

Tamil **TIMES**



VOL XVIII No. 4 ISSN 0266-4488 15 APRIL 1999 90p



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the leader of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kashgam Jayalitha Jayaram who by pulling out from the Bharatiya Janatha Party-led ruling coalition brought its downfall



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15 APRIL 1999

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

-Voltaire

**Tamil
TIMES**

ISSN 0266 - 44 88
Vol. XVIII No. 4
15 APRIL 1999

Published by:
TAMIL TIMES LTD
PO Box 121, Sutton,
Surrey SM1 3TD
United Kingdom
Phone: 0181 644 0972
Fax: 0181 241 4557
Email: prajan@gn.apc.org

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka.....£15/US\$25
Australia.....Aus\$45
(Australian Bank cheques only)
USA.....US\$35
Canada.....Can\$40
All other countries..... £20.US\$35

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The Balkan Imbrogio

The Nato bombardment began ostensibly in the pursuit of protecting the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo from repression by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. But the airstrikes have made the situation a thousand times worse for the Kosovans themselves. Almost a million of the estimated 1,800,000 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo find themselves in neighbouring countries having become victims of Milosevic's savage campaign of ethnic cleansing. It was certainly after the Nato airstrikes were launched that Milosevic intensified his grisly attacks upon the ethnic Albanians, pillaging, plundering and burning their homes, raping their women, massacring hundreds of their men-folk and driving them out of the country.

If Nato and the western leaders thought that Milosevic could be taught a lesson within a few days and forced to agree to the Nato demand of thousands of Nato troops being inducted into Kosovo, it has turned out to be a grave blunder on their part. In fact Milosevic's position has become stronger in the context of a rising tide of Serbian nationalist sentiments generated by the "enemy's" aggression. The Serbian regime has been bombarding the population with jingoistic exhortations calling upon them to rise up to what it claims as their patriotic duty to join the army and defend the holy homeland of Serbia and Kosovo from enemy aggression.

Almost 30 days of relentless pulverising bombardment of Serbia has destroyed, besides airbases and military installations, railway and river bridges, oil refineries, chemical plants, electricity stations, factories and a whole host of facilities essential for the civilian population. An ecological disaster is being predicted after Nato bombed a combined petro-chemicals, fertilizer and refinery complex on the banks of the river Danube in the outskirts of Belgrade sending a cloud of toxic smoke and gas into the sky. What is humanitarian about bombing a country and its people into the stone age is a mystery wrapped in horror.

The democratic movement that has shown vibrant growth against Milosevic's regime has been dealt a body blow leaving him almost impregnable strong. Zoran Zivkovic, the opposition Mayor of the city of Nis, is quoted to have said, "Twenty minutes ago my city was bombed. The people who live here are the same people who voted for democracy in 1996, the same people who protested for 100 days after the authorities tried to deny them their victory in the elections. They voted for the same democracy that exists in Europe and the US. Today my city was bombed by the democratic states of the US, Britain, France, Germany and Canada! Is there any sense in this?" Veran Matic, editor-in-chief of Belgrade's banned Radio B92 and a leading peace activist, wrote, "Nato's bombs have blasted the germinating seeds of democracy out of the soil of Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro and ensured that they will not sprout again for a long time."

What was claimed and projected as a progressive war launched to serve a "humanitarian" cause has turned out to be the worst humanitarian disaster Europe has faced since the Second World War.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

A Mixed Result

D B S Jeyaraj

The recently concluded elections to five Provincial councils in Southern Sri Lanka have provided a mixed result. Although at face value the ruling Peoples Alliance (PA) government seems to have made a clean sweep, a closer scrutiny reveals that arriving hastily at such a conclusion would be incorrect.

The PA by virtue of having polled the highest number of votes in each province has come out on top and scored a five nil win. Yet it does not have a clear majority in four out of five Provinces despite earning the bonus of two additional seats in each council. It remains to be seen whether the PA can form viable coalitions with minority parties and conduct stable administrations in the future. Likewise the United National Party (UNP) in spite of being "defeated" now, may be down, but is certainly not out.

Even though the five PC elections were expected to be an index to forthcoming political trends the fractured verdict has negated such a prognosis. The end result of the mini poll indicates that the situation is quite dicey and that neither the PA nor the UNP can afford to take voters for granted in the Parliamentary and Presidential elections scheduled in the future. It has also signalled the emergence of the radical Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) as the third force in Sinhala Politics.

Apart from this the very high rate of abstentions from voting as well as the unusually high rate of spoiled votes point to an erosion of faith in the electoral system itself. On another level the results demonstrated the growing alienation between the PA and the minority communities.

The results also manifested the growing decline of veteran Thondaman's clout among the Tamils of Indian origin. This time the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and a motley crew of 22 associations and organizations representing the Up Country Tamils formed a new front called "Inthiya Vamsaavali Makkal Perani" or Indian

Origin Peoples Front. The Up Country Peoples Front led by deputy minister P. Chandrasekharan kept aloof of this front. Thondaman's CWC has a registered poll symbol of the "Seval" (cockrel). But his erstwhile general secretary M. S. Sellasamy has initiated legal action laying claim to the symbol. Since the cockrel is embroiled in legal dispute the "Perani" adopted the "Mayil" (peacock) symbol of another party the National Union of Workers (NUW). So all results concerning the Thondaman dominated Indian origin Peoples front are available only as NUW results officially. To avoid confusion the acronym NUW will be used to depict the CWC dominated "Perani" in this article also.

Of the five PC polls the ruling PA obtained a clear-cut majority in only one Province. This was the predominantly rural North Central Province generally known as the Rajarata. Here the PA, UNP and JVP obtained 231, 757 (53.39%), 171,307 (39.46%) and 22,695 (5.23%) respectively. 466,482 or 70% of the registered 665,416 cast their votes. Of these 32,408 were spoilt votes. The PA, UNP and JVP got 17, 12 and 2 seats respectively. The PA also gained the additional bonus seats as it polled the highest. Thus out of a 33 member council the PA having 19 enjoys an absolute majority. One reason attributed for the PA's creditable showing in this province is the alleged military success of the government. Since it is a border line province with the Tamil areas of the north and east the people living in the border areas are said to have faced insecurity at the hands of the LTTE. The recent military operations have succeeded to the extent of shifting these borders away. This has made the grateful border village people to vote en-masse for the PA, it is said. PA cabinet minister Bertie Premalal Dissanayake will resign his post and take over as Provincial chief minister.

The PA has not been that successful in the other provinces. In the Uva

Province 462,768 or 68.16% out of the registered figure of 678,990 voted. Of these 39,226 were spoilt votes. The PA, UNP, JVP and NUW got 190,105 (44.88%), 186,293 (43.98%), 20,099 (4.75%) and 19,914 respectively. This entitled the party's to 15, 14, 02 and 01 respectively. Even with the additional bonus of 2 the PA tally increased only to 17 in a 34 member council. Since the JVP refused to align with neither the PA nor the UNP the government had to work out a deal with the NUW. But in spite of this alliance the PA has only 18 out of 34 in the council. Deputy Minister Samaraweera Weerawanni is expected to relinquish his present post and take over as Provincial chief minister.

Two Tamils were elected in Uva. Both were from Badulla district. One was Satchithanatham of the CWC contesting as NUW and the other Velayutham of the UNP. Interestingly the sudden death of outgoing UNP chief minister and Uva strongman Percy Samaraweera prior to the polls made Velayutham on the number two on the UNP list. With samaraweera's death it is said that there was a subtle whispering campaign by the PA that a "Tamil" will become UVA chief minister if the UNP won. Thus there was a last minute swing away from the UNP. Interestingly all pre-polls predictions depicted Uva as a safe bet for the UNP. Now the UNP is promising its Sinhala supporters that a "Tamil" will not become Opposition leader in the council. So much for the claim of standing for inter-communal harmony and Estate-Village integration.

The Central Province comprising the Kandy, Matale and Nuwara Eliya districts has a substantial concentration of Tamils. In fact the combined strength of Sri Lankan and Indian origin Tamils makes "Tamil" the dominant entity in Nuwara Eliya. In the CP 1,068,887 or 73.57% out of the registered number of 1,452,906 voted. Of these 92,110 were spoilt votes. The PA, UNP, NUW, UCPF and JVP got 421,629 (43.17%), 391,659 (40.10%), 95,701 (9.80%), 22,896 (2.34%) and 28,984 (2.97%) respectively. This party position line up was: PA - 24; UNP - 23; NUW - 06; UCPF - 02; JVP - 01. The reason for the Up Country Peoples Front polling less than the JVP getting one more seat was because it scored more and got both seats in the Nuwara Eliya district as opposed to the JVP that got its seat in Kandy district. Under the PC scheme

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voting and seat allocation is done on a district basis while the bonus seats are awarded on a provincial basis. With the bonus seats the PA tally went up to 26 in a 58 member council. The PA was therefore compelled to solicit the support of the Tamil parties. Thondaman's grand son Arumugam Thondaman tried to negotiate with the UNP also and demanded two positions in the council's five Board of Ministers including chief minister. But at the same time Chandrasekeran's UCPF threw in its lot with the PA. It was possible for PA and UCPF to form a 30 member administration out of 58 together. So the Thondaman's NUW joined the PA fold.

There are nine Tamil members in the 58 member Central Council. Six of them are elected on the NUW ticket but all belong to CWC. They are messrs. Kan-dasamy Naidu, Radhakrishnan. Nada-rajapillai and Vellaiyan from Nuwara Eliya; Sivagnanam from Matale and Mathiyogaraja in Kandy. The UNP has only Puthirasigamani former provincial minister elected from Nuwara Eliya. The UCPF also has two from N-Eliya. They are M. Sivalingam and Lawyer Raja-kulendran. Interestingly the latter is of Puloly origin but has been resident in the hill country for long. It is also said that Thondaman adopting the credo "people of Indian origin" upset the district's Jaffna Tamils who voted en-mas-se for UCPF's Rajakulendran. The PA administration in the CP is quite stable thanks to the NUW and UCPF. It is 34 out of 58 now. Thondaman has sought and obtained the powerful ministerial post of Utilities and Education for his nominee. The UCPF nominee will be deputy chairman of the council (deputy speaker). Cabinet minister Nandimitra Ekanayake will resign and become CP chief minister.

The Sabaragamuwa Province has 1,113,105 registered voters. Of these 798,731 or 71.76% cast their votes. 53,107 were spoilt votes. The PA, UNP, JVP and NUW got 356,543(47.82%), 334,415(44.85%), 32,737(4.39%), and 11,937(1.60%) respectively. On this basis the PA, UNP, JVP and NUW tally was 20,19,02 and 01 respectively. The person elected on the NUW ticket was the CWC's Ramachandran from Ratnapura. Even with the bonus of two the PA could get only 22 out of a 44 member council. With the CWC it now has a slender 23 of 44 in the Council. Deputy minister and veteran Samasa-

maajist Athauda Seneivaratne now in the SLFP will become chief minister here.

The much prestigious and populous Western Province council is well and truly a hung council. Of its registered 3,217,040 voters only 2,161,293 voted. Of these a record 127,138 were spoilt votes. Apart from the PA, UNP, JVP and NUW, Dinesh Gunewardene's Mahajana Eksath Peramuna(MEP), Dr. Wickremabahu Karunaratne's New Left Front(NLF), and MHM Ashraff's Sri Lanka Muslim Congress(SLMC) also obtained seats in the Council of 104. The winning party position was as follows:

PA	888,454 votes(43.68%):	44 seats
UNP	879,388 votes(43.23%):	44 seats
JVP	141,985 votes(6.98%):	08 seats
MEP	65,649 votes(3.23%):	03 seats
NLF	22,976 votes(1.13%):	01 seat
NUW	16,561 votes(0.81%):	01 seat
SLMC	7,230 votes (0.36%):	01 seat

With the UNP and PA registering a neck to neck result and the NUW not having enough seats the WP council was effectively a "hung" council. Even with the 2 additional bonus seats the PA has only 46 out of 104. With the NUW and SLMC joining forces it would only have 48. Putting "principle" to the winds the PA Gen Secy D M Jayaratne initiated talks with the "racist" MEP. But Dinesh refused. So did the JVP. It was also possible for the UNP to form an administration if the JVP with 8 supported it. If the MEP too opted to do so it would have been 57 to 47. But both JVP and MEP have said "No" to both the PA and UNP for the moment. The incumbent PA chief minister Sunil Premjayanth will take oaths as chief minister. It is a moot point as to how long his minority administration will function. Already the UNP plans to make the PA position difficult by planning to elect a JVP'er as chairman(speaker) and an MEP'er as Vice Chairman (Dep speaker) respectively.

The Western Province saw Mano Ganeshan, son of the late VP Ganeshan actor cum trade unionist, winning. Being of the Democratic Workers Congress he is the only non-CWC person to be elected on the NUW ticket. The only other Tamil elected in the WP is Lawyer Joseph Charles of the UNP. Velamma Sellasamy wife of MS Sellasamy narrowly missed being

elected on the UNP ticket. Though there are 95,000 Tamil voters in Colombo district the CWC came a big cropper prompting a frustrated Thondaman to berate Colombo Tamils as "selfish". But the NLF that stands for recognition of Tamil right to self determination and a negotiated settlement with the LTTE was able to get its only seat in Colombo largely due to the Tamil vote. Likewise the UNP Sinhala candidates like the Colombo Mayor Karu Jayasuriya also got a sizeable chunk of the Tamil vote(his preferences were a record 250,000 plus). At the same time the large non-turn out particularly in areas like the Colombo West division including Kollupitiya, Bambalapitiya and Wellawatte is also attributed to non-participation by Tamil voters. Also the large number of spoilt votes also has a Tamil component, it is suspected.

The Sri Lankan Tamils voted overwhelmingly for Chandrika Kumaratunga in the 1994 Presidential election. But with the on going war the Tamil people have become increasingly disillusioned. The war heaps a great deal of hardship on the Tamil people. The travails of the north eastern Tamils is vicariously experienced by their kinsfolk in the south too. Besides the Tamils in Colombo and the south are also subjected to a lot of harassment in the name of security.

On the other hand the devolution package yet remains a "paper" package without any hope of it materialising. The overall emphasis of the government is the prosecution of the war seems to be the impression in the eyes of the average Tamil. The so called war for peace is now a nightmare and not a dream. The angel of peace Chandrika Kumaratunga is now perceived by some extreme Tamil critics a goddess of war. Sadly the causes of the war or the current constitutional impasse are not realised. Only the consequences of the war are felt. So a UNP that refuses to co-operate in finding a bipartisan solution is the recipient of Tamil votes but not the PA that made a genuine attempt to arrive at one. The alienation of the Tamils has been going on for quite a while. The last Colombo municipal council election saw the strong Tamil swing against the PA.

The same malady afflicts the Indian Tamil too. The local authority elections saw the up country vote going in substantial numbers to the UNP. The Sinhala voter base of the PA seems

irreconciled to aligning with the Up country Tamil as opposed to the UNP Sinhala voter base. Likewise the average up country Tamil regards the Sinhala constituency of the PA as hostile in contrast with the UNP. Thus the opportunistic alliance between Kumaratunga and Thondaman has not seeped down to the up country masses. The result has been a mutual decline by both parties when contesting on common lists as in the case of the 97 local polls. On the other hand there has been for more than 15 years a "unity" of sorts between the CWC and UNP. Even now Thondaman sits with the government and his MP's are with the opposition in one of the most bizarre arrangements in any political set up. Also the UNP trade union the Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union is second in size only to the CWC and has a huge Tamil membership. The 97 local polls saw the UNP performing far better than the PA and CWC in mixed electorates.

Thus it was clear to both the PA and the CWC that contesting jointly amounted to combined "hara kiri". It was imperative that both should strike out alone. Thondaman after a brief flirtation of unity with his "bete noire" Chandrasekharan opted out and wooed the other unions. 22 of them joined forces under the umbrella Inthiya Vamsaavali Makkal Perani or Indian origin Peoples Front. The chauvinist appeal was to the "Indian consciousness" dormant within the community. In the process the front antagonized the Sinhalese and alienated the other minorities particularly the Sri Lankan Tamils. The smaller parties that hoped to cash in on the CWC elder brother found that they had been gobbled up by the giant. Plantation community stalwarts from the other unions failed to make the grade. It was a CWC monopoly in the highlands with only Mano Ganeshan of the DWC making it in Colombo. Though the CWC dominated within the "Peacock umbrella" its performance in comparison with the 1993 provincial council was dismal.

Aligning with the UNP, the CWC won 17 seats in the PC election then. This time it won only nine. Also given the voting trends the CWC is facing quite a crisis it seems. Contesting with the PA is tantamount to political suicide. Contesting alone won't help it to win much seats. Judging by the current PC poll the CWC can get two seats in Nuwara Eliya and one national list seat at the most. It cannot hope for seats in

Badulla, Matale, Kandy, Ratnapura or Colombo whereas in the 1994 elections it was able to win nine seats inclusive of two national list ones by aligning with the UNP.

The reasons for the decline of the CWC is sheer ineffectiveness, crass opportunism, blatant nepotism and gigantic corruption. The younger generation of up country Tamils are totally cheesed off with it. Under the present circumstances the only way out for Thondaman seems to be a contesting arrangement with the UNP again. For that Thonda will bide his time till the opportunity in the form of elections presents itself. It is very likely that he will jump on the UNP bandwagon then ditching the PA. Again it is to be seen whether Ranil Wickremasinghe will agree to bail out the untrustworthy and opportunistic Thondaman. Still politics being a cynical exercise it may be possible. But in any event Thondaman may not have the same bargaining clout he had in earlier political arrangements.

The current election has demonstrated the weakness of the CWC but thanks to the PA-UNP tight fight the CWC is again able to play a limited kingmaker role. But this again can only be the Last Hurrah for that plantation patriarch Thondaman.

