the torture victim who suffered something unspeakable and shameful, and cannot talk about it. The matter has not been written about in Tamil touching even distantly the deeper truths. People are relieved to see in drama or writing a mere ambiguous reference such as: 'They asked us to go.' A recent book in Tamil written by a university don in Jaffna has chronicled several experiences during the "Exodus", but admits honestly that as regards the causes, he would say nothing.

Several months after the "Exodus", I had occasion to talk to a colleague from the University of Jaffna, whom I knew to be a man of homely wisdom. He himself brought up the matter and said, "I say, you all brought out a fine document on the "Exodus", how did you get such detailed information?" I was surprised because I had seen his signature in the English statement from Kilinochchi attacking us, and asked him why he signed that statement. Taken aback, he immediately denied having done so!

The "Exodus" remains the big lie where influential sections of the Tamil elite here and abroad have played their games and have tried to cover up the truth. To the people of Jaffna it remains a deep wound in the soul that they need to bear in the agony of silence.

The truth in the grapevine

I mentioned earlier the grapevine that operates at a humble level. The ordinary people are seldom fooled. To them much of the reporting that goes on in the Tamil media are 'attempts to bury a pumpkin in a plate of rice'. Take the LTTE leaders whose profile was high in Jaffna from about mid 1986 to July 1987. To the middle class they were often models of puritan virtue and discipline - Kittu, Rahim, Thillepan, Murali, Curdles etc... The grapevine saw them differently. Some were scarred by their role in the Anuradhapura massacre and most were given to alcoholism and drunken attacks on detainees. Badly tortured prisoners had been killed simply to protect the Move-

ment's reputation for purity.

The politics of the period was dominated by intense personal rivalry between Mahattaya and Kittu. When Victor, the military leader of Mannar area was killed during a military operation in October 1986, his body was brought to Jaffna and huge ceremonies were organised. Even as the priest who gave the oration solemnly pronounced the words from St. John 12:24, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit", LTTE cadre were telling their friends, "When the Movement makes a big fuss over someone dead, there is bound to be foul play".

Victor had failed to act against the rival group TELO in Mannar, as Kittu had done with blood curdling effect in Jaffna. Victor's relative humanity had rendered him unsafe. The morning after the bomb attack in March 1987 which lamed Kittu, Mahattaya's men were in Kittu's office, laughing sarcastically when callers asked for Kittu.

Thileepan fasted to death on orders from the Leader in September 1987 in a sensational demonstration, ostensibly to no purpose other than securing extra places on the Indian brokered interim council, which the LTTE was not serious about after securing its key demand.

Murali was killed during the Indian army's advance in October 1987. Curdles had died in an accidental explosion in February '87, in a botched operation with the Leader in command.

Thus by the end of 1987 the kings of Jaffna who were given a long rope for a year had practically gone to dust. In turn, Mahattaya's high profile in 1990 became uncomfortable to the leader. In 1993 Pottu Amman was used to get him out of the way. Little now in turn is heard about Pottu. That in short is the LTTE. It goes from internal crisis to internal crisis and can never find peace. This is well understood in the grapevine.

Thus the tenth anniversary of Thileepan's death on September 26 this year (1997) would certainly have aroused strong emotions in the minds of the Tamil people. These emotions have nothing to do with a longing for Eelam. Thileepan symbolises the waste of the flower of Tamil youth, and his slow agonising death, the fate to which LTTE politics had condemned the community.

There is also a process of un-bottling that goes on within the grapevine. Mentioned earlier was Senkathir, a protégé of Mahattaya's, who was accused of being Rajini's killer by the EPRLF.

During 1991 he is said to have disappeared in a confrontation with the Sri Lankan Army near Vavuniya. But his body was not brought home. He was duly

commemorated as a martyr in Nelliady. His own community is however strongly convinced that his death was an inside job. Others held that Senkathir had gone over to the Sri Lankan Army.

According to a story in the grapevine, Senkathir came to Nelliady with the Sri Lanka Army in April 1996. He stood in front of the huge cut-out commemorating him as martyr and gazed upon it for a good while with his hands upon his hips. Then he took an axe and brought it down with a few hard blows. The story may be apocryphal rather than factual. But it contains important truths about what the people think about the LTTE and about Senkathir himself. This is the hidden media.

November 1986

The question naturally arises, "If the people see the LTTE so negatively, or at least ambivalently, how has it been able to thrive? Why was there no mass protest?"

It is definitely not true that the ordinary Tamil people did not want to look at the long term implications of internal issues whenever they felt threatened by the Sri Lankan state and its forces. This is again an elite myth. In November 1986 Jaffna university student Vijitharan was abducted and killed by the LTTE, simply to soothe Kittu's personal vanity.

A student protest and death fast was mobilised under the leadership of Vimalaswaram and other student leaders. Masses of people who had hitherto found no opportunity to protest against several similar violations by the LTTE joined in spontaneously. Schools too joined in. The streets were filled with protest marches and the university became the focus of mass public meetings. The support of the EPRLF also helped.

Kittu was forced to at least tactically make a pretence of negotiating with the students and pledged to find the missing student. It was but a good section of the elite that viewed the protest with contempt and worked against it. The students were constantly pressurised by derisive remarks from them to the effect that they were being petty minded, that Kittu needed his precious time for far more important things, and how gracious it was of him to drop in on this unruly lot.

When the protest ended after assurances from the LTTE and the student leaders were isolated, they were remorselessly hunted.

About 10 days later on 14th December 1986, the LTTE struck at the leadership. In early January 1987 Prabhakaran came to Jaffna from India. Kittu, Thileepan and company had done their demolition work extremely well. The other militant groups that had played a crucial role in keeping the Sri Lankan

army out of Jaffna and large parts of the East had been decimated with a mixture of cunning, deceit and brute force. All independent voices had been silenced. The way was also incidentally cleared for the Sri Lankan army to walk in.

But in the course of their meteoric career in Jaffna, Kittu and company had acquired immense personal power and a high profile. It was time for them to go. A rising star in the LTTE is in fact on a slippery slope. Alas for human vanity.

On further assurances of safety given by the LTTE, student leader Vimalaswaram came out of hiding in 1988 to complete his finals and make a living for his family. He was gunned down like a dog in a street in Jaffna during July 1988 by an LTTE assassin. In the same month as his murder, he had written to the mother of the missing student Vijitharan, a native of Batticaloa: "We live from day to day with no guarantee for our life. You too, mother, have to find some consolation in your grief as being one among the multitudes of tear-drenched mothers in our community".

These are the words of a great and compassionate man from the rural North who died in obscurity, leaving hardly a memorial at home other than in the hearts of those who went to dust like himself.

The LTTE, for its part, made sure that there would be no such mass protest again as in November 1986. This is one context in which the murders of Vimalaswaram, Rajini and thousands of others must be seen. Many unrecorded and unnumbered, disappeared on account of mere spontaneous and isolated village-level opposition.

The political resolution

Where political implications are concerned, the distortion of truth leads to gross misrepresentation of the Tamils. From 1986 a stream of Tamil elite spokesmen and 'peace activists' in Colombo have been making public pronouncements to the effect that the Tamils are behind the LTTE. If one is a little sensitive to the recent history of the Tamils, the thousands of dissenters who courted death and the abominable manner in which the LTTE swallows up young recruits and sends them to their doom such a proposition would be seen as an absolute canard.

It would be far more accurate to say that the Tamils have been smitten by a feeling of powerlessness from within which has been and continues to be compounded by the conduct of the state and its forces. The general approach of Tamil spokesmen in playing safe by the LTTE, is twisted and reported in chau-

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RAJIV ASSASSINATION PROBE

Justice Jain Lands a Bombshell

Even as the main criminal trial of the assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi drew to close with the verdict from the designated court reserved to be delivered on 28 January next year, the Jain Commission that has been probing the background circumstances surrounding Gandhi's murder has landed a bombshell with its damning revelations which are threatening the very survival of the United Front government of I K Gujral and throwing into question the political reputations of many important personalities named in the report.

