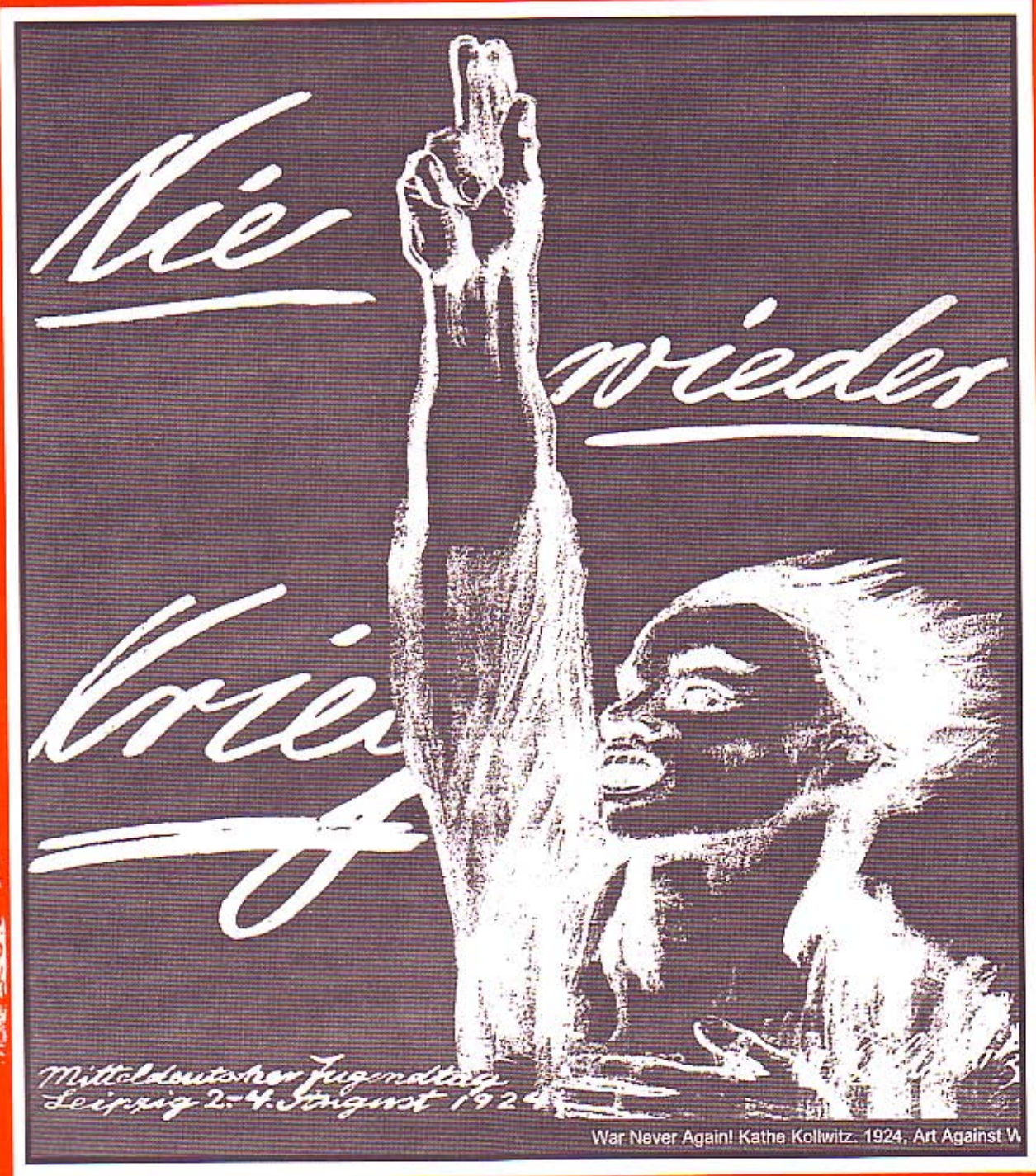


Tamil

TIMES



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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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Talking is the only option

Many believe that the latest developments have dealt a severe blow to the Norwegian initiative to bring the government and the LTTE to commence peace talks. The ending of the self-imposed four-month old ceasefire by the LTTE and the military offensive within hours launched by the Sri Lankan army resulting in hundreds of casualties on both sides have certainly created an atmosphere of continuing confrontation rather than a congenial climate for peace talks to begin in earnest.

In early April, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, told the island's parliament that the government was fully committed to the Norwegian-backed peace process and the date for the commencement peace talks with the LTTE would be announced by the end of April. However, it is now doubtful whether the expectation of the Foreign Minister will or can be realised.

When the LTTE offered a month-long truce last December, the government dismissed it as a ploy. The LTTE said it would observe its truce anyway and extended it three times on each occasion to last a month asking that the government should reciprocate its "gesture of goodwill" towards the Norwegian facilitated peace process.

The government committed a grave error in not responding to the LTTE's ceasefire and utilising this period positively to take the peace process forward. Summarily and repeatedly rejecting the LTTE's ceasefire as just a ploy and a stunt demonstrated the government's failure in appreciating the danger that such a stance posed to the whole peace process itself. If not a full-fledged ceasefire, at least an offer to suspend all offensive military operations with the aim of altering the military situation on the ground could have been made. The government today stands criticised for squandering the opportunity presented by LTTE's ceasefire period of four months.

What is worse is that the armed forces launched a major military offensive, 'Operation Agni Kheela', within hours of the LTTE ending its ceasefire. The post-facto excuse given by the army command for the offensive was that they made the first move to pre-empt an LTTE offensive. If this was the real intention, certainly it was not realised and the military suffered a humiliating defeat.

The reasons given for the fiasco of the military operation and the large number of casualties suffered by the army are the heavy resistance put up by the Tigers, their long-reaching artillery and mortar fire, and landmines laid in the area. Given years of experience of fighting with the Tigers, didn't army command know that Tigers do not normally runaway from battle, they lay landmines in areas from which they withdraw and that they possessed long range weapons? What the government and the politicians of the country must realise is that war is too important a matter to be left in the hands of generals.

An unacceptably large number of young persons battling on both sides have been killed or severely injured. Indulging in the familiar practice, repeated on this occasion too, of exaggerating the losses suffered by the other side and minimising their own is an exercise in self-deception. The latest fighting has again made one thing absolutely clear. That neither the Sri Lankan military nor the LTTE can inflict defeat on the other side and expect to win the war on the battlefield. If the parties are genuinely interested in ending the conflict, the only available option is to negotiate.

What offers hope in an otherwise unpromising situation is that the Norwegians have not given up their efforts to bring the government and the LTTE to the negotiating table. Norwegian peace envoy, Erik Solheim remains optimistic saying: "The peace process is in a preparatory and most vulnerable stage. Hopefully the parties will decide to start direct talks, but there are still issues which will have to be sorted out before that is possible." Placing the entire responsibility on both parties to take the process forward, Solheim says, "If in the future we are able to make some successes it will be because the parties are ready to move towards peace."

It seems clear that the imperative of talks between the Government and the LTTE has been recognised and accepted by both sides as absolutely essential for ending the conflict and restoring peace in the country. In this context, the parties should resist the temptation to publicly engage in a propagandist game of accusing and demonising each other for their past track record or questioning their current motives and bona fides. Such an exercise will only serve to poison the atmosphere. Not only a cessation of hostilities in the battlefield, but also a moratorium on the war of words is a must for a congenial atmosphere to be created for productive peace talks to begin.

Military Offensive Turns into a Major Misadventure

April 28 - The ambitious military offensive launched by the Sri Lankan armed forces against the Tamil Tigers turned into a misadventure by the fourth day with government troops pulling back from the newly captured areas. A statement from the military confirmed that had government troops had withdrawn to their original position.

The army admitted to losing five officers and 152 soldiers, while more than 860 soldiers being wounded in the four days of fierce fighting with the Tamil in the southern sector of the Jaffna peninsula in northern Sri Lanka. Military sources speaking in confidence estimated the death toll on the part of the military to be much higher than official statistics revealed.

According to the army statement, initially, troops very successfully advanced and captured the forward areas held by the Tigers, but due to very heavy artillery and mortar fired by the Tigers, troops were re-deployed in the original defense line because, preparation of the new defense line, that would have given little advantage, would have cost more in terms of lives.

The armed forces also abandoned their aim to expand the area under their control after suffering heavy casualty.

Sounding triumphant, a statement issued by the LTTE on 28 April stated that the "Sri Lankan army suffered a humiliating military debacle with unprecedented heavy casualties as their major offensive operation was repulsed and the troops, which penetrated the LTTE controlled territory, were pushed back to their original positions in the early hours of the morning today. In the ferocious counter-offensive assaults by the Tamil Tiger combat formations which lasted for four days, more than 400 Sri Lankan troops were killed and over 2000 injured. On our side 75 LTTE fighters, including female cadres, were killed."

The armed forces launched operation Agni Khela (fire flame) at 5.30 am on Wednesday, 24 April soon, barely

five hours after the unilateral cease-fire by the LTTE ended. A statement from the army said, "The Security Forces launched a fresh offensive this morning by 5:30 code named 'Operation AGNI KHELA I' in the JAFFNA Peninsula to clear terrorist positions and further expand the areas brought under Security Forces control in ELUTHU-MADDUVAL during Operation KINI-HIRA IX Stage II".

Thousands of soldiers marched ahead, supported by artillery, armour and air force broke out of forward positions in Eluthumadduval and Muhamalai on the neck of the peninsula. The air force pounded rebel hideouts and defenses in the southern sector of Jaffna peninsula. According to official sources, the offensive was launched to clear 'enemy positions' and further expand the Eluthumadduval defence line. The military did not identify the targeted area but the offensive was apparently aimed at regaining Pallai, a village in LTTE hands since May last year.

All the phases of the operation, including capturing and consolidating Elephant Pass, were carefully planned and organised for more than four months, military sources said. A large number of troops on the FDLs of the Nagar Kovil-Kilali axis were pulled out for retraining and to prepare for the Gini Khela series of operations since January this year, according to them.

The latest offensive was aimed at expanding the army's territorial control on the road towards Elephant Pass, a strategic corridor that connects the peninsula with the mainland. This was the same objective with which troops set out in January in a two-stage operation and captured eight sq km of territory. Pallai along with Elephant Pass, the isthmus gateway to the peninsula, were captured by the LTTE last year during a massive offensive that brought them to the gates of Jaffna city, 30 km (18 miles) to the northwest.

"Fierce fighting took place throughout the operation causing heavy casualties to both sides. Most of the casual-

ties suffered by the security forces were due to very heavy use of artillery and mortars by the terrorists. It was observed terrorists have used Anti Personnel Mines in an extensive manner to further restrict the movement of security forces," the army said.

Defending the decision to undertake the offensive, the army said that it was conducted to pre-empt the LTTE from launching a major attack on the armed forces. The operation was successful in destroying rebel deployments that posed a major threat to the defense lines of the security forces.

According to the armed forces, more than 180 LTTE combatants were killed and hundred wounded. The Tamil Tigers, on their part, claimed that more than 350 government soldiers were killed and more than 1,400 wounded in the battles. The guerrillas said that they had lost some 60 cadres.

Analysts said that if the army had launched the offensive to pre-empt the LTTE from launching its own offensive against the armed forces, the exercise had turned out to be a major disaster for the military, which suffered enormous casualties. The reversal would be a major setback to the armed forces, but would boost the morale of the Tamil Tigers, they added. "The rebels have beaten back the security forces in a conventional battle, which is a major gain for them," an unidentified military observer said.

With the casualty of security personnel mounting in the Jaffna offensive, urgent pleas for blood were issued by the Colombo National Hospital. The hospital was the scene of hectic activities throughout the day and night since the fighting began. Hundreds of wounded soldiers were airlifted from the battlefield and some of them were shifted to other hospitals due to shortage of space. All civilian flights to the north were stopped on the afternoon of 26 April as the Air Force said they needed the planes to fly down injured soldiers instead.

In a front-page advertisement, a newspaper put out an "SOS for blood" and asked the public to donate blood urgently and liberally.

By the second day of fighting, with 38 more soldiers succumbing to injuries, the total number of security personnel killed in the offensive rose to 70 and the number of injured had also

gone up to 340, according military sources who guessed LTTE casualty to be around at least 110. Although casualty of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was not known, the Voice of Tigers radio has said they had lost only 33 of their cadres.

By 28 April the defense ministry said a total of 126 soldiers were killed and placed rebel losses at 180 Tigers, killed in fighting since the fighting began on 25 April. Sporadic artillery exchanges continued Friday 27 April, but the main battles had died down, officials said.

The LTTE placed military losses at over 300 soldiers killed and 1,200 wounded. "The Government troops suffered heavy casualties as they ran into minefields and fell prey to accurate artillery and mortar fire by the Tamil Tigers," it said. The LTTE also refuted the Government claim, reiterated in a statement from the Defence Ministry, that Air Force bombers had successfully targeted two busloads of LTTE cadres. It said it had destroyed "several battle tanks and armoured vehicles" of the army.

Casualties started rising when several advancing SLA troop concentrations were hit by heavy artillery fire from the LTTE's gun positions in the rear, military sources in Jaffna said. A large number of these were airlifted to government hospitals in Colombo and Anurudhapura. Many of the seriously wounded were also sent to the government general hospitals in Jayawardhanapura and Ragama near Colombo. Others were admitted to provincial hospitals, according to medical sources.

Army Routed says LTTE

The statement issued by the LTTE on 28 April said, "The Sri Lankan army suffered a humiliating military debacle with unprecedented heavy casualties as their major offensive operation was repulsed and the troops, which penetrated the LTTE controlled territory, were pushed back to their original positions in the early hours of the morning today. In the ferocious counter-offensive assaults by the Tamil Tiger combat formations which lasted for four days, more than 400 Sri Lankan troops were killed and over 2000 injured. On our side 75 LTTE fighters, including female cadres, were killed.

LTTE commando units have started clearing the area, about 2 square kilometers, vacated by the army in the Eluthumadduval sector, in southern Jaffna. Decomposing bodies of soldiers and their weapons are scattered everywhere in the area, according to LTTE field commanders. The Tigers have already started cremating thoroughly disintegrated bodies of soldiers with military honours, and identifiable bodies will be handed over to the International Red Cross.

Just a few hours following the termination of the LTTE's four months old cease-fire in the early hours of the morning on the 24th April, thousands of Sri Lankan troops of the SLA's 52, 53 and 55 Divisions, in a major show of strength, supported by heavy artillery, multi-barrel rocket fire and aerial and naval bombardment, launched a major offensive assault against the LTTE positions in southern Jaffna. Directed by the Deputy Minister General Ratwatte and heads of the armed forces in the Palaly military complex, the Sri Lankan troops initially breached through the heavily entrenched LTTE's forward defence lines on three fronts along the Kilaly-Eluthumadduval - Nagar Kovil axis. The LTTE's battle-hardened combat units well prepared and anticipating an imminent offensive by the Sri Lankan army launched ferocious counter-offensive assaults using heavy artillery, mortars, and multi-barrel rocket launchers.

The intrusions of the Government troops in Kilaly and Nagar Kovil sectors were repulsed by the LTTE forces on the first day of the offensive inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. But the army managed to hold a 2-kilometre stretch of territory in the Eluthumadduval sector near the A9 highway.

These troopers holed up in an area surrounded by the LTTE fighters on three sides faced intense artillery and mortar fire day and night for four days. Unable to sustain the determined assault by the LTTE fighters on one side and the unacceptable mounting casualties on the other, the government troops finally abandoned the captured territory and fled to the original positions in total disarray. Though the land battle ceased today, Israeli Kfirs, and Russian jets are continuing to pound the LTTE's positions."

Government Response

In response to the LTTE announcement that it had called off its unilateral cease-fire, President Kumaratunga said Thursday 28 April reiterated her government's position: "As far as we are concerned having a cease-fire is irrelevant to the peace process," adding, "We are still totally committed to commencing negotiations with the LTTE and working out a solution to the problems which have led to the war. We do not believe it can be solved only through military means. Once again I reiterate with all honesty and very strongly my call to the LTTE not to continue with their tactics of pretending to the world they are ready for peace while putting all sorts of obstacles to delay the process of negotiations,"

When the LTTE offered a month-long truce last December, the government dismissed it as a ploy and the military continued its attacks against the Tigers. The LTTE said it would observe its truce anyway and extended it three times for a month. The LTTE said 160 cadres had been killed in Sri Lankan attacks during its truce. The Defence Ministry, however, claimed that the LTTE had violated its own self-declared cease-fire over 224 times in the past four months since it was declared on Christmas Eve last year, and that the Tigers had used the period of the cease-fire to regroup and rebuild their defences, and to receive supplies of arms and ammunition. For their part, the Tigers said they were pulling out of their truce because the government because of the failure by the government to reciprocate and the military used it to intensify attacks against them, killing 160 Tiger fighters and wounding more than 400 in the past four months.

Reflecting his widely known hardline stance towards the LTTE, Prime Minister, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake said at a public meeting on 22 April at Panadura, about 15 miles from the capital Colombo, that the government was not agreeable to a cease-fire, being fully aware of the true nature of the LTTE. "We burnt our fingers once and we are not prepared to let it happen again," he said in an apparent reference to the LTTE's past record of unilaterally breaking cease-fires and resuming armed hostilities.