The Sri Lankan Muslims too are becoming alienated from Kumaratunga and the PA. The Muslim Congress of the eastern based Ashraff is systematically undermined by the Colombo based Fowzie of the PA. Like the CWC, the Muslim Congress supporters in the Southern areas too find it difficult to get along with the PA Sinhala voter base. As a result there is tremendous pressure within SLMC rank and file to contest alone. The SLMC did want to do that in the North Western Provincial elections. But last minute insistence by Kumaratunga who bluntly told Ashraff to get out of the cabinet if the Muslim Congress wanted to contest alone made the latter cave in. The Muslim Congress candidates failed to get elected.

In the current round of elections the SLMC contested in Kalutara district separately and with the PA jointly in the other districts. It has been able to win only in Kalutara. None of the other candidates were returned. Worse still no Muslim except Fowzie's son in Colombo won on the PA side in all provinces. Thus it seems definite that in its own self interest the Muslim Congress

too has to charter a course separate to that of the PA in the future.

The Catholic vote too has turned considerably against the PA. The Wayamba election saw the PA goons terrorise the Catholics considerably in a vote rigging exercise. This prompted the Colombo Archbishop to come out with a scathing criticism of the PA government. Tensions exacerbated when the PC elections were originally scheduled for Maundy Thursday. The Catholics observed a day of protest. Saner counsel prevailed and the date was postponed. Still the Catholic vote would have swung very heavily against the PA but for the so-called capture of Madhu Church. Posters with a smiling Chandrika and Mother Mary with Madhu Church in background were pasted all over. This "sacrilegious" incident itself has hurt Tamil catholic sentiment but seems to have won some Sinhala catholic votes at least for the PA. But with tensions arising because of the continuing military occupation of Madhu Church the PA advantage may turn into a liability if and when the Catholic church hierarchy demands a total withdrawal from the Church premises. Already the agitation for such a demand has been launched in Mannar.

This alienation of the minority communities who voted overwhelmingly for Chandrika is clearly felt in the results. The PA has failed to get 50% votes in any Province except the NCP (53%) that has the largest Sinhala Buddhist constituency. In the others with substantial minorities it has got only in the 40% category. The overall percentage is 47% for PA and 43% for UNP. Given the present situation it hardly seems likely that the Tamils and Muslims of the North-East too would vote for PA. In a Presidential election it does not seem that the same Kumaratunga who got 63% in 1994 would get even 50% at first count. This means a second count. Parliamentary elections are likely to reflect the PC pattern. Given the current scenario it looks like the UNP is gaining popularity again. Both parties are retaining their voter bases with the new vote going to the JVP. The minority vote seems to be floating back to the UNP. But whatever the result it seems clear by the current result that neither the PA nor the UNP can hope to have an absolute majority in the next Parliament. Likewise no Presidential candidate seems likely to win at the first count itself. But a more comprehensive

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analysis may be possible only after elections to the Southern Provincial Council are held in most likely in June. But such analysis is possible only if the polls are held in a violence and rigging free atmosphere and not in the Wayamba mould.

In that respect the current elections too had its share of violence and rigging in selective venues. But it was not as widespread as it was in Wayamba. The Wayamba situation cannot be held as a standard. Still there is unanimity that though flawed these five elections were not "irretrievably flawed" as Wayamba. Nevertheless Kumaratunga can restore some of her credibility by getting the NWP chief minister Sarath Nawinna to dissolve council and face elections in a comparatively free and fair atmosphere. The current polls have shown that a relatively free poll is possible if and when the ruling party wants it. This is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka.

The UNP of yore fixed and rigged polls blatantly backed up by institutionalised violence. But then there were few or no critics. The few who dared had to contend with the UNP's violent machine. Civil society was in a subdued state. There were no election monitoring mechanisms. Religious leaders were "blind, dumb and deaf". The "free press" was eloquent by its silence either by choice or fear. Now under the Kumaratunga regime everyone feels "ready, able and willing" to practise their freedom of expression to the maximum. Ironically the PA is feeling the cutting edge of this unbridled criticism while the UNP is parading around like paragons of democracy.

Although both sides seem evenly matched now that assessment is based on the premise that the present scenario is a constant. But anything can happen in the near future that may alter the status quo drastically. Dramatic developments on the military front or major shifts on the political front can tilt fortunes of either party overwhelmingly.

The current PC polls were projected as a review of the current government's achievements and a preview of future political trends. The fractured verdict has rendered that impossible. On a national level the PA has not suffered an anti-incumbency swing factor. It has won the councils even if not with viable majorities. On the other hand the UNP has suffered the regional anti-incumbency factor. It was that party

which ruled all councils except the WP. In that sense, the UNP can said to have lost its power and the patronage it gives in these areas.

In terms of electoral divisions there were 95 in all five councils. There the PA has got 61, the UNP 33 and NUW 1. But the more important factor in these elections is to note the unusually large number of spoilt votes and non voters. Unfamiliarity with the voting card procedure and inclement weather cannot be the reasons alone. It appears that a large number of voters are getting frustrated with the political process itself. It may also be that to many Southern voters the PR system itself is of no meaningful significance. So many voted with their feet by keeping away from the polling booths. Next to the PA and UNP the third largest percentage was the non-voters. Others may have deliberately spoilt their votes. Again the percentage of rejected votes was higher than that of the third force the JVP in all Provinces except the WP. Growing disenchantment with the existing system and parties does not forebode good for the country.

A notable yet sad feature of these PC elections is that real issues of development affecting the respective Provinces were not canvassed greatly. Instead the thrust of propaganda by all parties was on larger or national issues.

The PC system was introduced at Indian insistence to resolve Tamil aspirations by devolving power to the periphery. Ironically the PC's are not functioning in the areas of the North and East that needs devolution but in areas where the need is not felt greatly. The Sinhala politicians who never wanted devolution seem incapable of realising its potential and rendering it meaningful to the average constituent. Instead one is treated to a pathetic exhibition on the one hand of duplication of work

because of the "Concurrent list of powers between centre and periphery" and on the other an obsession with the trappings of power resulting in colossal extravagance. The PC's are yet to be of relevance to the Sinhala voter.

In spite of flimsy majorities the PA is now in control of several PC's. It is also ruling at the center. Unlike the UNP that was coerced into passing the PC scheme Chandrika Kumaratunga's government is genuinely committed to the concept of greater devolution. It is now up to this government to strengthen the concept of devolution in Sinhala areas by taking effective steps to demonstrate what devolution really is. At the same time it must seriously think of reviving the defunct North - eastern Provincial council again with the widest possible participation of all shades of political opinion in the region. ●

ANCIENT BUDDHISM IN TAMIL NADU

Municipal workers laying water pipes at Tirumani village near Vellore stumbled on a 3-foot tall statue of the seated Bodhisattva. According to archaeologists, the statue is at least 1,200 years old dating back to the epoch of the Pallavas who had ruled a substantial portion of northern Tamil Nadu and south Andhra. Pallavas, who had elaborate maritime links with south-east Asia, were known to have fostered Buddhism. Interestingly, the village is known as Tiru-mani, or Sri-mani in Sanskrit or Paali, clearly showing the link with the Vajrayana school, the Adamantine Vehicle of Buddhism. This statue, now at the Vellore Museum, is the second Buddha statue recently discovered in Tamil Nadu. The first one was recently located off the ancient coastal of Poompuhar.

Tamil
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Bishop Calls for Removal of Troops from Church

The Bishop of Mannar, Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph, has written to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga requesting her to ensure that the armed security forces keep away from the precincts of the Roman Catholic Madhu Church.

The areas surrounding the church had been under LTTE control until last month when the security forces successfully recaptured these areas.

The Bishop has told the President that the recent entry of the Army into the sacred precincts of the church and its continued presence there was religiously very painful.

The Bishop in his letter said: "The historical Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, so dear and close to the heart of the Nation as such and to the Catholics in particular has a tradition ancient and sacred of being a Spiritual Abode of Prayer and Meditation. It has served the country, in this capacity for the last 350 years and in a very special manner during the last 100 years. A code of strict discipline had been maintained here by the Church Authorities in order to foster and promote this Spiritual Atmosphere. The common and neutral nature of this Shrine had also been contributing to its serenity and peacefulness. It has always remained a peace zone and had ever been maintained as out of bounds for any Armed Groups or Forces. Besides, its precincts had since 1990 become a haven of war-refugees and is functioning at the moment as also an Open Relief Centre under the international mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) housing at present over 10,000 refugees in its 400 acre-sacred precincts.

The recent entry of the Sri Lankan Army into these Sacred precincts and its continued presence there in large numbers with its war machineries and weapons using the innocent refugees as its human shield is religiously very painful and humanly untenable. This sad situation had robbed this spiritual home of all its Serenity and Peace. This age old house of Prayer and Meditation had been turned out to be an explosive

location of armed conflict and confrontation, thereby endangering the lives of over 10,000 innocent refugees besides spelling out destruction of the Sacred Edifice of the Shrine and the Venerable Statue of Our Lady of Madhu. This, in all respects is a very serious situation.

Therefore, with all urgency and earnestness that this subject deserves, I appeal to you Your Excellency the President of Sri Lanka and the Commander in Chief of the Security Forces to prove your noble disposition towards things spiritual and your praiseworthy commitment to respect minority rights and their feelings by immediately ordering the removal of the Armed Security Forces and all in military uniforms from the sacred area of the Madhu Shrine consisting of the 400 acres of land on the four sides of the Shrine."

Meanwhile the Government has kept its promise and taken action to restore as from 29 March the electricity supply to the Madhu church and its environs. "This is the first time since its inception that the Madhu church had received power supply directly pro-

vided by the Government," Vavuniya's Chief Electrical Engineer C. Sabharatnam told newspapers.

Mr. Sabharatnam said The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) installed a powerful generator-KVG 300 at the Madhu church on a directive by Irrigation and Power Minister and Deputy Defence Minister General Anuruddha Ratwatte. At a press conference held in Vavuniya the Minister explained that all these years the church had only a small generator which had gone out of order some years ago. "We will also provide electricity to the area around the Madhu church and to the liberated villages at a cost of Rs. 13 million. Palampiddi, a liberated village, too, was provided with electricity from yesterday", he said.

Rev. Fr. A. P. Devasagayam, Parish Priest, Madhu church told pressmen that there was an outbreak of cholera among the refugees at the church premises and they had been sent to the Government hospital at Madhu. He said: "In all, there were 25 cases of cholera and they were being given prompt treatment. DMO Mannar had been asked to send more doctors to Madhu hospital."

Fr. Devasagayam also said, "People here are now happy as more and more food supplies are arriving. There is also good rapport between the civilians and the troops."

Tamil to be Language of Record

The Tamil language is to become a language of record in all divisional secretariat divisions where Tamil speaking persons constitute at least a fifth of the population, according to a directive issued by President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Justice, Constitutional Affairs, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris said on 31 March that this administrative direction would enable Tamil-speaking people to transact their business with the Government in their language.

Inaugurating the third On The Spot Service at Isipathana College, Colombo Prof. Peiris said: "One of the fundamental aspirations of the Tamil people is to use their own language in their dealings with the Government adding that

provision for the satisfaction of their aspiration is embodied in the Government proposals for Constitutional Reform."

But, he said, it could not be implemented because the new constitution that contains the language provisions and the devolution proposals could not be enacted by Parliament for want of the required two-thirds majority. "Undaunted the President and the Government are taking administrative steps to implement whatever is possible within their power," the Minister said.

Chapter IV of the Government's proposals spells out in great detail the position of the Sinhala, Tamil and English languages. Sinhala and Tamil are given the official language status and these two languages and English the

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status of national languages.

Sinhala shall be the language of record in the seven provinces where Sinhalese form the majority population and Tamil the language of record where Tamils constitute the majority. But in every divisional secretariat division where the minority Tamil speaking persons or Sinhala speaking persons constitute 20 per cent of the population Tamil or Sinhala, as the case may be, will also be the language of record.

Prof. Peiris said the President had administratively directed the implementation of this provision of the Government's proposals.

"President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga is the first Sinhala leader to accept the fact that Tamils have genuine grievances and encourage Government departments and institutions to adopt all possible measures to allevi-

ate their hardships," the Minister said.

Prof. Peiris himself received praise from three Tamil political parties for consistently working for the resolution of the ethnic conflict. TULF senior Deputy President S. Anandasangari said: "Prof. Peiris is working tirelessly to build a united Sri Lanka nation where Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims could live as equal partners. We wish him to succeed."

PLOTE Leader Dharmalingam Sidharthan praised Prof. Peiris' dedication to find a just and durable solution to the ethnic conflict. Failure of other national parties to appreciate the nature of the conflict had derailed his efforts. "Solution to years-old problems had been reached," he said. It had brought relief to a large number of people, said Mr. Sidharthan.

The knowledge of English is not only a way out of the ethnic conflict, but also a necessity in the global context," he said.

The survey, also aimed at clearing doubts about whether the reading habits matched the high literacy rate amongst the population, covered 10,000 respondents in 3,000 households in seven provinces in Sri Lanka. This excluded the north and the east where fighting between government troops and Tamil rebels made it difficult to seek public responses.

The roots of the ethnic conflict in the island lie in the Sinhala-dominated government's decision to make Sinhala the official language, sparking ethnic tension.

The Colombo University survey is also food for thought for those who believe people are tired of the daily menu of crime provided by the newspapers and that "positive" stories about other issues would be more interesting.

Shirani Tilakawardene, a respected woman judge of Sri Lanka's Appeals Court, told a group of journalists discussing the reporting of issues relating to women and children that she believed stories portraying public deeds was more interesting to readers than crime.

Sociologists have also partly blamed the rapid breakdown in social values in Sri Lanka on excessive reporting of crime and suicides by the media, and violence on television.

The survey shows that the newspaper-reading habit is not widespread, as believed, and that the Sunday or weekend papers were the most popular. Fewer people were reading books, nowadays.

"Of the population in the seven provinces, just above half (54.7 per cent) read newspapers. The habit varies significantly between provinces," it said. The level of education also positively influences the newspaper-reading habit.

A higher prevalence of the newspaper-reading habit was seen amongst young people between 12 years and up to high school. It dropped among those who had higher qualifications. The survey found that more men read newspapers than women, because men had more time than women who were engaged in domestic activities. This was not so in the case of books, where more women, 40 per cent, read than men (37 per cent). (Courtesy by IPS, 6.4.99)

Readers Relish the Daily Dose of War News

Sri Lanka's bloody ethnic conflict running into its 17th year in 1999 tops the list of stories followed avidly by newspaper readers, according to a new survey that puts local news and crime stories in dailies well behind war stories.

The survey, conducted by the University of Colombo for the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, also found that less than 0.2 per-cent of Sri Lankans speak mainly in English, contrary to popular belief that English is widely used.

"The news item most popularly read is 'news regarding war' followed by features that tend to highlight positive values or enhance general knowledge," the 1998 survey of newspaper readers said.

It also revealed that most of this island's people are mono-lingual. While the principal language of communication for the majority Sinhalese community was Sinhala (86.7 per cent), for 12.7 per cent it was Tamil, and for 0.2 per cent it was English.

The findings of the research team from the university's Department of Sociology are expected to help educationists and policy planners in disseminating knowledge among the people through newspapers and other forms.

Of those whose principal language

of communication was Sinhala, only 16.1 per cent could read in English and 0.9 per cent in Tamil, the survey said. However, among the minority Tamils, 35.4 per cent could read in Sinhala and 4.8 per cent in English.

This is significant because language has often been cited as the cause of the ethnic tension between majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils.

Observed Cultural Affairs Minister Lakshman Jayakody, "All this while we thought English was being widely spoken," "English is being promoted as a link language to bridge the gulf between the Sinhalese and the Tamils," he pointed out.

Jayakody told IPS that it was significant that minority groups like the Tamils knew Sinhala, the language of the majority community much more, than the other way round of Sinhalese having a knowledge of Tamil.

Prof Siripala Hettige, Sri Lanka's well-known sociologist who co-ordinated the survey as head of the Colombo University's Sociology Department, said it came up with some disturbing issues. "Apart from the fact that people have a thirst for war news, the fact that fewer people are speaking or reading in English is a disturbing thought.

Jaffna Sacred Areas

The monthly meeting of the Jaffna Municipal Council which was held recently in Jaffna under tight security presided over by K Raviraj, Deputy Mayor has resolved to declare the areas surrounding two famous Hindu temples as sacred.

A resolution moved by Municipal Councillor S. Kirurairaja (PLOTE) that the areas surrounding Naguleswaram temple at Keerimalai and the Mavidapuram Kandasamy kovil be declared sacred areas was adopted unanimously.. Citing the example of the Madhu Church as an example where the areas surrounding it had already been declared sacred he said that by declaring these two areas as sacred places the sanctity of these places of worship could be preserved and no armed group or the armed forces could desecrate the area by their presence with arms.

Councillor S. Ganendran (TULF) said that the finding of human bones next to Duraiappah Stadium in Jaffna has led to many speculations. The period when the bodies were buried should be ascertained.

The Jaffna town had been under the control of the IPKF, LTTE and the Sri Lankan Security forces. We must therefore find out in which period the bodies had been buried. S. Subathiran (EPRLF) speaking in support of the motion said that from 1990 to 1995 about two thousand people had disappeared in Jaffna. The human skeletons could be found not only near the Duraiappa Stadium but in other parts of the peninsula as well.

A resolution requesting the government to commence exhumation work near the Stadium and to ascertain the period, the human bodies were buried was also unanimously adopted.

Deputy Mayor Raviraj said the reconstruction of the Jaffna Public Library should be started immediately. During the last four years bricks and books had been collected and a library rehabilitation fund too was started. Foreign aid has been received by the government for the rehabilitation of the library. The Jaffna Mayor or the Deputy Mayor should be included in the Committee that maintains this fund, and motion to this effect was also passed.