Justice Milap Chand Jain, a widely respected member of the Indian higher judiciary, was appointed five years ago to investigate into the circumstances of and the conspiracy leading to Rajiv Gandhi's murder on 21 May 1991 at Sripurumbudur in Tamil Nadu. Jain presented his interim report consisting of 17 volumes and over 5200 pages to the Indian Home Minister Indrajit Gupta on 28 August.

Since the leaking of certain sections of this highly classified confidential report in the "India Today" throwing the political powers that be in New Delhi and Madras into disarray, there have been widespread demands for the immediate presentation of the Jain report to Parlia-

ment which is expected to reassemble on 19 November.

The most serious accusations in the report are directed at M Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and there have been calls in recent days that the DMK, which is a constituent partner in the National Front government at the Centre, be dropped.

The following are excerpts from the "India Today" story published here with its courtesy:

In his findings, Jain holds Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi responsible for abetting Rajiv Gandhi's murderers. Also blamed are two former Prime Ministers, V P Singh and Chandra Shekhar, for their laxity in assessing the threat to Rajiv, Finance Minister, P Chidambaram, criticising for "supping with the devil in the cause of political expediency".

According to the leaked Jain report, it singles out the DMK for its severest indictment. It is replete with examples of the DMK's proximity to the leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE), whose cadres killed Rajiv. While conceding that both the Congress government at the Centre and M G Ramachandran's AIADMK government in the state were responsible for the initial impetus to Tamil militancy, Jain holds the DMK guilty of encouraging and assist-

behind the "Exodus".

A similar experience in October 1987 which Rajani witnessed was among the principal motivations for writing the 'Broken Palmyra'. Amidst the cold and inclement weather, tens of thousands of refugees, shivering, starving and frightened, were huddling around Nallur Kantthasamy kovil, staring vacantly, with lumps of excreta among them.

Meanwhile, the LTTE forces were converging upon the kovil, provoking every inch of the way, the advancing Indian army, who were total strangers to the place. As in October 1995 everyone knew that the LTTE had decided to withdraw. Despite the acute danger in which the people were placed, they were also too scared to tell the LTTE to go as they had already decided. It was again a tragic scene of total powerlessness. This still remains the principal challenge before the Tamil community. ●

ing the LTTE even after the Indo-Sri Lankan accord of 1987 pitted the Indian Army against the Tigers.

"Under the changed scenario, the LTTE made a strategic shift in their political alignments," says the report. "They sent personal emissaries to Karunanidhi for seeking his active support in their battle against the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF). These overtures of the LTTE towards the DMK started a chain of events which led to LTTE's survival and growth in Tamil Nadu even after the attitude of the Government of India had changed towards the LTTE after the hostilities between the IPKF and LTTE in Sri Lanka. The Jain report also concludes that the LTTE "was getting its supplies, including arms, ammunition, explosives, fuel and other essential items for its war against the IPKF from Tamil Nadu. That too with the support of the Tamil Nadu government and the connivance of the law enforcement authorities."

The report states that Karunanidhi becoming Chief Minister in January 1989 signified "the perpetuation of the political trend of indulging the Tamil militants on Indian soil and tolerance of their wide-ranging criminal and anti-nation activities....LTTE activates of arms smuggling, abduction of Indian citizens, officials and intimidation of the law enforcement machinery were tolerated." The murder of EPRLF leader, K Padmanabha, along with 15 others in Madras on June 19, 1990 was an example of "the impunity with which the LTTE could operate in India."

The report states that Karunanidhi considered Padmanabha as a betrayer, and his killing and that of Varathraja Perumal was a necessity, and on the basis of the testimony of former Home Secretary of Tamil Nadu, R Nagarajan, Karunanidhi had asked the police not to evince any interest to trace the culprits of the Padmanabha killings. Karunanidhi also had advised the LTTE to take him into their confidence and provide advance information regarding LTTE movements and locations of their hideouts so that he could direct the police to keep away from such places.

The report contains details of the extent of LTTE's free access to Karunanidhi and state officials, the several meetings the CM had with LTTE activists and the occasions on which state officials acted to obtain the release of LTTE activists taken into police custody. The LTTE in discussions with the Chief Minister also obtained more landing points along coastal areas to bring their injured cadres across the Palk Straits. Even coded messages between the Centre and the state government were promptly relayed to the LTTE leaders in Jaffna. "There is

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vinistic sections of the Southern media as the Tamil people being against the government's political package, and by extension their not being interested in anything short of separation. Such mischief has no licence from the Tamil people. The fundamental flaw in the Tamil community is therefore a sense of powerlessness among the ordinary people.

Thus to Rajani, politics rather than being the vulgar power game that it normally is, was something far deeper. It was about giving a sense of dignity and self-esteem to the ordinary people, together with a collective ability to bring about change. Under such circumstances their spokesmen could speak with authority and also speak the truth. Today's politics can be described as one of constraining the people to be cowards, so that their self acclaimed liberators can be heroes. This is the underlying truth

MODERN DEMOCRACY IN THE SUBCONTINENT

A Case of Sexual Adolescence

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

Adolescence is a strange period in the life of a human being or a country. It's necessarily a period of trial and error. But it's double-headed: the coming of age; or the arrival of the process of aging. May even be stunted growth; or growth stunted. Either one learns by the period's certain-to-happen errors or one ends up committing more of them in trying to breeze through the period. Either one grows into adolescence losing innocence or out of it retaining innocence.

And fifty years after the British left, polity in the subcontinent is no longer in its childhood or adolescence. And it is certainly not innocent. It's more the brattish old hag. Having aged double quick, what it plays out only is an evil farce, ever playing outside the set rules. Innocence has no place in it. The farce may well be the equivalent of pure evil in the ancient world. It could well have

been a poisonous concoction prepared by a witch, if such a phrase could be used without incurring the wrath of the ever-vigilant feminists.

Politics, in its innocence, is the age of life, and, in its evil-mode, sudden death. Life can age slowly retaining innocence, but the evil of death can cut it short anytime, bolting from nowhere. Thus, the atrophied polity of the subcontinent, which has lost its innocence, ever faces sudden death in its prolonged haggard adolescence which manufactures evil. Sudden death can come in as uncertain ruptures - assassinations and dynastic successions, political pogroms, ethnic or communal cleansings, caste riots, phony coups and dictatorships and what not, manufacturing insecure reveries and chaos. Well, it's clear it could even follow clashes within planes of the atrophied institutions.

Last month, for instance, the Nawaz

Shariff government in Pakistan backed down after a prolonged tussle with the judiciary and agreed to elevate five judges to the Supreme Court as suggested by the Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah. A similar phenomenon could have occurred in any other country in the subcontinent. And anyone willing to guess the consequences if the government did not back down? One never knows. The realm of uncertainty again, but it is true that such adventures are part of the haggard adolescence - a clear marker of the subcontinent.

In India, Indira Gandhi, for instance, defied a judicial verdict from her father's hometown of Allahabad against her and clamped down the infamous Emergency which had sought to vasectomise poor villagers in Uttar Pradesh.

Pakistan, with its coups d'etat, saw the emergence of Islamic martial law under General Zia Ul Haq; Sri Lanka witnessed a legislative conflict involving the rights of Tamil representatives as the ethnic conflict broke out in full horror; Bangla Desh still suffers from the residual politics of cyclonic terrorism for which the seventies were well-known.

72 days had passed in Pakistan under the shadow of the deadlock of an atrophied constitution over the judges' appointment issue. In between, Pakistan went through the tortuous process of talks as well as a low-intensity border war with India; the Kashmir issue came up once again in the utterances of Bill Clinton and his spitting-on-the-mike spokespersons. And Pakistan's prime-minister-she-was, Benazir Bhutto, realised, to her-now-dissolving-fame, that 17 of her undisclosed Swiss bank accounts had been frozen.

Benazir clearly lost her Daughter-of-the-East book-title this year to Arundathi Roy. Arundathi went on to win the Booker Prize with her maiden literary attempt in London. The bankscreens of the West legally opened out for Arundathi, even as the British Queen hopped and arrived at and hopped and arrived at Islamabad, Delhi, Amritsar, Madras, Cochin and Kanchipuram. In fact, the British Queen, for the Indian and Pakistani media was simply the Queen, reflecting their dynastic mindset, an atrophied psychic state of feigned innocence, which amounts to haggard adolescence.