"The LTTE is a ruthless group of

separatist terrorists who are trying to revolt against a democratically elected Government. They have no morals, principles or ethics," he said adding that the government would not consider lifting the ban against the LTTE unless and until it is positively assured that future peace talks with the government appear to be absolutely sincere and honest.

Tamil Parties Critical

As the military offensive began, the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) on 26 April called upon the government to halt the military operation and negotiate a peaceful solution to the crisis. "We hold no brief for the LTTE but at what cost does the Army want to advance towards Elephant Pass? More than 100 lives were lost yesterday. Does it matter if they were LTTE or soldiers? They were all people," Mr. V. Anandasangary, parliamentarian and senior vice-president of the TULF stated.

"It is still not too late to salvage the peace process. The Norwegians have said they will continue with their efforts. The Government should be co-operating with them instead of going around the world asking other Governments to ban the LTTE," he added.

Tamil party leaders strongly condemned statements made by the Prime Minister that the war against the Tamil Tigers would continue and that the government would not declare a cease-fire again. "The Prime minister's pronouncement on Friday (20 April) makes it amply clear that the Sri Lankan government is not interested in peace negotiations at all. The PM is a confidante of the President. His renewed belligerence shows that the government is on the war path again", charged a spokesman for the alliance of ten Tamil parties.

"The PM has declared that war is the only solution to the ethnic problem at a time when the Liberation Tigers have reiterated their commitment to peace by unconditionally observing for four months the cease-fire they declared unilaterally as a goodwill measure to create a suitable climate for the peace process to begin. This proves once again that the government cannot be trusted", said Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham, TULF MP for Batticaloa.

In another statement on 24 April, Mr Pararajasingham said, "The Tamil

LTTE Ends Ceasefire

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in a statement issued on 22 April from its headquarters in the Vanni in northern Sri Lanka, stated that the organisation had decided not to extend its unilaterally declared cease-fire. At the same time it said that it remained seriously committed to and would continue to support and co-operate in every possible way with the Norwegian government in its untiring and noble effort to bring about peace and negotiated political settlement to the Tamil national conflict.

The full text of the LTTE statement said that "the organisation had decided not to extend its unilaterally declared cease-fire that expired at midnight on the 24th April 2001.

"We are compelled to make this painful decision as a consequence of the hard-line, intransigent attitude of the Sri Lankan government which has not only refused to reciprocate positively to our peace gesture but intensi-

fied land, sea and air attacks causing heavy casualties on our side.

"It has become impossible to contain the military assaults of the enemy with our self-restrained defensive tactics without resorting to counter-offensive operations. Under such dangerous conditions we can no longer sustain our self-imposed truce which the enemy has been exploiting to its own military advantage.

"The Tamil Tigers unilaterally declared a month long cease-fire on Christmas Eve (24th December) last year as a gesture of peace and goodwill and has been extending the truce on a monthly basis for the last four months until 24th April this year. The Sri Lanka government of Chandrika Kumaratunga consistently rejected the LTTE's offer as a 'political stunt' and continued with offensive operations with intense naval and aerial assaults provoking the Tigers to the maximum.

Our repeated plea to the international community, particularly the United States, Britain, European nations and India to use their diplomatic good offices to persuade Sri Lanka to reciprocate positively to our peace gesture was of no avail. Instead of commending and promoting our peace offensive some international Government's have imposed proscription and other restrictions against us whereas the other party in conflict (Sri Lankan State) is being provided with financial assistance, military aid and training facilities thereby encouraging our enemy to adopt a hard-line militaristic approach.

"During the last four months of our self-imposed cease-fire we suffered serious set-backs militarily losing strategically important territory in the Jaffna Peninsula and suffering substantial casualties. Over 160 cadres have been killed and 400 injured. Civilian settlements of the coastal villages of Mullaitivu and Trincomalee have been subjected to regular and systematic aerial bombardments that caused heavy civilian casualties and massive property damage.

"Though the LTTE has been strictly

people have totally lost faith in the Sri Lankan government. The Liberation Tigers observed a cease-fire unilaterally for four months because they felt that the Tamil people should not continue to suffer and to create a climate conducive for Norway's peace efforts. By rashly rejecting their cease-fire and stubbornly refusing to reciprocate it, the government displayed its gross insensitivity to the agony of the Tamil people. It is now evident that the Sri Lankan government was not genuinely interested in peace but was only paying lip service to a settlement. The Liberation Tigers have got the full backing and support of the Tamil people. The international community can no longer view with suspicion the LTTE's bona fide and its commitment to peace efforts. The International community should have seized the window of opportunity opened by the LTTE's cease-fire and prevailed on the Sri Lankan government to move closer to negotiations and peace. The trust the Tamil people had in the good offices of the international community has been betrayed."

and rigorously observing cessation of hostilities, the Sri Lanka armed forces have been relentlessly engaged in hostile military operations to frustrate and demoralise our fighters. Furthermore, Sri Lanka government has been importing lethal weapon systems and boosting up its navy and Airforce with the objective of strengthening and modernising its armed forces in preparation for an all-out war.

"On our part we have co-operated in every possible way with the Norwegian Government in their facilitatory peace efforts. Our cease-fire for the last four months was intended to create a congenial atmosphere conducive for talks. By observing peace we did implement the obligations of the Norwegian 'Memorandum of Understanding' by suspending all forms of armed operations and violent attacks in Colombo and in the southern provinces. The Sri Lanka government refused to allow the free flow of essential items into Vanni, and therefore deliberately delayed the Norwegian initiative.

"While our unilateral cease-fire provided the basis for hope and optimism and brought four months of peace and stability to the Sinhala south, the same period has brought war, violence, death and destruction among the Tamils in the north-east. Despite Sri Lanka's public claim of lifting a few banned items, the draconian embargo on food, medicine, fuel and other essential items continued in Vanni subjecting our people to immense suffering. Sri Lanka has been blatantly refusing to reciprocate to our call for de-escalation and normalisation of civilian life in the north-east. Rather, the Sinhala armed forces who control most of the populated cities have intensified military persecution of the civilian masses by arrests, detentions without trial, torture, rape and summary executions.

"The Kumaratunga government, which is dominated by ultra-nationalist and chauvinistic elements, is not genuinely interested in resolving the ethnic conflict through peaceful means and therefore it has been refusing to take any practical steps towards peace.

"We remain seriously committed to peace and to peacefully resolving the protracted ethnic conflict though we are compelled to withdraw our self-proclaimed cessation of hostilities, which turned out to be a futile exercise as Sri

Ready to Commence Talks With LTTE, Says Govt

"For some weeks the Government has been ready, and remains ready today, to finalise and formalise the document on the implementation of humanitarian measures, to commence the implementation of these measures with the assistance of monitors, to commence political negotiations at the earliest possible agreed date and pursue them expeditiously. The Government of Sri Lanka repeats its call to the LTTE to engage honestly and swiftly in commencing the process of negotiation, and not to squander, yet again, a valuable opportunity for peace, and hopes that even now the LTTE would commit itself to helping the Tamil people to achieve their real aspirations," the Government said in a statement issued on 28 April by the Ministry of Information and Media on the LTTE's withdrawal of its ceasefire.

The statement said that LTTE's "was not a genuine unilateral ceasefire but rather a unilateral effort at international deception," and that from the outset the Government had "declared unequivocally that it was not accepting the LTTE's 'unilateral ceasefire,' described by the LTTE as a 'goodwill measure to facilitate the peace process,' because "further gestures of goodwill are unnecessary when the Government has clearly indicated its wish to engage in talks with the LTTE forthwith on the substantial issues involved, with a view to resolving the ethnic question, ending the war and constructing a durable peace."

"The Government went ahead with its agenda for peace with the assistance of the designated representatives of the Norwegian Government who are acting as facilitators. The LTTE partici-

Lanka has failed to recognise its constructive meaning and purpose. Our liberation organisation will continue to support and co-operate in every possible way with the Norwegian government in its untiring and noble effort to bring about peace and negotiated political settlement to the Tamil national conflict." ●

pated in these efforts and considerable progress had been made in reaching agreement on a document that would embody humanitarian measures to alleviate any hardships and dangers to civilians affected by the ongoing armed conflict, and contribute to building understanding and a foundation on which negotiations can take place," the statement said.

"But in the last round of extensive talks with the Norwegian Ambassador, Mr. Jon Westborg, who went to the Vanni on April 6 to meet some of the LTTE leaders they raised certain "concerns" associated with the commencement of negotiations. Consequently, Ambassador Westborg had to return to Colombo without having finalised the content of the said document, although the Government had given its approval to all substantial matters in that document prior to Ambassador Westborg's journey into the Vanni. The latest action of the LTTE fully justifies the Government's decision not to reciprocate its unilateral ceasefire. The LTTE has once again proved that it cannot be trusted on the issue of a genuine ceasefire. It has unilaterally abandoned earlier ceasefires and cessations of hostility, the last being in April 1995."

The government said the LTTE has in fact violated its own unilateral ceasefire on more than 224 occasions during the past four months, adding that this conduct on the part of the LTTE also fully vindicates the Government's rejection of its unilateral ceasefire as a "political stunt" from the very outset.

"The LTTE laments that its repeated pleas to the international community, particularly the United States, Britain, European nations and India to use their diplomatic good offices to persuade the Government of Sri Lanka to reciprocate its ceasefire were of no avail. The LTTE must understand that of the countries mentioned - India, the United Kingdom and the United States of America - two of them have proscribed the LTTE and one has declared it to be a terrorist organisation. The European countries too have of late

come to revise their assessment of the LTTE. As for India, our closet neighbour and the country most concerned with the LTTE's activities, the LTTE should know that the Government of Sri Lanka has kept the Government of India fully informed of the progress that was taking place with the Norwegian facilitation, and that the Government of India was in turn fully appreciative of Sri Lanka's position."

In abandoning its own ceasefire the LTTE also makes a threat of violent attacks in Colombo and the southern provinces. By saying that they had suspended all armed operations and violent attacks in Colombo and in the southern provinces, the LTTE, at last publicly admitting responsibility of all the earlier carnage and destruction it caused through violent attacks in Colombo and the southern provinces, the Government said

Though in November, 2000, the LTTE leader, at a meeting in the Vanni with the Norwegian representatives, offered to open a dialogue for peace "with no conditions attached", later, the LTTE began to place obstacles in the way of negotiations variously described as "pre-conditions", "pre-requisites" and "concerns".

There is ample evidence that over the past months, under the cover of its unilateral cease-fire, the LTTE has been training, arming and supplying its cadres. Arms and ammunitions have been, and are being, landed by sea.

"The Government maintains that mere gestures towards peace, such as cease-fires are unnecessary. In the Government's view, as it stated in its press release of December 12, 2000, 'the crucial political issues that affect the future of Sri Lanka should not be evaded any longer. The Government states that political talks with the LTTE, aimed at resolving the conflict, can and should begin forthwith. This requires that the LTTE agree that the core issues should comprise the agenda of negotiations. The core issues, as the Government has consistently maintained, are: the stoppage of war, the stoppage of all terrorist killings, the resolution of the Tamil people's problems through negotiated political settlement and a speedy resolution of the problems of those displaced by war, etc.'

"This Government wishes to reiterate that it has never believed in the

Peace Talks Only After Lifting of Ban - LTTE

April 7 - "Mr. S.P. Tamil Chelvan, the Head of the Political Wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has called upon the government of Sri Lanka to lift the ban on his organisation and reciprocate positively to the LTTE's unilateral cease-fire as essential pre-requisites for the commencement of political negotiations. This message was conveyed through the Norwegian Ambassador in Colombo Mr. Jon Westborg when he had lengthy discussions with the political leaders of the LTTE in Mallavi, Vanni, northern Sri Lanka on 6 and 7 April" the organisation said in a press release on 7 April.

The press release added, "Mr. Jon Westborg and an official of the Norwegian Embassy, Mr. Tomas Strangland, arrived in Mallavi, Vanni yesterday afternoon and engaged in a marathon discussion for six hours last night with the LTTE's political wing leaders. The discussions continued for more than two hours in the morning today before the Norwegians left for Colombo. Along with Mr. Tamil

use of violence for the resolution of any problem. It has from the beginning made every endeavour to persuade the LTTE to halt armed hostilities and to engage in dialogue with a view to resolving the problems that have caused the military conflict. The Government continues to be committed to this policy. This Government is acutely aware, and has already said so, that there are difficulties faced by the civilian population, in conflict areas, in the North and East. This is due to the inescapable fact that there is an on-going war for which the LTTE bears a heavy responsibility.... It has to be emphasized that it is the LTTE that has constantly disrupted the supply of goods and services to the people in the Northern and Eastern provinces. The Government is of the view that issues concerning the early normalization of civilian life could also be discussed in the course of the proposed talks." ●

Chelvan, Mr. Thangan, Mr. Pulidevan and Mr. George were present during the discussions.

"Presenting the LTTE's position on peace talks Mr. Tamil Chelvan insisted that a climate of peace and goodwill conducive for talks should be created before the commencement of political negotiations. The LTTE has always emphasised the necessity and urgency of the cessation of armed hostilities by the parties in conflict before talks, Mr. Tamil Chelvan told the Norwegian diplomat. "We have argued that it would be difficult to hold talks while engaging in a bloody war. Irrespective of the belligerent stand taken by the Sri Lankan government, the LTTE had unilaterally declared cease-fire and has been extending the truce for the last few months. This measure clearly demonstrates our sincere determination to seek peace and a negotiated settlement. So far Sri Lanka has not positively responded to our goodwill gesture. But it is absolutely essential that both the parties cease all armed hostilities and maintain peace as an essential condition for the resumption of peace talks", Mr. Tamil Chelvan said.

"Mr. Tamil Chelvan also impressed upon the Norwegian delegation of the necessity of lifting the ban on the LTTE by the Sri Lanka government to create a goodwill atmosphere for peace talks. "We are glad to note that the Sri Lanka government has finally realised the importance of talking to the Tamil Tigers to resolve the ethnic conflict. This realisation entails recognition that the LTTE is the preponderant representative organisation of our people. Therefore, the time has come for the Kumaratunga government to lift the ban on the LTTE and embrace us at the peace table as the authentic representatives of the Tamil people. We will not under any circumstances participate at the peace negotiations as an out-lawed outfit"; the LTTE's political wing leader told the Norwegian Ambassador.

"The major portion of the discus-

Five Remanded in Mannar Rape Case

April 24 - Five suspects including the head of the Special Investigative Unit, M. N. M. Suraweera were remanded by the Acting Judge for Mannar on 23 April after having been identified as suspects in the rape and sexual molestation of two Tamil women, Nanthakumar Wijikala (22) and Sinnathamby Sivamani Weerakon (24).

The controversial case, first brought to light by the Bishop for Mannar, Rayappu Joseph, has resulted in the arrest of five men including the former head of the SIU, three police constables and an army lieutenant.

According to the Bishop of Mannar, Rev. Rayappu Joseph, On the 19th of March 2001, about ten Navy personnel entered a private lodge at Uppukulam in Mannar at 10.30 pm and arrested two women by name Wijikala (22 years) and expectant mother already with one child and Sivamani (24 years) a mother of three children.

They had been living in the refugee camps in Vavuniya and had come to Mannar on private business.

After the arrest on their way to the Special Investigation Unit (SIU), the Navy personnel started to make sexual advances on these two helpless females

and on arrival at the SIU, Mannar at 11.30 in the same night Wijikala was taken in and along with some Navy personnel, some SIU personnel joined up in a room and forcefully stripped her naked, tied her hands and laid her on a table and sexually assaulted her in ways so inhuman and so brutal. Consequently, two of these men brutally raped her repeatedly.

In the meanwhile, Sivamani who was kept in a white van used by the Navy had been made naked by the Navy and sexually molested by them and one of them blindfolded her with his stocking. The driver of the vehicle was holding both her hands behind and a Navy man forcefully raped her. After a while Sivamani was also taken with her dresses on, to the above room and was forcibly stripped naked again and in a brutal way sexually assaulted by all present in the room while rest of the Navy personnel were peeping into this sex torture room through the openings on the walls. Their cries could only be heard by the detainees at the SIU. When they, in tears related their trauma to the Bishop when he visited them in the company of a unit in the prison lock-up in Mannar on the 27th instant, they told the Bishop that they would iden-

South.

“Mr. Tamil Chelvan explained in more depth and detail the requirements of fuel and cement in the Vanni region for agriculture, industry and for the reconstruction of the infra-structure totally destroyed by the savagery of the war. Expressing his dismay over the Sri Lanka government’s determination to restrict the flow of these essential items vital for the economic life of the Tamil people, Mr. Tamil Chelvan urged the Norwegian envoy to persuade Sri Lanka to allow the fuel and cement to satisfy the requirements of the war affected civilian masses. Mr. Westborg assured the LTTE’s Political Wing representatives that he will discuss the issues raised by them with the Sri Lanka and Norway governments.” ●

tify most of these criminals and they mentioned frequently the names of one Raja (a Tamil speaking one) and of one Wimal of the SIU who were mercilessly extra brutal to them. They also said that the person whom they came to know as the OIC of the SIU was also taking part in this brutality.