Journal Faces Legal Action

The Canadian-based well known journalist D B S Jeyaraj is in the process of launching legal action, both in the Canadian and Sri Lankan courts against the Tamil weekly "Thinamurasu" published from Colombo, its publishers and editor. According to Jeyaraj, the paper had published material defamatory of his character and reputation by alleging that he was "an informant" of the Indian Criminal Bureau of Investigation.

"Thinamurasu" is not only read in Sri Lanka, but also is relatively popular among expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils. The historical anecdotes published every week as a serial titled "Alfred Duraiappah to Gamini Dissanayake" though a highly popular column is termed by knowledgeable critics as a re-writing of contemporary history. Besides the normal news items, the paper revels in publishing titbits of "secrets" of past and present events and personalities that are interesting to read but according to informed circles are replete with distortions, exaggerations and in some instances plain inventions. Some of the "secrets" tantamount to slanderous allegations against individuals.

The latest target of such malicious allegation is D B S Jeyaraj. The Thinamurasu (March 14-20) has alleged that Jeyaraj had informed N Ram, the editor of the Indian weekly "Frontline" about "One eyed Sivarasan" the alleged mastermind behind the Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. The paper says that Ram had published an article in Frontline on the basis of the information supplied by Jeyaraj. It also says that the article was of use to the special investigating team probing Rajiv's killing. It also alleges that Jeyaraj had obtained the information about Sivarasan from Kanagaratnam alias Raheem - LTTE's one time military leader in Jaffna - resident in Canada from the early 1990s. It further claims that Indian national daily, "The Hindu", and the Frontline changed their attitude towards the LTTE following the information given about Sivarasan by Jeyaraj.

The defamatory insinuation against Jeyaraj appears to be that he passed information obtained from Raheem to Ram of Frontline which in turn was utilised by the CBI special investigators to bring about Sivarasan's detection and identification. According to sources close to Jeyaraj, allegation by Thinamurasu might have dangerous consequences for him and Raheem. Not only it would undermine the professional integrity of Jeyaraj as serious and independent journalist, but also would make him and Raheem vulnerable to accusations of "treachery" and possible reprisals in regard to their personal and physical safety.

According to a non-governmental organization in Canada protecting the rights of individual journalists Jeyaraj had never passed information of any type about Sivarasan to Ram in a personal capacity as alleged by the Thinamurasu. Jeyaraj however had written an article for Frontline on the topic "Who Is Sivarasan?" under his own name after Sivarasan committed suicide in Bangalore when he and his associates were cornered by the Indian police. This again was an English version of an article "Yaar Intha Sivarasan" in Tamil written by Jeyaraj in the Tamil weekly "Senthamarai" edited by him then. The article was basically about Sivarasan's childhood and early past. It had been written on the request of Sivarasan's relatives in Canada who wanted something written about him in the papers so that he would not be "forgotten". Much of the information was supplied by them. The articles had nothing whatsoever about Sivarasan's involvement in Rajiv's killing and in any case was published only after his death.

Jeyaraj is reported to be angry that by twisting and suppressing the real chronology of events, Thinamurasu has now subjected him to what he considers as scurrilous and dangerous charges. The paper has sought to characterise him by insinuation as an "informant" of the Indian law enforcement agencies. Engaging in open journalistic expres-

(continued on next page)

AI Condemns Restoration of Death Penalty

In an open letter dated 16 April to Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané has expressed deep concern that the country may be moving towards resuming executions, after 23 years of being a de facto abolitionist country and against an unmistakable international trend towards worldwide abolition..

The AI letter from Pierre Sané's letter states:

"Our organization calls on your government to lead Sri Lankan society away from a course which will not serve our common struggle for justice and human rights - and will not offer real protection to the Sri Lankan people from the threat of criminality.

This appeal is written on behalf of the one million members of Amnesty International worldwide, including throughout Asia, who seek to defend and promote the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and to work on behalf of victims of human rights violations. For decades, we have campaigned for commutation of all death sentences, including some recently passed against Sri Lankan citizens in the Middle East.

Amnesty International is urging that the policy change announced on 13

March, as part of a larger review of the President's prerogative of granting remissions of sentences imposed by the courts, be reconsidered. I have set out below a number of arguments that you and members of your government might take into account in reviewing this decision. In making this letter public, we seek to express international support for the many Sri Lankan voices in media, human rights, legal and other groups who are dismayed at the prospect of a resumption of executions.

It is our understanding that a recent apparent increase in crimes of serious nature such as murder, rape, armed robbery and drug trafficking has been the main reason for the government's decision to reintroduce executions, in the apparent belief that this move would deter people from resorting to such violent crimes.

As pointed out in our letter to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs in June 1995 at the time of a private member's motion in parliament calling for the resumption of executions, there is no proof that the death penalty has any special power to deter people from resorting to violent crimes.

A number of studies in diverse countries, including a study by a Commission on Capital Punishment instituted in

mentarian belonging to the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), the leader of which is Douglas Devananda who escaped murder, but suffering very serious injuries, by LTTE-prisoners held in the Kalutara jail after being invited to visit them on a 'mercy-mission' last year. Questions have been raised as to whether Devananda has lost control both of the paper which was founded and continues to be financed by the EPDP and of its editor Ramesh.

A journal in Canada noted for its pro-LTTE views has reproduced the Thinamurasu allegation against Jeyaraj and added its own view by calling him a traitor and urging the people to beware of enemies who are delaying and obstructing the liberation struggle. This has also been followed by the customary cavalcade of abusive threats to which Jeyaraj has become accustomed over a period of years. ●

Sri Lanka in the late 1950s, have failed to find convincing evidence that the death penalty has any unique capacity to deter others from committing particular crimes. In 1995, the president of the Supreme Court of South Africa, when it unanimously held that the death penalty was against the country's constitution, commented that: "It ha[d] not been shown that the death sentence would be materially more effective to deter or prevent murder than the alternative sentence of life imprisonment would be." As President Mandela commented at the time: the ruling is in line with "contemporary civilised norms."

The execution of innocent defendants is an ever-present risk wherever the death penalty is inflicted. In February 1998, an appeal court in the United Kingdom posthumously overturned the conviction of Mahmood Hussein Mattan, a Somali national who was executed in September 1952 after a trial strongly tainted by racism. In February 1994, authorities in Russia executed Andrei Chikatilo for the highly-publicized murders of 52 people. The authorities acknowledged that they had previously executed the "wrong man", Alexander Kravchenko, for one of the murders in their desire "to stop the killings quickly". Another innocent man suspected by the authorities of the killings committed suicide. On 21 April 1998, the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan posthumously quashed the conviction of a former Uzbek government minister, Vakhobzhan Usmanov, who was executed in 1986 on charges of corruption. A number of countries which retain the death penalty have recently released condemned prisoners who were mistakenly convicted. They include the Philippines, Malaysia, Belize, China, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Malawi, Turkey, the United States of America and Japan. In the latter country, two innocent prisoners were released after each spent 34 years under sentence of death: Akahori Masao in 1989 and Menda Sakae in 1983.

In his response to our letter in 1995, the Minister of Justice & Constitutional Affairs gave assurances that the government had not made a decision to carry out the death penalty in "extreme cases of murder in circumstances which shock the public conscience because of unusual cruelty or for any other reason" as had been urged in the private motion tabled in parliament. The Minister implied that the motion would trigger

(Continued from page 10)

sion has been converted into a sinister and secret act by an "informant". Its allegation that the Hindu and Frontline changed course after learning about the details about Sivarasan from Jeyaraj is again downright distortion as those reading these journals would have known that this development occurred right after the LTTE-IPKF military confrontation began in October 1987, some four years before Rajiv Gandhi's murder.

Sources close to Raheem assert that involving Raheem in this by the editor of the paper who is also the author of the defamatory article, Ramesh, was motivated by the latter's long-standing enmity towards the former. It would seem that during a LTTE-EPRLF (of which Ramesh was a member) skirmish in Jaffna Raheem and another had shot Ramesh in the leg and back

Incidentally, Ramesh is a parlia-

off a public debate and that, pending the outcome of that debate, no sentences would be carried out.

To our knowledge, no public opinion polls have recently been conducted on this issue in Sri Lanka. We have, however, noted several letters to editors of various newspapers calling for the resumption of executions. Our sense is that an in-depth study to increase understanding of the actual situation of criminality in the country, its causes and the means available for combating it may help to increase the public's understanding of crime prevention and criminal justice and produce more support for anti-crime measures which are genuine and not merely a palliative for public cries for law and order.

The majority of the members of the above-mentioned Commission on Capital Punishment in their report published in June 1959, after careful study, recommended that death sentences not be carried out. Amnesty International is urging the Government of Sri Lanka to consider whether a similar commission should be appointed to study the apparent recent rise in criminality in the country and make recommendations for effective measures which could be taken without resort to the death penalty. In the event you were to appoint such a commission, our organization would urge the commission to recommend total abolition of the death penalty and put before it detailed evidence of the arbitrary, unfair and biased way in which the death penalty is being applied around the world, including in the USA, as set out in the selection of reports enclosed.

The international community has repeatedly expressed its opinion against the death penalty and in favour of its abolition. In 1997, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution calling for a "suspension of executions". In 1998, it called on all member states which still use the death penalty to establish a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty all together. Sri Lanka, we noted, abstained on both occasions.

We believe that the death penalty which is a violation of the fundamental human right to life should be abolished. We oppose the imposition of death sentences in all cases, including for those held responsible of the most heinous crimes. For instance, you may

Provincial Polls An Indicator of the Future

Harim Peiris

The elections to five provincial councils are over and the results have been declared. Nominations for the Southern Provincial Council elections have been called and the poll is likely to be held sometime in June. All these provincial poll results reflect the current public sentiment and is the most reliable indicator of the future political trends for the presidential and general elections, which would be held next year. The variety of opinions expressed in the media with regard to the poll results prompted this columnist, to join that debate.

The results have provided a narrow victory for the PA, while the UNP has increased its votes over the 1997 local government elections. The strategists, analysts and apologists of the UNP have argued that the UNP is on a trend

recall that when we wrote to you to welcome justice being done in relation to the abduction, rape and murder of Krishanthi Kumarasamy, we appealed to you to commute the death sentences imposed by the High Court once they come before you for consideration for granting of pardon.

Recently, our organization has upheld Sri Lanka as a positive model for the protection of human rights in the region and worldwide. A resumption of execution, in our view, would be a blight on Sri Lanka's reputation and seriously undermine international confidence in the government's commitment to human rights and reform.

As a head of state who has repeatedly pledged her commitment to upholding human rights, we call upon you to show political leadership in the defence of human rights. In our view, it is not possible for a government fully to respect human rights and execute prisoners at the same time.

We will also be writing to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Attorney General and other officials on this matter in the hope that the government may as yet reconsider this regrettable decision." ●

of increasing its share of the vote and that the difference between the PA and itself has been reduced to about 2.6% of the votes cast or two hundred and six thousand votes in the five provinces. They argue that at the next elections the UNP would sweep to victory, should one extrapolate on a trend line from the 1994 and the 1997 election results.

However a more realistic alternative theory is as follows. The election to the five provincial councils was the best opportunity for the UNP to better the PA and it displayed its inability to do so. After the Wayamba fiasco the Government was unpopular, the election pitted the UNP's new image bearing brightest and best candidates against a decidedly second string PA and with national elections only an year away the UNP could make credible claims to being a future government to solicit the men, money and materials it needed, none of which it seemed to have in short supply. The election was largely free and fair and the UNP was fairly and squarely beaten.

Nonetheless some analysts claim that the PA performance a poor show, the last gasp of the dying and this thesis deserves to be examined. The so-called poor performance of the PA should be checked against history. The UNP won the 1989 presidential election by a countrywide majority that was much less than the PA's majority from only five provinces. The public having currently elected the PA for thier provincial administration for the next five years is unlikely to have a change of heart and decide on the UNP for the national level next year. Why should they? What is the UNP going to do between now and then that would make people change their minds about them? The factors that prompted a majority of the populace to remain with the PA are likely to hold good for the next elections as well.

The minority vote is always a deciding factor at national elections and it's worth evaluating the likely scenario. Admittedly ethnic minorities, both

Tamils and Muslims feel betrayed by the absence of a resolution of the national problem, while the humanitarian burden of the war for peace policy is borne largely by the minority populations of the North and East. However minority leaders remain convinced that in the President lies the best prospect for peace. While the PA hasn't delivered peace in six years, the genuine intent exists alongside a credible set of proposals, while the UNP didn't deliver peace for seventeen years and their desire for peace is not apparent by their past actions or their present lack of a coherent policy on the ethnic problem.

This writer would also argue that the UNP has a credibility problem. That the UNP's new Chairman Karu Jayasuriya has taken Colombo's middle class by storm and that their love affair with him would endure until and even after the next general election is a foregone conclusion. But then Colombo's middle class anyway historically had no problems with the UNP. Notwithstanding that party's calculated assaults on democracy in this country during its seventeen years in power. The UNP has always left the middle and upper classes free to make money in war if not in peace and was a welcome relief in the 1980's after the disastrous socialist policies of the 1970's. That the UNP has a new and popular figurehead in Karu Jayasuriya is not in doubt. But the Party Leader, the General Secretary, the shadow ministers, the ideas, the policies, the thinking, are all holdovers of the 17 year rule. Is the country ready for another seventeen years of UNP rule? Of politics without principles? Of policies without vision? Of referendums without elections?

Do we want the Sothi Upalis and the Gonawela Sunils of this world ruling the roost if not running the show? The people of all five provinces emphatically answered in the negative.

The South will only reinforce that message and do so more strongly. The UNP needs more years in opposition for it to shed the baggage of its past and present a credible alternative for the future. Presently all it does is offer a repeat of the past, well camouflaged by its affable new Chairman. A majority of this country has quietly declined a repeat performance of the UNP's 17 year rule, believing instead in the alternative vision laid out and the different journey that was begun in 1994. ●

Violence and democracy

Prof. Carlo Fonseka

Let us come right out and admit it: incontrovertible evidence has accumulated that violence and anti-democratic practices besmirched and befouled the Wayamba Election. What cries for rational explanation is how and why such things came to pass. By way of preface it is useful to recall what Karl Marx wrote in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte": "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves; but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."

At the presidential election held in 1982 President J R Jayewardene polled 52.91% of the valid votes; in 1988 President Premadasa polled 50.43% of the valid votes; in 1994 President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga polled 62.28% of the valid votes. Given such an unprecedented popular public endorsement, if there is any politician in this country who should have no need or inclination to resort to organized rigging of elections to retain power, it is President CBK.

However, rigging elections by violence if necessary had become a generic feature of the political system that had been transmitted to her from the past. Did what happened in Wayamba occur without her consent and against her will, even as periodic floods do? There is reason to believe that it did, because if Marx's dictum quoted above is valid, men - and I daresay, even women - do not make their history just as they please. They do so, under circumstances directly transmitted from the past.

What precisely were the circumstances transmitted from the past? My answer is partly political. But that does not necessarily make it false. And I should be delighted to challenge anyone to falsify the hypothesis I proposed way back in 1987 when JRJ was very much alive and kicking and was at the height of his temporal power. For the

record, let me say that I have hitherto never criticized JRJ after his death; even as I never ceased to do so from 1977 until his death.

As it happened, in 1987 I was invited by the Centre for Society and Religion to speak at a seminar on the theme "Violence and Democracy". I spoke from a prepared text. Even the mainstream newspaper that has been almost unvaryingly friendly to me, flatly refused to publish the text of my talk. To set the context and theoretical basis of the explanation I am going to offer for the Wayamba fiasco, I will reproduce below an abbreviated and slightly edited version of my talk.

Text of 1987 Talk

"During the past decade or so violence has increased in our country and democracy has declined. Is there a relationship between these two phenomena? The thesis of this talk is that violence increased mainly because democracy declined; and democracy declined mainly because of one individual's love of power. More precisely and specifically, democracy declined and violence increased at the rate they did during the past decade mainly because in 1977, Junius Richard Jayewardene at the age of 71 became - as he loves to remind us - the 193rd King or Head of State of Sri Lanka. The decline of democracy in this country since 1977 is most simply explained in terms of JRJ's supreme ambition to live and die as the 193rd King or Head of State of Sri Lanka.

The attainment and retainment of power is the ambition of almost all politicians. So it has been with JRJ and there is nothing intrinsically wrong with that. Indeed, judged by the criterion of convincing attainment and long retainment of power, JRJ must be reckoned the most successful Sri Lankan politician of our time. The price the country has had to pay for his success, however, has been a decline of democracy and an increase of violence. How did that come about? Let us see.

Decline of Democracy

Most people would agree that the decline of democracy in our country during the past decade was signalled above all by two events.

(1) The deprivation of the civic rights of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1980; and

(2) The fraudulent referendum of 1982 which has now been officially exposed.

Both of these served only one main purpose; namely, to enable JRJ to continue as the 193rd King or Head of State. It was not to keep the Open Economy going. There was no reason to suppose that Mrs. B as President of Sri Lanka with the SLFP in power, would have radically altered the socio-economic structure created by the UNP after 1977. In truth, that socio-economic structure was really a consolidation of a process that the SLFP itself embarked upon in 1976, after the break up of the United Front Government in 1975. By depriving Mrs. B of her civic rights JRJ eliminated his principal political opponent from the presidential election that was held in 1982. The manoeuvre worked even better than he probably expected because of Mrs B's aim of preventing anybody other than a member of her nuclear family from defeating JRJ. So by one and the same stroke, JRJ converted his principal political opponent into his principal political ally. But that is another story.