The Queen was actually witnessing the Kalakeshra Bharatnatyam of Anglicised Adyar girls, marvelling at the Cooptex silk sarees flaunted before her in front of the Ekambaranathar temple at Kanchipuram and wondering standing in front of the stainglasses of the now-emptied-out Cochin synagogue even as Arundathi's saree-clad photocry GOSH! cry flashed in the British and In-

(Continued from page 23)

evidence to show that, during this period, some of most vital wireless messages were passed between the LTTE operatives based in Tamil Nadu and Jaffna. These messages, which were decoded later, are directly related to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi."

The report states that the National Front government under V P Singh failed to take effective steps to check the growing connivance of the DMK government with the LTTE. It "appears that the question of Rajiv Gandhi's security was examined with a closed mind... A very serious question which requires consideration by the Commission is whether V P Singh was actuated by malice, bias or animus in not providing security of such nature and level as would have protected Rajiv Gandhi... Rajiv Gandhi was not given the due attention in respect of the capability available in the state and in respect of the threat scenario of Rajiv Gandhi, the consideration was not an honest one..."

As for former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, the report states, "Blame lies equally at the door of the government headed by Chandra Shekhar... The

nature and quality of security needed under circumstances prevailing under Chandra Shekhar's time was not provided.... The threat scenario during this period had drastically changed and required a complete streamlining of security arrangements for Rajiv Gandhi, which was not contemplated at all....

After the dismissal of the DMK government during the period of Chandra Shekhar, there was a crackdown on the LTTE. How effective was the crackdown can be assessed by the fact that it was this period during which the intelligence group of LTTE cadres led by Sivarasan went about their job undeterred and managed to carry out the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. During March 1991, fresh wireless sets were installed by the LTTE in Madras which were extensively used to pass coded messages to LTTE Intelligence HQ at Jaffna."

In respect of the present Finance Minister, P Chidambaram, the report states, "It was expected from P Chidambaram that he would place all material and adduce all ... evidence with regard to the facts and accusations mentioned and levelled by him in his speech ... on 25.2.1991 Why he did not choose to act, is best known to him." ●

dian press and reverberated across the corporatised world-over with millions of dollars and sterling pounds pouring down: a case of small things-like- innocence coolly dissolving itself in the evil concoction of marketableness.

And Gujral and Shariff, like the Punjabi buddies they really are, flew to Edinburgh, where once their forefathers would have sailed to study law and to admire Scottish countryside and Lake district: a case of feigned adolescence of boys under the watchful eye of Big Mother Britain; Little Red Riding Hoods under the surveillance of the Godmother; boys whose once-strong-and-lovable

Urdu-Punjabi poetry having got dissolved into nuclear sabre-rattling, being the delayed equivalent of the passed-out cold war between the United States and the now-non-existent Soviet Union.

Conflict with the Judiciary

With all these events, the row over the judiciary hogged the limelight in Pakistan. It all had started in August, with some differences of opinion creeping up between Sharif and Justice Shah on the issue of setting up special courts to try terrorist crimes, which implies violence by the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM), which leads the poor lot of Muslims who had migrated from the centre of the sub-continent to the then-newly-formed-

and-now-non-fulfilling dreamland of Pakistan fifty years ago.

MQM leader Altaf Hussein, even as he is London, systematically loses his relatives and cadre in the war with the Pakistani state and various militant groups based in Karachi. Nawaz Sharif's argument didn't cut much ice with Justice Shah who had been very mild in insisting that the judiciary would take an activist role. Shariff, after his election as Prime Minister, had gone about criticising the judiciary for not dispensing speedy justice.

Justice Shah and Sharif had met in a bid to resolve the problem and the judge insisted that it was necessary to appoint more number of judges at various levels. It had had to boil down to the question of numbers, but both would not give in simply and without a fight. Shariff insisted that special courts alone would deliver justice, quick enough, to the victims of MQM terrorism in Karachi and elsewhere. In fact, he has a point to prove, a constituency to attach, in projecting that he cares for Sind, hitherto the pocketborough of the Bhutto family and the Pakistan People's Party.

George Orwell would have flung open his British grave: this novelist who wrote 1984 and Animal Farm would have shrieked in all innocence having heard

that the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's independence went along with the parliament enacting a draconian anti-terrorism act. Freedom at midnight turned into darkness at noon, as envisioned by novelist Arthur Koestler, who had committed suicide more than a decade ago having witnessed the dawn of this era of numerical idiocy, of cloning and chronic ozone depletion, of extra-terrestrial cybersex, of foreign exchange see-saws and stock market collapses...

The law of the lie in Pakistan simply closed, for the arrested, the option of appeal to the Supreme Court and restricted it to a new tribunal consisting of two high court judges. The Apex Court saw this as Sharif's attempt to set up a parallel judicial system: a case of breezing through adolescence.

The consequence was the sudden revolt of the Chief Justice: more Kafkaesque horror. Justice Shah hit back saying "legislation is the work of Parliament and the Judiciary only interprets it." This obviously was a double-headed statement, implying the Supreme Court's unique power to interpret the Constitution.

However, in times of turmoil in Pakistan's political history which led to dic-

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FIFTY YEARS AFTER

The Queen's Visit and Question of Indian Democracy

T.N.Gopalan

Fifty years down the line, has India really come of age, as a nation-state, as a democracy? There are conflicting signals, and the future remains uncertain, typical of a third world country.

The effusive welcome accorded to Queen Elizabeth, the controversy the visit of the royal couple ran into, and immediately followed by the developments in India's most populous state, the Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), where the coalition government of the communal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) of the Dalits, fell apart, all seemed to show that the elite running the show in the country are fumbling as never before, though the right wing hindu forces seem to have an edge at the moment. And coupled with the economic down-turn, the portents for the immediate future are grim.

It still remains unclear whose brainwave was it to invite the Queen to visit the country as part of the golden jubilee celebrations of its independence.

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tatorship, the Supreme Court had the option of interpreting the Constitution, or whatever was left of the document, in favour of the little-left-liberty, but chose not to. Hence, its present stand amounted to a delayed attempt to feign innocence. To assert the stated powers of the Judiciary, he followed his statement with a letter to the government seeking elevation of five judges to the Supreme Court.

Resentment is a certain marker of haggard adolescence. Sharif went ahead with his decision to undercut the judiciary. He got a notification issued to cut down the number of Supreme Court judges from 21 to 17! This was challenged by the Bar Association, followed by a press war between the Supreme Court and the government in Pakistan. The Supreme Court decided to hear petitions challenging the Anti-Terrorism Act and a land allotment case involving Sharif.

In an obvious attempt at a truce, a parley was called on October 28 when the "big four" of Pakistan - the President, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice and

The Independence was the fruition of a long-drawn struggle of the Indian masses and the colonial master let go of them not out of any great charity or goodwill, but because they found it too costly to hold on to in the context of devastations of the Second World War and the awakening of the subjects. And India's ties to the U.K. either at the political level or commercially speaking have not been anything great to speak of. The so-called Commonwealth of the erstwhile colonies, guided by the U.K., is nothing more than a show-piece.

What the visit was supposed to achieve and why so much importance was given to it by the Indian government and the media have never been sufficiently clearly explained, except for the misplaced, gaping admiration of the royalty.

One argument trotted out in some circles was that by inviting the Queen of the very country which had enslaved us for so long, India is living up to the Gandhian legacy, showing nothing but

the Army Chief - met for three long hours. The Army Chief's presence at a meeting in an effort to resolve an issue concerning the country's Judiciary is a reflection of the army's role in Pakistan.

Sharif later went a step further by charging the Chief Justice with going back on the "agreement" reached at the meeting. The Supreme Court retorted saying that it never agreed to postpone hearing of some cases as sought by the Prime Minister. On the same night, Sharif and his band of legislators passed a two-page resolution affirming the supremacy of the Parliament. The next day, the Apex Court directed the President to implement its recommendation to elevate five judges. Sharif made a last-ditch attempt to block this by seeking 30 days' more time to file a review petition against this, but ultimately had to give in, since the Supreme Court is hearing a number of cases against the government! All this means the end of the pursuit of adolescence and loss of even feigned innocence for those who loved playing it dangerously. ●

love and affection for those who might have harmed us once but who have since realised their mistakes and are willing to live on equal terms!