These victims then, were threatened with further torture and were forced to sign a statement to say that they were from the LTTE. Three days later they were taken to the DMO, Mannar. These victims were told by the SIU that they would be killed if they revealed anything to the DMO. The helpless victims told the DMO out of fear, being in the presence of the SIU, that they had no complaints to make and they were briskly taken away by the SIU. This is how the medical examination of these poor victims was made to end up. The victims were taken before the Mannar Magistrate by the SIU only on the 27th instant at 6.30 pm.

On an appeal made by the Bishop to the magistrate and to the Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services, Mannar in the name of the public, a fresh medical examination of these two unfortunate victims was undertaken by the DMO, Mannar on 30.03.2001.

The District Medical Officer of Mannar, Dr G Somasekaram, in his medical report to the Mannar court submitted on 1 April concluded in respect of the first victim, “From the history given by the subject and (from) examination I come to the conclusion that Nanthan Wijikala was tortured and raped”. In respect of the second victim, the DMO concluded, “From the history given by the subject and examination I come to the conclusion that Sivamani Sinnathamby Weerakon was tortured, hurt and sexually harassed. But there is no evidence to say that penetration has taken place.”

As the news of the alleged rape was widely published, on the directive of the Inspector General of Police, the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) commenced investigations in respect of the allegations of rape and torture, and recorded complaints of Vijikala and Sivamani.

Conducting further investigations, the CID recorded statements of the other important witnesses, took charge of the books and related documents from the SIU office, arrested and pro-

sion time was devoted to the ‘Memorandum of Understanding’, the proposals submitted by the Norwegian Government to de-escalate the conflict and pave the way for talks.

Having expressed their dissatisfaction over the alterations by Sri Lanka of the title of the document into an ‘Agreement on Humanitarian Measures’ the LTTE delegation insisted that the original version of the title as ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ should be retained. The LTTE delegates also expressed their displeasure over the distorted comments made by Mr. Kadirgamar on this crucial document, the implementation of which is vital for the normalisation of civilian life in the northeast and peace and stability in the

duced four suspected officers including a sub-lieutenant of SL Navy and the Officer in Charge of SIU, before the Magistrate of Mannar.

N. P. N. Suraweera, OIC/SIU (now under interdiction), filed a petition before the Court of Appeal citing Attorney General as a respondent, and requested the transfer of the case out of the jurisdiction of Mannar Magistrate's Court either to Colombo or Anuradhapura. The reasons set out in support of this application inter-alia were partiality of the Magistrate and the fear of personal safety. Further he maintained that ... 'a false case has been fabricated against me and that I will be denied my right to a fair trial'.

The Solicitor General C. R. de Silva, PC vehemently objected to the transfer and invited the attention of the Court to the Medico Legal Report issued by the Colombo Judicial Medical Officer (JMO) in order to negate the allegation of fabrication.

In the Medical Report, the JMO describes the various injuries seen on the women when he examined them on 6.4.2001 and expressed his opinion as "... the scars are consistent with healed injuries sustained on or around 19.3.2001."

The Bench comprising the president of the Court of Appeal Justice J A N de Silva and Justice Ms. Tilakawardane, having considered all the material placed before the Court in their order stated that, in all these circumstances submitted, Judges found that the Application to transfer this case at this juncture when investigations were pending and incomplete was premature.

The Court also directed that for the protection of the suspect, that State takes steps to afford him maximum possible security. Such protection to be made available also to his Counsel if he so wished.

GOVT-LTTE NEGOTIATED PEACE URGRD

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, in statement issued on 25 April, regretted the fact of the ending of the LTTE's unilateral ceasefire after four months without a positive response to it from the government and the outbreak of bloody fighting in the Jaffna peninsula once again, and called on the government and LTTE to enter into peace talks immediately without letting unilaterally determined issues of pre-conditions or seeking the military upper hand delay them.

The statement issued following a visit by a group of media personnel to Jaffna during the third week of April stated: "The critically important role of the LTTE in negotiating a solution to the ethnic conflict was one of the messages received by a group of media personnel from the state and private media who visited Jaffna last week. The five-day visit was organised in associa-

tion with members of the University of Jaffna and the Centre for Women and Development in Jaffna and the National Peace Council with the support of the Embassy of the European Union in Colombo

The ten-member team had a series of meetings with Jaffna-based civic organisations representing a wide variety of sectors, including trade unions, teachers, lawyers, cooperatives, traders and religious leaders. It appeared that the LTTE's ceasefire had helped to reinvigorate Jaffna society. Most of the groups expressed the view that they wished the LTTE to represent the interests of the Tamil people in the peace process. They also strongly rejected war and violence. These expressions will have to be viewed and understood in their proper context.

Many of the groups put forward their own problems and proposed solutions to them, and also their suggestions as to how the ethnic conflict could be politically resolved. The University of Jaffna Teachers Association put forward a proposal that would include autonomy on the Swiss or US models for the northeast and shared rule at the centre in the ratio of 60:40 between the majority and minority communities. As this example demonstrates, a range of possible political solutions to the ethnic conflict do exist, but there needs also to be a willingness to sit down and negotiate on them.

The NPC regrets very much the ending of the LTTE's unilateral ceasefire after four months without a positive response to it from the government and the outbreak of bloody fighting in the Jaffna peninsula once again. The NPC calls on the government and LTTE to enter into peace talks immediately without letting unilaterally determined issues of pre-conditions or seeking the military upper hand delay them. Now that the LTTE's unilateral ceasefire has ended, we see a great need and an opportunity for the Norwegian facilitators to broker a mutually accepted de-escalation of hostilities and peace talks that could lead to a just solution that the people of Jaffna and elsewhere yearn for."

On 23.4.2001 seven Identification Parades were held at the Magistrate's Court of Mannar. The State Counsel Nominated by the Attorney General to assist the investigators and the Magistrate on legal issues in this case was also present in Court. Two Navy personnel and three police suspects were identified.

The Court rejected the application by the Counsel for the suspects for bail when the State Counsel objected and the suspect was further remanded.

The other officers attached to SIU will be produced before the Mannar Magistrate on 10th and 11th of May 2001 for further identification.

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Muslims Return Slowly to War-torn Jaffna

April 18 - Sri Lanka's Muslims, caught up in a war between the island's two main ethnic groups, have formed a tiny beachhead in troubled northern Jaffna after being run out of the area a decade ago.

Several of the returnees said that they were happier running businesses among their Tamil neighbours in Jaffna City than depending on aid handouts in refugee camps.

About 40 have returned in the last several years from the 15,000 who were given two hours to leave the city in October 1990 by the LTTE.

An estimated 110,000 were forced out of Jaffna peninsula by the LTTE who was widely accused of ethnic cleansing.

"They (the Tamils) invited us back. We can work here, there was no busi-

ness in the camp in Puttalam," said Mum Thahir, who was part of the first wave of 23 Muslim businessmen who returned to run businesses shops in Jaffna two years ago.

Puttalam, about 120 km (75 miles) up the coast from Colombo, is home to an open refugee camp that houses about half of the Muslims forced to flee the north.

Muslims make up about eight percent of Sri Lanka's 19 million people, while Tamils account for 18 percent and Sinhalese the rest.

Thahir came back to reopen a clothing shop in the centre of town even though he was held for 530 days from 1990 to 1992 by the LTTE until his family paid a ransom of 100,000 rupees (\$1,150).

"It was only Muslim businessmen

and we were kept in nine different camps around the peninsula until our families paid," he said.

Now he is still trying to save enough money to repair his home which was partially destroyed by looters after he was taken away.

Thahir said several other shops run by Muslims had opened in the last several months and that more were likely to return if recent developments between the government and rebels towards peace talks gathered pace.

K.M.S. Hameed, who was a deputy school principal before he fled in 1990, felt confident enough to return to open a business but has left his family in Puttalam until there are more indications of a lasting peace.

"Our families are ready to come back, we just want a sign that there will be more peace," Hameed said after taking part in afternoon prayers at a mosque in central Jaffna. The brightly painted mosque is the only one operating in the peninsula and was reopened two years ago, with a mullah, or priest, arriving one year ago. (Source:Reuters)

Buddhist Prelates Slam Sihala Urumaya

April 18 - Mahanayaka theros from all major chapters strongly criticised the conduct of the ultra-nationalist Sinhala organisation, Sihala Urumaya party supporters over attacking a Buddhist monk last week.

"If somebody thinks monks should not be involved in creative art, how can they advocate that the same monk to politically support them. Political activism is also against Buddhism," Most Ven. Weveldeniyer Medhalankara, Mah-

anayaka of the Ramanna Nikaya, said in an interview with BBC's Sandeshaya.

A group of Sihala Urumaya, activists had attacked Mahakunumulle Vijitha thero, while shooting his short feature titled "Uncompleted Tale". Vijitha thero has identified the attackers, nearly 300 Colombo University students, as Sihala Urumaya supporters and some of them had even contested the last general election.

Although monks directing films

cannot be accepted according to the Buddhism, harming a monk by the so-called Buddhists is not the correct way to prevent such activities, said Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha, Mahanayaka of the Amarapura Nikaya.

According to Most Ven. Professor Varakave Dhammaloka, secretary of the Asgiriya Nikaya, all Buddhists should condemn this attack as every individual, including Buddhist monks, are entitled to their right of expression via their selected methods of expression. As Buddhist monks are renowned for creative art, such as Kavsilumina, Guttilaya, etc. a monk directing a film cannot be questioned, said Batapola Nanda thero.

India Supports Norway Peace Effort

April 23 - The Norwegian Prime Minister Hon. Jens Stoltenberg on a five-day visit to India said that his country was helping to bring the two warring parties of Sri Lanka to the negotiating table to end the ethnic conflict in the island. This was going to be the first initiated process taken by a country outside the region.

The Prime Minister told pressmen on Sunday 21 April at the Airport in Bangalore that he was optimistic about

the ongoing peace process in Sri Lanka. He added that his country was still not 100 percent sure that it could bring both sides to the negotiating table.

He said that his country has had wide experience in the process of making peace in the past. "We therefore came forth to create understanding among the Sinhala Community and the Tamil Community in Sri Lanka where fighting is going on for the past eighteen years with heavy casualties."

Hon. Jens Stoltenberg added that he received vast support from the leaders in India in ending the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The Indian leaders consider that there is no other choice but a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Sri Lanka because the continuation of the war can lead to instability in the region.

The Norwegian Prime Minister briefed the Prime Minister of India, Hon. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, about the Norwegian efforts to broker a solution between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE that would bring about lasting peace. The Indian Prime Minister promised that he would do his best to provide India's support to the peace process initiated by the Norwegian Government.

Recruitment of Child Soldiers - Amnesty Appeal

Amnesty International issued an urgent action appeal on 30 March directed to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stating that the organisation was concerned for the safety of three boys, eight-year-old Chandrasekaran Udayakumar, 12-year-old Ravichandran Prathishan and an unidentified child friend, who are thought to have been recruited as combatants by the LTTE.

Amnesty International has been concerned about the recruitment of children as combatants in Sri Lanka for many years, and has been campaign-

ing for the practice to be eradicated.

Chandrasekaran Udayakumar left his home in the village of Ganesapuram, Vavuniya district on 15 March. He told his parents that he was going to play with friends. He did not return home and has not been seen since. As of 29 March, there has been no news about him. Ravichandran Prathishan left his home in the village of Anapankulam, Vavuniya district around 9am on 20 March. He said he was going to a shop near the bus stop. He was seen getting on a bus together with an unidentified friend of his age. They report-

edly took their identity documents with them. Some parents in the area, believing that Ravichandran Prathishan and his friend were going to join the LTTE, reportedly prevented their children from joining.

Amnesty International has been concerned about the recruitment of children as combatants in Sri Lanka for many years, and has been campaigning for the practice to be eradicated. In May 1998, the leadership of the LTTE told the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict that it would not use children under the age of 18 in combat, and would not recruit anyone under the age of 17. However, since then, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports that children as young as 12 years of age are

being recruited as combatants. The recruitment of children as young as eight years of age is reminiscent of the early 1990s, when both the LTTE and armed Tamil groups opposing the LTTE were recruiting very young children on a large scale. LTTE representatives have admitted that some of their members are very young, but argue that they have not been forced to join. They have also promised to investigate any complaints

regarding the recruitment of children under the age of 17, and that if such children are found to have been recruited, they will be released.

Quoting LTTE officials, TamilNet website said that LTTE on 2 April refuted allegations by Amnesty International that they had recruited young children as combatants, describing the accusations as "malicious". They had said that the LTTE did not recruit com-

batants under the age of seventeen. "The accusations by Amnesty International are malicious and calculated to discredit the image of our liberation movement. It is not the policy of the LTTE to recruit below the age of seventeen," the officials had said adding, "We have no knowledge of the events leading to the disappearances of the children described by Amnesty International."

Human Rights Award

Sri Lankan Human Rights campaigner Basil Fernando has been awarded with the prestigious Kwangju Human Rights Award. Mr. Fernando, the executive-director of the Hong Kong based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHC) has been intensively working on human rights in the Asian region.

As a prominent human rights activist, Mr Fernando has criticised the bu-

reaucratic system of existing international human rights organisations, including the UNCHR. He has sought to overcome the problems associated with these large bureaucratic organisations by trying to establish a human rights organisation which is rooted in the people and that places the people themselves at the centre of the human rights movement.

"I hope the occasion of this award will provide us with a further opportunity to rededicate ourselves for a future in which all of us, men, women, children can live with dignity and without humiliation," a delighted Mr. Fernando reacted on the award.

The first Kwangju Human Rights Award was given to East Timor independence leader Xanana Gusmao in the year 2000. The award ceremony will take place on the 18 of May, 2001 in the Kwangju city in the Republic of Korea.

Media Watchdog Criticizes Probe on Journalist

April 19 – The Paris Based media watchdog, Reporters Sans Frontiers, has criticized the lack of progress in the investigation into the murder of Jaffna based journalist Mylvaganam Nimalarajan, and called on President Chandrika Kumaratunge to do everything in her power to ensure an impartial and speedy inquiry takes place.

Highlighting several shortcomings

in the police investigation, the RSF in a letter to President Kumaratunge said it was deeply concerned about the Sri Lankan government's "apparent unwillingness to shed light on the murder." The letter added that the organization was also worried about statements made by government officials implicating the LTTE in the murder, in what it calls an attempt to lessen the

seriousness of the crime. The organization, which advocated an impartial and independent inquiry, also volunteered to be part of an international investigation into the killing.

Nimalarajan, who was a correspondent for several local and foreign media organisations in Jaffna, including the BBC, was killed in his home, on night of 19th of October last year. Inspector General of Police, Lucky Kodituwakku, has handed the investigation of the murder over to the Criminal Investigation Department.

AI Urges Action Against Rapists in the Forces

Amnesty International on 4 April wrote to the President of Sri Lanka urging her to take action to stop rape by security forces and bring perpetrators to justice.

Following several recent reports of rape by security forces in Mannar, Batticaloa, Negombo and Jaffna, the organization reminded President Chandrika Kumaratunga that safeguards to protect women in custody (as contained in presidential directives for

the welfare of detainees issued in July 1997) were being ignored.

Security force personnel should be punished if they fail to adhere to these safeguards. Female guards should be present during the interrogation of female detainees and should be solely responsible for carrying out body searches.

Among the cases reported are those of two women who were gang raped after being arrested by members of the

navy and police in Mannar on 19 March.

The pace of investigations into several other cases of alleged rape, including the case of Ida Karmelita who was raped and murdered in Mannar in July 1999, are proceeding very slowly. Other cases have collapsed because the victims or the witnesses were threatened or feared reprisals.

All necessary measures should be taken to protect the victims and witnesses and any security officer found to be responsible for rape, sexual abuse or other torture, or for encouraging or condoning them, should be brought to justice.

● PEACE TALKS AND 'PRE-REQUISITES'

Hopes that peace talks between the government and the LTTE would at last commence were raised, possibly in May this year, when on 3 April Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, told Parliament during the budget debate that the government was fully committed to the Norwegian-backed peace process and the date for the commencement peace talks with the LTTE would be announced by the end of April.

On 4 April, the Government announced that it had lifted the ban on the transport of 24 items. The list included fruit juice, gelatin, roneo paper, balm, paint (except green, black and brown colours), vitamins, rice, eggs, noodles, cigarettes, soft drinks, agricultural equipments, alcohol, soap, aspirin, wine and sleeping mats.

Everyone interested in a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict now thought months of shuttle diplomacy by Norway's Special Envoy, Erik Solheim, had borne fruit in clearing the preliminaries for talks to begin. It was said that even the venue for the talks, a foreign capital, had been agreed between the parties.

During his six-month long endeavours Erik Solheim had been working on a document, known as the "Memorandum of Understanding" (MoU), containing certain steps that both parties, the government and the LTTE, would agree upon before formal talks began.

On the government's part, it was to relax the restriction and/or totally lift the ban placed on the number items that could be transported to the war-torn areas of the north and east. On the LTTE's part, it was to assure that would not carry out any offensive action in areas outside the North and east, the two designated operational zones.

It appeared that general agreement had been reached between the parties on the contents of the document. However, the government wanted the title of the draft document changed from "Memorandum of Understanding Humanitarian Measures" to "Agreement on Humanitarian Measures". It is said that the thinking behind this move was the belief that the word "Agreement" imported a more formal, definite and binding meaning than the words "Memorandum" or "Understanding" which were open to different interpretations. The government also had

NEWS REVIEW

made a modification to the preamble to the draft document. The initial draft read: "The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding is to create an atmosphere conducive for a negotiating process that will lead to a peaceful settlement and to take measure to improve the humanitarian situation and to reduce the human suffering caused by the conflict." The government altered it to read: "The purpose of this Agreement is to take measures to alleviate the hardships and dangers to civilians affected by the on-going armed conflict and to contribute to establish a foundation on which negotiations can take place."