Referendum

Again, by replacing the general election that was scheduled for 1983 with the referendum held in 1982, JRJ ensured that he could rule until 5 August 1989 with a 5/6 majority in parliament. He ensured that he would continue as undisputed Head of State. Many perceptive commentators have observed that JRJ has acquired virtual dictatorship over the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The technique of acquiring dictatorship over what has been a democracy has been known since Greek times.

As Bertrand Russell has documented in his book titled "Power", the technique has always involved three ingredients: 1. Bribery; 2. Propaganda; and 3. Violence. No one will deny that each of these ingredients has been maximally exploited during the past decade by the ruling powers.

Increase of Violence

Having considered the decline of democracy in our country during the

past decade, let us now focus on the increase of violence. No one will gainsay the fact that violence has increased by leaps and bounds in our country in the recent past. The most striking feature about much of the violence of the past decade is that it was systematically organized and perpetrated by the ruling party. In fact, violence became institutionalized. The principal instrument for the perpetration of institutionalized violence for political purposes was the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (JSS) - the trade union of the UNP. That is now an open secret.

Ethnic Violence

A large part of the violence seen during the past decade was ethnic in nature. Since 1983, thousands have died of ethnic violence, especially Tamils. All available evidence indicates that the principal mischief-maker in regard to the increase of ethnic violence in this country in the recent past has been the 193rd King or Head of State of Sri Lanka.

Most political observers seem to agree that the ethnic trouble since Independence began with the language issue. Indeed many believe that the Sinhala Only slogan was the beginning of the rot. As a matter of fact, it was JRJ who in 1944 introduced a motion proposing that Sinhala be made the sole official language of this country. However, in moving the motion, he amended his proposal to include Tamil also as an official language. Thus, it was he who started the process, which has generated an incredibly amount of violence in this country.

In 1956 when Sinhala became the only official language, the Tamil people through the Federal Party protested strongly. At that point, S W R D Bandaranaike proposed Regional Councils in the North and East as part of the solution. This was included in the well known Bandaranaike - Chelvanayagam Pact. The Regional Councils were an exercise in the devolution of power, which is an essential part of democracy. At that stage, it was JRJ who did his diabolical best to prevent the devolution of power.

If the B-C Pact had been implemented in 1958, it is most unlikely that the ethnic violence of the past decade would have escalated. JRJ who is now apparently willing to concede much more in the way of devolution than was envisaged in the B-C Pact, opposed the BC Pact entirely in the pursuit of his

political ambitions.

Even at present he appears to be loath to democratically devolve power and help end the violence in the country. He evidently fears that given his past history, such an exercise in democracy may pose a threat to his position as 193rd King or Head of State of Sri Lanka. So he permits violence to escalate and uses the pretext of violence as the excuse for imposing further restrictions on democracy.

Thus, the inference seems warranted: the principal cause of the decline of democracy and the consequent increase of violence in Sri Lanka during the past decade or so has been JRJ's love of power. He has given to the world of Sri Lankan politics a despicable and vicious principle: Power by right means if you can; if not by any means power!"

Postscript to the 1987 Talk

To argue the thesis that democracy in Sri Lanka declined at the rate it did during the decade after 1977 because of the chance occurrence of JRJ's coming to power at the age of 71 is not necessarily to profess belief in the omnipotence of chance in human history. Nor is it to subscribe to what is called Cleopatra's Nose theory of history. But at least in the short run the role of chance and the impact of the character of leaders on human history are undeniable. In the short run the application of the principle that JRJ bequeathed to politics has made the post-1977 era very violent.

Appraisal

Let us face it: the majority of people in this country implicitly accepted JRJ's principle. Candidates endorsed by JRJ regained power in the presidential and parliamentary elections held in 1988/89. JRJ himself died in the fullness of years and honoured as an elder statesman. One distinguished historian wrote an eulogistic political biography of him, when JRJ had not yet breathed his last. JRJ virtually spoon-fed his biographers not so much with information about what actually happened during his times, as with material he believed he could persuade them to believe. His biographers obliged and retailed the stuff. They had the historical art to dress up the stuff in a way calculated to impress the converted and the uncritical.

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Even now, as then, there are many Sri Lankans of the highest respectability and ethical propriety who show a solid preference for politicians however depraved, provided the politicians pose no threat to the personal privileges and positions the respectables enjoy. No wonder then that JRJ became the role model for the younger generation of politicians in this country. They too yearn for power by right means if possible; if not by any means. What happened in Wayamba and will continue to happen to a greater or lesser degree in elections to come would be variations of application of the principle that JRJ bequeathed to politics.

Conclusion

When I was young the political revolutionary was the ideal of a hero. No longer does that seem to be so. Market forces seem to have effectively banished serious revolutionaries from the political scene, except perhaps in Cuba. Che Guevara was admired by thinking and sensitive people the world over, even though they rejected some of his methods. After Che was summarily executed by the Bolivian army in 1967, Jean-Paul Satre called him "the most complete man of his age". Concerning Che's qualities as a man Fidel Castro voiced the common feeling when he said: "If we wish to express what we want the men of future generations to be we must say: 'Let them be like Che'".

The above digression was a prelude to my conclusion. For some time to come most politicians in Sri Lanka will try to be like JRJ. To be like JRJ is to act on the principle that guided his political life. Those whose political philosophy is the philosophy of JRJ and his UNP, have no ethical right to complain when others act according to the principle JRJ and the UNP systematically practised in and after 1977. I believe that President CBK, for one, has no use for the principle that inspired JRJ's political behaviour. She has the power to urge her followers - as indeed she did after the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1994 - to act in the spirit of democracy. She has the moral stature to tell them: "Do unto your opponents, as they did not do unto you under JRJ". Easier said than done, admittedly! But then as Spinoza said, "all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare". ●

Engendering Peace: Women's Empowerment and Political Violence

Cat's Eye

South Asian women it seems have greatness thrust upon them. They are rarely born great though they may be born to great families, and they rarely achieve greatness without great men. The phenomenon of women from powerful political dynasties becoming Presidents or Prime Ministers literally over the dead bodies of their husbands and fathers is a telling reflection and indictment of the gendered nature of political power and violence in the South Asian region. For while post-colonial South Asia has the highest regional concentration of women heads of State in the world - Benazir in Pakistan, Khalida Zia and Hassina in Bangladesh, Sirimavo and Chandrika in Sri Lanka, Indira in India, with Sonia in the wings, they are all widows and/or daughters of male Presidents and Prime Ministers. These women, as heads of State, have rarely succeeded in stemming the violent trends in South Asian politics or in chalking out an alternative vision and course for their conflict riven countries. By and large, even women heads of State who had an alternative vision for peace, such as Chandrika Bandaranaike have remained hostages to the violent political processes that in the first instance thrust them to power.

Women, War and the Gender Status quo

Clearly violent politics and armed conflict have opened up ambiguous spaces of agency and empowerment for some women who have not been directly engaged in violence even as it has silenced and destroyed others. The proposition that wars disrupt social, political and gender hierarchies in unexpected ways and benefit marginal groups and individuals not directly engaged in conflict is both obvious and dangerous. It is this "dangerousness" that has made for the lacuna in our analysis of conflict and its effects. The

second reason for this lacuna has much to do with how we conceptualise peace - as a return to the (gender) status quo. Peace we still think constitutes a return to things the way they used to be; the certain certainties of familiar, older, ways of being and doing. But to conceptualise peace thus, is another kind of violence. For women, widows and mothers who have lost a head of household or seen him "disappear" in the violence, there is no return to the old certainties of the nuclear family, headed by the father, the patriarch. For the war's widows, for those who have lived intimately with war, the changes wrought by sixteen years of armed conflict in Sri Lanka are too deep, too complex, structural and fundamental. They force us to challenge our certain certainties about war and peace. In this context, peace is necessarily a third place divorced from the past; utopia perhaps, somewhere arguably between the old and the existing, the past and the present.

But the argument that sixteen years of armed conflict might have unintended positive consequences is dangerous and disturbing for those of us who believe in and advocate the peaceful resolution of conflicts arising from social injustice. In Sri Lanka social scientists have fought shy of addressing the issue of how social structural transformations wrought by sixteen years of armed conflict might have also brought desirable changes to entrenched social hierarchies and inequalities such as caste and gender among people exposed to it. We also fear to analyse or articulate the unintended transformations brought by war, to see positives in violence, lest we be branded: "war-mongers". We have thus conceded the new spaces of cultural and ideological struggle opened by the conflict to the proponents of violence: the men and women with guns, and their political ideologues and paymasters.

Recasting Widowhood

The re-imaging of widowhood by women such as Chandrika Kumara-tunga and other women in positions of leadership in the island is but one form of women's ambiguous empowerment in the midst of spiralling political violence and armed conflict in Sri Lanka. There is another, quieter and deeper revolution happening to gender relations elsewhere in the war zones of Sri Lanka. A generation of young war widows who have been displaced are increasingly challenging conventional constructions of widowhood as a negative and polluting condition which bars their participation from many aspects of community life. Consciously or unconsciously, many young Tamil widows are challenging and redefining conceptions of the "good woman" as one who lives within the traditional confines of caste, kin group and village.

Many of these young women who have lost husbands to death, displacement or family fragmentation in the course of armed conflict and flight from bombing and shelling, forced to go out to work and support themselves and their children, increasingly refuse to erase the signs of sumankali (particularly the auspicious red pottu) they wore when married, and refuse to be socially and culturally marginalized and ostracised because they lack husbands. As they struggle with new gender roles and identities, many of these young widows who refuse to wear the prescribed garb of widowhood appear to break with the ideology of Kannaki (Pattini) the exemplary wife and widow of Tamil mythology and ideology. Rather, they seem to evoke the sign of the devadasi - Kannaki's, alter ego - who transcended conventional gender roles; the professional woman married to immortality for her talent and skill, most familiar to South Asian audiences in the name of the famed dancer and courtesan, Madhavi of the first century Tamil Hindu-Buddhist epic, Sillapadikaram.

Additionally, the fragmentation and reconstitution of families around women in a conflict where men frequently have had to flee to avoid being killed or inducted by armed groups, appears to have provided a space to re-define the patriarchal family structure. Finally it seems that the great threat and the greater challenge to the gender status quo derives less from the women heads of state trapped in the culture of violence, or the militant women in their

battle fatigues. It will come rather from the structural changes to the family wrought by conflict and the young widowed women who refuse to erase their red pottus.

Ambivalence

Through the armed conflict and ensuing displacement women have been forced to take on various new roles within their families and communities. Some have been empowered in the process while others have felt only the crushing burden of change, others have over time gone through a process of transformation despite the difficulty of taking on the added burden of traditionally male roles (head of household/principal income generator), due to the loss of their men folk and displacement. And the shift in women's roles leading to unexpected empowerment is not transparent, unambivalent, or free of guilt. Few have the confidence of the displaced women in a camp in Vavuniya who said quite categorically "it is a relief now that he (her husband) is not with me. He used to drink and beat me up". Most women still lack a language to articulate the process of transformation and regeneration and clearly feel guilty about expressing their new-found confidence.

As women have gained greater self-confidence, mobility and authority within their families and communities, the backlash against women's changing roles and patterns of mobility is also evident in increased levels of violence against women in public and domestic spaces. This is also in keeping with the evidence. For historically, women who took on various non-traditional gender roles in situations of social stress, conflict, war and revolution, have been "pushed back into the kitchen after the revolution" as part of a return to everyday life. Arguably, one of the primary reasons that the return to peace often meant a return to the gender status quo was the lack of social recognition and a culturally appropriate idiom to articulate, legitimate and support women's transformed roles and empowerment in the midst of conflict, trauma, and social disruption. Feminist social science must begin to distinguish between the kinds of transformations that have occurred by exploring their long-term impact. For social transformation to be sustained, there needs to be cultural transformation; acceptance of the legitimacy of women performing their new

roles.

Clearly to sustain the gains made by women in conflict we need to problematise the victim ideology which pervades our thinking about women living in conflict, as well as our understanding of peace. Non-combatant women who have found spaces of empowerment in the conflict need sustained assistance to maintain their new-found mobility and independence in the face of sometimes virulently nationalist assertions of patriarchal cultural tradition and practices during the conflict and in the period of post-war reconstruction. The return to peace should not mean a return to the pre-war gender status quo.

Women Warriors or Doves?

It is often asked why women have not built a strong platform for peace? The question presumes that women are pacific, peace-loving creatures and is based on the assumption that, that women share some sort of essential underlying, nurturing and caring female nature, based on biology, anatomy and finally motherhood. The fact is that women have commonalities and differences that have more to do with the culture they inhabit and create, than with nature. Women combatants in nationalist struggles waged by groups like the LTTE, tend to subordinate their gender identities to the nationalist cause. Suicide bombing is but the extreme version of this phenomenon which might, in Durkheimian terms, be glossed as altruistic suicide, when a woman's gender, individual autonomy and personal agency is completely subsumed in the national cause. The question might well be raised as to whether women would be more given to altruistic suicide than men given their socialization in patriarchal Asian cultures where girl children and women are more often than not taught to put themselves second, and their male folk, family, and community honour first.

Nationalist conflicts also reveal a certain commonality in women's experiences. Women experience particularly gendered forms of violence, such as rape and the fear of rape, body searches and the fear of sexual violence, as well as the social stigmas which dog women who have been raped and thus 'contaminated' by enemy men. Moreover the fear of sexual violence limits and inhibits most women's mobility and

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Kosovo and Sri Lanka

Jehan Perera

There is the image and the reality; what might have been and the present.

Talking to a visiting foreign diplomat, a human rights activist recently described the Sri Lankan north-east as another Kosovo. Clearly concerned about the sufferings of the Tamils in those conflict-torn areas, he inquired whether the Western countries could not intervene in Sri Lanka just as they had done in Yugoslavia to halt the Yugoslav army's advance into Kosovo. The foreign diplomat's answer was revealing. Who is the Milosevic of Sri Lanka, he asked. There was an uneasy silence.

Some years ago, the matter might have been less in doubt. Especially in the aftermath of the 1983 anti-Tamil riots, the Sri Lankan government headed by President Jayewardene might have been seen as fitting into the Milosevic slot. At that time, when India was making threatening noises about intervening militarily in Sri Lanka, senior government ministers publicly made counter-threats. One said that before the Indian army could land in Sri Lanka, the Tamil population in the south would be eliminated by Sinhalese who loved their land. While

the government headed by President Premadasa made no such crude threats, it could not make a clean break with the past. Besides its conduct during the JVP uprising did not endear it to the world.

But today, the international image of the Sri Lankan government is entirely different. The government of President Kumaratunga is one that came to power on a high risk political campaign that admitted the reality of an ethnic conflict that needed a political solution. It is a government that entered into peace talks, was trapped once again by war but still managed to come up with a set of radical political reform proposals in the teeth of hardline Sinhalese opposition. It is a government that has been propagating peace education in the schools and has given NGOs and peace organisations a free hand to both criticise it as well as to conscientise the people that the government needs to go much further in the cause of peace.

The boot is indeed on the other foot. In the eyes of the international community, it is not the leadership of the government that is in the dock but that of the LTTE. Its spectacular deeds that have caught the cameras of the interna-

Agent, to the military, to the humanitarian aid agencies. They file documents, plead their cases and implement decisions in public and private in the presence or absence of their men folk who are increasingly disempowered or disappeared.

As Rajini Thiranyagama (nee. Rajasingham) who was assassinated by the LTTE for her fight against Tamil chauvinism wrote: "Women have come out strong during the war... They have stood out as individuals or as small groups, exposing the atrocities and the violations of human dignity... Women who in the midst of war pleaded and argued with the militants for their families and the whole nation. Women's history does have a triumph. There is powerlessness, disappointment and disillusion. But also hope. We have done it... a little bit." Rajini was killed for her struggle for human rights, for women's rights, but other women continue the work she began. ●

tional media have not been ones that have been political, democratic or suggestive of flexibility. From the murder of former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, to the destruction of the Central Bank in the heart of Colombo, from the mass evacuation of the half million people of Jaffna to the bombing of the sacred Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, theirs have been acts of concentrated violence and coercion. In these decisions, short term gains seem to have figured more than the long term cost.

The US Report

The comparative attitude of the international community to the Sri Lankan government and LTTE can be seen in the most recent (1998) human rights report on Sri Lanka compiled by the United States. The US prepares such human rights reports on most of the countries of the world, which it then uses in determining its policies towards those countries. Most third world countries, where abuses of human rights usually occur, take great offence at this report. The US report is generally viewed as an authoritative document by many foreign embassies in Sri Lanka.

The US human rights report on Sri Lanka covers different aspects of human rights, including political and other extra-judicial killings, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, arbitrary interference with privacy, use of excessive force and violations of humanitarian law, freedom of speech and press, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of movement, forced or compulsory labour and acceptable conditions of work, among others. Quite a damning mix, it would seem.

The main focus of the US report is clearly enough the state of human rights in Sri Lanka and what the government is doing about them. It might be expected that the Sri Lankan government would be angry and embarrassed by the exposures contained in the report. The general public in Sri Lanka know quite well what the situation is in their own areas, in places of police detention, during election campaigns and so on, even if they do not know fully what is happening in the north-east theatre of conflict.

What is noteworthy is that the Sri Lankan government was able to take the observations made in the US report in its stride. In fact the government-controlled media even made out that the

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hence their livelihoods, choices and realities.

Despite similarities in women's experience of armed conflict they have reacted differently to nationalist armed violence: some like the women cadres of the LTTE, or the women cadres of the Sri Lanka Army and Air Force, have taken up arms for their respective nationalist struggles, others have become activists for peace, seeking to build alliances across ethnic, cultural and regional borders (Mother's Front, Women for Peace, Women's Coalition for Peace), while many women have been rendered barely functional after suffering the violence of bombing, shelling, loss of family members, family fragmentation, and displacement. At the same time due to the security situation and the fact and perception that men are more likely to be "terrorists", women increasingly have to play a public role dealing with the authorities ranging from meetings with the Government

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US report was complimentary towards the Sri Lankan government's track record. This is despite the fact that the report gives in fair detail the shortcomings and abuses of human rights that are taking place in the country owing to the deficiencies of the government.