That was some clever explanation, though not enough to cover up the ludicrous craving for the mere darshan of the exalted couple from the Buckingham Palace. And the media's coverage of the visit, billing it as some momentous occasion in the history of the nation, fitted in with such a puerile perspective.

In the event though the minor contretemps which came up were blown out of proportion, and the prickly sensibilities of a highly self-conscious elite did nothing to enhance the image of the country.

First UK's Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's reported offer at Islamabad, when the Queen was there, to mediate between India and Pakistan sparked off a furore. How dare a bit-player from Europe arrogate to itself the role of a super power; how could it seek to dictate terms to a big democracy; who gave it the right to meddle in our internal affairs, and the rantings and ravings were endless.

The hapless Cook had to beat a hasty retreat. For the life of him he would never understand why any offer to mediate should be construed by anyone in his senses as an affront to the nation's dignity or as a partisan gesture. But given the virulent opposition of the Indian media to the very idea of a meeting between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan under the aegis of the USA, such a reaction to Cook's offer was predictable.

And even before the jingoistic breast-beatings on the issue were over, came the Duke of Edinburgh's remarks at Jalianwala Bagh at Amritsar, the site of the gruesome massacre in 1919. He remarked casually that the toll was perhaps not as high as 2,000 as claimed in the memorial plaque, for he had heard from General Dyer's son (Dyer was the one who had ordered the mowing down of the defenceless people of Amritsar) it was much less. For sections which had been angry that the Queen would not apologise for the colonial outrage, the Duke's remarks came in handy. It was almost interpreted as nothing short of blasphemy. But then the fact is that historians generally agree that the toll could not have been more than 400.

And the next gaffe was when the British High Commission sought to persuade the Tamil Nadu Governor into allowing the Queen to make a brief banquet speech. Apparently a speech was not in the tour itinerary at all, and the idea of a banquet speech was thought up in the last minute, but then protocol required the matter be cleared at the highest level.

But the Centre had not been taken into confidence, and the miffed mandarins of Delhi told the Governor not to allow any speeches at the banquet. This the British side took as an offence, and its media made a hue and cry, inviting retaliation in kind from the Indian side. To round it all off there was a minor scuffle at the Chennai airport when the police sought to prevent a British photographer from entering a restricted area.

The visit only left a bad taste in the mouth though officially both the governments played down the glitches and claimed that the visit had generated a lot of goodwill. Be that as it may, the extreme reactions towards trivial developments went to show two things - one that India is still needlessly obsessed with its erstwhile colonial masters and two it is very insecure about its own identity.

Testing Times for Democracy

However the developments in the most populous north Indian State of Uttara Pradesh a fortnight later threw into sharper relief the rather precarious nature of Indian democracy in the wake of the crumbling of the Congress edifice. The events themselves were sufficiently disgraceful, attracting international attention and making every Indian hang his or her head in shame.

With no single party getting adequate majority on its own in the state assembly, a coalition resulted, the tall-talking BSP proving a key factor. It kept switching its partners at an astonishing pace, from the backward caste champion Samajwadi Party to the amorphous Congress on to the communal BJP and finally came crashing. It justified its marriages of convenience as political compulsions and claimed that when the major political parties had been exploiting the dalit vote-bank there was nothing wrong in its trying to ride piggy-back to power and that way promote the interests of the Dalits.

Following a very unusual agreement with an unlikely partner like the BJP - which is status-quoist and swears by Hinduism which keeps the Dalits untouchables - BSP leader Mayawati became chief minister for six months. She did many a quixotic thing in the name of the Dalits during her tenure, but the BJP put up with the taunts gamely.

But six months come and go fast, and she had to hand over the reins to the BJP which she finally did after creating a lot of ugly scenes. But what followed after a BJP man took over was even uglier, perhaps one of the ugliest scenes in the annals of independent India.

Barely a week later, the BSP chose to withdraw its support to the BJP on the

ground that some of its actions were anti-Dalit. Clearly the acerbic BSP leader Kanshi Ram was playing for high stakes. He had always boasted that he was emerging as the deciding factor in the entire country and whoever backed by him could capture power, of course paying the appropriate price in the form of Dalit amelioration measures.

But the BJP proved smarter. It simply succeeded in splitting the BSP, the Congress and the Janata Dal and contrived to obtain a majority on the floor of the House. The violent exchange of mis-sives, paper-weights, chairs and

wrenched-off-microphones, resulting in injuries to many, was appalling. But the non-BJP parties realised that they had been beaten comprehensively and were forced to beat a shameful retreat. The BJP won a comfortable majority.

It was at this juncture that the Samajwadi party, a member of the 13-party

coalition at the Centre sought to demonstrate its secular commitments. Its leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, propped up avidly by the Communist parties as the sole champion of secularism - that his excessively backward casteist plank tends to alienate the other Hindu castes, especially the Dalits who find the backward castes their immediate and worst oppressors is easily ignored - got into the act. He got the UP governor send up a report to the Centre saying that the constitutional machinery had broken down and recommending dismissal of the BJP government and dissolution of the Assembly.

Whatever the goings on in the Assembly, the fact remained that the BJP had managed to cobble up a majority and it was against all canons of the constitution to have such a government sacked. The wimpy Gujral could only protest meekly but finally the Communist Parties and Mulayam Singh prevailed on him to accept the governor's report.

Enters the new President of India K.R. Narayanan who put his foot down and asked the Gujral regime to review its decision. Technically the President has very little room for manoeuvre. All that he can do is only ask for a review, and if the cabinet sticks to its decision, he can only swallow it and sign on the dotted line. This was the first time that a President so openly differed with the cabinet on such a crucial issue. But Narayanan took the chance.

And here the DMK and the Telugu Desam saw a golden opportunity. They had always been against Art. 356 of the constitution which enables the dismissal of a state government. With the Press coming down hard on the UP Governor on the one side and the DMK and other

constituents suggesting endorsement of the President's suggestion, it was Gujral's turn to beat yet another humiliating retreat.

But the newspapers which were hauling over the coals the pseudo-secular forces for ganging up against a morally upright BJP, lauding the President's infinite wisdom and admirable courage of conviction and gloating over the ultimate triumph of democracy were in for a still nastier shock. Their much beloved BJP let them down terribly badly.

In an attempt to keep all the defectors happy, the BJP rewarded everyone of them with a ministerial berth. With a 90-plus mega-cabinet, the party concerned with ethics, the party with a difference, became a laughing stock. And worse even the 12 defectors from the BSP who clearly attracted the provisions of the Anti-Defection Act were all accommodated, and the BJP

Speaker of the Assembly refused to disqualify them. (Under the Act a split in a legislature party is tenable only when the number of those who walk out is more than one-third of its total strength. Otherwise those defying the party whip on any count are liable to be disqualified from the membership of the legislature.)

Clearly it was a case of gross subversion of all democratic norms, much more serious than what the UF government had sought to do in the first place. The media analysts taken in by inevitable march of Hindutva did not know wherein to hide their faces. They could only agonise over the compulsions of realpolitik and hope the BJP would opt for fresh elections instead of compromising its commitment to moral values. Anyway politics had fallen on bad days, tut, tut. In a matter of 24 hours the BJP's puffed up image had nosedived. Yet another God with clay feet, going to any length to satisfy its political ambitions.

There is once again talk of a broad anti-BJP front, but many believe that despite its dented image the BJP could be within a striking distance of

power even at the Centre. Still stability will elude the polity while communal divisions deepen. Some say there is now hope for a truly federal structure. Whatever the case, the much vaunted Ram Rajya of Gandhi remains a mirage.

** I have never heard of a person attacking power without wanting it, and the religious moralists are the worst in this respect.**

- Elias Canetti
The Human Province

Rajiv Assassination Trial Ends - Judgement Reserved

T.N.Gopalan

It is now curtains on the four-year-long in camera trial of the Rajiv assassination case. Mr.V.Navaneedham, special judge of the designated court, before whom the trial was conducted, has reserved his judgement for January 28 next year. On the firing line are as many as 26 persons including five women. Almost half of the accused are Sri Lankan Tamils, and the rest their alleged Indian accomplices.