It was with this draft document that Norwegian Ambassador, Jon Westborg and his diplomat colleague, Thomas Stangland, traveled to the Vanni to have discussions with the LTTE's Political Wing leader, S P Tamil Chelvan on 6 and 7 April. The purpose behind their trip was to finalise arrangements, including the date, for the peace talks to commence between the parties.

After ten hours of detailed 'marathon' discussions lasting two days the Norwegian diplomats had with Tamil Chelvan in the company of his comrades, Mr. Thangan, Mr. Pulidevan and Mr. George, they returned to Colombo in the afternoon of 7 April. That same evening, the LTTE released a statement to the press, which was posted on the Tamilnet website, giving details of the discussions the LTTE representatives had with Jon Westborg and his colleague.

The LTTE statement indicated that, while objecting to the alterations made by the government to the draft Memorandum of Understanding, Tamil Chelvan had raised new issues which had not been previously covered by in the document.

According to the LTTE's statement, the message given to the Sri Lankan government, during the discussions with Jon Westborg was as follows:

there should be a cessation of armed hostilities between the government and LTTE as an essential condition for the resumption of peace talks;

the government should lift the ban on the LTTE and embrace the LTTE at the peace table as the authentic representatives of the Tamil people. The

statement quoted Tamil Chelvan telling the Norwegian Ambassador as: "We will not under any circumstances participate at the peace negotiations as an out-lawed outfit."

the LTTE delegation was dissatisfied over the alterations by Sri Lanka of the title of the document into an Agreement on Humanitarian Measures and insisted that the original version of the title as 'Memorandum of Understanding' should be retained.

The government should allow the requirements of fuel and cement in the Vanni region for agriculture, industry and for the reconstruction of the infrastructure totally destroyed by the war.

The LTTE statement pointed out that the lifting of the ban on the LTTE and the reciprocal cessation of armed hostilities by the government of Sri Lanka "as essential pre-requisites for the commencement of political negotiations."

The LTTE's 'pre-requisites' produced a flurry of comments in the media, particularly the so-called independent privately owned media - which by and large editorially and otherwise remain consistently opposed to the government having any negotiations with the LTTE while at the same time giving space to some notable Tamil columnists to peddle their own pet themes. Dissecting the LTTE's statement that detailed the purported discussions between Tamil Chelvan and the Norwegian diplomats in minute detail, they raised the issue of the LTTE placing new "preconditions" for commencement of peace talks. Journalists and commentators had a field day indulging in the semantic luxury of the similarities and distinctions in the meanings of the words and terms such as "preconditions", "pre-requisites", "Memorandum", "Agreement", "Understanding" etc.

However, the fact of the matter was that Jon Westborg had been pre-empted by the LTTE's statement in regard to the discussions he had with Tamil Chelvan. He was inundated with calls, particularly from the media. He tried to avoid making any comments to the press before he had an opportunity to debrief the President and the Foreign Minister. Because of the pressure he was under, the Norwegian Embassy in Colombo issued a press release on 8 April which, inter alia, said: "A number of concerns and questions raised by the LTTE concerning a proposal for building of un-

derstanding and creation of a foundation for direct talks between the parties were clarified. Possible alternatives were discussed.

"The discussion revisited some important issues also raised in the past, and the LTTE expressed concern that negotiations between the conflicting parties took place in an environment absent of hostilities and present of respect and understanding. These issues were presented as concerns that needed deliberation and it was agreed to refer a couple of questions to further consultations in the near future. "Norway will continue its efforts of consultations between GOSL and LTTE."

On April 10, Mr Westborg met and debriefed President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister Kadirgamar. As the account of the Norwegian Ambassador and the LTTE statement put out on Tamilnet contained significant variations, both in content and emphasis, the government decided to seek further clarification from the LTTE through the Special Envoy, Eric Solheim.

Whatever remaining doubt one had about the authenticity of the Tamilnet version and contents of the LTTE's statement on the discussions between Ambassador Jon Westborg and Tamil Chelvan was removed when the LTTE's radio, "Voice of Tigers", broadcast an identical version.

● BALASINGHAM EXPLAINS

In an interview given to the Tamil Guardian on 17 April, the LTTE's chief advisor Anton Balasingham, explaining in detail the LTTE's position in regard to the issues raised by Tamil Chelvan during discussions with the Norwegian Ambassador, said: "We are not stipulating new pre-conditions for negotiations. We have been consistently insisting on de-escalation and de-proscription as practical and necessary steps to create a strong foundation of peace and goodwill conducive for serious political negotiations." LTTE's call for reciprocation of its ceasefire and lifting of its ban by the government should be viewed "as pre-requisite practical steps to build a cordial atmosphere of mutual trust essential for the warring parties to enter into a peace process," he said adding, "If Sri Lanka wants to engage the Tigers in a serious and constructive dialogue to arrive at a political solution, it is essential that the LTTE should be given the legal political status as the

authentic representative of our people." He said that it was "crucial that we should enter the negotiations as equal partners with due recognition as the preponderant representative organisation of our people."

In regard to the 'Memorandum of Understanding', Balasingham said that it was submitted by the Norwegian government to the LTTE and the Sri Lanka government "with the objective of improving the humanitarian situation and ease the human suffering and to create an atmosphere conducive for negotiations." He said that the document contained "mutually reciprocal obligations by which Sri Lanka Government has to lift the economic embargo facilitating free flow of goods into Vanni and the LTTE has to cease all acts of violence and sabotage in the southern provinces. An international monitoring committee is proposed to supervise the implementation of the reciprocal obligations. The LTTE leadership endorsed the document in principle without any alterations, except suggesting amendments to the formation of the monitoring committee." Lately, the government made alterations in the title and preamble to the document about which the LTTE was not happy, and therefore the original version should be retained, he said

The indications are that the government would not accede to the two new "pre-requisites" of the LTEE, namely the lifting of the government's ban on the LTTE imposed on 27 January 1998 following the suicide-bomb attack on the Dalada Maligawa and a formal cessation of hostilities which had not been raised before and therefore not included in the Norwegian draft of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The question is whether the LTTE would renew its unilateral ceasefire when it expires on 23 April if the government did not agree its two "pre-requisites". One hopes the LTTE does extend the ceasefire as it will reinforce its expressed commitment to peace talks. But from the tone and content of its statement, the chances are that it will not.

● THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The role of Norway as Facilitator in the peace process also came into focus during April with the government and the LTTE expressing varying views on the subject.

Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister,

Lakshman Kadirgamar, in an interview given on 6 April to N.Ram, the Editor of the Indian fortnightly "Frontline" (14-27 April) elaborated on what he perceived as the role of Norwegians. He said that "they have been engaged by the parties as a facilitator and not as a mediator. As a facilitator, their task is to bring the parties together. To facilitate the parties coming together. Well, a third party's role is limited. It is limited to bringing the two parties together. Shuttling back and forth between the parties. Carrying messages. And laying the groundwork for them to meet. They are logistical things they will have to attend to, in due course. There will be venues and times and schedules and various things of that kind. But when it comes to substantive negotiation, the Norwegians will have no particular role at all. They will certainly have no mandate to make any judgmental decisions. In that sense, they're not arbitrators, they're not judges, and they're not mediators. Mediators tend to be people who, at a certain stage, are entitled to say to the parties, 'Now, we think you're right and somebody else is wrong. And we say you must do this, that or the other.' And they assume a kind of judgmental character. That character the Norwegians definitely will not have in this process."

As for the LTTE, Anton Balasingham directly contradicted the Foreign Minister's view on the role of Norway as facilitator. In an interview given to the London-based Tamil Guardian, Mr Balasingham said that Mr Kadirgamar wanted "Norway to function within the rules of facilitation, which is confined to bringing the parties in conflict to the negotiating table. Once that is achieved, in Kadirgamar's conception, Norway's facilitatory role comes to an end. I do not share his view because it is very rigid, technical and non-creative. It is not flexible or dynamic enough to cope up with the set of new problems and difficulties that might arise when the belligerents, with a lengthy history of mutual distrust and hostility, face each other on the negotiating table without the assistance, advice and guidance of a third party."

Mr Balasingham favoured "the concept of third party involvement rather than adopting the defined roles of facilitation and mediation. In our perspective the third party involvement is crucial even after the commencement of the negotiations. Playing the role of a neu-

tral advisor and observer, the third party, in our case the Norwegians, can continue to involve themselves in the negotiating process to prevent misunderstanding between the protagonists and to help to promote the forward movement of the dialogue without imposing 'judgmental decisions' on the parties. It is our view that without the presence and participation of an experienced third party the negotiations between the two historical enemies may run into serious difficulties."

It is quite obvious that the government and the LTTE have different ideas about Norway's role. While the LTTE wants Norway to play a more participatory or interventionist role in the peace process as it progresses, the government sees it as one limited to logistical facilitation to bring the parties to the negotiating table and remain on the sidelines leaving the parties themselves to engage in negotiations.

● UNP PLOT AGAINST GOVERNMENT

An interesting political drama unfolded in the parliamentary complex during the recent Budget debate. Some senior UNP parliamentarians backed by a few big private companies in Colombo saw the possibility of defeating the Government during the voting in the Second Reading of the Budget. They discussed the matter with the UNP and Opposition Ranil Wickremesinghe who promptly appointed a committee headed by deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya to examine the prospects of inflicting a defeat upon the government in parliament. The other members of the committee were: Gamini Atukorale, M.H. Mohammed, Rukman Senanayake and Lokku Bandara. This Committee was to be in charge of the strategy and tactics to mobilise sufficient number MPs to bring down the government.

The UNP's move was leaked to Sports Minister Laxman Kiriella who passed the information to Sri Lanka Freedom Party Secretary, Minister S. B. Dissanayake, who promptly informed President Kumaratunga who was on a visit to Germany. She instructed that every Government MP should be present in parliament at voting time on March 19. The Government carried the day by 9 votes, 115 voting for and 106 against.

The narrow margin of the vote added strength to those who felt that the Government could be toppled through

a parliamentary vote and they entertained the idea of defeating the government during the Third Reading of the Budget and the formation of a Government of National Reconciliation, which could rope in all opposition parties, and some of the constituent parties in the governing coalition. Approaches were made to the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), both of which are partners in the Government coalition, but somewhat discontented. The Jayasuriya-Atukorale duo also met Anandasangari and Sampanthan of the TULF to discuss the UNP's move. Some Government back benchers were also approached with offers of large sums of money if they voted with the opposition.

The government got wind of the moves by the UNP to defeat the government at the Third Reading of the Budget through a businessman, a close friend of former UNP Parliamentarian Sarath Kongahage, who contacted the latter after being approached by some UNPers to raise funds for the crossover exercise. According to the businessman, a sum of Rs.80 million had been mentioned as the sum available to buy over some MPs belonging to the governing coalition. The President summoned a meeting of the government parliamentary group at which she warned the Parliamentarians of the UNP plan and warned them not to fall a prey to the UNP's plan.

If the UNP's behind the scene machinations had succeeded the country a possible dissolution of Parliament and a General would have been on the cards. In the event, the Third reading of the Budget was passed with 116 voting in favour and 107 against.

Had the opposition succeeded in defeating the government in a vote on any aspect of the Budget, the President would have opted for an immediate dissolution of Parliament than permitting the formation of an UNP-led government in coalition with other parties.

The Constitution prohibited the President from dissolving Parliament within one year of the general election. However, if the government was defeated on a vote involving a fiscal proposal, it is open to the President to dissolve Parliament. Some of those MPs even within the UNP who would have wanted to support the move to defeat the government did not like the prospect of facing another election at this

time.

Although, the government won the vote, it was not achieved without much effort on the part of the President. Having to depend on her coalition partners to sustain the slender majority in Parliament, particularly the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, she had to make concessions and enter into deals with these two parties to assure herself that the required majority was intact. The fact that the leaders of these parties, while being Ministers, accepted invitations from UNP leaders to meetings where the chances of defeating the government and formation of an alternative government were discussed demonstrates clearly the tenuous and opportunist nature of the relationship among the parties constituting the governing coalition.

● UNP'S CONDITIONAL SUPPORT

Norway's bid to broker peace in Sri Lanka has come up against a new hurdle with the country's main opposition United National Party (UNP) demanding domestic political reforms as a precondition for support for the peace plan.

UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, during his recent visit to Oslo had said that his party would withhold support in the legislature if the government did not establish independent commissions to be in charge of police, elections, civil service and the judiciary.

Analysts see Wickremesinghe on a new tack to link his party's domestic agenda with the internationally backed attempt to open peace talks between Colombo and the LTTE. Many, particularly the Tamil political parties, have criticised the UNP leader's statement. They question the need for the linking the two matters and suspect that the UNP leader is already preparing his party to backtrack on the peace process.

A statement issued from the UNP headquarters in Colombo on 18 April said, "Mr. Wickremesinghe pointed out that the UNP has displayed its bona fides by fully supporting a consensus between the government and the LTTE to pave the way for lasting peace. The government must reciprocate by establishing the four independent commissions in order to strengthen and protect democracy in the country. If the government deliberately fails to take necessary steps to appoint these four commissions in the near future, the UNP

would not have a choice but reconsider its support to the government.”

The government has, however, resisted the call to appoint the commissions saying the proposals have already been included in the government's proposed draft constitution. However the UNP wants the commissions in place before any attempt is made to finally settle the ethnic problem.

In the event the peace process progresses to a satisfactory conclusion, it must inevitably lead to substantial constitutional reform, or as the government has proposed, a new Constitution. All matters, including the question of independent commissions, could be addressed when the new Constitution is discussed. The UNP leadership knows that the government, with its slender majority in Parliament, would not be in a position to enact a new Constitution without the support of the UNP MPs. In this context, for the UNP to put the issue of the appointment of the four commissions as a pre-condition for its support for the peace process is an attempt at scuttling whole process itself.

The UNP statement added, “Leader of the opposition Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe has said in Oslo that while finding a durable solution to the North East conflict in Sri Lanka, it must also ensure that the rights and aspirations of all communities must be safeguarded. During the bilateral talks he had in Oslo, Norway, Mr. Wickremesinghe, explaining the stand taken by the United National Party on the ethnic problem, further stressed that any solution meant for lasting peace must protect the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. It was under these fundamentals, devolution of power should be implemented in order to carry out a cultural, social and economic development in the North East.”

● THE PLOT TO OUST RANIL

The depths to which political chicanery can sink would have perhaps surprised the UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe who learnt from far away Oslo of the plot to oust him by his own deputy leaders who were political non-entities until Ranil himself brought them onto the public arena and elevated them to their present positions. He could not have ever imagined that these pretenders to the his throne would have waited for an opportunity for him to be away from the country to put into practice the conspiracy they had

hatched.

It is now known that plotters swung into action after Mr Wickremesinghe accompanied by wife Maithree, National List MP Milinda Moragoda and Dr. S. Walson left for Oslo on April 11.

The challenge was led by a self-proclaimed “Reformist Group” led by party's deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya. The group included such figures as Gamini Atukorale, W J M Loku Bandara, Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, Ravi Karunanayake P. D. Abeyratne and several other leading UNP figures. More intriguing was the role played by Free Media Movement twins Victor Ivan and Waruna Karunathilaka who were actively involved in the UNP rebel group's plans to oust Ranil. It is said that these two gentlemen, purportedly representing the Alliance for Democracy, went round among UNP parliamentarians collecting signatures to a petition demanding that Ranil step down from the leadership of the party.

Having learnt from the Speaker Anura Bandaranaike who told him in telephone conversation of the plot to oust him, the UNP leader cut short his visit to Norway beating a hasty return home to find that many of his once trusted leading figures in the party were demanding his resignation as party leader. They were feverishly engaged in collecting signatures from MPs to oust him.

If the dissident group had secured enough signatures for its petition calling for the removal of Wickramasinghe, the plan was to submit it to the Speaker Anura Bandaranaike to deprive Ranil of being the Leader of the Opposition. Upon his removal, Karu Jayasuriya would have been nominated as Leader of the Opposition.

The move to oust Ranil as leader of the party came in the wake of the failure of the UNP's attempt to bring down the government during the recent budget debate, and in its place install ‘an all-party government of national unity’ possibly led by the UNP.

The main charge brought against Ranil was that he did not pull his weight adequately enough to bring down the government during the recent budget debate by promoting no-confidence motion and thereby let the party down. The UNP leader was accused by the reformist group of dragging his feet on tabling the no-confidence motion against the government. He was also accused of being a weak leader, wimp,

vacillator, and lacking in energy and determination. W J M Lokubandara said the root of the problem was the lethargy and inertia on the part of the leadership, which prevented them from ousting the Government. Another grouse of the rebel group was the alleged interference in party matters by a former policeman, Sudath Chandrasekera, who is now the private Secretary to Ranil Wickremesinghe.

They point out to the fact six years had elapsed since Mr. Wickremesinghe assumed the leadership of the party. Under his leadership, all the elections – provincial, parliamentary and presidential, more than 10 in number, have been lost. They have no faith in Mr. Wickremesinghe's ability to lead the party to victory. They believe that he is a ‘born loser’. So long as he is leader, the party would never come back to power, they assert.