Negative Comparison

But there is a reason for the government's relaxed attitude towards the US report. The reason is simply that the LTTE, which is the government's chief opponent, came out so much worse on every subject in the report in which they too were referred to. To give just one example. Under the subject heading "Freedom of Speech and Press", the report points out that the "Government restricts those rights in practice, often using national security grounds permitted by law." It says "There are no political restrictions on the establishment of new media entities." It also goes on to point out, accurately, the existence of censorship on news from the north-east and incidents where journalists were harassed.

Over a page is devoted to describing the shortcomings of the government in relation to freedom of speech and press. But the one short paragraph on the LTTE is totally damning. "The LTTE does not tolerate freedom of expression. It tightly restricts the print and broadcast media in areas under its control. In the past, the LTTE has killed those reporting and publishing on human rights," states the US report.

This is just one example of the comparative approach adopted by the US human rights report, which makes the LTTE leadership fit into the Milosevic mould. There can hardly be a valid comparison between a democratically elected government, with an independent judiciary and media, and an inaccessible military machine with a reclusive leader who only burst into international consciousness through spectacular suicide bombings outside of the north-east. It is due to this disparity in images that the Sri Lankan government is able to send its army relentlessly into Tamil inhabited territory, most recently at Madhu, without creating the same kind of international outrage that the Yugoslav government has done in sending its army into the Albanian inhabited territories of Kosovo.

With the advance of the Sri Lankan army into the Madhu area approximately 30,000 more people have come

to be liberated, according to government news releases. It comes as no surprise that the people of the newly cleared area are unsure of the value of their liberation. There will be more food and medicine for sure, but the people will never be sure whether they might fall into trouble because of cross fire or because of a cordon and search operation. Certainly, the spiritual guardians of the liberated people, the Catholic priests of the area, did not seem to be overjoyed at the Sri Lankan army's advance into Madhu. They said that they were "surprised" and "shocked" to observe the entry of the army to the very precincts of the sacred shrine.

Human rights and peace activists should do all they can to put pressure on the government to honour its commitment to search for a peaceful solution instead of pressing on with the unending quest for a military solution. They must also find a way to put pressure on the LTTE to act more politically, and take more substantial political initiatives than mere assertions of a willingness to negotiate. An example of such a political initiative could be to form a political wing on the lines of the IRA in the United Kingdom and the Shanti Bahini in Bangladesh that can humanise the face of Milosevic that has come to be imprinted on the LTTE. ●

The Fall of BJP-led Govt but Jaya's Future Uncertain

T N Gopalan

Yet another non-Congress government has bitten the dust in a matter of a year. Only last month the BJP was boasting that it had created a record of sorts by completing one full year in office, something no non-Congress government could do since the Janata experiment in the seventies.

"Now we can consolidate our position, Jayalalitha or no Jayalalitha," party leaders were crowing. But it was the very same nemesis that aborted its career. On 17 November the Vajpayee government was voted out by a one-vote margin.

The AIADMK had first pulled out and then withdrawn its support to the BJP-led coalition following which President K.R.Narayanan directed Vajpayee to seek a vote of confidence.

Interestingly the DMK, throwing to winds its Dravidian credentials, chose to extend support to the BJP government in its hour of crisis. That was its riposte to the Congress and them Left which decided to take Jayalalitha's support to topple the BJP. Karunanidhi came up with a new formulation, "Corruption is more dangerous than communalism." But even its state ally, the Tamil Maanila Congress, with three members, refused to follow suit. It went ahead and voted against the BJP government saying that it was opposed to both communalism and corruption in

equal measure.

But then it was the Bahujan Samaj Party, with five members, whose decision sealed the fate of the Vajpayee government. It had earlier maintained that it would abstain during the voting, saying that there was little to choose between the Congress and the BJP, both being Manuwadi, meaning conforming to the tenets of Manu, the notorious Hindu law-giver. But it sprang a surprise at the time of voting and later said that it was its own way of teaching the BJP a lesson for splitting it in the UP in order to remain in power.

No tears were shed over the fall of the weak, wobbly, incompetent, and worse, communal, though sneakily. Its so-called achievements, exploding the nuclear bomb and testing the Agni missiles, posed a great danger of militarisation of the country and of the region. The Lahore bus ride, a very sensible step though, did still sound quite hollow in the context of its otherwise aggressive postures. Certainly there was no follow-up exposing the BJP's proclamations as hypocritical.

The way the Sangh Parivaar started flexing their muscle everywhere, culminating in the horrid burning of the Australian missionary Staines and his sons, it looked like India was destined to go through a period of riots and clashes. They pulled back from the brink

in the face of public furore and realising that their government could be in danger.

Besides the BJP did not have the guts to stand up to the hectoring from a corrupt Jayalalitha, witness the attempt to transfer the corruption cases against her from the special courts to regular courts with a view to indefinitely delaying the trials. After a lot of humming and hawing, Vajpayee did decide to call her bluff, but then on a wrong issue. For the records she demanded the reinstatement of the sacked Naval Chief Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat and the sacking instead of Defence Minister George Fernandes who had dismissed Bhagwat.

Bhagwat had been shown the door for allegedly defying the civilian authority. Later he turned the heat on Fernandes alleging corruption in purchase of arms besides saying that he was hobnobbing with the Myanmar rebels and the LTTE. While Bhagwat was no angel of integrity and he seemed to have been a highly ambitious and arrogant Admiral, the BJP too refused to come clean on the issue, why it should have chosen to peremptorily

sack him, etc. or even to countenance the demand for a parliamentary probe into Bhagwat's allegations.

The Congress went to town on the issue, more because Sonia was seeking to ward off any possible further inquiry into the Bofors, it is claimed.

Anyway Jayalalitha gladly pitched into the fray and endorsed the Congress demands, precipitating a crisis.

Why the BJP unnecessarily chose that issue to fight it out with Jayalalitha is still not clear when they could have chosen to buy peace with her by opting for a parliamentary probe.

Equally not clear is why Jayalalitha herself went on to upset the apple cart over this issue which is not very greatly relevant to her. Well she could have hoped to propitiate Sonia that way as per the advice of Subramaniam Swamy.

Possibly unwilling to face the next elections as an ally of the BJP, whose hour, many say, has passed, she was hitching her wagon to Sonia's star. Remember she had excoriated her as a foreigner unfit to lead a nation with glorious traditions like India. Her U-turn only signalled her desperation. But a lot more should have been at stake for

her to have triggered off a crisis at a crucial stage of her trial in the courts.

If a guilty verdict is returned, she will become disqualified from contesting any elections for six years thereafter. She might have been angry that the Centre would not do much to get the cases quashed somehow or other or bring pressure on Kauranidhi to go slow.

At the AIADMK General Council meeting which took place at Chennai, after her "historic" tea-party encounter with Sonia in New Delhi, one got a glimpse of what was working in her mind. She blamed Vajpayee for failing to prosecute Karunanidhi and his family on corruption charges on the basis of the "indisputable evidence" she herself had furnished a year ago, that is immediately after the formation of the government at the Centre. "I'd like to see them all behind bars. But the Centre is not moving, it's simply not listening." At one level her wanting to take revenge for the humiliation meted out to her combined with her helplessness had provoked her wrath perhaps.

Besides she was justly angry that despite her crucial voting strength, she

உங்கள் திருப்தி - எங்கள் சேவை

குறைந்த கட்டணம் - சிறந்த விமான சேவை - உலகின் எப்பகுதிக்கும் விரைவான சேவை
பிரிட்டன் உட்பட ஐரோப்பா முழுவதும், தமிழ்நாடு அரசாங்கத்தின் சுற்றுலா பயணத்துறையை
அபிவிருத்தி செய்ய, தமிழ்நாடு அரசாங்கத்தின் சுற்றுலா அபிவிருத்தி நிறுவனத்தினால்
(T.T.D.C.) அங்கீகரிக்கப்பட்ட ஒரே பிரதிநிதி எங்கள் நிறுவனம்தான்.

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- ★ மகாபலிபுரம் சுற்றுலா
- ★ பாண்டிச்சேரி 1 நாள் சுற்றுலா
- ★ 8 நாள் இந்தியாவின் கிழக்கு முதல் மேற்கு வரை சுற்றுலா
- ★ 8 நாள் தமிழ்நாடு சுற்றுலா
- ★ திருப்பதி - பகல்/இரவு பயணம்
- ★ முருகப்பெருமான் ஆறுபடைவீடு சுற்றுலா
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was unable to lift a finger against Karunanidhi whereas Murasoli Maran and P Chidambaram, between them, in the previous United Front Government, were running amok, hounding her out as also the entire Sasikala clan.

She could not get more of her men into the cabinet, a wavering Vajpayee repeatedly postponing cabinet expansion, unable as he was to cope with the enormous pressure from his allies. He would not even divest Vazhapadi Ramamurthy, the lone ranger, of the lucrative Petroleum ministry and hand it over to the AIADMK. Also by announcing the Sethu Samudram project at an MD-MK rally, Vajpayee was depriving her of an opportunity to claim credit for it.

Many blame Subramanian Swamy, the one-man demolition squad, for the developments. But she is a person with her own mind and would not have listened to his advice unless it suited her doing so.

For all such explanation, one is still at a loss to understand why Jayalalitha chose to behave the way she did, after all she was taking too many risks in her rage. Well shall we say, it was her overweening arrogance in full play yet again, she was trapped by her own rhetoric or did the suicidal instinct in her come to the fore? Take your pick.

Whatever the case the fall of Vajpayee could only be a pyrrhic victory for her, nothing more than a sadistic satisfaction that she has socked it in the eye of a party which was reluctant to carry out all her bidding, though it had obliged her on some counts.

Says T.Sikamani, a senior Tamil journalist, "What has she gained now, tell me. If anything she has lost whatever clout she had earlier. Vajpayee and company might not have dismissed Karunanidhi nor transferred out all the officials as she desired. Still they were really bending backwards all the time Now is Sonia going to oblige her the same way? Very unlikely. She is certainly not going to cower before her tantrums as Vajpayee did till recently. Whatever the new formation, her clout will be much less than what it used to be...."

As of now the future shape of things was not clear. With hardly 270 members in a 543-member House ranged against the BJP government, there is no clear sign that any viable stable government could be formed. And Jaya's own influence over such a government would be very tenuous.

Did not Sonia Gandhi make Jayalalitha sweat it out before finally even granting her an audience or stepping out to see that the Congress could consider forming an alternative government after Vajpayee regime is voted out? There is no way Sonia is going to dance to the other lady's tunes. She is even snootier, though a lot more polished and suave and much less abrasive and arrogant. Besides any new combination will have quite a few constituents which are not well-disposed towards her.

Already the TMC has declared that the AIADMK should not find a place in the new government. Besides the Left would not allow the DMK government to be dismissed. And Sonia will not do anything to get the cases off Jayalalitha's back. Her only solace then could perhaps be a possible alliance with the Congress in a future Assembly election. If she comes back to power, most of her problems will be solved. But that is a bit too far in the future. Lok Sabha elections could be a few months away, yes, but that is not much of a consolation for her. For a victorious Sonia is even less likely to oblige Jayalalitha than is she now.

As for Karunanidhi he is in a fine pickle too. After the results became known here, he sought to put up a brave face and said, "Well victory and defeat are common in any democracy. The fall of the Vajpayee government is unfortunate. What more can I say?"

But significantly when asked what about the future of his new-found relationship with the BJP, Karunanidhi would only say, "Let's wait and see. Our executive will decide on the future course of action." That was in sharp contrast to his previous day's ringing declaration that the DMK never severs any relationship it enters into on its own.

Obviously the ageing politician is rattled. He had not bargained for Vajpayee's defeat. He had decided to bale out the BJP only under the fond hope that his six votes would prove decisive, well it did, but only almost. Mayavathi spoiled his trip.

He had not expected even Moopanar's TMC to vote against the motion. It was thought the TMC would only abstain. "To face the next elections when there could be a Congress-AIADMK alliance without someone like Moopanar who could attract a chunk of the Congress vote-bank could

be risky. And what position the Left would adopt, it is difficult to say. An alliance with the BJP doesn't mean much here unless there is going to be a massive sympathy wave for Vajpayee, especially so when we could stand to lose the minority votes," felt a second-line DMK leader.

It is not as if the TMC is sitting any the prettier. It cannot join a Congress-AIADMK alliance. It certainly cannot merge with the Congress when such an alliance is on the cards. It cannot go back to the DMK if it is going to be a DMK-BJP front. A third front with the PMK, the MDMK and the Left could be contemplated, but what impact it would have on the electorate, remains to be seen. But in the context of its declared intention to make a bid for power on its own in the next assembly poll, a break with the DMK could become easier and it can claim to be occupying a moral highground on the issue of secularism and try and checkmate Jayalalitha as much as it can in the near future. But beyond that what? That is still a moot point.

The Pattali Makkal Kadchi (PMK) led by Dr Ramdas, on the other hand, could comfortably negotiate the waters, what with its strong Vanniar vote-back and relatively "flexible" political approach. If Sonia and Jayalalitha reject him, Dr.Ramdas could happily switch over to the DMK-BJP combine with little qualms and his entry would be prized by that front, assuming such a one is going to be formed.

The MDMK is the worst affected. Vai.Ko. had been loyal to the BJP, but how could he hope to be in the DMK camp now? Jayalalitha would certainly not allow him or Vazhapadi Ramamurthy to come anywhere near her. Even the ebullient Petroleum Minister could continue to cling on to the BJP, Karunanidhi might not mind much. But Vai.Ko's is a very different case. He should only look forward to a third front for whatever it is worth.

The free-wheeling Swamy, now thriving in the role of Jaya's hatchet man, has nothing much to lose though. He had predicted right after the last Lok Sabha polls, prophetically as it has turned out, "Any ministry that does not include me will be unstable." And he can chortle to his heart's content now. Whether he becomes a minister or not, it is immaterial. He has reinforced his image as the one-man demolition army.

(continued on next page)

Revealing Lessons from the Kosovo Crisis

T N Gopalan

The Kosovo crisis and the NATO air-strikes have sparked off very revealing reactions across the world. Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, as seen during the first attack on Iraq, the reactions of the various nation-states were dictated more by their selfish interests than by any ethical code.

There was hardly a single country then that would criticise Saddam Hussein on the one hand for the invasion of Kuwait but also denounce the US on the other for its brazen attempt to enforce its own will on the international community and its unbridled hypocrisy.

The Muslim countries that expressed solidarity with Iraq, even if notionally, conveniently ignored its crimes against its own citizens or the unwarranted attack on Kuwait.

And even a section of the Left was willing to turn a blind eye to Hussain's own criminal lapses in their eagerness to pillory the US. And of course those who denounced him in hysterical terms were mostly the most wretchedly hypocritical liberals whose hands were stained with the blood of humanity.

For many analysts, especially on the Left, the overwhelming lesson of that period was that the bi-polar world had collapsed. Certainly it was, but how

could one overlook the other ethical dimension involved?

Those opposed to the US hegemony, mostly of the Communist variety, have traditionally tended to ignore the ethical dimension, to their own grief as it has turned out.

Be that as it may, a similar dilemma should inform the debate on the current Kosovo crisis, but again concerns expressed have sprung from selfish considerations, with little thought to the continuing miseries of the Kosovans.

And the issue has a special significance to many Third World countries which are grappling with separatist struggles and to the separatist rebel moments themselves. It is precisely the fear that lending support to the NATO action, even an expression of the sympathy for the Kosovans, could only further strengthen the separatist problems in their own respective backyards has made many Third World countries denounce the intervention in Yugoslavia.

A typical news despatch in the Indian media read as follows- "Parties cutting across the political spectrum strongly criticised the NATO air-strikes against Yugoslavia. They made the point that the action which was without sanction from the United Nations was illegal and violative of international law

governance.

Only a liberal, left-of-centre (even if slightly so) formation like the ones the country saw under V.P.Singh or still later under Gujral and Deve Gowda could fit such a bill. But it was the Left parties which spoiled it all last time by refusing to sup with the Congress - some accommodation with it would still have left the initiative with the Left and liberal sections. Such an opportunity might not turn up again in the near future and the Left have none but to blame themselves for the current imbroglio. Still it could be some solace that India will not be held to ransom by majority communalism in the name of combating increasing fundamentalist activities. ●

and the UN Charter. It seemed as if the lost national consensus on foreign policy issues had been found....

There is a growing feeling that the US-led unilateral action whether against Iraq or against Yugoslavia militated against the concept of territorial integrity of sovereign states and eroded confidence in the ability of the UN to keep in check the powerful nations..."

Needless to state the unstated fear running through all such reports and analyses is what would happen to Kashmir if one endorses the NATO action in Kosovo. And any sympathy for the refugees streaming out of Kosovo was very muted. "Oh it's pretty bad that such things should happen...But then intervention is no answer...Somehow the parties concerned would have to sort out the issue among themselves... Certainly one can't allow a precedent to be set for intervention in areas affected by internal rebellions.." Such was the thrust of the argument.

Just as few political parties and commentators ever bother to stop and ponder for a moment whether the Kashmiris by and large could indeed be preferring to opt out of the Indian Union and whether they might have very valid reasons to do so, but merely stress India's sovereignty and Pakistan's sponsoring terrorism, so also in the case of Kosovo few persons in or outside the establishment have cared to empathise with the suffering Kosovans.