Though billed as one of the most sensational cases in the history of independent India, little was known to the outside world of the actual proceedings spread over 700 working days - the trial was held almost totally in camera, and the media was kept out of it all, though a couple of news agency reporters were allowed to glean some tidbits occasionally and some more leaked out by from the counsels on both sides. The trial was held in camera thanks to the Anti-Terrorism Act under which the special court was constituted, the ostensible reason being the lives of those who deposed against the accused could be in danger from the LTTE who are believed to have carried out the deadly mission.

The entire trial was conducted inside the well-fortified high security Poona-mallee prison off Chennai. All the accused are detained there only, and since the state feared danger to their lives if they were moved in and out for trial elsewhere, the judges conducted the trial right inside the prison complex.

The human bomb Dhanu exploded at an election meeting at Sriperumbudur, 55 km from the state capital, on the night of May 21, 1991, instantly blowing to pieces Rajiv Gandhi and 17 others, setting off a series of events of far reaching significance both for India and Sri Lanka. The LTTE became an international out-cast, the Lankan Tamil refugees in this country were hounded and India washed its hands off, proving a great set back to the Eelam cause itself, in promotion of which, ironically, Rajiv was so brutally murdered.

If the Congress lost a charismatic vote-catcher, Tamilnadu itself saw the meteoric rise of Jayalalitha who cashed in on the assassination, though she squandered away the peoples mandate at a later stage. Her regime in 1991-96

marked the worst phase in the history of the benighted Lankan Tamil refugees. They were hounded out, every one of them considered a threat to the state, their movements restricted and their life inside the camps became miserable as the camps were denied even basic amenities and allowed to go to seed - you are guests who have overstayed your welcome, they were bluntly told. More than 30,000 refugees were forcibly repatriated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees blithely looking on. Only after a concerted campaign by human rights activists, the deportations were put to a virtual. They all breathed a sigh of relief only after Jayalalitha's electoral debacle.

It was thanks to a fortuitous event, the recovery of a camera at the assassination spot that the police were able to put the pieces together and link the LTTE with the ghastly crime. The hunt for the alleged mastermind, the one-eyed Sivarasan and his associates, went on for a year and ended in a gory finale when he and six others were shot dead or they all committed suicide following a fierce encounter with the police who had laid seige to their hideout in Bangalore.

Originally 41 persons were cited as accused including the LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, its intelligence chief Pottu Amman and women's wing leader Akila - the three could not of course be nabbed and were declared proclaimed offenders. Apart from the Sivarasan's gang of seven, five others died midway through the trial, leaving the 26 to face the music.

Though the charge-sheet itself was filed a year after the crime, it took another 19 months for the trial proper to commence. In all 288 witnesses were examined, 1500 exhibits produced before the court as also 1200 material objects.

The prosecution's case is of course that it was the LTTE which had executed the mission by way of wreaking vengeance on Rajiv who was instrumental in unleashing the Indian Peace Keeping Force on the Tamil Tigers fighting for their own Tamil Eelam and all the accused had in one way or another aided or abetted commission of the crime. And the defence has been that the prosecution has

not been able to prove beyond reasonable doubt either the involvement of the LTTE or of the accused and that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) had gone purely by surmises.

Of the 26 persons awaiting with bated breath the dawn of 28 January 1998, hardly five or six are perceived to have direct LTTE links, the rest being accomplices, wittingly or otherwise. The roll call includes Mr.Subha Sundaram, a veteran news photographer of Chennai and who had lent his camera to youngster Hari Babu, allegedly engaged by the LTTE to film the event for their macabre archives. The poor Hari Babu too was a victim of Dhanu's suicide-bomb, but the camera he left behind had provided the vital breakthrough and also implicated Subha Sundaram.

Another interesting sidelight is that Nalini, sister of a Tamil nationalist printer Bhagyanathan, another accused besides their mother Padma, had had secret liaison with Murugan, an LTTE cadre, also an accused, during the run up to the assassination, was pregnant at the time of her arrest and gave birth to a baby while in prison and the child is being brought up in Switzerland.

Most of the accused did not hire lawyers by themselves but it was the state which provided them with legal assistance. There was even a raging dispute over the discrimination in the fees paid to the prosecution and to the defence counsels who numbered eight in all. Their agitation had also contributed to the delay in the trial. Finally some compromise was arrived at.

It was Judge S M Siddick who conducted the trial for the most part. On his elevation to the High Court, Judge Navaneetham replaced him.

Leading defence lawyer S.Duraisamy told this correspondent that while they had no complaints whatsoever about the attitude of either of the two judges, the secret trial had worked to the detriment of the accused. Invoking the TADA provisions the prosecution had sprung as many as 40 secret witnesses on them, the defence coming to know of them only on the day of their deposition and it greatly affected their ability to satisfactorily cross-examine such witnesses. Besides since it was all in camera the outside world never came to know of the weaknesses in the prosecution case and public opinion could not be mobilised in favour of the innocent. He also faulted the prosecution for the inordinate delay in getting the trial going though he felt that the actual trial itself had been gone through at a steady pace barring some hiccups here and there.

There was not a single defence wit-

(continued on next page)

ASPIRATIONS OF TAMILS !

After continuously subscribing to the Tamil Times for more than fifteen years, I have come to the stage of stopping my subscription unless it changes its attitude towards the aspirations of Tamils.

I am really fed up reading articles (TT August 97) of people like Dr S Nara- palasingham, who pretends as that he does not know the meaning of the "Do or Die" stand taken by the LTTE. It is one of the biggest insults one could give to our freedom fighters. By publishing such articles Tamil Times is not only giving prominence to Dr N's view, it is also favouring the oppressive Sinhala Government.

I do not personally endorse every-

(Continued from page 28)

ness in the case. The delay in the trial had also been caused partly by the over-weening Jain Commission which sought the case diaries and almost a parallel trial, but the Supreme Court put its foot down.

The prosecution itself seems confident that stiff sentences would be awarded to most of the accused and that none has been unfairly implicated. Knowledgeable sources assert the neither the Jain Commission inquiring into the conspiracy angle nor the Special Court trial could hope to unravel the entire truth behind the assassination and the people who conspired to commit it. They seem to think it had died with Sivarasam and his associates. The rest of the accused could only have been small players, some of them even trapped unwittingly. But several death sentences and life terms are inevitable given the sensitive nature of the case and the public interest in the case. Any lesser penalties or acquittal could provoke a furore in the country.

Even in the Mrs. Indira Gandhi assassination case, despite some last minute efforts to mobilise public opinion, the main accused were hanged and some consider it a case of miscarriage of justice. One may also remember when rationalist poet Perunchithiranan filed a writ petition in the Madras High Court challenging the state-sponsored tour of the urn containing the ashes of Mrs. Gandhi, arguing that it went against the secular nature of the government, the learned judge came down heavily on him: The petitioner must thank himself for living in a democracy. In any other country he would have been lynched for daring to file such a petition which was an outrageous insult to the sentiments of the public which revered Mrs. Gandhi in such high esteem and agonised terribly over her terrible assassination, the judge said.

Readers Forum

thing done by the LTTE, but I believe that they are the only group who are genuine with their objective of sacrificing themselves towards the cause. They are not a handful of "terrorists" as depicted by the Sinhalese governments to fool the world. It is well accepted by everyone, including the majority of the Sinhalese that they are representing the aspirations of the majority of Tamils. They need appreciation and support by the respected Tamils from all over the world. If the LTTE is doing any wrong there is a way to correct them and not by insulting the brave men and women, who are our only hope to bring respect and dignity to Tamils.

T Selvaratnam

76 Windermere Avenue
Wembley, Middlesex, UK

MANGALA AND THE PRIESTLY THREAT

It has been reported that some Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka have reacted strongly to the comments made by the minister Mangala Samaraweera regarding the report of the Sinhala Commission. They have demanded that the unfortunate minister should withdraw his comments and make an apology, otherwise he will have to face dire consequences such as forbidden from entering Buddhist shrines or participating in any religious ceremonies.