A columnist, C A Chandraprema, wrote, “The inevitable has happened. There is a concerted move within the UNP to remove Ranil from the leadership. The surprising thing is that it took so long for this situation to materialise. The UNP has a serious problem. With a government that has proved beyond doubt that it is unable to govern, the UNP has not managed to make any headway as an opposition party. The UNP vote bank has remained static over the past few years while that of the JVP has improved tremendously. Many people now tend to regard the JVP as the opposition. The UNP has proved itself totally inept. Many people think the problem besetting the party is Ranil. Ranil no doubt is a problem. There is a body of opinion, which is now firmly established that he cannot deliver the goods. That is the general impression in the country among all sections of the people whether UNP or non-UNP.”

Bruised and battered though, Ranil appears to have temporarily emerged out of danger, but with the hold on the leadership his party very much weakened. However, the campaign by the conspirators to elevate the party deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya as the Leader of the Opposition allowing Ranil to continue as the UNP leader continues unabated.

In an attempt to retain his party position as party leader, Ranil had to concede a lot to the dissidents. UNP sources said that if an All Party Government move succeeded, Wickremesinghe had agreed to make Karu Jayasuriya the

Prime Minister of that government while he remained as leader of the party.

Nineteen dissidents styling themselves as the UNP reformist group at a meeting with the UNP leader held at Malik Samarawickreme's residence in Bullers Road, proposed the appointment M.H.Mohomad as the Chairman of the Party, P.Dayaratne as the General Secretary and to create a new post of National Organiser to be handed over to Gamini Athukorale.

Ranil Wickremesinghe had also agreed to the proposal by the "reformist group" led by party Deputy Leader Karu Jayasuriya and Assistant Leader Gamini Athukorala for wide ranging reforms within the party to establish inner-party democracy and that if a national government is formed the parties that constitute the government would elect its leader. He also agreed to implement all future decisions affecting the party through the newly set up Political Committee comprising himself, the Deputy Leader, Assistant Leader and the Party Chairman.

In a move directed at satisfying a dissident group, Ranil also agreed to move a no confidence motion on the government during May-June, to table a no confidence motion against the country's

Chief Justice and to present draft legislation on the four independent commissions in parliament within two weeks.

Whether or how long Mr Wickremesinghe will survive as UNP leader is the question on the lips of many.

● INDIA ASKS SWEDEN TO ARREST 'KP'

India has launched a controversial international manhunt against senior LTTE leader Kumaran Pathmanathan, generally known by his initials KP, who is suspected of being in charge of arms purchase for the Tigers from various clandestine arms bazaars. Known as head of what is referred to euphemistically as the LTTE's overseas purchasing division, 'KP' has proved to be an elusive character allegedly moving from country to country under various aliases.

The Indian Central Bureau of Investigation however is of the view that 'KP' is currently domiciled in Stockholm and has requested Sweden to arrest and extradite him to India as he is allegedly wanted in connection with the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The Indian authorities have alleged that 'KP' was living in Bombay with an

Indian national called Protima Das at the time of Rajiv Gandhi's murder and was therefore needed for further investigations.

Although the Rajiv Gandhi murder trial has concluded, a fresh probe is currently on because of a new recommendation made by the Jain Commission that inquired into various aspects of the killing. The CBI has also requested 23 countries mostly in the West to assist them in their investigations into the LTTE. Apart from 'KP' it had earlier requested further information about the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, Intelligence Chief Pottu Amman and Womens' Brigade Commander Akila, all three of whom were named as accused in the Rajiv Gandhi killing.

KP however was not included in the accused list earlier but now faces an Indian inspired manhunt at a crucial time when the LTTE is involving itself in the peace process.

The Indian request to Sweden comes in the wake of media reports stating that the Scandinavian nation may be a likely venue for talks between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE that are expected to occur soon as a result of Norway's efforts.

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The Pragmatic Message from Jaffna

Dr Jehan Perera

On the descent to Palali airport the destruction in the Jaffna begins to be evident. A church stands forlorn near the sea shore, and around it are neglected trees and vegetation. Interspersed are the wrecks of buildings. The journey from Palali airport to Jaffna town is one through a sea of destruction seen at close quarters. These are the results of battles fought several years ago and a testimony to the very high stakes that attach to the success of the present peace process. There are significant changes taking place in Jaffna. Three years ago when an opportunity arose to travel to Jaffna with a PAFFREL election monitoring before the local government elections, the focus of the visitors and the people of Jaffna was on the elections. The main message to come out then was a denial of the need for those elections. The people had other priorities, we were told, such as being supplied with electricity and buses, and the roads needed to be repaired.

This time around the roads on which we travelled in Jaffna were in a very good state of repair. There was a bulldozer to be seen repairing yet another road. At noontime there was a fleet of over 20 big yellow government buses at the main bus terminal with others elsewhere on the road. The electricity supply to Jaffna has been restored and is available most of the time, though with regular interruptions especially late in the evening due to the problem of capacity.

Officials of the EPDP who control many of the local government bodies and also, since the last general elections, the Ministry of Northern Development and Rehabilitation, claim much of the credit. But it was not the roads, buses or electricity that was paramount in the statements made by the civic groups we met with in Jaffna this time. The group of journalists from Colombo who spent five days in Jaffna (on a visit organised by the National Peace Council with funding from the European Union embassy) heard much more about the need for peace, and the people's desire for a non-violent solution, than they heard anything else.

The objective of the visit was to spend

more than the few hours usually available to journalists who travel to Jaffna on military-organised visits. It was hoped to get a more in-depth view of the situation in Jaffna by spending several days there and also to engage in dialogue with different sections of Jaffna society. The Ministry of Defence not only gave the necessary approval for this longer visit, but also assisted in blocking out ten seats on a civilian flight to Jaffna at short notice. To their credit, neither the Ministry of Defence nor the military sought to involve themselves in the programme for the journalists in Jaffna. We were given a free hand to meet with whomever we wanted with no governmental restrictions being imposed.

Main Message

Whether it was the Jaffna traders association, the university teachers association, the bar association, the cooperatives association or the religious leaders association, the main message to come out of them was the same. They all said that the people wanted peace and did not want violence. This is a message that is hardly likely to surprise anyone who sees the destruction in Jaffna, especially what took place a year ago with multi-barrel rockets. The people are acutely conscious of the possible vastly increased scale of destruction likely to occur in fighting with the new weapons systems and do not want it.

In this context the contrast with the situation three years ago when the local government elections were being held is interesting. At that time the LTTE had no peace strategy, and had only a strategy of war. The voice for peace in many of the same civic groups in Jaffna at that time was more muted. Instead the articulate voice was that there was no need for the government to hold the local government elections for the sake of the people. The LTTE also opposed those elections and, in fact, assassinated the mayoress who emerged from them and over a dozen other elected councillors.

The willingness of the civic groups to publicly articulate their desire for an end to the war at the present time has no doubt been strengthened by its correspondence

to the LTTE's present course of action. For the past four months the LTTE has been pressing the government to reciprocate its unilateral ceasefire. Therefore there is a coming together of the people's aspiration for peace and non-violence (which undoubtedly was always there) and the LTTE's recent strategy of pursuing its objectives through a ceasefire. This congruence seems to have strengthened the people to articulate that they want peace and no more war without fear of adverse reaction.

The second important message to emerge from most (but not all) of the civic groups was that their representative was indeed the LTTE. Perhaps their belief that the LTTE has made a shift to a peace strategy has made this a palatable proposition. Some even went to the extent of saying that the LTTE was their sole representative, a position that even the LTTE seems to have publicly modified to being the "preponderant" representative. Some civic groups preferred not to say anything on the matter. But not a single civic group was publicly critical of the LTTE as an organisation though some said that they did not approve of all its actions.

At one meeting a religious dignitary went as far as to say that there was no difference between the LTTE and Tamil people, they were not two. A southern journalist asked whether this meant that the Tamil people approved of the LTTE bombing of the Temple of the Tooth. This led the dignitary to draw a distinction between the aspirations of the Tamil people and the LTTE actions. He also said that he did not approve of this action and had written to the Ministry of Buddha Sasana to express his regret.

Pragmatic assessment

The fact that not a single public criticism was made of the LTTE as an organisation (except on one occasion by those who were affiliated to the EPDP) made the assertions of the civic groups somewhat suspect in the eyes of the southern journalists. Accustomed as they are to a free and democratic environment in which there is no public unanimity about anything, they saw a chilling factor of fear. That the source of the fear of dissent was not the government or army was confirmed by the vigour with which criticisms was publicly about them. This perception was reinforced by a few persons who met us after the public meetings and spoke of the fear of the LTTE and the inability to speak up truthfully in public.

However, a dispassionate analysis would suggest that it is not only fear of the LTTE that impels the civic associations of Jaffna to speak up in favour of the LTTE and its representative status. Better than anyone else, the people of Jaffna know the real strength of the LTTE. They saw the LTTE come up to the very gates of Jaffna last year through their military prowess overrunning the massive Elephant Pass army base on the way. While a combination of military and political measures saw the LTTE brought to a halt outside Jaffna town and subsequently pushed back, the LTTE still remains within the Jaffna peninsula.

In short, the people of Jaffna know that peace without the LTTE is not possible now or in the foreseeable future. They know that the peace they desperately need and yearn for will only come about through negotiations between the government and LTTE, because it is the main actor, and no other. They also know that after such a negotiated peace, the LTTE will necessarily play a very important role in a peaceful Jaffna. Therefore they are being pragmatic when they give the pre-eminent place to the LTTE at the negotiating table, without whose agreement there

cannot be peace.

While pragmatism is likely to have played a big role in the public statements that we heard, there may also be a genuine appreciation of the LTTE in the hearts of many if not most of the people of Jaffna for what they have done. But this we could not tell for sure simply by spending five days and listening to their public statements and private expressions. It is only when peace returns to Jaffna and the people vote at a free and fair election that we will know the truth. Perhaps even then we may not because love and gratitude may not translate into votes for good governance after the war, as Sir Winston Churchill found after leading his country to victory after the second world war.

A third message that came out of the meetings with the various civic associations was the desire to have links and regular exchanges with those in the south who are seen to have access to resources unavailable in Jaffna. One immediate outcome was the formation of a north-south journalists friendship association. There was by and large no evidence of separatist sentiment, which said leave us to ourselves. At more than one meeting the phrase "shared rule at the centre, self rule at the

region" was voiced. The desire for mutually enriching interaction was most strongly expressed at the meeting with the Jaffna traders association. But clearly, the amount of such interaction will remain limited so long as the highway to Jaffna remains closed. Re-opening it would be a priority of any genuine peace process.

In the meantime, there is much that the government can do, and is not doing, to improve the conditions of ordinary life for the people of Jaffna. There is still the longstanding complaint of government letters coming in the Sinhala language only, and the police taking down complaints in Sinhala which neither the complainants nor the judges can understand. There were problems pointed out of medicine having to be cleared through the Ministry of Defence, delays in the receipt of school texts and equipment, unfair control by four trading groups over the Jaffna market and the goods and services tax (GST) being charged on the transport cost of shipping to Jaffna. These are problems of an unresponsive government. They problems can be addressed by the government even while peace, and a way out of the "war for peace strategy," is being sought.



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Peace and Suffering

Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy

There is a spectre that haunts Sri Lanka: the spectre of peace. But for a people mired in a history of distrust and antagonism, peace is a deeply disturbing phenomenon. It challenges once learnt but now naturalised habits of antagonism, hate and fear. It unsettles assumptions.

The peace process itself makes many feel insecure, fearing a loss of control, suspicious of decisions that are being made outside one's sphere of influence. There is a constant and insatiable demand for certainty, transparency and security. For some it resembles Chamberlain flirting with Hitler at Munich. For others it is a sellout, a refusal to accept the imperatives of the right to self-determination. For peace activists, the present historical moment poses the greatest challenge since the beginning of this terrible conflict. Branded as traitors and the targets of hate speech, they have to continue their work in a murky environment of suspicion and fear. Sinhalese peace activists have to face a daily barrage of epithets and hate speech, the possibility of grenade attacks and a government and community hardened by years of betrayal and conflict. Tamil peace activists have the task of convincing both parties that it is in their interest to talk to each other even as they have to come to terms with the ideas and emotions that constitute the concept of the "Tamil nation".

The two nation concept

Tamil political leaders in the twentieth century from Arunachalam onwards have insisted that there are two nations inhabiting the island of Sri Lanka, one Tamil one Sinhala. Influenced by nationalism in Tamil Nadu, they have insisted on distance and difference from the Sinhala nation. Recently, Sinhala nationalist polemicists have also pointed to this phenomenon, arguing that this stance proves that Tamil racism is the primary cause of the ethnic problem. However, in terms of electoral politics a different reality emerges.

When C. Suntheralingam first

mooted the idea of Tamil Eelam in the 1950s, he received less than a handful of votes. In the 1950s, the Tamil community regarded Tamil Eelam as a joke, the eccentricities of an elderly but much loved Tamil politician. Though the ideas of Tamil separatism existed, no one took them seriously. In 1976, exactly twenty years later SJV Chelvanayakam resigned his seat and contested on a platform of a separate state. He received overwhelming support with over 70% of the electorate voting for a separate state. Something very radical happened between 1956 and 1976 in the Tamil community. Understanding that transformation will help us come to terms with the major obstacles we face in bringing the Tamil community aboard "the peace train".

Between 1956 and 1976, the Tamil leadership did become more aggressive and separatist in its advocacy. History will judge their actions accordingly. In addition the Tamil community was faced with a great deal of overt discrimination. The Sinhala Only legislation, the refusal to guarantee physical security to Tamil people living outside the North and East, standardization of university admissions which discriminated against Tamils, perceived discrimination in employment and the refusal of successive governments to honour their commitments with regard to negotiated devolution agreements are now the standard litany of discrimination that Tamils recite when asked to justify the call for a separate state.

Discrimination and articulate leadership by Tamil politicians fuelled a deep sense of grievance among the Tamil community. The lack of economic and educational opportunities due to the slow growth of an economy also added to the sense of frustration and isolation. In this despairing reality for young Tamils who were Tamil speaking, the idea of "the nation" finally captured their imagination. The nation became the panacea for all their problems. Like an opiate, it lulled them into the belief that everything will be alright once they get their own nation. The idea

of fighting for the nation made life more bearable. Benedict Anderson introduced the idea that the nation is not only a political/economic construct. It plays with our imagination, highlighting the romanticism of an imagined community. Val Daniel in a recent article shows how the concept of nation state "promises to soothe and heal... the modern nation has promised to provide refuge to those whose lives have been rendered chaotic by catastrophic events..." By the 1980s the concept of a Tamil nation had become the mainstream idea in vernacular, Tamil writings and articles. A whole generation of young Tamils had grown up taking this nation for granted.

The Pluralist Alternative

The other decision moment in Tamil construction of recent history is July 1983. Once JR Jayawardene told a group of Tamil leaders that they speak of 1983 as if it is the demarcating line between BC and AD. In many ways it is.

Until 1983, the champions of Tamil nationalism were primarily parliamentarians and democratic political leaders, who may have flirted with violent groups but who were generally committed to non-violent agitation.

After 1983, that radically changed. The LTTE had less than seven hundred members in June 1983. By January 1984, their cadres were in the thousands.

Along with other Tamil militant groups, the greater part of Tamil youth in the North and the East began to be implicated in armed struggle. A whole generation of young Tamil men exist who have had to negotiate with the call to armed insurrection. They have made their peace in different ways but they have all been touched by the rhetoric, ethics and discourse of armed struggle. Violence as the means of furthering the nation became the dominant tactic of Tamil nationalism after July 1983 with devastating consequences for the Tamil people and Sri Lankan society.

Since the Vaddukodai Resolution of 1976, Tamil politics of Sri Lanka has been integrally linked to the concept of "The Tamil Nation". It is this concept that has driven thousands of Tamil boys and girls to willingly or otherwise commit suicide in pursuance of what they perceive is a heroic death.

Revelling in the life of the imagined community, they are inspired by tales

of martyrdom, bonding and brotherhood. The intoxicating combination of heroism and self sacrifice, the building blocks of nationalist ideology, has inspired young Tamil men and self sacrifice, the building blocks of nationalist ideology, has inspired young Tamil men and women to commit unbelievable, and terribly brutal acts of violence. Dousing the passions associated with this way of life will be a major future challenge of the peace initiative. It is also this concept of nationalism that may eventually prevent Tamil political and military leaders from making a honourable peace with the Sri Lankan government. Unless the Tamil community and Tamil political leaders revisit the concept of nation, think of it differently, and see the possibility of viable pluralist alternatives within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, the peace process cannot move forward.

Nationalism to Tamil Internationalism

Where has nearly thirty years of the relentless, violent pursuit of the nation and nationalism got the Tamil community? What has it meant for the every day lives of ordinary persons? Professor Valentine Daniel in his recent work and writings has spent a great deal of time speaking to Tamil victims of violence. As we think of peace and the possibility of a peace process, it is important to revisit his work. The voices of the people he interviewed are the voices of silence that must be heard. They tell a different story. A story of so much pain and suffering that it is a testament to the need for peace in its own right. Peace is not only the problem of the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka. Peace is about the every day life of people.