Mr.Saeed Naqvi, a well-respected columnist, was in the affected region at the time the strikes were taking place and the catastrophe was gradually unfolding. He does bemoan the conflict, hark back to the great traditions of Yugoslavia, but spares few words for those thrown out of their hearths and homes by a vengeful Serbian police and paramilitary forces, and his signing off is quite significant: "In today's context the Americans are the undisputed heroes of every ethnic Albanian. The supreme irony that those who have turned to the Americans as their saviours are today streaming out in their hundreds of thousands as refugees with nowhere to go. For a long time they will remain the symbols of the inability of the world's only superpower to save them, indeed, to have been unintentionally responsible for their plight as homeless, ethnically cleansed, consigned to their fate as the most wretched of the earth."

Surely Naqvi's logic is indisputable and it is indeed a tragedy that a nation

(Continued from page 21)

There should be many others waiting to tap his skills in the future.

The Tamil Nadu angle apart, the country is undergoing yet another round of political crisis. But it looks like whatever the shape of the new government, a fresh round of Lok Sabha elections would be inevitable before long. In which case a Congress led by Sonia Gandhi could be a clear winner.

To the extent that a communal BJP is shown the door, that is a much better prospect. But it is also a throw-back yet again to the stodgy feudal rule of the Congress. Perhaps what India needs is a consensual government which would devolve greater powers to the states and seek to associate the large masses in

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like the US should come to be seen as the saviour by anyone. But it is the other nations which have allowed such a situation to develop by studiously ignoring the Albanians for their own selfish reasons.

As another commentator, this one a rare breed, put it bluntly, hitting out at the hypocrisy of the Indian critics of the NATO action, "The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 by India is the nearest parallel to the NATO's actions. If this leads to a new state of Kosovo, there is no better rear view mirror than the birth of Bangladesh after the brutality of the Pakistani forces, the 10 million refugee-influx and the intervention ordered by Indira Gandhi..." Forget for a moment there are lunatic fringes, including of the left hue too, which even today tend to justify the atrocities unleashed by Pakistan, there was a pretty strong case for intervention by some international force or other in 1971. As perhaps there was in the case of Sri Lanka under Jayawardane and Premadasa.

The national question as frustrated Marxists would concede, for all their erudition and a rational approach, is

very complicated and there is no cut and dried solution. What is sauce for the Kashmiris might not be so for the Lankan Tamils and the Kosavan Ala-banian rebellion might have far too many implications for the very future of a secular Europe to be lightly dealt with. Each case will have to be tackled on its own merits and solutions attempted keeping in mind the larger interests of the communities concerned.

Those who support the Kashmiri struggle must take into account that for all its faults, the Indian democracy has some checks and balances left, that the Indian polity as it has evolved over the years has still a very large space for liberal and secular opinion, and that the fundamentalist-inspired terrorism could do much greater damage to the Kashmiris with a secular tradition than the Indian "occupation" itself.

So also in the case of Sri Lanka even while highlighting the plight of the trapped Tamils and the continuing injustice meted out to them on a whole host of fronts, one cannot also lose sight of the fact that President Chandrika Kumaratunge did start off on a right note, was indeed keen on putting an end

to the fratricidal war, more than any other Sinhalese politician was willing to build bridges to the Tamil community, but had been pushed into another senseless round of bloodletting by an intransigent LTTE dedicated to its separatist course.

Or take Indonesia where in the islands of Madura and West Kalimantan the Muslims and Christians are flying at each other's throats and apparently some church-inspired rebellion is on. Or the Karen struggle in Myanmar most shamelessly sought to be exploited, even hijacked, by a fundamentalist Christian sect.

But saying all that, one has to acknowledge the colossal human misery and stress the need for finding a way out sooner than later. Unless the man's right to live in peace and harmony is granted the centrality it deserves in any discourse, it would be difficult to arrive at a sensible and generally acceptable solution.

In the case of Yugoslavia itself, first the horrendous things happening since the death of Marshal Tito are a savage commentary on the kind of rule the Communists had provided.



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As is happening in the erstwhile Soviet Union too, after decades of Communist rule one could see brutal and barbaric instincts at work in full steam. It is as if the intervening years had never existed and the cave man is still learning to become a civilised being at a painful cost to himself. To think that 1917 promised to usher in a New Man!

The failure of the Communist rule to iron out the ethnic differences, or even to reduce the tensions, is indeed tragic. But that apart, the Serbians have been the least tractable of the majority communities anywhere. Reading their literature, and watching them on the TV raising their fists and warning the other communities to fall in line and setting fire to and looting the Kosovan homes, one does experience an involuntary shudder, the Taliban brazenness and fanaticism offering a very close parallel.

At the same time the US and its allies might have their own calculations in sticking their necks out, given their track record from Grenada to Chile to South Africa. Any bloc of nations choosing to strike out on their own, contemptuously marginalising the United Nations, is suspect and could pose a greater threat to world peace than even chauvinist majorities.

But how does one fault the self-serving actions of such blocs without first raising one's voice against the injustice which triggers off the crisis in the first place? During the days of Jawaharlal Nehru India enjoyed such a moral high ground that it was highly respected despite its weak economy and military capabilities.

If a frail Gandhi, many times dismissed as too idealistic to make sense, could still succeed in restoring sanity in Noakhali, that was because his commitment to basic human values was readily acknowledged.

It has been pointed out that there are 5,000 ethnic groups in the world and the difficulties involved in managing the planet if each one has its own nation-state are mind-boggling. But unless the existing nation-states can make their respective citizens, regardless of their origin or creed, live in harmony and freedom and give them a sense of belonging, rebellions which only spell disaster are inevitable.

But to push the nation-states to adopt such an enlightened position requires clear-eyed, dedicated and an equally enlightened public opinion. ●

Violence Threatens Nepal Politics and Society

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

Political instability continues to dog this mountain country, even as it goes to two-phase polls on May 3 and 17. The Maoists, who were believed to be once close to certain sections of the Chinese communists, have threatened to boycott the polls. The threat has become ominous in the wake of their entrenched support base in the remote villages and tough terrain of the Himalayas. The extent to the threat can be gauged from the fact that a candidate of the United Marxist-Leninist party (UML), Yadu Gautam, was killed by the Maoists. Gautam was a member of parliament in the dissolved Nepalese parliament and belonged the largest communist party in Nepal which has come a long way from its origins to becoming a ruling party. After all, communist leader Manmohan Adhikari was the first left prime minister of Nepal; he continues to lead the UML party.

Sandwiched between two giant neighbours India and China, Nepal has had to tread a cautious path ever since democracy was restored following the epic agitations ten years ago led by B P Koirala and Ganesh Man Singh Shrestha of the Nepali Congress (NC). The country has seen several coalition governments involving the NC, the UML and the Rashtriya Prajatantrik Party (RPP), which consists of powerful residual elements of the party-less panchayati raj system once promoted by the Nepali royalty. Though the NC is the premier party in the country, some sections of the people continue to view it as a pro-Indian outfit, given its links with political parties like the Indian Congress, the Samajwadi Janata Party of former Indian prime minister Chandra Shekhar and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The rise and fall of NC-led coalition governments has always been accompanied by palace intrigue, political manipulation and possible violence on the streets; the UML-led government had to embrace a similar fate recently.

The UML seems to have become a special target of the Maoists in recent times. Newspaper reports point to the Maoists' hand in the recent macabre

death of eight UML in the Himalayas region. That they were burnt alive has sent shivers down the UML cadre which is too scared to move about, the reports say.

The three main parties, NC, RPP and UML, seem to agree on the roots of Maoist violence in Nepali society. They admit quite tacitly that the democratic institutions in the country had not been able to satisfy the people's expectations. However, they blame each other for the upswing in extremist activity. While the RPP leaders blame the NC and the UML, Adhikari says that some leaders and activists of the erstwhile panchayati raj system are instigating the Maoists. The Maoist groups are also suspected to be receiving help from radical outfits abroad through the channels provided by various non-governmental organisations.

The other problem faced by the government of NC leader Girija Prasad Koirala is the possible presence of a large number of criminal elements from across the Indian border during elections. The border states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are known to consist of a large number of private armies and mafia gangs. These gangs, who are in close touch with the political establishment of the two states, have been able to strike at will even in distant New Delhi. Some of the Uttar Pradesh dons have links with the Dubai-based Dawood Ibrahim, who is wanted in connection with the March 12, 1993, serial blasts in Bombay.

Given the kind of money and muscle power these gangs possess, they are feared by the local people during elections when the gangs manage to cast the votes of all and sundry by capturing booths. The Indo-Nepal border, which has several crossings including Raxaul and Gorakhpur, is porous and the criminal elements can be deployed at will to capture booths. The Nepali government hopes to tackle this problem in association with the Indian establishment which itself is currently embroiled in a political crisis.

(continued on next page)

The Media's Crucifixion of Muralitharan

Michael Roberts
University of Adelaide

All representations have a measure of partisanship. It is from a partisan position in the opposite camp that I read the lead article "Straighthen Murali or law" and the carefully-chosen pictures that accompanied it on page 25 of the *Australian* of 25 January 1999. I argue here that the slants etched into this set of representations are pedantic, flawed and misleading. Malcolm Conn's position, moreover, is marked by that form of fundamentalist purism that has been one of the roots of the contretemps from the very beginning (see my essays in *Crosscurrents* 1998).

I contend further that a number of Australian media persons developed a climate of opinion that was favourable to the type of action taken by Ross Emerson on that fateful day at Adelaide Oval, though it is quite conceivable that he would have taken such a step irrespective of the voices in the background.

Today, the support on air and in print for Emerson's decision alleges that "as long as [Law] 24.2 remains then ... every umpire [has] the right, in

fact a duty, to call a bowler every time they suspect the legitimacy of a delivery" (Conn in *Australian* 25 Jan). Such reasoning, of course, caters to the emphasis on personal autonomy in a country that is at the leading edge of Western individualism. The several Australian men on Radio 5AN provided continuous reminders during the 23rd January reportage of the depth of this philosophy (though perhaps unaware of this grounding).

Such reasoning seems remarkably oblivious – is this convenient blindness? – to the fact that Law 24.2 is poorly drafted and construes suspicion to be proof of guilt. These flaws in the law are manifest. If my affirmative statement on this point is not adequate, however, let me cite Frank Tyson, Peter Roebuck, Allan Border and J. Neville Turner as my authorities.

Given such a defective rule and in the desire to avoid the sort of incident that took place at the MCG on 26 December 1995, the ICC created a process of evaluation by experts. That process cleared Muralitharan in late 1997. Kumara Dharmasena remains under a

struggle between G P Koirala and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai is well known.

It's now the turn of Bhattarai to be named as the prime ministerial candidate for the elections. The UML had split into two groups, with Baumdev Gautam taking away a faction in protest against Adhikari signing, as prime minister, the Mahakali-Pancheshwar treaty with India as a betrayal and sell-out of Nepali interests. The RPP too has undergone a split into two groups led by two former prime ministers, Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand.

The road to Kathmandu, in the sixties, was described by Patrick Marnham, as the path towards freedom, as propounded by Buddhist and Hindu mystics. It's now a veritable abyss into power-intrigue and political chaos. ●

cloud however. The Sri Lankan authorities recently responded to these ICC concerns by omitting Dharmasena from the team to Australia and from the initial World Cup Squad of thirty selected early in January. That Muralitharan was in the team to Australia, therefore, marked a reliance on the good faith of the ICC and ACB; and the confidence derived from his acceptance by a range of umpires all over the world.

The ICC process necessarily qualifies the discretion of umpires on this issue, without removing their powers altogether. Once this scheme was in place it was a matter of common sense for umpires to realise that any suspicions should be conveyed to the ICC for evaluation through video evidence. The importance of "common sense" has also been underlined by Kim Hughes (in an article in the *Australian* 28 Jan. 1999 that nevertheless presents Emerson in favourable ways).

It is for this reason that Lawry, Botham and Roebuck reacted in such a hostile fashion during the course of the game to Emerson's action. Botham was explicit: Emerson was being "ludicrous" and taking an ego trip. Peter Roebuck put it in a nutshell. To quote him from memory: "the ICC put a system in place and one man has decided to buck the system."

In such circumstances it is pedantic and seems disingenuous for Conn to claim that Emerson was merely applying the law as it stands. It is also erroneous for Conn to claim that the ICC process "takes nothing away from the power of umpires to rule on every delivery as they see fit." If the ICC holds to such a position it has set up a contradiction and is not holding to the common sense interpretation of the situation essayed by Roebuck, Hughes, Botham et al. What we have here, then, is a major difference of interpretation: an emphasis on equity and modernised form by Roebuck et al on the one hand and the pedantic literalism and rigidity of Conn and associates on the other.

Conn's misleading reading of the process of arbitration is compounded by a set of three STILL PICTURES of Muralitharan's action from side-on under the caption: "a legitimate delivery, or not? You can be the judge."

This TYPE OF REPRESENTA-

(continued on next page)

(Continued from page 24)

The Maoists, on their part, have made it clear that they want to capture not just booths but entire regions and render them as "liberated zones". They plan to raise funds from collecting taxes from the "liberated zones" to sustain their guerilla warfare; resort to extortion of the rich, the ministers and the bureaucracy; raise the level of conflict to a civil war and capture power in order to be able to establish independent links with the international community. It is still not clear whether the Maoists have been able to enlarge their area of operation beyond the mountainous and remote regions of the country.

All the three mainline parties have experienced factionalism, fissures and splits during the recent tumultuous years of democratic politics. The bitter

TION is truly gross – when presented within a context where one has access to video evidence. Such video evidence, it appears, reveals that the appearance of chucking is “an optical illusion.” It has been video evidence plus a couple of doctors’ reports on Murali’s peculiar arm that led the ICC committee to deem Murali’s action legitimate. That any writer could review the case without reference to these facts is more peculiar than Murali’s arm.

That Malcolm Conn should adopt the position displayed in the article under review is not surprising. He revealed his hand in an article in the *Australian* of the 4th Dec. 1998 which treated Darrell Hair as a hero. “If more umpires around the world had taken a stronger stand sooner,” he says, “then bowlers throwing may not be the issue it is today.”

Now, on the 25th January 1999, he reiterates his position of moral righteousness. The cricketing world has to be cleansed of all chuckers. Suspicions and visual evidence resting on the power of the human eye are adequate grounds for action in the light of Law 24.2.

I have little doubt that Conn thinks that his position will serve the interests of cricket – as, indeed, Hair and Emerson surely believe. My opposing position is that the pedantic and fundamentalist stance that they have assumed has sullied the field of cricket. Nay, more: it has been extremely damaging. The ACB and the ICC have had to bear the consequences.

The ICC has been everyone’s carpet to beat on. In this instance, I claim, the main culprits have been Darrell Hair and Ross Emerson. But they are not alone. From the safety of their offices several Australian media personnel have encouraged firm action in the ‘trenches’. This was illustrated in the ‘campaign’ from circa January 15th 1999 which claimed that several Australian umpires officiating at the limited-over games had presented concerns over Muralitharan’s action to the ICC referee, Pieter Van der Meuwe. This was explicitly denied by the ICC in a statement issued around the 17th January 1999.

So, who started this set of stories? and which mediemen disseminated this rubbish? It is presumably this back-

BOOK REVIEW

CROSSCURRENTS

SRI LANKA and AUSTRALIA at CRICKET

Michael Roberts and Alfred James

In the mid 70’ a seductive Lankan lass asked an English reporter to be kind to Sri Lanka when they eventually made the grade and played at Lords. The Sri Lankan team’s Australian tour in 1995/96 witnessed many unkind moments. Indeed, it matched the notorious bodyline series for its plethora of flashpoints and heated exchanges. In an incisive outline of these episodes Roberts does not hesitate to skirt the unkind in his analysis of Australian responses. His provocative review encompasses the Australian decision to skip the match in Sri Lanka during the World Cup in the months that followed. It also reaches beyond the cricket field in unpacking the characteristics of Australian popular culture through the practices of its cricketers, umpires, sports commentators and the occasional public comment.

The anthology records Australia’s contribution to Sri Lankan cricket at numerous moments, notably in 1981 when the country was accorded full Test playing status. Articles on Sri Lanka’s cricketing history and Alf James’s statistical record of Australian tours of Ceylon and Lanka substantiate the background of interaction. The whistle-stop

ground that led Mike Coward, ironically in the same issue of the *Australian* (but page 24) as that with Conn’s essay, to suggest that “there was a sense of Emerson’s action being premeditated.”

I remain wary of conspiracy theories. But Coward is better located than I am to make calls of this sort. What such a claim reinforces in my mind is the degree to which a number of Australian journalists have actively promoted an ideological and purist line that has endorsed the cleansing line of action taken by Hair and Emerson. The latter have power with responsibility – so that they face consequences. The pressmen seem to have power without responsibility. ●

matches in Colombo are indexed by reports on the matches played by Bradman’s and Hassett’s teams – including accounts by Fingleton, O’Reilly and Learie Constantine. In this small way this book is yet another epitaph to a leading cricketing character, Sir Donald Bradman.

The book concludes its survey with a celebratory outline of the Sri Lankan cricket team’s performance at the World Cup, in part through comments from non-partisan observers such as Peter Roebuck, Mike Selvey, Vijay Lokapally and Henry Blofeld. The latter is affectionately known in some circles as ‘the Blo-fly’—because he is ‘a character’. This anthology introduces many a ‘character’ in its passages. But it is also a story of character assassination and character building.

Its prosework is supported by 36 illustrations interspersed within the text. These include cartoons, but are mostly pictures. Perhaps the most interesting of these are those of the Australian cricketers of yesteryear and their wives in Colombo, though the most striking are selections from the World Cup. From a particular point of view the most significant item in this collection is the reproduction of a single-page leaflet circulated by Tam-il militants who demonstrated at the Oval in London during the incident-full Australian match against Sri Lanka in 1975. This is but one mark of the several ways in which issues of ethnicity, race and politics are threads that course through the book.