All what Mr Samaraweera said was that the report should be condemned to the dustbin. Whether it is prudent to make such a remark on the Sinhala Commission by someone in the capacity of a minister is a moot point, but what is more disturbing and distressing is the reaction of the clergy. The harsh man-

ner in which Mangala has been maligned and ostracised is in sharp contrast to the noble teachings of Lord Buddha.

It would be interesting to note at this juncture an incident in the life of Buddha. Once Buddha encountered an opponent who cast aspersions and abused him in vitriolic language. Buddha listened and waited patiently for the man to finish his verbal tirade and said to him "My dear friend, if you invite guests to a banquet and the guests do not come, what do you do with the food that is prepared?"

"Oh", was the reply, "I and my family will consume the food if the guests do not arrive". The great Buddha then said to the man who abused him "you have offered me your abuse, I am not receiving it. You can take it yourself" and quietly left the scene.

The moral teaching in this episode is axiomatic and surely the followers of Buddha would have known this important incident, but what is lamentable is that it has not manifested in their reaction to the Minister's remarks. Dabbling in politics by religious dignitaries is not only undesirable but also pernicious as well. Those who are in ecclesiastical order should view any remarks attributed to them dispassionately, even if they are unpalatable to them. To behave in a high handed manner is against the basic tenets of any religion, let alone Buddhism.

As if this is not bad enough, the behaviour of some of the Newspapers in Sri Lanka is also equally reprehensible. They were quick in condemning the minister but failed to criticise the monks. Perhaps they are too frightened to stick their neck out or stir up a hornet's nest. It is needless to say that it is the duty of the editors, if they are really responsible people, not only to point out but also to condemn in unequivocal terms any undesirable trend, emanating from any quarter, which is detrimental to social harmony.

V P Singam

London SW17
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MATRIMONIAL

Tamil Hindu parents seek partner for US raised son, 26, 5'5", doctor employed in US with citizenship. M 980 c/o Tamil Times.

Uncle seeks Jaffna Tamil bride in UK for nephew, 40, engineer in top firm, sportsman. Girl must be of outgoing personality and a good conversationalist. M 985 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Brahmin parents seek good-looking educated bride for son, 31, doing Master's in Professional Accounting in Australia. Send photo, horoscope, details. M 986 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu father seeks professionally qualified partner for attractive doctor daughter, 29, educated and qualified in UK. M 987 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu A.C.C.A. Accountant, well established, house owner, U.K. permanent resident, 39, 5'8", teetotaler, non-smoker, seeks bride preferably professional. All correspondence treated confidentially. Send horoscope, full details. M 988 c/o Tamil Times.

Catholic Tamil Lankan parents in America seek educated partner for tall, handsome commerce graduate, qualified accountant, 40, employed Australia, dual citizenship. Relocation considered. Contact (203) 732 4836 (USA) or M 989 c/o Tamil Times.

Well Established Hindu Family seek professionally qualified partner for only son, Computer Engineer, 32 years, working in USA, willing to sponsor. Please send details with photo. Tellabs Inc., P.O. Box 15, Holmdel, New Jersey 07733, USA, email vr@tellabs.com, fax 732 294 4774.

Jaffna Hindu professional, widower seeks in strict confidence lady partner around 47 in employment abroad. Should relocate to Australia Send details. M 990 c/o Tamil Times.

Uncle seeks professional bride with easy going personality around 26 for UK qualified Hindu doctor, 30. Send horoscope, full details in first letter. Confidentiality assured. M 992 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu seeks partner for professionally qualified sister, divorcee, no encumbrances, 33, 5'4", fair, UK permanent resident, Mars seventh house. Send horoscope, details. M 993 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek groom, 28-34, 165 cm, professionally qualified for professionally qualified, pretty, daughter, employed. Send horoscope, details to P.O. Box 1482, Station B, Hull, Qc J8X 3Y3, Canada.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professionally qualified groom for their ICMA accountant daughter with MBA, 34, in employment in London, permanent resident. Send horoscope, details. M 995 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Latha daughter of Mr. & Mrs. A.T.S. Ratnasingham of 178 Queen's Road, Wimbledon SW19 8LX and Tirunal son of Mr. & Mrs. S.B. Parvathaneni of 84B Thameside, Staines, Middx. TW18 2HF on 17th October 1997 at Shree Ghanapathy Temple, Wimbledon, London SW19 8PU.

Jai Shankar son of Dr. & Mrs. Ramanathan of 92 Hitchings Way, Reigate, Surrey RH2 8ER and Sai Swarupini daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Kathirgamathamby of 294 Scuthborough Lane, Bromley, Kent BR2 8AA on 20th October 1997 at Pedda Venkamaraju Kalyana Mandapam, Puttaparthi, India.

Adhithya son of late Mr. P. Narendranathan and Mrs. G. Narendranathan of 53 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8JQ and Meera daughter of Mr. S. Sithamparanathan and late Mrs. S. Sithamparanathan of 16 Dengwood Road, Highgate, London N6 4AJ on 1st November 1997 at The Clay Oven Banqueting Hall, Ealing Road, Wembley, Middx.

OBITUARY



Kanmanni beloved wife of V. Thiagarajah formerly of Mavidapuram and Mahajana College, Tellippalai and presently of Melbourne, Australia; loving mother of Sriskantharajah, Rajani and Rajabhavani; mother-in-law of Gnanapoonkothai, Rajalingam (USA) and Nadarajalingam; eldest sister of Saraswathy Arumugarajah (Canada), Parameswary Satchithanatham (Sri Lanka), late Kanthasamy (formerly of TRRO & Saturday Review), Parameswaran (Sydney), late Gnanambikai and Mangayatkarsai Dharmarajah (Canada) died on 11th September 1997 and the funeral took place on the 13th in Melbourne. - 15 Harris Crescent, Glenwaverly, Victoria 3150, Australia.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of Mr. P.V. Nadarajah on the ninth anniversary of his passing away on 16th November 1988.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his loving wife Thilagavathy; children Usha, Varathan, Nalini and Nanthini; sons-in-law Sivanathan, Rajkumar and Vathsayan; daughter-in-law Savithiri; grand children Bairavi, Luxmi, Uruthiran and Abhirami. - 32 Kenmore Close, Hoppens Crossing, Victoria 3029, Australia.

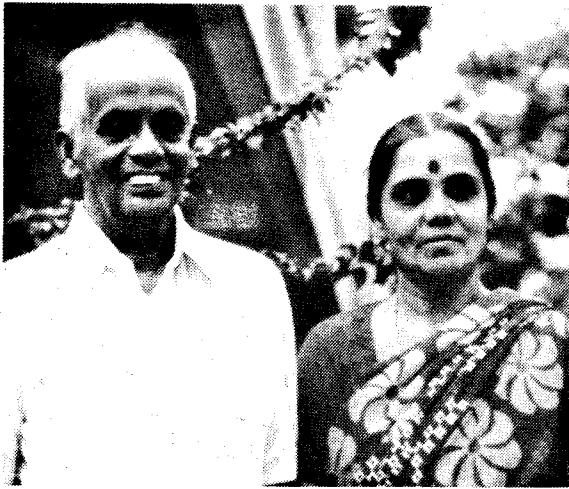
**Mrs. Sivakolunthu Nadarajah
First Death Anniversary
22.11.97**



**Bhoomi: 10.10.1924
Swargam: 22.11.1996**

Fondly remembered by her husband Mr. C. Nadarajah (Malaysia); daughters Aachi, Indra (Sri Lanka), Saras (UK); son Dr. Siva (Malaysia); brothers Ramalingam, Dr. Sharil (Malaysia), Kandiah (Singapore), Velupillai, Visvalingam (Sri Lanka), Mylvaganam (UK); sisters Sivagami (Singapore), Thangamma (Sri Lanka); son-in-law Bas (UK); daughter-in-law Dr. Selvam (Malaysia); sisters-in-law Varathaluxmi (Sri Lanka), Mahaluxmi (Sri Lanka), Zahum (Malaysia); Shanthini (UK); brother-in-law Sundaram (Singapore) and grand children. - 102 Cavendish Road, Colliers Wood, London SW19 2EZ, UK.