When Valentine Daniel asked a young Tamil refugee in the United Kingdom what he thought of Tamil nationalism in the context of today's world, this was his response:

"You ask me about Tamil nationalism. There is only Tamil internationalism. No Tamil nationals. Never was. Never will be. This is Tamil internationalism.

Being stuck in a windowless room in Thailand, or a jail in Nairobi or Accra or Lagos or Cairo or America. Or being a domestic servant in Singapore and Malaysia for a rich

Tamil relative. Being part of a credit card racket in London. Crossing Niagara Falls into Canada. I am told that there is even a Tamil fisherman on a Norwegian island near the North Pole. All internationals. And don't forget the briefless barrister at Charing Cross who tries to hawk his speciality as an immigration lawyer to anyone who is gullible enough to believe him. He is a Tamil too."

The relentless fight for the Tamil nation and Tamil nationalism through war and violence has basically resulted in Sri Lanka being cleansed of Sri Lankan Tamils. Mr. N. U. Jayawardene has gone on record stating that the war should continue since at the present rate of attrition, Tamils will soon become numerically so small that they will be a "manageable minority". History then will provide us with the greatest irony. The call for a Tamil nation may have actually resulted in the decimation of the Tamil people. Internationally the image of who is a Tamil is also changing. Tamils who once nationally were considered to be civil servants, accountants and professionals are emerging on the international radar screen as smugglers, drug couriers, arms dealers and members of organized crime. The attempts to outlaw "terrorism" in western countries are very much a result of this new "Tamil internationalism". Tamil internationality is an outgrowth of Tamil nationalism but it is also a different phenomenon. Tamil internationality thorough life in the western under-world confronts Tamil nationalism and invest it with a great deal of cynicism. Heroic death at home does not always sit well with human smuggling abroad. While there is this standard picture of the Tamil diaspora funding and fighting a proxy war, this is true primarily of the early immigrants. Val Daniel's interviews with recent immigrants to the West paints a picture of young Tamil people, disillusioned with nationalism, often ex militants themselves, learning new habits and negotiating how to become members of the British working class. In their lives criminality and normalcy intermingle, as is the case with all those who are marginalized from the western political system. Their life at the borders of western society gives them a different identity, the identity of the subaltern on the fringes of western civilization. In this incarnation they

make alliances with working class movements, other immigrants and the world of criminal gangs and drug couriers. The Tamil nation is not always integral to their survival.

A People Without Voice

While Tamil nationalism faces international challenges, Tamils who remain in Sri Lanka often find themselves without a voice and without agency. Political leaders speak for them but somehow they do not portray the full reality. What of ordinary people, how have their lives changed because of this persistent armed conflict? Can we speak of Peace without taking them into account? Valentine Daniel's work consists of so many portraits that challenge our indifference. Tale after tale of enormous pain and suffering contrast with the strident tones of competing nationalism. There is for example **Kamalam**:

In 1985, the army took her son away and he never reappeared. She then worshipped his photograph and prayed for him daily until her house went up in flames when a gasoline bomb was dropped by a helicopter gunship. She now sits in a refugee camp in India and every morning she goes to the ocean and sits there staring out to sea. Whenever people ask her why, she says poignantly, "tomorrow my son might come".

Then there is **Karunaharen**, a sixteen-year-old boy. The Indian Peace-keeping Force stopped him and his sister. While he waited on the road, his sister was taken into a house. He heard her screams. He ran to the window to watch her being raped and then killed. He fled in terror to his home. His parents worrying for his safety just bought a ticket and put him on a plane to Canada. When he reached Seattle in the US, he was taken off the plane and put in a detention centre with a criminal gang from the Seattle area. There he was gang raped and beaten by members of the gang. He was finally saved by a sympathetic prison guard who handed him over to a Tamil lawyer living in Seattle.

In retelling stories recounted by Daniel, there is also **Shanmugham**, aged twenty-eight. He escaped the July 1983 riots and went to Jaffna. There one day he was interrogated and tortured by the security forces. After that he was picked up by the LTTE who according to his own words "relentlessly tortured him" to find out what he told the secu-

rity forces. When he was released by the LTTE, he was picked up by the EPRLF and tortured about what he had told the LTTE. Finally he escaped, went on foot to Mannar and then took a boat to India.

Then there is **Punitham**. She had lost her father and brothers to the war. She had only a son and daughter. She wanted to save the life of her son and send him to safety. She sold all her possessions and bought a ticket for her son to go to Germany. She then handed him over to "uncles", human smugglers engaged in the trade. She has not heard from him since but still feels that she had given him the gift of life. She told the interviewer, "There isn't a day that goes by that I don't pray for him and weep for him. He was my only son. He is my only son. I am glad he did not die for Sri Lanka or for Eelam. 'Maybe he will remember Tamil. That is enough. He will be a German-Tamil. That is enough.'"

The Anthropology of Pain

In my work I have spent a great deal of time with women victims of violence. And yet we cannot forget the expectation and suffering of sons and boys.

Because of the armed conflict, young Sri Lankan males, both Sinhala and Tamil have different role models for being "masculine". Gone are the images of the schoolteacher in Arya Sinhala or the young Tamil accountant/engineer.

Increasingly being masculine in both communities' means wearing camouflage and carrying an AK 47. Increasingly being masculine means fighting, dying and shedding blood. Violence has become a central element of Sri Lankan masculinity. Being male in Sri Lanka is to be aggressive, violent and fearless.

Punitham put her son on a plane to save him from this ideal, of having to fight and die to live with dignity. The repercussions of these habits of masculinity, of these ways of being male, will haunt Sri Lanka long after the war is over.

It is not only the Tamils who suffer. Unfortunately there is not much scholarship on actual case studies of Sinhalese and Muslim direct victims of ethnic violence, written by those who are concerned with what has now come to be called "the anthropology of pain", even though there has been some recent scholarship on the JVP period. However, there are many fact-finding reports

and third party accounts of the horrendous violence that Sinhalese and Muslims have had to suffer during the course of this conflict. A recent spate of Sinhala films by young and brave filmmakers capture the fate of the rural young men from Sinhala areas who have to actually fight this war. They show families and villages devastated by loss, grief and violence resulting from this war. Survivors of LTTE attacks on border villages have also spoken about the brutality and violence they face. Their constant fear of being attacked in the night from forces emerging from the jungle haunts their every action.

A report on the attack in Boatte shows the indiscriminate, barbaric nature of the violence with the obvious and deliberate aim of intimidation and cleansing. Psychologists working in the South of the country are overwhelmed with the issues of grief and loss resulting from bomb explosions in Colombo, not to mention the sheer loss of life. There are also the stories of the Muslim families who have been driven out of their homes in the North and the East. NGOs working with these families in Puttalam have a great deal of evidence about the trauma and suffering of these victims. Internecine warfare was once common in the East and in certain parts of the East an uneasy equilibrium exists reflecting a very fragile peace between the communities.

In the refugee camps and the welfare centres, Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims, one million strong, wait for handouts from the state. Homeless and displaced they have only one thing on their minds, how to survive the very next day.

Social Suffering

Whatever the future holds for Sri Lanka, the time must come when we must courageously take stock of the violence that we have suffered both individually and collectively. Veena Das defines "social suffering" as "the devastating injuries that social force inflicts on human experience". People can suffer because of the normal grief associated with the life cycle, or because of natural disaster. Or they can suffer because of social and political strategies that target them. They can suffer because someone else imagines a life for them, or feels that they can be sacrificed in pursuit of abstract principles or pas-

sions of honour. They can suffer because others can make decisions for them, decisions often affecting their life, death and survival. Violence in pursuit of preserving the nation by the Sri Lankan state and violence in search of a new nation state by the Tamil Tigers has resulted in unimaginable social suffering. The injuries from this confrontation have been so devastating, destroying human beings, extracting enormous pain and suffering and creating a totally traumatized population in the North and East and in some parts of the South. All this suffering has been justified in the search of elusive and imagined goals of victory and glory.

"Social Suffering", then must be centrepiece concern of the peace process.

The voices of those who suffer most should not be ignored in pursuit of abstract goals of conflict resolution or military victories a la Clausewitz. Negotiators in Oslo cannot just sign away the rights and concerns of the civilians of these areas in any formal agreement between the combating parties. Humanitarian and civilian needs must be a cornerstone of any lasting agreement. It is time that we think of those who have borne the brunt of this war the civilians living in the North and East.

Seeking Oracle's Intercession

Patricia Lawrence in her work on the eastern province tells us of a place where the secrets of this armed conflict are revealed in hushed whispers. In the eastern province, the oracles of the Goddess construct a sacred space where the army and the LTTE do not venture. It is the ordinary citizen who comes there to ask the oracle to plead with the Goddess to intercede on their behalf and relieve their suffering. Sitting next to the oracle, Patricia Lawrence was able to hear the stories and thoughts of ordinary people, thoughts and stories they would not dare tell others because of the fear and pain they feel when they relive them. Stories are told to the Oracle in hushed whispers of rape, of torture, of extortion, of fear, of anxiety, of mental illness, of physical pain, of suffering so terrible that the Oracle herself bends in two when she hears them. All these stories relate to the war. The Oracle plays the part of healer, intervenor and counsellor. She absorbs the pain within her body and speaks to the Goddess. She is

often overwhelmed. No one who has been privy to what is told in whispers to the oracle in the Eastern province would be able to justify even one more day of this terrible war.

The Terror of Silence

Veena Das, Valentine Daniel, Patricia Lawrence, all the South Asian scholars who have engaged closely with victims of violence point to the fact that silence is the common reaction of those who suffer violence. In my work as Special Rapporteur, I have found the same thing. When you speak to those who suffer unmentionable violence and ask them to tell you their story, they are often speechless. Some may never speak. Others claim that "words don't come", or that ideas do not form. I have often thought that for victims of violence, the pain is so deep and the anger so fierce that words fail them. Das and Daniel claim that it is even more than that. Being human inevitably entails communication and relationships, and therefore, the refusal to communicate, or the inability to communicate, is a refusal or an inability to be human.

The silence is then a withdrawal from participating in humanity. Silence is before thought, before imagination. It is the void. It is terror. If peace talks are to begin, the victims of this war, both Sinhala and Tamil have to move beyond the terror of silence. Negotiators must be forced to remember that there is more to this conflict than the political resolution of constitutional boundaries.

In conclusion, I have memories of this old Tamil lady in her eighties from Jaffna who boarded a SriLankan Airways flight to London. She wore a white sari, a sign of her widowhood and a large pair of spectacles. I offered to help her with her immigration forms. She sat next to me and would not say a word. During take off, landing and moments of turbulence, she held my hand tight for reassurance. She had never been on a plane. Throughout the flight a steady stream of tears poured down her face. When I asked her what was wrong, she brushed me aside. She refused to speak. Like Kamalam, she would just stare into space. Her silence was laden with so much pain and suffering. It is her voice that we must capture. It is her anxieties and insecurities that we must address. Any peace process to be fair, effective and just must give her centre stage. ●

Sri Lanka, Perfect Window to India's Past, Present and Future

[Speech by His Excellency the High Commissioner of India in Sri Lanka, Gopalakrishna Gandhi, at the Gratiaen Awards Ceremony 2001. The Gratiaen award for the best Sri Lankan fiction in English was endowed by Michael Ondaatje, in remembrance of his mother, from the Booker Prize award for his novel, *The English Patient*].

Sri Lanka, "perfect window" to India's past, present and future. We are all but linked, all but the same.

Nature has used India as an oyster clasp for its genetics. A pearl of the rarest refraction has emerged from that bivalve of mind and matter, as Sri Lanka. India's spirit no less than its seed, ethos no less than ethnicity have quickened life on this isle. Sri Lanka is, to wit, India miniaturized. And yet, within its sub-continental gestation, this dweepa has acquired a hue all its own, a glint that stands apart from its originations.

Sri Lanka derives from India but is not of it; she owes to India but belongs only to herself. If history has vouchsafed her exclusivity, geography has validated it but after - almost - changing its mind. Consider the Palk Straits, which set off Sri Lanka from the Indian coastline. A series of shy islets between Talai Mannar and Dhanushkodi hyphenate that sliver of sea. They hyphenate, neither joining up nor staying apart. They are an elliptical bridge of sand-discs strung on a filament chain of salt, where it requires expertise to say this one, here, is India's and this one, Sri Lanka's. I can imagine two children, a boy called Geo and a girl, Polity, playing hopscotch on these islets, neither winning nor losing. Just playing, their little heads tousled by the saline wind.

Salinity is sharp. Salt-water divides and creates more decisively than any other substance in nature. The sea, be it ever so narrow, ever so superficial, sunders continuity and nature. So that this side of the brine becomes mine and the other, thine. And not just this land-side, this shore, but even this stretch of the sea - this ceases to be mine, becomes yours. Tuna move unblinkingly from one territorial water to another; prawn trespass. But they are tuna, prawn. They

are free to do so. Not so the fishers of tuna, prawn. And they - the fishers - are netted. By Immigration.

Near can be far. 'Here', in a trice, can become 'there'.

India and Sri Lanka, as coastal states, know that sovereignty can end or begin with a fish's fin. *Monkfish Moon* could never have been written in India. But nowhere can it be understood better than in India. Understood under the skin. *Funny Boy* could not have been written in India, for it tells a Lankan tale, but India does understand why "Ammachi (in Jaffna) phoned Nages Aunty to find out if it was safe to send Radha Aunty by train. (And) Nages Aunty said that the tension had died down and that she had arranged for a police friend of hers to escort Radha aunty to the station (to take the train that would take her to Colombo)". Nowhere other than on the subcontinent of India can one understand in our very beings the hazards that train journeys can entail. Train journeys, that is, from one ethnocentricity to another. Both in India and in Sri Lanka, the longer, overnight-type of journeys are journeys from one major ethnic ambience to another. Majorly different, to employ a word disallowed in grammar, yet majorly linked ambiances. "Ceylon" wrote Ananda Coomaraswamy "is a more perfect window to gaze on India's past than can be found in India itself". He is right. The question arises: Is Sri Lanka, the window to India's past, also frozen in the same past? Or is it a window to gaze on India's present and India's future, a window that is keeping time with the transformations in the subject of its gaze? Is the window learning, unlearning, borrowing without inhibition, discarding without regret? Or is it a painting of Still Life, fixated on some one image of India?

There are those who would like to freeze India and Sri Lanka in the time warps of their preference. I have found with more irritation than surprise the following account in a 1996 British publication dealing with literature on the Indian sub-continent. Writing on "the first historic settlements" in Sri Lanka

it says: "These settlers came from India, and were composed of Sinhalese from north India, speaking an Indo-Aryan language and Tamils from South India speaking a Dravidian language".

Doubtless the writer thinks they came on an upper and lower deck of the same ark, one marked "North Indians headed for Southern Ceylon" and the other "South Indians headed for Northern Ceylon". Who is to explain to these simple labellers of the world's population that even in that remote antiquity those who moved out of India were unrecognizably inter-bred even before the Tamil queens at Polonnaruwa and the Nayakkar kings of Kandy contributed to the ethnic toss-up of the genetic dice in this dweepa, so that a 'throw' can land on any one of the DNA's multiple faces? India is a civilisation of many constants and many more variables; which is why it is perennial. 'Only that which moves, stays'.

Barring some prismatists most Lankans know that their window gaze of India is, essentially, the gaze of one dynamic pluralism at another. Likewise, barring some incorrigible ethnicists, most Indians know the diversity of their component parts to be part of a mosaic, which is, in turn, fascinating, bewildering, exasperating, traumatizing but which is always-India, greater than the sum of its parts. Like pieces in a kaleidoscope, forming new patterns with each turn of Time's hand - new patterns that yet remain, each in itself, the same. So that when an earthquake brings a part of India down, something survives the rubble, something vital, something deathless. Deathless not just because it is a billion plus strong, but because it is - India. A torment to the dividers-up of the world into neat blocs, a nightmare to colonialists and post-colonialists unlike, an impossibility to all categorizers, north-south wallas, second-world-third-world types, an oxymoron for segregationists, integra-tionists, congregationists, India is a delight, a joy and a rap-

ture for the higher human sensibility. Also, of course, ever so often, a cause for lamentation, sorrow and, always, for contemplation. Such is India. A house of laughter and of pain, of remorse and of self-confidence, of memory, and of dreams. But a house that is itself.

The literatures of India or Sri Lanka as, for that matter, of the whole sub-continent bear a family resemblance; they cannot but since they are true to themselves. Tagore, Iqbal, Nazrul Islam, Bharati and Ananda Samarakoon have created national - as opposed to nationalist - verse of the same timbre. Yet Bengali, Urdu, Tamil and Sinhala retain - thank God - their individualities. Likewise, Vikram Seth and Michael Ondaatje when writing, albeit in English about India and Sri Lanka, write about the same chapter of life in which we, South Asians, have been sited. Coomaraswamy has written "India without Ceylon is incomplete". The geopolitical Indian in me was a little startled to read that line. I read it again. Yes, it was put in exactly those words. "India without Ceylon is incomplete". What could Coomaraswamy who has also spoken of Ceylon as a perfect window to gaze on India's past, I wondered, have meant by that line - "India without Ceylon is incomplete"? And after a while of contemplation, I understood; I understood it perfectly. Just as the different components of India, remaining distinct, go to complete India, so also in the dimension of India's non-territorial culture, its imperium of human pluralism, does Sri Lanka complete India.