Walla Walla Press and Mobitel (ISBN 0 9587079 4 4) and is priced at 19.95 Aus/dollars, 168 pages. Postage & Handling within Australia: \$6.00; Postage & Handling by air to other sites: \$12.00; ORDERS: either to “Michael Roberts” 1 Woodlark Grove, Glenalta, Australia 5052; Inquiries: mroberts@camtech.net.au; Or refer to Walla Walla Press Information at wallasales@asc.zipworld.com.au; In Sri Lanka try Mobitel, 5th floor 108, Ramanayake Mw, Colombo 2 - fax: 94 1 438 354 tel 330 550

15 APRIL 1999

Is the JVP Prepared to Disown its Pol Potist Past?

Amaradasa Fernando questions the democratic credentials of the JVP which appears to be emerging as a noteworthy force in Sri Lankan politics as evidenced by its performance in the recently held Provincial Council elections.

The JVP seems to change its ideological course with the same ease that one would doff off an out-worn coat. But is this a change of tactics or is this a change of ideology? To those who are unacquainted with politics, particularly the politics of the Left, this new move to embrace democratic politics should be viewed with scepticism and as a sham, knowing its past record. One is reminded of what Hitler told the democratic world when he tore up the Munich Agreement with Chamberlain in 1936. He said with cynicism, that "it was just a piece of paper". We shall come to this later.

Today we find the UNP espousing what has come to be popularly called "gentleman's" politics. (This is of course a tacit admission that they were ungentlemanly, and no one will deny this!) The hallmark of gentleman's politics was Mr. Dudley Senanayake's. We are told that is what Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe is aspiring to, having admitted the UNP, has sinned. Yet he seems to be reluctant to take the next logical step, wear sack cloth and ashes and say, "we are sorry" and seek the forgiveness of the people for the Beeshanaya when he was a Cabinet Minister during Mr. Premadasa's Presidency.

The politics of Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, have gained currency as "Machiavellian". Both Mr. Premadasa's and Rohana Wijeweera's politics have come to be known as politics of Beeshanaya. By his admission, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe has done one better than the JVP, which has so far not done any self-criticism. Tilvin Silva, the present leader says that we had done (podi podi deval), "small small things". But he is not prepared to disown Rohana Wijeweera who still remains his revered leader, when the whole world knows that he was not second to Pol Pot.

But one may ask, what about the politics of Chandrika Kumaratunga? Keeping aside the economic policies

and the corruption of some sections of the PA Government, not even her bitterest enemies will say there is Beeshanaya prevalent today. The only fly in the ointment being the Wayamba election which has made her hand down her head in shame and she made her reprimand in anguish that this was because of some meeharak in her party. If she cannot turn around the 17 years of Beeshanaya and usher in a just and civil society which she promises to, then the muse of history will confine her also to its dust bin. She will have to blame only herself for such a situation.

Let us get on with the politics of the JVP. Most people have short memories, but can one forget what Wijeweera said after his release from prison by President JRJ on November 11, 1977? At his first public appearance at the Town Hall, he dropped his call for an armed struggle. He said that the JVP was for the democratic road, as Tilvin Silva is saying now.

This honeymoon with democracy went on for some time, after which the JVP became a recognised political party, contesting the District Council Elections in May 1981. The party won a few seats, gaining popularity among the students and the lumpen proletariat, though not the working class proper, who were with the Left parties and the SLFP and the UNP and the CWC. Rohana Wijeweera himself contested the Presidential Election in 1982 in the now famous "Referendum."

In 1983 came the ethnic riots, orchestrated by a UNP Minister, though in fairness it must be said that JRJ had no direct hand in this. He turned a blind eye to the murder, mayhem and arson directed against the Tamils by those who called themselves whom "Sinhala patriots". They have today raised their ugly heads under different labels in the guise of saving the Sinhala nation and the Buddha Sasana. The JVP, CP and the NLSSP were proscribed. This was a foolish and an unjustified act by JRJ, which made the JVP go underground, while the CP and NLSSP fought this unfair act by democratic means. One of the things the present leadership says in defence of resorting to arms was because of the state repression that followed. Once again the JVP thought that

there was no way of throwing out an undemocratic government was by the force of arms. A short cut to power by revolution through terrorism. The Government's repression only gave an alibi to the JVP to get back to its old ways.

Though Wijeweera called himself a Marxist-Leninist, he was basically a fascist and a terrorist as later events showed him to be. There was a serious split in the party over this new turn. The majority of the Central Committee was against this adventurism which they said would end in disaster. Several leading members such as Nandana Marasinghe, Jamis Atugala, Mahinda Pathirana, Nandasena of Kalutara, and Hunugama Simon were murdered by the JVP killer squads headed by Saman Piyasiri Fernando alias Keerthi Wijebahu known as a anadena niladari, commander-in-chief of Deshapremi Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (DJVP). Of the other top leadership of like Kelly Senanayake (publisher of Yukthiya), Sunanda Deshapriya (editor of Yukthiya), Lionel Bopage (then secretary of the JVP), Mahinda Wijesekara (now Deputy Minister, Victor Ivan alias Podi Athula (now editor Ravaya), Bandara Tennakoon, Patrik Fernando, and Nimal Maharage, all principal accused in the CJC trial, all of whom served prison sentences, and many others are alive but remain out of the JVP. Only Somawansa Amarasinghe of the old leadership remains.

The present leadership of the JVP of Tilvin Silva and Vimal Weerawansa were unknown in 1971. This situation was like when Stalin who by 1948 had got rid of almost the entire Central Committee of Lenin which led the Bolshevik Revolution. Most of them had been murdered.

From 1987-89 the law of Rohana Wijeweera prevailed. His promise of democratic politics made after his release was only a sham. The leopard would not change its spots. The signing of the Indo-Ceylon Accord and coming of the Indian Peace Keeping Force and the proscription of the party gave an alibi to the JVP to return to violence. What happened is history. Hold ups, bank robberies, murder of several MPs, District Ministers such as G. V. S. de Silva, Merrill Kariyawasam and Lionel Jayatilleke. There were several audacious attacks on the defence establishments such as the Kotelawala Defence Academy, the Katunayake Air Force Base Camp and Panagoda Army Camp. They were organised by the leader of the Desapremi Janatha Viap-

araya (DJV) Saman Piyasiri Fernando alias Keerthi Wijebahu. There was an unsuccessful grenade attack on the lives of the entire UNP Cabinet meeting in Parliament, where MP Keerthi Abeywickrema was killed, while Minister Lalith Athulathmudali was seriously injured. Intellectuals such as Dr. Stanley Wijesundera, Prof. Patuwathavithane VCs of Colombo and Moratuwa universities were murdered. So were artistes and TV broadcasters such as Thevis Guruge, Chairman of the ITN, an old man of 65, Premakeerthi de Alwis the popular TV announcer, Sagarika Gomes a popular singer and TV personality, who fell at the hands of the JVP killers.

So did Vijaya Kumaratunga. This is admitted in the leaflet produced here - "Why we want Vijaya (to his death)". It is signed by the Commander against the enemies of the Fatherland. Which sometimes called itself DJVP. Thus among those who were brutally killed were student leader Daya Pathirana, whose only crime was to lead the Independent Students' Federation which dared to challenge the JVP Inter University Student's Federation.

They did not spare even Buddhist

monks such as the Venerable Kotikawatte Saddatissa Thera, who was a member of the SLMP of Vijaya. Some may have forgotten the JVP barbarism, which was hard to beat. They terrorised the civilian population, when they could not turn their terror on the armed forces and the police.

Sometimes when they wanted to have a hartal of a whole city or a province, the people had to obey. The military would request the people defy their orders. But the people feared the JVP more than them. When the DJV ordered that there shall be no light burning, with all doors and windows closed. Watching television was banned. Their regular stoppages of trains and buses. Political opponents of the JVP were killed for no other reason than that so and so was a UNPer, SLFPer, SLMPer or for the crime of being a leftist he was murdered and his decapitated head stuck on a pole outside his gate.

Sometimes the dead man's decapitated head was sent to the murdered man's wife as a present! To some others they were more merciful, they were killed and hung on lamp posts at street junctions. Their dead were not allowed a decent funeral. The graves were to be

shallow one of not more than three feet!

There were 21 thousand prisoners of reported JVP connection who spent a good part of their lives either in jail or in refugee camps. Where are they today? The large majority of them are outside the JVP. Its membership today consists of mostly young people who do not know the heinous crimes of the JVP. The argument of the present leadership is that the DJVP which committed most of the crime were not done by the JVP. But the question posed is how was it that after the arrest and murder of Rohana Wijeweera and General Secretary Gamanayake on 13th November 1988, that Saman Piyasiri Fernando the Anadena Niladari of the DJVP took over the leadership of the JVP and as secretary only a few days after the death of Rohana and Gamanayake?

The purpose of this article is that the JVP should come out clean denouncing Rohana Wijeweera and what was done under his leadership, the same way as did the Germans of today who have thrown out Hitler and Nazism, lock, stock and barrel. Then perhaps the present day JVP may be entitled to be viewed differently.

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BOOK REVIEW**Hinduism in Sri Lanka**

Ilatu Intusamaya Varalaru (History of Hinduism in Sri Lanka) (Part 1),
S K Sitrapalam, University of Jaffna Publication, Thirunelvely,
1996, pp558, Price Rs 465.

Reviewed by Professor P Shanmugam

Department of Ancient History & Archaeology, University of Madras

The beginnings of the religious history of Sri Lanka is usually traced to the advent of Buddhism. The innumerable Brahmi inscriptions record the activities of Buddhist monks and lay worshippers. The famous Sri Lankan chronicles, the Mahavamsa and the Dipavamsa also narrate the history of early Buddhism. The numerous archaeological and literary evidences were well utilised for the study of the origin and spread of Buddhism by the several authorities like E W Adikaram, M B Ariyapala, G C Mendis and S Paranavitana.

Hinduism was another religious movement patronised in Sri Lanka. It was the oldest religious order with marked regional differences in India. Though it existed several centuries earlier to Buddhism, its spread to the neighbouring countries has not been well documented. However, the available evidence shows that the tenants of Hinduism were deeply rooted in Sri Lanka even before the introduction of Buddhism. This aspect has been neglected by some historians. In this well researched book, S K Sitrapalam has systematically analysed this shortcoming utilising the latest archaeological material.

The origin and spread of Hinduism in Sri Lanka from the earliest times to 500 AD, the various aspects of Hinduism in Sri Lanka and the deities were studied in the ten chapters. The author has quoted extensively from the Early Brahmi inscriptions and the native Pali literature. He has admirably shown that before the advent of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, there existed native religious practices. The Yaksha and Naga cults, the fertility cult, tree and animal worship were common among the native Sri Lankans. According to him these religious cults were derived from the Hindu religious practices from India.

Some of these cults were later adopted by the Sri Lankan Buddhists.

Another aspect which attracts our attention is the several names of Hindu deities found in the Early Brahmi inscriptions. These inscriptions found in different Buddhist sites record numerous donations. Names of monks like Siva, Maha Siva, Parumaka Siva, Kumara, Mahasena, Visaka, Vinu, Baladeva, Tuka (Durga), Paduma (Padma), and Sri (Lakshmi) undoubtedly suggest the association of Hinduism. A long list of Hindu names collected from Early Brahmi inscriptions is given as an appendix which will serve as a useful source. Similarly the names of Kings like Girikanda Siva and Muta Siva also suggest the existence of Hindu gods in early Sri Lanka.

In this book the author has extensively quoted the archaeological material. The Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and the coins with the image of Lakshmi issued by the Kings during this period suggest the popularity of Hinduism. All these evidences have been utilised by

the author to suggest that Hinduism was introduced before the advent of Buddhism.

Though Hinduism could have reached Sri Lanka from different regions of India, the author emphasises a greater role for the Dravidian speakers due to its proximity to Sri Lanka. Most of the native cults of Tamilnadu could have reached Sri Lanka earlier than Buddhism. In fact the prehistoric and megalithic materials found in Sri Lanka suggest even earlier contacts with the Dravidian speakers, more particularly with the Tamil country. Some of the popular beliefs in the Sangam works like the worship of the Kadamba tree, offering of sacred food, lighting lamps in front of the deity etc., have been adopted in Sri Lanka. The Velan Veriyadai and other forms of Muruga cult were also accepted in Sri Lanka. These adaptations could easily suggest the direct contact with the Tamil region.

Some of the Saiva temples in Sri Lanka had a very high antiquity. On the basis of Tamil literature and traditions, the author suggests that the Siva temples in Anuradhapura, Tirukonamalai, Tirukketisvaram, and Erakaville were established by the Hindus of the Tamil region probably during the early centuries of the Christian era. The antiquity of the Muruga temple in Katirkama and its association with the Tamil Muruga cult has been well discussed. The association of this temple with Buddhism has been rightly expressed as to the conversion of the devotees of Muruga to Buddhism at a later period.

SMUGGLING STILL ON?

Reports suggest that Sri Lanka's north, north-western and eastern provinces continue to use diesel and kerosene illegally supplied from southern Tamil Nadu. This has set alarm bells ringing in the Tamil Nadu government and police establishments. Huge quantities of kerosene, diesel, petrol and hundreds of bottles of dextrose were seized by the state's Coastal Security Group police in the recent months. Apart from these, packs of bottles of sodium chloride solution, sterile water, needles for intravenous injections were washed ashore at Thondi and Dhanushkodi. On March 7, the Sri Lan-

kan naval personnel arrested, near Nachikuda in Lankan waters, six Lankans and three persons hailing from Tamil Nadu and seized from them diesel and petrol. This was followed by harassment of Rameswaram fishermen at the hands of the Lankan navy, after which Rameswaram fishermen struck work for a few days.

PERUMAL BACK

EPRLF leader Varadaraja Perumal has returned to India a few weeks ago after a brief stay in Colombo where he was learnt to have been looking for a role in the island's politics. Perumal, whose stay in India is about to reach a decade, is now back at the Ajmer and Chanderi forts of Rajasthan, according to official sources in Delhi.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional partner for daughter, 31, British educated medical doctor. Send details. M 1099 c/o Tamil Times.

Friend seeks suitable partner for professional Tamil gentleman, British citizen in his fifties, for marriage or companionship. Ladies without dependent children also considered. Recent photo appreciated (will be returned). Confidentiality assured. Please write with full details. M 1100 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu Uncle seeks professional groom for slim niece, 27, read English and Law at UK universities, solicitor in leading English law firm in London. Send horoscope, details. M 1101 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu mother seeks overseas groom with permanent residence for pleasant daughter, 29, graduate teacher in Maldives. Send horoscope, details. M 1102 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu mother seeks partners for her British born son, 30, Management Accountant and good looking daughter, doctor, 29. Send photo details. M 1103 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek partner for daughter, 33, Canadian citizen, widow within few months, no encumbrances, was medical student Jaffna, in employment now. M 1104 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu Doctor sister seeks educated partner for professional sister, British, 34, Divorcee, no encumbrances. Send details with horoscope. M 1105 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Sachchithananthan son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Murugupillai of 39 St. Martins Close, Erith, Kent DA18 4DZ and Thusitha daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Thuraiarajah of 39 Mayville Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 2HU on 3.4.99 at Loxford School Hall, Ilford, Essex.

Vijayakumar son of the late Mr. R. Thuraiappah and Mrs. Thuraiappah of Atchuvaley South, Sri Lanka and Aruntha daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Amirthalingam of 94 Kempton Road, Eastham, London E6 2LB on 3.4.99 at Tolworth Recreation Centre, Surbiton, Surrey.

Shiam Sundar son of Mrs. P. Pasupathy of 1250 Bridle Towne Circle # 1510, Scarborough, Ont. M1W 2V1, Canada and late Mr. Pasupathy and Sri Shanthi daughter of Mr. & Mrs. A. Veluppillai of 3275 Sheppard Ave. E. # 308, Scarborough, Ont. M1T 3P1, Canada on 10.04.99 at Sri Ganesha Temple Hall, Richmond Hill, Canada.

Dr. Loshana daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sivapathasundaram of 1 Percival Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 2AH and Dr. Matthew son of Mr. & Mrs. James of Marwicks, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6HG with the blessings of H.H. Namananda Giri Swamikal on Monday, the 5th April 99 at Shri Pandurangan- Rukmayee Temple Complex, G.A. Trust, Thennangur, Vandavasi, South India.

OBITUARIES



Mrs. Puvaneswary Canagasabai (81), beloved wife of Mr. S. Canagasabai, Retired Supervisor of Textiles, Sri Lanka; loving daughter of late Mr. & Mrs. Ponnampalam; loving niece of late Sinnapillai Acca of Uduvil Girls' School; loving mother of Somasegaram (Australia), Gunasegaram, Indradevi, Renugadevi (all of London), Jeyasegaram, Sandasegaram (both of Australia), Ranjanadevi (London) and Pararajasegaram (USA); loving mother-in-law of Selvathy, Pathmavathy, Narendran, late Jeyarajah, Pakialuxmy, Krishnavalli, Velauthan and Maria; loving grandmother of 18 grandchildren - Pamathy, Nalayini, Kajen, Ganen, Subashini, Suganthini, Subothini, Dr. Partheepan, Paranthaman, Kirijah, Jeyandan, Jenetta, Lusan, Sangeetha, Krishan, Prathika, Nandika and Mariana Sophia passed away on 3rd April 1999 in London and was cremated on 7th April 99.

The members of her family express their sincere thanks to all friends and relations, who expressed their sympathy and attended the funeral services. - 110 Deans Lane, Edgware, Middx. HA8 9NR. Tel: 0181 959 2681.