IN MEMORIAM



Our Papa
Mr. Arunasalam
Subramaniam

Born: 12.08.1908

Passed away: 10.11.1987. Passed away: 10.11.1989.

Tenth of November both of you departed

After all that you have imparted

To every one of us quite a number

Everlasting pleasant memories to remember.

From Loving children, sons and daughters-in-law and grand-children,

Eswara Kanthan, Rohini, Suganya and Shamita, USA.

Eswara Haran, Rathy, Rathan and Divya USA

Eswara Gowri, Ravi Nadaraja, Garani and Divani, USA.

Eswara Rupan, Shankari, Mahisha and Ahila, UK.

Eswara Janani, Sivaloganathan, Vaishnavi and Arathi.

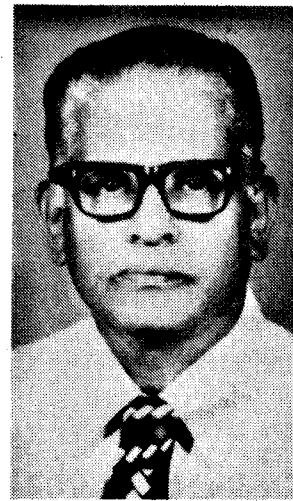
Eswara Narthana, Abhirami, Suban and Amuthan.

Eswara Ramanan, Dhakshini, Kuganesha and Vithushan.

Our Amma
Mrs. Kuganeswary
Subramaniam

Born: 19.07.1922

IN MEMORIAM



Richard Jeyarajasingam

Born: 20.11.1928

Entered Glory: 27.11.1990

Seven years to this day have

Passed without you

With every moment bringing a pang of hurt.

Yet within our hearts

You are always there

With thoughts of Love, Joy and Happiness you gave

And the firm belief you are in the perfect place

Away from pain, tears, want and sorrows

Justly Yours

Fondly remembered by Ranees and Children.



Mrs. Chandra Ragupathy

In everloving memory of my darling wife Chandra on the second anniversary of her passing away on 26th November 1995.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her darling husband Ragupathy - 262 Wrinkle-marsh Road, London SE3 8DW.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

December 1 Kaarthikai Somavaaram (3).

Dec. 3 Chaturthi; Feast of St. Francis Xavier.

Dec. 5 Shashti.

Dec. 6 Feast of St. Nicholas; 6.30pm Tamil Orphans' Trust presents Music & Dance by Pupils of Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan, Smt Saraswathy Packiarajah, Smt Sivatharani Sahadevan and Smt Uma Chandradeva at Winston Churchill Hall, Pinn Way, Ruislip, Middx. Tel: 0181 908 3540.

Dec. 6 6.30pm Jaffna Hindu College O.B.A. in association with Jolly Stars Sports Club presents Hindu Nite in aid of Jaffna Hindu College Scholarship Fund at Wembley High School Hall, East Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 200 3822/ 204 5366.

Dec. 8 Kaarthikai Somavaaram (4); Feast of Immaculate Conception.

Dec. 10 Ekaathasi.

Dec. 11 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Damascus.

Dec. 12 Thirukkaarthikai Theepam.

Dec. 13 Full Moon; Sarvalaya Theepam; Feast of St. Lucy; SLTWG Christmas Party at Merton Hall, London SW19. Tel: 0181 545 3313; SCOT Christmas Dinner Dance at Acton Town Hall, London W3. Tel: 0181 693 4088/952 7249/ 870 9897.

Dec. 14 Vinayagar Kathai starts; Third Sunday of Lent.

Dec. 15 Kaarthikai Somavaaram (5).

Dec. 17 Sankatahara Chaturthi.

Dec. 20 SLTWG Children's Christmas Party. Tel: 0181 545 3313.

Dec. 21 Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Dec. 25 Krishna Ekaathasi.

Dec. 26 Feast of St. Stephen.

Dec. 27 Sani Pirathosam; Feast of St. John.

Dec. 29 Amavasai.

Dec. 31 Feast of St. Sylvester.

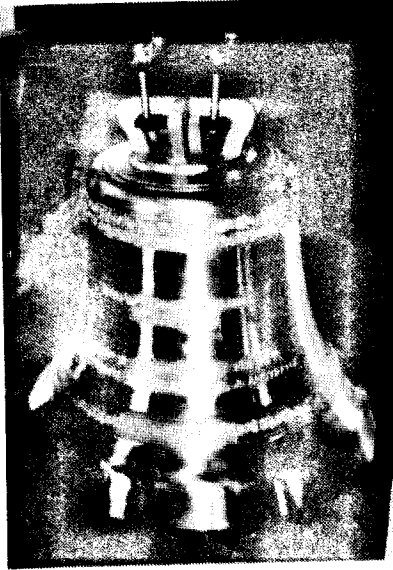
At Bhawan Centre, 4A Castle-town Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/ 4608.

Dec. 6 6.30pm Bharatha Natyam by Stella Appal Subbaiah.

Dec. 14 6.00pm Benefit Performance for Shri Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre. Karnatic Vocal; Sivasakthi Sivanesan, Bharatha Natyam: Prakash Yadagudde.

Dec. 22 7.00pm Christmas Celebrations: Carol Singing, Christmas Message and Cultural Programme. All Welcome.

Trincomalee Thirukoneswaram Temple



A new bronze bell, weighing 330 kilograms 33" in diameter and 29 1/2" in height was delivered to the Thirukoneswaram Temple, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka on seventh October 1997. It was made in France and supplied with all necessary fittings. The total cost was £5000.

The following inscription appears on the bell - 'Thirukoneswaram Temple, Trincomalee. Donated by Expatriates in the UK, Europe, North America, Africa and Australia'.

Mr. A. Mahendra, the UK fund manager, Mr. P. Thevarajah, other friends and fund raisers wish to thank all those who made donations and helped in every possible way to make this endeavour possible.

Kokuvil Hindu Old Students Meet

The Fifth Annual General Meeting and Lunch of the Kokuvil Hindu College Old Students Association (UK) took place on 21st September 1997 at Coston Primary School Hall, Greenford, Middx. Around 200 members were present and the proceedings commenced with the singing of the college song, and Mr. S. Sivagnanasegaram, the Chief Guest lighting the traditional Kuthu Villaku. Dr. P. Arumugaraasah, the President of the association welcomed the gathering and was followed by speeches by Dr. T. Raj Chandran, Mr. K. Kanthapillai and Mr. S. Selvaratnam. Mr. Sivagnanasegaram reminisced on the pleasant days he had spent as a student and complimented his teachers for the service they had rendered in shaping his future.

The following were elected office-bearers of the association for 1997/98. **President:** S. Kanagasundaram, **Vice-Presidents:** K. Kanthapillai, R. Kuganeswaran and S. Selvaratnam.

Secretary: N. Nanthagopan, **Asst. Secy:** V. Tharmarajah, **Treasurer:** P. Anandasi-vadas, **Asst. Treasurer:** S. Sivayoganathan, **Sports Secy:** N. Vijayakumar, **Asst. Sports Secy:** Mrs. S. Pushparajah, **Committee:** Dr. P. Arumugaraasah, N. Yoganathan, A. Prabakaran, K. Kugathasan, R. Ratnakumar, N. Rajendran, R. Kukendrarajah, Mrs. P. Thevarajah and Mrs. S. Arulanathan, **Auditor:** S.K. Chetti.

The meeting ended with Mr. Pirashanna's Drama and a Violin recital by Mr. G. Mathan.

Hariharan's Miruthanga Arangetram



Yoganathans of Stanmore, devotees of South Indian Saint Swamy Haridhos of Thennangoor had their prayers answered when a helping hand appeared from unforeseen quarters to help with their son's Miruthanga Arangetram which was nearly cancelled as the singer originally invited from Madras was suddenly taken ill and had to be rushed back home. The parents prayed more vigorously and were introduced to a brilliant singer from South India, resident in the UK. She is Smt Pavithra Mahesh, an exponent in Veena and gold medalist of the University of Madras. She is also a disciple of Padmasri Lalgudi Jayaraman and agreed to sing as a vocalist at the Arangetram. The result was Hariharan's Arangetram at Winston Churchill Hall, Pinn Way, Ruislip, Middx. on 27th September 1997 ended as a Grand Concert and was applauded by all those present. Smt Pavithra was at her best and 15 year old Hariharan performed on the Miruthangam as if he had 15 years experience in playing that instrument. One could feel the unseen hand of Saint Gururji playing through the tender hands of Hariharan.