Sri Lanka is not a postscript or an epilogue to the Tactatus Indica. It is the epigram that encapsulates the epic. It is the pith, the quintessence, the quintus, the fifth, that concludes and completes the proverbial 'four essences' which form and pervade the culture of India. Not for nothing is Sri Lanka the most perfect window because if it is a window that sees it is also one that can show up. Equally, it is a window that can see

and imbibe.

Sri Lanka cannot forget India in her thoughts and writings because she cannot forget her derivations. She cannot ignore India, for she cannot ignore diversities. She cannot forsake India for she cannot forsake her destiny. India and Sri Lanka recognise themselves in one another. We see in the other, the prides and prejudices, we know, and the littleness that often mar our daily lives. Equally, we see our humanity, our keenness of mind, our largeness of heart. We have, I am afraid, no way of forgetting what we have not relished. But perhaps we can remember without recrimination. We have, I am afraid, no way of repaying what we have borrowed. But perhaps we can lend without arrogance and borrow without feeling crushed by the debt, for do we not know that each loan between peoples has come from a borrowing. And let us remember, in the umbilism of the Palk Straits, we are all-but linked, all-but-the-same. Thank God for distinctions which do not divide, the similarities which do not typify. Thank God, too, that Geo and Polity can hopscotch under a shared, mellow sun, rather than squabble at the solstice of competitive arrogance.

May something in us never grow out of innocence into the venality of modern adulthood. Let the world worship globalisation and wire-connected globalism. Let us celebrate something akin but also fundamentally different: let us celebrate internationalism which, in the words of Coomaraswamy: "Is the recognition of the rights of others to their self-development and of the incompleteness of the civilized world if their special culture - contribution is missing". And may the literatures of Sri Lanka - English, Sinhala, Tamil - which we celebrate today, with the help of Michael Ondaatje's endowment, help Sri Lanka, the "perfect window", to gaze at India's past, present and future, and in doing so, see not just its mould but its soul-mate.



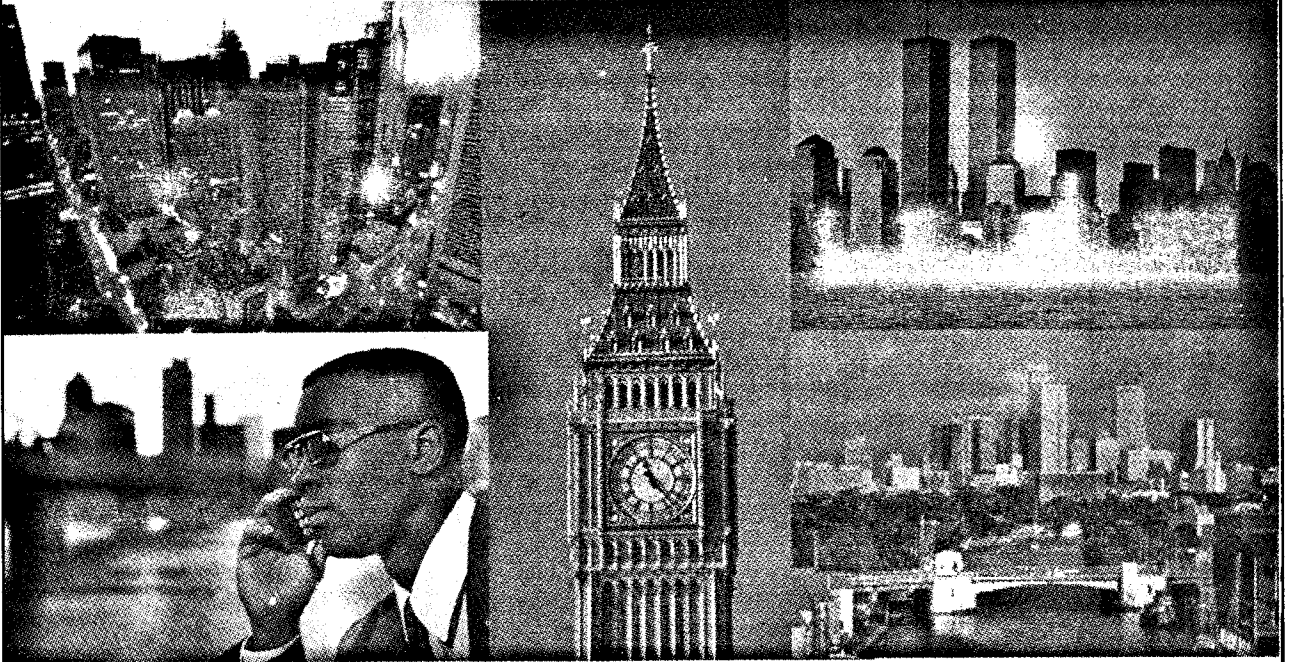
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PROFESSOR C J ELIEZER

A Tribute by Brian Senewiratne
University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

(Extracts from a speech in Brisbane on 8.04.2001)

It is an honour for me, a Sinhalese, to be asked to speak on the life of a great Tamil whom I have known for half a century. It is an emotional task for me and if I am unable to complete some sentences it is not that I do not know what to say but that I am unable to say it. I guess it should not all be sadness but a celebration of an extraordinary life, a life well spent.

As a fellow academic I will list out his amazing academic achievements. He has the best academic record of anyone that Sri Lanka has produced in the past 2000 years.

I will speak of our mutual commitment to the struggle of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka to live with equality, dignity and safety in the country of their birth. Eliezer's commitment to his people extended to the expatriate Tamil community in Australia. This was recognised by the Australian Government who awarded him the coveted Order of Australia, Australia Medal (AM). He was also honoured in October 1997 by those who are shedding their blood to establish a Separate State with their highest award, Maamanithar, meaning "Great Man", for his "patriotic service to the cause of national freedom".

His death will obviously be an enormous loss to Tamils both in Sri Lanka and abroad. It will be an even greater loss to non-Tamils such as myself who have voluntarily joined the struggle to free the Tamil people from Sinhalese domination and discrimination. We leaned on him so much. Even in the closing years of his life when he was unable to play an active role, he was still there to lean on.

It is said that no one is indispensable. I do not believe this. In the context of the chaos in Sri Lanka, four people have been indispensable – Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, Bishop Leo Nanayakkara, Vijaya Kumaratunga (the current President's assassinated husband) and Christie Jeyaratnam Eliezer. My worry is that I cannot see replacements for these people even in the distant horizon.

Eliezer was born in 1918 in Point Pedro and educated in Hartley College Jaffna. Even as a child he showed an in-



terest in mathematics, doing sums on the sand in those lovely beaches which I know so well. The arithmetic was erased by a stroke of the hand and a new 'slate' created.

He entered the Ceylon University College, the precursor of the University of Colombo. The University College, established by the British in 1921 in Colombo, was affiliated to the University of London and granted external degrees of BA and BSc of the London University. It was expected to become a University in a few years. It took twenty!

Permit me to digress for a moment and tell Sri Lankans something they may not know. Tamils had their centres of advanced education in Jaffna much earlier than 1921, in fact a hundred years earlier. In 1823 the American missionaries set up the Batticotta Seminary which the eminent British historian Sir Emerson Tennent assessed as equal in rank to many European universities. It produced scholars like C.W. Thamothersampillai, a High Court Judge in Madras and Regent in the Indian State of Puthokotai in 1892. Unfortunately the Seminary closed after a few decades when the Mission ran out of funds.

Eliezer entered Ceylon University College in Colombo and went on to Cambridge University where he did a degree in Mathematics and Theoretical Physics and got a First Class in the Mathematics

Tripes (a "Wrangler" in Cambridge jargon – a special term reserved for those who got a First Class in Mathematics because it is so incredibly difficult). He won numerous prizes and awards, including the Sir Isaac Newton Scholarship in 1942 and the coveted Smith Prize in 1943.

He went on to do a PhD under the Nobel Prize Winner Paul Dirac in 1945. The research for his PhD was on the Spinning Electron and the Electromagnetic Field. The following year (1946) he was elected a Fellow of Christs College, Cambridge. I know of no other Ceylonese who has achieved this distinction. He was awarded the Charles Mayer Award by the American Academy of Science in 1947.

Unbelievably he found time to study law and qualified as a Barrister (Inner Temple) in 1949.

About this time the Chair of Mathematics fell vacant in the University of Colombo and the authorities approached Cambridge for a (white) man to fill the Chair. Cambridge replied that the best one they could find was none other than a Ceylonese – Christie Eliezer.

Eliezer was appointed Professor of Mathematics in Colombo in 1949 at the ripe old age of 31, the youngest person ever to be appointed to a Chair in that University. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Science in 1954 before he was 40!

He presented papers in Conferences on the "Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy" in Geneva, Vienna and Bombay. He won a Fulbright Scholarship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton in the USA. There he worked with the world famous Dr Robert Oppenheimer, the Director of the Institute. He also held appointments in the University of Chicago.

In 1953 Eliezer had the extraordinary honour of being invited to discuss his research with Einstein, yes The Einstein (Professor Albert Einstein). I know of no other Sri Lankan who has got within a mile of this legend.

It was about this time that I first met Professor Eliezer. I entered the Science Faculty in the Colombo University in 1951 to do a degree in Zoology. It was at a University Student Christian Movement meeting, a group strongly supported by Eliezer, that a soft spoken young man in his early 30s asked me what Faculty I had joined and what I was doing. I thought he was a young lecturer and when he had moved off I asked someone, "Who is that very pleasant guy?" "Don't you know him? He is the famous Professor Eliezer who had that extraordinary career in Cam-

bridge". I met him at several of the SCM meetings. He always chuckled, it was a characteristic. He even chuckled in October 2000, the last time we were to meet.

In 1954, I left the Ceylon University for England to study medicine and entered Cambridge University. At the "Fresher's Welcome" tea party, the Vice Chancellor asked me, "And where do you come from young man?" I said "Ceylon". "Ah!", he exclaimed, "that is where Eliezer came from". I told him that the comparison must end right there to avoid disappointment! I said that Eliezer was in a different league and that it was like comparing Frank Worrell with the local village cricket captain because they both came from the same country. My degree results confirmed my pessimism. I passed the Tripos but not with medals and awards!

Let me digress for a moment to give you an example of Eliezer's extraordinary modesty. Many years later, in the mid 1980s, when the two of us were in New York to address a Conference on Eelam, we shared a room. Having exhausted every issue on the Sri Lankan problem, I said, "For a change, tell me what you did in Cambridge". His response was, "Exactly the same as you did 15 years later. I studied and passed the exam. That is all",

There was not a word about the First Class, being a Maths Wrangler, the prizes, the awards, the PhD under a Nobel Prize Winner, being elected as a fellow of a Cambridge College or the Law degree. That was Eliezer - a man of unbelievable modesty.

I came back to Ceylon in 1956 to get married (to a Tamil). My father-in-law to be, W.T.I. Alagaratnam, the first Ceylonese Director of Irrigation, made extensive inquiries about me. He called his friend Christie Eliezer who gave me a tick. This was apparently sufficient and I returned to England with his youngest daughter, now Kamalini Senewiratne. Commendably she has remained so despite being married to a rabid activist whose home has been turned into a mess with papers on Eelam, East Timor, Fiji, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, the chaos in the public hospitals in Australia and God knows what else, strewn around the house so that walking or sitting is not possible. The Tamils who have produced Tigers lost a Tamil to a roaring Sinhala Lion. No great loss - she is a 'sleeping Tamil' like so many of her ilk who do not know what the Tamil struggle is all about.

In 1956 when S.W.D Bandaranaike started playing opportunistic politics and

changed the Official Language from English to Sinhalese, Eliezer, then Dean of the Faculty of Science, played a crucial role in safeguarding the Tamil students from racists in the University Council.

The Vice Chancellor at the time was the utterly racist Sir Nicholas Attygalle and the Chancellor, that subtle racist Dudley Senanayake. These two and other racists in the University Council held the view that following Bandaranaike's Sinhala Only Act, Tamil should not be a medium of instruction in the University. This was a diabolical misinterpretation of the Act. As Bandaranaike had stated in the Bill, the Sinhala Only Act was to be applied to administration only and to not the language of education. It was Professor Eliezer and Senator A.M.A Azeez, the Principal of a Muslim school who was also on the University Council, who thwarted this blatant attempt by racists in the University Council to discriminate against the Tamils. Eliezer and Azeez had the support of none other than Bandaranaike himself. How do I know this? I had it from Bandaranaike himself, whose tennis partner I was! He told me that Eliezer was the most intelligent and sincere person he had ever met. Coming as it did from someone who was closely associated with people

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like Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India and Sir Anthony Eden, the Prime Minister of Britain, it was some compliment.

After the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1958 when armed Sinhalese hoodlums attacked Tamil people and their homes, Eliezer left Ceylon (1959) to take up what he thought was going to be a 2 year assignment in Malaya as Professor of Mathematics in the University of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. However, with the deteriorating situation in Ceylon, he decided to stay on in Malaysia and Ceylon lost another of its talented sons, perhaps its most famous. He remained in Malaysia till 1968.

In 1968 he was appointed as the Foundation Professor of Applied Mathematics in the newly established La Trobe University in Melbourne. He held the post till he retired in 1983. During this 15-year period he served as the Chairman of the Department of Applied Mathematics and Dean of the School of Physical Sciences. He also served as Chairman of the Academic Board and even acted as the Vice-Chancellor.

When he retired, the University established the Eliezer Prize in Applied Mathematics awarded annually to 2nd year students. A large fund was established, supported by very large contributions from many of his former students and colleagues throughout the world, showing the very high esteem he was held in.

Even after his retirement, he continued his research in Quantum Theory and Relativity, Symmetrics of Differential Equations and Mathematical Inequalities. I gather that in atomic physics there is even a theory called "The Eliezer Theory".

In addition to numerous research publications, he wrote two texts on "Concise Vector Analysis" and "Statics" and even one on Christianity titled "Evolution Creation or What" in 1996.

I returned to the Sri Lanka as Associate Professor of Medicine in Kandy the same year (1968) that Eliezer came to Australia. I was appalled at the sight of thousands of Tea estate workers (Plantation Tamils) dying in the streets of Kandy. They were the people who, by their slave labour had put Sri Lanka on the international map. They were being thrown out of the miserable sheds ("coolie lines") by Sinhalese hoodlums, presumably with the blessings of Mrs. Bandaranaike's government. I picked up these miserable people from the streets in Kandy and admitted them to my ward where they could die with dignity. Eliezer who was by then in Australia heard about this and wrote me a letter quoting the Bible "Ye are the salt of the earth". This encouraged me to con-

tinue the work with renewed vigour. That was what Eliezer did in Mathematics and in other areas - to encourage people. Eliezer was, in fact, one of the few Tamils to campaign for that much neglected and ignored group. He pointed out that they were severely disadvantaged in housing, education and health.

I followed Eliezer to Australia in 1976 to take up a university appointment in Brisbane. Thousands of kilometres apart in this vast country, we rarely met but I knew he was there and that is what mattered.

When that despicable man President J.R. Jayawardene committed that worst act of vandalism and had the Public Library in Jaffna burnt (1 June 1981) I was shocked. I called Eliezer simply because he was the only one I could think of worth calling. He strongly condemned this act, saying that it "...cut the heart strings to records of an ancient past. It denied access to a valuable educational resource, not only to thousands of school children who used the Library daily, but also international scholars of Tamil research. He named Jayawardene's two racist Ministers Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake who had been sent up to Jaffna supposedly to oversee district council elections who watched the burning library from the Government rest house across the road.

The 1983 massacre of Tamils affected me deeply. I felt that as a Sinhalese I had to tender an apology to the Tamil people, which is more than what Jayawardene could do. I sat up all night and wrote a booklet, "The 1983 Massacre, Unanswered Questions", in which I held Jayawardene, his Cabinet Ministers and their hoodlums responsible for this blot on Sri Lanka. Eliezer offered to write the Foreword. I was delighted and honoured, not that what he said about me was entirely accurate!

We met again in New York in the mid 1980s. It was, I think the 4th Eelam Conference which I was invited to address. Eliezer was in the Chair at that massive gathering of Tamils, non-Sri Lankans and the saner members of my community, the Sinhalese.

After the New York meeting we decided to do a world tour to explain to the uninformed what the current struggle was all about. We decided to follow Athulathmudali (Jayawardene's Minister of Security or, more accurately, Insecurity) and correct the lies and misinformation he was propagating. Eliezer was delighted to have a Sinhalese with him. I was elated to have someone of his calibre sup-

porting me. Since then we have been in close contact despite the distance that separated us in this vast country.

After the 1983 pogrom in the Sri Lankan South, Eliezer worked tirelessly to get the Australian Government to open the doors of this country to Tamils whose safety was in doubt. Every Tamil who has got into Australia as a refugee (and even some who have not come as refugees) owe their existence here to Eliezer. He lobbied everyone and had the doors of this not-easy-to-get-into country opened.

He was the Founder of the Australian Federation of Tamil Associations in 1984. It is now a vast organisation of 11 Tamil Associations covering the whole of Australia and New Zealand. He was Founder President from 1984 till he died in 2001. His contribution to the welfare of the Tamil community was recognised by the Australian Government which awarded him the Order of Australia, Australia Medal, on the recommendation of the Honours Committee. Eliezer himself preferred to see himself as "a citizen of the world", which he sure was.