Mrs. Maheswary Kanagarat-

nam (77) beloved wife of the late Mr. Karthigesu Kanagaratnam (P.H.I.) of Kokuvil East; loving mother of Mahendran (Sri Lanka), Sarojinidevi, Rajendran, Rajini, Kulendran, Raveendran (all of UK) and Puvanendran (Canada); sister of Thedchenamoorthy, late Sivapragasam and Puvaneswary; mother-in-law of Sugirtha, Yogaratham, Kamalini, Gunasuntharam, Pavalam, Rathy and Jeyanthi; loving grandmother of Pradeepan, Prasanthan, Sanjeevan, Dhamayanthy, Nirooshun, Yalini, Nimalan, Kavitha, Mayooraan, Soruban, Ruben, Prameela and Bindhuja passed away peacefully on 3rd April 1999 and was cremated at Mortlake Crematorium, Richmond on 10th April.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them during the period of great sorrow. - 85 Cole Park Road, Twickenham, Middx. TW1 1HX. Tel: 0181 892 2084.

Born: 17.12.1920



Died: 17.03.1999

Kanagasingham - Mrs. Sivapoopathy, wife of late V. Kanagasingham (Teacher, Perameshwara College, Jaffna); youngest daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. Muhandiram Mutthiah; sister of the late Thanabalasuriyar, late Muthubalasuriyar, late Dr. Ratnabalasuriyar, late Sangarabalasuriyar, late Shanmugabalasuriyar, late Dr. Saravanabalasuriyar, late Mrs. Somasundaram and late Mrs. Kanapathipillai; mother of Dr. Nandhabalan and Dr. Nirmala; mother-in-law of Kalyani and Dr. Subanandan; much loved grandmother of Arjuna, Abirami, Meera and Prasantha, all of UK passed away peacefully

Continued on page 31

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Continued from page 30

on 17th March 1999. The remains were cremated according to Hindu rites in London on 20th March 1999. - No. 1 Bulmer Gardens, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. HA3 0PA, UK.



Leelavathy (83) wife of late Mr. V. Thillainadarajah of Vanarponnai, passed away peacefully after a very brief illness in Wellawatte, Colombo on 23rd March 1999. She was a religious, caring and an unassuming lady, and lead a peaceful life in the midst of many difficulties. She leaves behind her children Visvendran (UK), Visvakumar (Colombo), Vimaladevi (UK), Lalithadevi (Matale), Jeyadevi, (Battaramulle), Jeyendran (Saudi Arabia/UK), Jeyakumar (Malaysia) and Thiyakesan-Seelan (UK); sons-in-law Lingamayagam, Nitsingham and Thamocharampillai; daughters-in-law Suprabha, Arunthavarani, Yogarani and Angela; grand children Shankar, Latha, Aravinth, Vimalraj, Eric-Nimalraj, Victor-Sreeraj, Subashini, Sivarubini, Nimal, Thivakaran, Premasorubini, Karttick, Jegan, Janani and Jayani, key grandsons-in-law Mathew and Bhagavan and key granddaughters-in-law Jyothi, Bianca and Jane, two great grand children Pavan and Alisha.

The funeral took place according to Hindu rites at Kanatte, Colombo on 24th March 1999. Colombo residence: 25/2 Alexandria Road, Colombo 6, Tel: 592076.

'The one who does what should be done, untroubled by results of work, at once renounces and yet acts, not one who has no rites or work.'

(The Bhagavad Gita - meditation verse 1).

She obeyed and followed the above to the end.

The members of the family thank all the relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy, floral tributes and assisted them during the period of grief. Contact in UK, son T. Visvendran No.1, Trubys Garden, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes MK6 5HA. Tel: 01908 241147.



Mrs. Annamuththu Kuddipillai (92), beloved wife of the late Ramalingam Kuddippillai of Raja Veethy, Nallur, Jaffna; beloved mother of Kidner (Australia), Packiam (Nallur), Kandasamy (Poonakary), and Puvaneswary (Colombo); mother-in-law of Kanagammah (Australia), Shanmuganathan (Nallur), Vadivambihai (Poonakary) and the late Sellachamy (Nallur) passed away peacefully at Nallur on 17.2.99 (Wednesday) and was cremated at Chemmany on 18.2.99. She also leaves behind her grand children, great grand children and a great great grand child.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - K. Kidner, 10 Fairway Drive, Warwick 4370, Queensland, Australia. Tel: 0161746 612969.



Mr. Vaithilingam Sivagnana-

sundram (Churchill), beloved husband of Nageswary (Lily); loving father of Ranjan, Mohan (Canada), Thayan and Gowri; father-in-law of Renuka, Janaki (Canada), Premini and Ajan Pasupati; loving grandfather of Maathangi, Sangavi and Rianjitha; brother of Dr. Sivapalasundram (Melbourne), Gnanalakshmi Vaheisvaran, Yogalakshmi Maniarpillai, Jeyalakshmi Sivasubramaniyam, late Sivapathasundram (Malaysia), late Thangalakshmi Selvarajah, and late Rasalakshmi Nalliah; brother-in-law of Pavalakodi Sivapalasundram, Vaheivaran, late Maniarpillai, Sivasubramaniyam, late Mahayogeswari (Malaysia), late Selvarajah, and Nalliah (Canada) passed away in Sydney on 11th April 1999 and was cremated on 13th April.

The members of his family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and helped them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - 1 Paradise Place, St. Clair, NSM 2759, Australia.

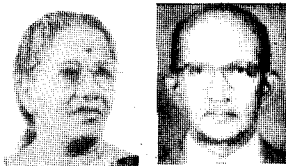
E-mail:
thayan@ozemail.com.au
Tel: 612 9834 4179 Fax: 612 9670 1085.

IN MEMORIAM

In everloving memory of **Mr. Vellupillai Nadarajah**, formerly Director, Ceylon School of Social Work; son of late Mr. & Mrs. Vellupillai of Chetty Street, Nallur, Sri Lanka; son-in-law of the late Mr. K. Muthulingam and Mrs. Muthulingam of Tellipallai, Sri Lanka on the eighth anniversary of his passing away on 04.04.91.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Muthu Ambikai; daughter Dr. Sakunthala; son Dr. Ravin-

dran; son-in-law Dr. Suresh Thayalan; daughter-in-law Meera; grandchildren Arjun, Nisha and Sathya. - 11 Baronia Croft, Highwoods, Colchester, Essex CO4 5EF.

In Loving Memory of Our Beloved

Amma
Appa
Leelawathy Saravanamuttu Ilankanathan Ilankanathan
Born: 24.08.32 Born: 31.10.22
Rest: 28.04.96 Rest: 18.02.94
You are greatly missed forever
And are in the thoughts of
All your family and friends.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by your ever-loving daughter Urmila, son-in-law Kuha, grand daughters Shobi and Ranji. - 58 Ringwood, South Bretton, Peterborough PE3 9SH. Tel: 01733 262760.



In loving memory of **Mr. Visvalingam Sivasubramaniam**, Principal Emeritus Skanda Varodaya College, Chunnakam on the third anniversary of his passing away on 26.4.96.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Sironmany; children Dr. Sivanandarajah, Sivagnanasunderam, Dr. Sivapalan, Sivathasan, Sivaratnam, Sivamanoharan and Sivaloshanadevi; son-in-law Thavarajah; daughters-in-law Manimehaladevi, Anandhi, Yogeswary, Kamaladevi, Supathiradevi and Devahi; grandchildren Sutharshan, Priyatharshini, Suseenthiran, Suhanthan, Sutharshika, Suloshan, Suthaharan, Sulak-

cont:nued on page 32

In Memoriam



In cherished memory of **Mr. Chinnathampy Rasiah** on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 24.04.94.

**Deep in our hearts you will always stay
Loved and remembered every day**

Greatly loved, deeply missed and always remembered by his sorrowing wife Gunawathy; beloved children Rajan and Rajini; loving daughter-in-law Janaki; son-in-law Lakshman; grandchildren Thabojan, Prashanth and Sulakshan; sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces.

● 14 Greenbriar Avenue, Wheelers Hill, Melbourne Vic 3150 Australia.

● 3818 Campolindo Drive, Moraga, 94556 California, USA.

In Loving Memory of



Rest 23rd March 1998

Mr. T. Poopalasingam (Shroff), retired Chief Shroff, Bank of Ceylon; Batticaloa; father of late Mr. P. Vijayakumar and father-in-law of late Mrs. Arunthavarani Vijayakumar on the first anniversary of his passing away on 23rd March 98.

**Gently with love your memory is kept,
Your affection and kindness,
We will never forget.
You are always in our thoughts
And for ever in our hearts.**

Remembered with love and affection by your loving wife Thanapakiyam; sons Jeyakumar, Balakumar; daughters Vijayarani, Jayarani, Indrani, Kalaivani Kavitha; sons-in-law Sabanathan, Rajan; daughters-in-law Vathani, Brinda and grand children Niroshan, Niroshini and Klaudia..

- 23 Covington Road, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. Tel: 065 22040. Son/Brother Balakumar, 65 Beverley Gardens, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 9RB. Tel: 0181 904 6432.



Rest: 23rd February 1991

Mr. P. Vijayakumar (Viji), Former Technologist, National Paper Corporation, Valaichenai, husband of late Arunthavarani and son of late Mr. T. Poopalasingam on the eighth anniversary of his passing away on 23rd February 91.

Sadly, missed and fondly remembered by his loving children Niroshan and Niroshini; mother Mrs. T. Poopalasingam; brothers Jeyakumar, Balakumar; sisters Vijayarani, Jayarani, Indrani, Kalaivani, Kavitha; brothers-in-law Sabanathan, Rajan; sisters-in-law Vathani, Brinda and niece Klaudia..

Continued from page 31

shan, Arooran, Gajamohana, Gajaharan and Vaishna. - 135A Sudbury Avenue, Wembley, Middx. HA0 6AW. Tel: 0181 385 0477.



In loving memory of **Mrs. Grace Nagarathnam Rasiah** of Varuththalai-Vilan and Ilavalai; beloved wife of the late Mr. M.A. Rasiah (Former Headmaster) on the second anniversary of her passing away on 5th April 1997.

With fondest thoughts and prayers from her family. - 40 Hillingdon Road, Kingswood, Watford, Herts. WD2 6JG.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 1 South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Women's Front meets Tel: 0181 542 3285; Feast of St. Joseph.

May 1 6.30pm Tamil Performing Arts Society celebrating 20 years of service presents a Children's Drama Festival of five plays at Greenford Town Hall, Ruislip Road, Greenford. Admission Free. All Welcome.

May 2 Feast of St. Athanasius.

May 8 Tamil Orphans Trust presents Variety Performance of Veena by students of Smt Sivatharini Sahadevan, Children's Drama by Tamil Performing Arts Society and Dance by students of Smt Rajani Sureshkumar at Acton Town Hall, London W3. Tel: 0181 908 1101/422 2943; SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

May 9 12.30pm SCOT Annual Lunch with Guest Speaker at Acton Town Hall, High Street, Acton, London W3 6NE. For tickets and details Tel: 0181 904 9227/952 7249.

May 11 Eekathasi.

May 12 Pirathosam.

May 14 Amavasai; Feast of St. Matthias.

May 15 Karthigai.

May 16 6.00pm Shruthi Laya Shangam presents Bharatha Natyam solo by Anandavalli with live orchestra at Logan Hall, 20 Bedford Way, London

WC1H 0AL. Tel: 0181 778 0633/767 2229.

May 18 Sathurthi.

May 20 Shashti.

May 22 SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

May 25 Eekathasi.

May 27 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury.

May 28 Vaikasi Visakam.

May 29 Full Moon.

May 31 9.00am Festival of Cricket at Norman Park, Bromley. Tel: 0181 675 3529/01536 517288; Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/4608.

May 8 5.00pm Talk on 'Prakit Languages of Ancient India' by Prof. Krishna Arjun Wadekar from Pune. All welcome.

May 9 5.00pm talk on 'Some Interesting Episodes from the Upanishads' also by Prof. Wadekar. All welcome.

May 9 6.00pm Mohiniattam and Contemporary Dance by Priyadarshini Ghosh Shone & Parvati Nair.

May 29 6.30pm Bharatanatyam by Shobana, the popular actress from India.

May 31 10.00am to 5.00pm Whole day Seminar on Vaastu Sastra by Dr. Prabhat Poddar from India. All welcome.

Myuresh - Miruthangam Debut



A very large number of friends and relatives of the Skanthalaban family had gathered at the Broadway Theatre, Barking, Essex to witness and bless twelve year old Myuresh on the day of his graduation concert.

The Miruthangam unlike Veena, Violin and the Flute is rarely played as a solo instrument and is mainly treated as an indispensable accompaniment for vocal, instrumental and Bharata Natya performances. Therefore whenever a student has a maiden concert on Miruthangam, it is usually in the form of a vocal recital. Inviting a high calibre artiste to perform a vocal recital with a young student on the Miruthangam is usually a problem faced by many parents.

But young Myuresh came out with flying colours as he sat with confidence on the stage with a vocalist, who is one of the best known in the field of South Indian Carnatic Music from Madras. The vocalist is Sri K. Rajasekharan - a scholar of the Madras University and a Diploma holder of the Adayar Kalakshetra. Listening to him to the accompaniment of Myuresh's young fingers on the Miruthangam playing with the ease of a master was indeed a pleasure.

As Smt Pushkala Gopal said in her speech, Rajasekharan was exhibiting his Guru's style. Therefore listening to Rajasekharan's display of 'M.D. Ramanathan style' was indeed a double bonus for the invited audience - watching this great musician accompanying a young artiste on Miruthangam, but carefully guiding the youngster.

Myuresh was trained by Trinco's Muthu Sivarajah - who is Trincomalee's greatest gift to the London Cultural Scene. His talent and ability to impart knowledge and the rapport he has with his students even long after their Arangetram speaks volumes of his exemplary qualities in this imperfect western world of Gurus and Sishyas.

The programme started with a Varnam-

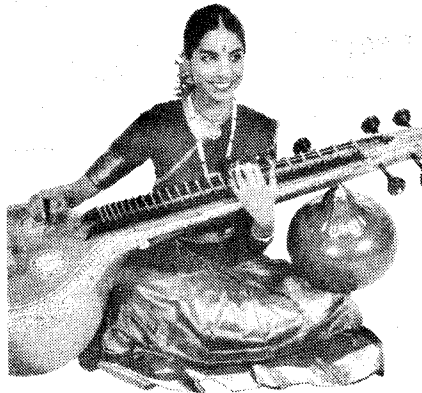
(Sarasuda). There were three compositions by Saint Thiagarajah - (Marugelara, Pakkala Nilabadi and Gnanamo Thaharara) and three Tamil songs - (Thaye Thripura Sundari by Periya Sami Thootan, Mayil Vaahana by Papanasam Sivan and Kani Nilam Vendum by Supramaniya Barathiyar).

The accompanists were Thiuvvaru Sri L. Kothadapani - Violin, Bangalore Sri R.N.Prakash - Gadam and Sri K.Sithaparanathan - Morsing. Sri Ravi Sanguhan with his mellifluous voice compared the show.

Unlike many other performers, in particular some Bharata Natya dancers, who hang up their costumes after their Arangetram, we would like to see more of Myuresh in performances on the London Stage. I am sure that this view would be shared by his parents and of course his Guru himself

Wimal Sockanathan.

Priyanthi's Veena Arangetram



I have viewed the video cassette of the Arangetram of Selvi Priyanthi. I had listened to her playing last year and the progress she had made during the span of one year is remarkable. Her rendering of Varnam, Kirtanam, Pallavi and Bhajans are very pleasing to hear, and the support she had from the accompanists has elevated the programme to a high concert level.

She played the Raga Hindolam step by step from depth to its height, followed by Keerthanam, Mamavathu Sri Saraswathi, composed by Mysoor Vasudevachariar, set to Adi thalam. Her playing was of a high standard. The Ragam Thanam Pallavi set to Keeravani Kandathirupudai thalam, composed by Smt Sivatharini, created another climax along with Ragamalika Swaram.

I congratulate my student, the Guru Smt Sivatharini Sahadevan who has untiringly coached Selvi Priya to this high concert standard. I am sure that if Selvi Priya con-

tinues to learn in this manner, she will become a good concert artiste.

I also congratulate the parents for taking so much interest in this Fine Art and placing their daughter under the able guidance of Sivatharini and providing all the facilities to Selvi Priya to learn this unique 'Divine Instrument' the Veena. Selvi Priya should be proud of having such understanding parents who encouraged her to learn this Fine Art. With best wishes,

Tanjor K. P.Sivanandam,
Retired Professor & Head,
Department of Music, Dean, Faculty of
Fine Arts, Annamalai University.

Tamilnet Decisions

The TamilNet conference recently hosted by the Tamil Nadu government resolved to promote the use of the Tamil phonetic keyboard in computers and also modify the existing UNICODE with a new character encoding system for Tamil language. Other proposals made by Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi include establishment of a Virtual Tamil Varsity software development fund and an agreement with the London-based WorldTel of technocrat Sam Pitroda to set up 1,500 internet access centres all over Tamil Nadu in the next three years.

LeftWord Books

Shocked by the gains made by the rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party in the Indian media and public sphere, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has launched a new publishing house, LeftWord, to offer a non-doctrinaire view of current topics and issues. Spearheaded by party politburo member Prakash Karat, the publishing house will be on the lines of the British 'New Left Books, Polity and Verso publishing companies. The CPI(M) thus hopes to make a dent in the liberal-democratic mindscape which is being hijacked by the BJP. Coinciding with this is the party's attempt to build a social research academy in Kerala, named after the late EMS Namboodiripad.

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For further details and application form please write to:

**The Co-ordinator Tamil Refugee Action Group,
1st Floor, 111 High Holborn, London WC1V 6JS.
Tel: 0171 405 4152. Fax: 0171 405 4303.**

Closing date for the applications is Friday 30 April 1999.

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