Hariharan's Guru Muthu Sivarajah was all smiles at the performance when his disciple continued to run even after touching the finishing line to break further records. Dr. Lakshmi Jayan on Violin, Ganathanan on Gadam, Sithamparanathan on Morsing and Bhayiravi Ganeswaran on Thambura gave excellent sup-

port. Mr. John Holman, Hariharan's Headmaster was the Chief Guest. As Hariharan's uncle Mr. S. Shanmugam OBE (recently honoured by HM the Queen in the honours list) wrote in the brochure, Hariharan's Arangetram should not only be the fulfilment of his childhood dreams but should be the beginning of higher achievements in academic, professional and cultural activities and also his spiritual pursuits.

Wimal Sockanathan.

Bishop Ambalavanar



The Rt. Rev. David Jeyaratnam Ambalavanar is the second of the five children of the late Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Ponnambalam Ambalavanar of Pungudutivu, Jaffna. The parents were mission workers in Andhara Pradesh, South Indian in the early days and on their return to Ceylon continued their ministry work in the Jaffna Diocese. All the children were born in India.

Jeyam had his early education in Bangalore and when his parents returned to Ceylon, joined St. John's College, Jaffna. He lost his father when he was 15 years old, and thereafter entered Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai, where he excelled in his studies. He was a King's Scout and represented the college in the cricket and soccer teams. After completing the studies in college, he entered the undergraduate department and secured a science degree. For a short time he served as a teacher at Drieberg College and Jaffna College.

In 1950, when Jeyam's contemporaries were aspiring to be doctors and engineers he offered himself for full time Ministry in spite of domestic opposition. To pursue his ambition, he joined the Serampore University in Calcutta, from where he graduated in Divinity with an All India best performance. On his return to Ceylon, he joined the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India in 1954 and his pastoral station was Araly. It was during this period that he married Dr. Chandra Kanapathipillai.

From Araly, he was posted to Manipay Parish from where he proceeded to King's College, London for higher studies and

gained the Master's Degree in Theology. After his return from UK and while serving at the Udupiddy Parish, he was elected the Second Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese, succeeding the late Rt. Rev. Sabapathy Kulendran, one of our most erudite scholars of Jaffna. He was consecrated in Jaffna on 30th June 1971.

Jeyam took over at a very turbulent period in the history of the Tamil struggle for self determination. He was a spokesman both in Sri Lanka and at International forums for Tamil rights and against human rights violations. He raised his voice fearlessly on behalf of the Tamils. His counsel and advice was sought both by the powerful and the down-trodden. He provided leadership to the Church with a clear sense of purpose, direction, dignity and courage. He always exhibited an unwavering commitment to the ideals of his faith.

During his tenure of office as Bishop, the most distinct contribution to the Diocese has been the expansion of the mission field into the entire North and East of Sri Lanka. When he took over in 1971 there were only 24 churches. Today we are proud to count 72 churches, 66 day care centres for the poor children, 15 orphanages, 13 vocational training centres for women, 2 technical colleges and several other development projects. During his time he was also instrumental in building 1500 low cost houses for the refugees. After a distinguished life in the service of The Lord for 22 years he retired on 28th February 1993. Bishop Jebanesan, another scholar succeeded him.

In 1996, an Honorary Doctorate was conferred on him by the Serampore University of Calcutta. The last function he attended was the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the C.S.I. in Madras and his last speech was at Ladies College, Colombo, where he spoke on the theme 'The Year 2000'.

He passed away peacefully on 10th October 1997 at the Jaffna Hospital and the funeral service took place at Vaddukoddai in the presence of around 10,000 mourners from all walks of life, and the burial took place at the Mission Graveyard, Uduvil.

He leaves behind his dear wife Chandra, two sons Dr. Dayalan and Darshan and a vast array of relatives, friends, admirers and well wishers to mourn his loss.

May his soul rest in peace.

R.J. Gunaratnam.

Bharatha Natyam Fundraiser

The Tamil Union of Herts in association with the Lakshmi Art Centre presented a Bharatha Natyam recital at the Watersmeet Theatre, Rickmansworth, Herts on Sunday, 28th September 1997 to raise cash for the University of Jaffna Students Welfare Fund. The fund was set up by the university with the primary aim of providing financial assistance to students in need of

help during their undergraduate careers. The fund has in the past few years assisted several students affected by the turmoil in the North and East of Sri Lanka to maintain their commitments to the educational process.

The Tamil Union of Herts which was founded fourteen years ago has been in addition to promoting the social, cultural and educational activities of the members of the Tamil community in and around the Hertfordshire area, mobilising support for the Tamils affected by the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

The main benefactors of this fund raising event were Natasha Karunakaran, Vaishnavee Sreeharan, Kumudhini Visuvaratnam, Shobana Balaratnam, Sowmya Sreeharan and Thenuha Thiagarajan; the graduate students of the Lakshmi Art Centre, which has over the years been training students in the Kalakshetra style of Bharatha Natyam, has staged several Arangetrams and dance dramas. It is gratifying to note that the Tamil Union of Herts has made a net profit of £2100 from this event.

Smt Selvaluxmy Ramakrishnan, the popular director of the Art Centre performed the Choreography and the Nattuvangam and the other accompanying artistes were Sri Reji George - Vocal, Sri M. Balachandar - Miruthangam, Sri B.K. Chandrasekhar - Violin and Dr. T. Nimalraj - Flute. Sri K. Sanguhan was the compere for the evening. Dr. S. Sabaratnam welcomed the audience at the commencement of the recital and Mr. Logan Rasiah thanked the participants for their support and the gathering for their generosity.

The Tamil Union of Herts commences new classes in Bharatha Natyam and Music in January 1998. Those interested please telephone Mr. Logan Rasiah on 01923 463466 or Dr. S. Sabaratnam on 01923 226000.

Shivanthan & Shivaruban Shine



Two youngsters added two more feathers to the cap of Miruthanga Guru, Trinco born, Muthu Sivarajah. Shivanthan aged sixteen and his twelve year old brother Shivaruban trained under the Guru for six years presented their maiden performance at the Tooting Sivayogam Hall on 19th October 1997.

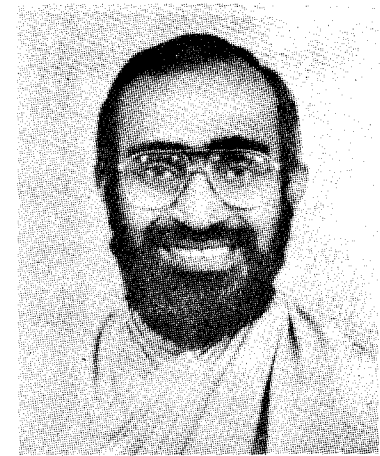
Instead of inviting a priest to the Hall as

in every other Arangetram we have seen in and around London, the performers and most of the audience were taken to the nearest temple (just one floor above!). Offerings were made to the deity, blessings were conferred and the party returned to the hall to start the performance. Shivanthan and Shivaruban had many other youngsters on the stage. To the untrained and ignorant eye they may have looked like a junior school orchestra! Those of us who knew the capabilities of persons such as child prodigy Sujaya were not let down. Sixteen year Sujaya Chandran was the main vocalist who performed for this Arangetram. The other youngsters on stage were Sithamparanathan on Morsing, Gananathan on Gatam, Visakan on Ganjira and Kavitha Natesaligam on Thambura. Violin accompaniment was provided by Smt Kalaivani Indrakumar.

Smt Pushkala Gopal was the Chief Guest, while Sri Naganatha Sivam Kurukal and Sri V.R. Ramanathan were both special guests. All speakers emphasised the appearance of youthfulness on the stage and that the average age on the stage was fifteen! The programme was very professionally presented by the Evergreen compere Sri Wimal Sockanathan of Radio Ceylon and BBC and now of the Tamil Ozhai - Europe's Tamil Television.

- Suba.

Swami Yogeshwarananda Visits UK



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