Professor Eliezer died on 10 March 2000 a few days after his last call to me. I went down for the funeral in Melbourne. It was one of the most impressive funerals I have ever attended. It was a clear reflection of the esteem he was held in. Nearly 1000 people mainly Tamils, but some non-Sri Lankans and even a few sane members of my community, the Sinhalese, were there.

We grieve for Professor Eliezer but grieving alone is not enough. We must construct a memorial for him. What better memorial than the establishment of a separate Tamil State, Eelam, so that his people in the North and East of Sri Lanka could live with equality, dignity, and free of discrimination in the country of their birth. This is what he yearned for and this is what will have to be delivered. It is our business, indeed our obligation, to see that it is delivered.

Goodbye Professor Eliezer. It was my privilege and good fortune to have known you for half a century and worked with you for the last 18 years. I grieve at the loss of a close friend but I also celebrate a life well spent, all the way to the very end.

Rani Eliezer and her family must be very proud of a man of extreme brilliance with an amazing academic record, a tireless worker for human rights, a humanist, not just a Tamil but a true citizen of the world who achieved a great deal but was so humble, so unassuming and painfully modest. He has been a role model and an inspiration to us all. ●

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MATRIMONIAL

Ariyalai Hindu parents seek groom for science graduate daughter, 37, in Senior Government employment in Colombo. Please send horoscope, details. M 1234 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu Tamil parents residing in UK seek suitable partner for their 25 year old attractive professional daughter with Mars affliction. Please apply with horoscope and details. M 1235 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Catholic parents seek partner for son, 47, 5'9", Fair, Handsome, Canadian Citizen, Accountant, Employed in Bank. Reply with full details. M 1236 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek groom for daughter, 28, partly qualified accountant presently in UK. Send horoscope, details. M 1237 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek partner for British born daughter, 25, 5'5", completing Ph.D shortly after B.Sc., M.Sc. Send horoscope, details. M 1238 c/o Tamil Times

WEDDING BELLS

Mohan son of Mrs N. Sivagnanasundram and the late Mr. V. Sivagnanasundram (Churchill) of 1 Paradise Place, St. Clair, NSW 2759, Australia and Radha daughter of Mrs. P. Krishnanandan and the late Dr. S. Krishnanandan of 16/2 Hampden Lane, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka on 6th April 2001 at Chandra Mouleeswarar Temple, Anna Nagar, Madras, India - 77 Coulter Ave., Toronto, Ontario M9N 1P7, Canada.

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OBITUARIES



Mrs. Theresa Mariathason of Bambalapitiya Flats, Colombo, Sri Lanka, beloved wife of late Mr. K.A. Mariathason of Education Department, Colombo 2; loving mother of Mano, Gnanam, (UK), Maragatham (Sri Lanka), Soundari, Rajah (UK), Lawrence (Germany), Thiru (UK); mother-in-law of Ratna, Queenie (UK), Chellappah (Sri Lanka), Selva, Rajini (UK), Maheswary (Germany), Ramya (UK); grandmother of Ravi (Australia), Dharshini, Ophilia, Selvi, Priya (all of UK), Pratheesh, Anusha (Sri Lanka) Mellanie, Aaron, Romesh, Rajiv (all of UK) Nidharshini (Germany); Great grandmother of Jade, Ritchi (Raj) (UK); Great grandmother-in-law of James and Shanthan (UK) passed away in Sri Lanka on 28th March 2001 and was buried at the General Cemetery, Kanatte, Borella, Sri Lanka on 31st March 2001.

Mr & Mrs M.P. Chelvanayagam of Redhill, Surrey and all family members wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes, messages of sympathy, assisted and supported them during the period of bereavement. They regret their inability to thank them individually. - 6 Brook Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 6DL, UK. Email: mpc@talk.21.com



Mrs Ponnammah Suppiah, beloved wife of the late Arumugam Suppiah (formerly of P.M.G's office and C.T.O., Colombo) passed away peacefully on 7th March 2001 at the age of 85 years. She is the dear mother of Dr. Puvirajasingham and dear mother-in-law of Jegatheswarie with whom she was living in UK for the last seven years, and mother of Mangaiarkarasy and mother-in-law of Sivasothinathan of Canada. She is also doting grandmother of Nirmalan, Shivani and Janani all of UK and Sivakanthan, Sathiyaraj, Ramanan all of Canada. She is also grand-aunt of Sivasothi (Rasu), UK and great grandmother of Ganesh and Jyothi.

The family wish to thank all friends and relatives who supported them with messages of condolence, attending the funeral and visiting the home both before and after the funeral and bringing flowers, food and other refreshments during this time. - 76, Rating Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9LD. Phone 01229 821621.



Dr. K. Thirunavukkarasu (Thiru), formerly Assistant Transportation Superintendent, Ceylon Government Railways, dearly beloved hus-

band of Dr. Sathiamalar; loving father of Yamuna, Menaha and Sukanya; father-in-law of Ian Purcell; grandfather of Ilisha; brother of Jayaseelan, late Mangayarkkarasi Nagendran, Prof. Arulananthan, Ulaganathan, Manoranjitham, Capt. Chandran, Sathanandan and Athiroopawathy Jeyapalan passed away on 27th March 2001 in Cambridge, United Kingdom and was cremated in Cambridge on 31st March.

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - 20 Coppice Avenue, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5AQ, UK.

Appreciation on page 33.



Born: 21.12.1916

Died: 08.02.2001

Eliathamby Rasakulasuriar, Retired Chief Mechanical Engineer, Sri Lankan Government Railways; beloved husband of Kamalambikai; son of late Eliathamby and Achikutti; son-in-law of late A.K. Ponniah and of Mrs. Kankamma Ponniah passed away suddenly on the 8th of February 2001 and was cremated at the South Essex Crematorium, UK on the 12th of February.

He was a wonderful and loving father of Ganesh, Kanthini, Suresh (all of UK), Rohini and Sharmini (both of USA); father-in-law of Usha, Sheila (both of UK), Vannikumar and Sritharan (both of USA); loving brother of late Mrs Paakialakshmi Sathasivam, Muttiah Sinarasa, late Mrs. Sivagnanapotham, late Rasaratnam, late Thambapillai and late Sellathurai; brother-in-law of Kesabanathan, late Mrs. Thillaiampalam, late

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Pathmanathan, Dr. Ragunathan, Ramanathan, Swaminathan, Rasalakshmi Jeganathan (Kili), Kamaladevi Varunalingam (Sinnakili), Mrs. Muthiah and Mrs. Sinnarasa; uncle of T. Jeganathan; loving grandfather of Arjuna, Sudhakar, Maiurun, Amitla (USA) and Naresh.

Mr. Rasakulasuriar was a keen sportsman and was one of the past Secretaries of the well known Moor Road, Wellawatte Recreation and Dramatic Club in the nineteen forties for 25 years.

His wife, children and other members of the family wish to extend their sincere thanks and gratitude to all friends and relatives who visited them, attended the funeral, sent cards and messages of sympathy, floral tributes and for all the kind deeds offered to us during the period of intense sadness and sorrow. - Mrs. K. Rasakulasuriar, 3 Wilmot House, Wilmot Green, Brentwood, Essex CM13 3DF.

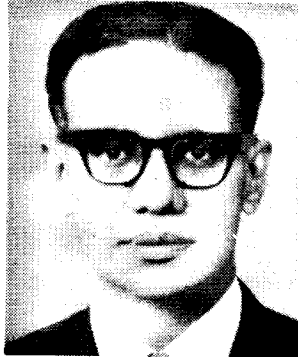


Dr. Nagalingam Kandasamy, retired General Practitioner, Liverpool; dearly beloved husband of Vadivambikai; loving father of Indranjan, Anushia and Krishnamuhunthan; father-in-law of Kathryn and Indrakumar; brother of N. Vellupillai and N. Kumarasamy; brother-in-law of Kethies Thuraisingham, Thevakie Karunakaran, Yasothai Sivathondan, Radha Ruthiramoorthy, Pam, Nandapalan Thuraisingham, Saroja and Swarna; devoted grandfather of Anita, Tanya, Oliver and Lauren passed away on Friday, 16th March 2001. Funeral took place on Saturday, 24th March in Sutton, Surrey.

The family are sincerely grateful to friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent

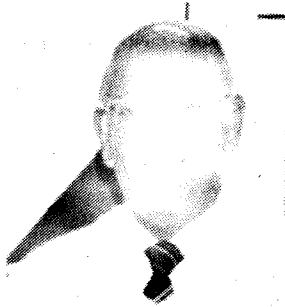
floral tributes, messages of sympathy and assisted in numerous ways during the period of great sorrow.

**IN MEMORIAM
Tenth Anniversary
Remembrance**



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

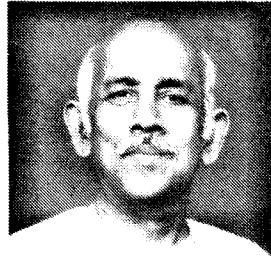
Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Muthu Ambikai; daughter Dr. Sakunthala, son Dr. Ravindran; son-in-law Dr. Suresh Thayalan; daughter-in-law Meera; grandchildren Arjun, Nisha and Sathya - 11 Baronía Croft, Highwoods, Colchester, Essex CO4 5EF.



In loving memory of **Mr. Vaithilingam Sivagnanasundram** (Churchill) on the second anniversary of his passing away on 11.04.99.

Fondly remembered by his beloved wife Nageswary (Lily); loving children Ranjan, Mohan, Thayan and Gowri; daughters-in-law Renuka, Radha and Premini; son-in-law Ajan; grandchildren Mathangi, Sangavi and Ranjitha; brother, sisters and their families - 1

Paradise Place, St. Clair, NSW 2759, Australia.



In loving memory of **Mr. Thillairasah Thampu (Bas)**, Retired Teacher, on the first anniversary of his passing away on 17th April 2000.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Saras; children Umaa and Hari; father-in-law Nadarajah (Malaysia); sisters Kunchakka, Pulanthakka (Colombo) and Chandakka (UK); brothers-in-law Sathyanathan (Colombo) and Siva (Malaysia); sisters-in-law Pathma Machchal (Canada) and Indra (Colombo); Selvam (Malaysia), Nieces, Nephews, friends and relatives. - 102 Cavendish Road, Colliers Wood, London SW19 2EZ. Tel: 020 8540 3678.



In loving memory of **Mr. Visvalingam Sivasubramaniam**, Principal Emeritus, Skanda Varodaya College, Chunnakam on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 26th April 1996.

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, Kamaladevy,

Supathiradevi and Devahi; grandchildren Sutharshan, Priyatharshini, Suseenthiran, Suhanthan, Sutharshika, Suloshan, Suthaharan, Sulakshan, Arooran, Gajamohan, Gajaharan and Vaishna. - 135A Sudbury Avenue, Wembley, Middx HAO 6AW. Tel: 020 8385 0477.



In loving memory of **Mrs. Grace Nagaratnam Rasiah** of Varuthalai-Vilan and Illavalai; beloved wife of the late Mr. M.A. Rasiah (former Headmaster) on the fourth 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.



In loving memory of **Mrs. Thaiyalnayaki Sivalingam** on the second anniversary of her passing away on 18th April 1999.

Greatly missed and fondly remembered by loving children Jeyakumaran, Kaladevy, Gnandran, Dr. Jeyagowri, Sureshkumar and Sivasuthan; sons-in-law Ganeshamoorthy and Dr. Kumaran; daughters-in-law Yogendradevi, Vallinayaki, Malathy and Balasuhanthini; sister Sethunayaki Sivasithamparam; grandchildren Havitha, Sinduja, Kalyan,

continued on page 32

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Neruban, Rathulan, Pratheeban, Apamah, Geevithan and Abisha. - 24 Sixth Cross Road, Twickenham, Middx. TW2 5RB. Tel: 020 8977 6277.



In loving memory of Ward & Davy Mr. Vythialingam Anandanarajah, retired school principal, on the first anniversary of his passing away on 12th May 2000.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his children Skandamalar, Sivanandan, Sivakumari, Gayathri, Ravindran and Bhahirathan; sons-in-law Indrakumar, Santhirakumar and Shan Navaratnam; daughters-in-law Bhama, Vasundra and Vathsala; sisters Kamalanayaki Param Thillairajah and Pathmavathy Balasingam; grandchildren Pradeep, Prasanna, Sharmatha, Murali, Brindan, Thayanuji, Sivanuji, Mayruja, Aarani, Luxmy, Kannan,

Vibushini, Kailesh, Lalithayini, Sanjutha and Shivanthi. - 4a Ringwood Road, Luton, Beds. Tel: 01582 582619.



In loving memory of Mr. Vellupillai Kumarasamy on the second anniversary of his passing away on 20th April 1999.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his beloved wife Sarojini; loving children Nirmala, Baskeran, Shyamala and Dayaharan; sons-in-law Rasalingam and Uthayakumar; daughter-in-law Gnanamanohari; grandchildren Gayathiri, Gayan and Arjun; relatives and friends. - 24 Rowlands Avenue, Hatchend, Middx. HA5 4BH / 37 Mississippi Road, Seven Hills, NSW 2147, Australia / 10 Fairway Drive, Warick QLD 4370, Australia.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- May 1** May Day.
May 2 Feast of St. Athanasius.
May 3 Eekathasi.
May 5 Pirathosam; South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop-in. Tel: 020 8542 3285.
May 7 Full Moon (Sithara Paruvam).
May 10 Shasti.
May 12 Feast of St. Mathias.
May 16 Feast of The Ascension of The Lord Jesus Christ.
May 18 Eekathasi; Feast of St. John.
May 20 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Bernardine of Siena.
May 22 Amavasai; Karthigai.
May 25 Feast of St. Bede.
May 26 Sathurthi; Feast of St. Neri.
May 27 Shashti; SLTWG Elders Day. Tel: 020 8542 3285; Feast of St. Augustine of Canterbury.
May 31 Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Centre, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 020 7381 3086/4068.
May 13 6.30pm The 2001 M.P. Birla Memorial Lecture on 'Integration - What Next?' by the Rt. Hon. Lord Dholakia (Contact Bhavan if you wish to attend).
May 27 6pm Mandolin Recital by Snehashish Manjubar.

Jeyabalan (Vincent Girls College), Mr. V. Jeyabalan (Jaffna Hindu College), Mr. S. Srirangan (Kokuvil Hindu College), Mr. M. Suthakaran (Kambar-malai G.M. T.V.) and Mrs. S. Thambipillai (Union College).

American Newsletter

Cultural Roots Nourish Young South Asians in North America: Chennai in South India is virtually halfway around the world from the little township of Canton, Massachusetts, USA, a town with a sprinkling of naturalised Asian and African Americans. After a treat of Carnatic music concerts and Bharata Natyam recitals in Chennai during the annual festival of music and dance in December 2000, Canton turned out to be a lovely bonus when Galwin Middle School was visited for its Heritage Day celebrations on March 15th with a variety entertainment of music and dance.

Quite by coincidence the first item was an invocation dance to the deity Lord Ganesha by 13 year old Gayatri Sooriyakumar. The school authorities would be happy to learn that this is a dance performed first in any recital; perhaps they knew about it. Gaya, as she is popularly known to her peers and teachers made an excellent impression on the audience with her skilled performance and the ease with which she expressed the emotions and meanings of her salutations to Lord Ganesha.

She received a spirited ovation and was mobbed by friends and peers, when she came off the stage, after explaining some aspects of the dance. They were also greatly impressed by the costume and ornaments, she had on and the significance of each of them. They had many more questions when it dawned on them that her item was not a mere cultural piece, but a spiritual expression in dance form with its traditions going back to thousands of years.

Canton is one of the satellite cities of Boston and Indian Music and Dance is becoming popular in these parts. Already cultural festivals are becoming an annual feature and some of them are centred with a temple as the fulcrum of such activities.

continued on page 33

In Memoriam



In Cherished memory of Mr. Chinnathampy Rasiah on the seventh anniversary of his passing away on 24.04.94.

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

Greatly loved and deeply missed by his sorrowing wife Gunamany; beloved children Rajan and Rajini; loving daughter-in-law Janaki; son-in-law Lakshman; grandchildren Thabojan, Prashanth and Sulakshan; sister-in-law, nephews and nieces. - 14 Greenbriar Avenue, Wheeler Hill, Melbourne Vic 3150, Australia.

7 Sessions Road, Lafayette 94549, California, USA.

Tamil Schools Sports Association (UK)

The Annual General Meeting of the above association was held on 11th February 2001 and the following office-bearers were elected.

President: Mr. S. Ratnajothy (St. Michaels College), **Vice Presidents:** Mrs. E. Gunaratnam (St. Patrick's College), Mr. V. Santhalingam (Hartley College) and Mrs. S. Selvarajah (Holy Family Convent, Illavalai) **Secretary:** Mr. K. Seveal (Jaffna Hindu College); **Asst. Secretary:** Mr. N. Sri Gengatharan (Mahajana College), **Treasurer:** Mr. K.S. Satkunaseelan (Nadeswara College), **Asst. Treasurer:** Mr. K. Rajathevan, **Committee Members:** Mr. M. Gunalan (Batticaloa Central College), Dr. (Mrs.) J. Kumaran (Skanda Varodaya College), Mrs. R.

continued from page 32

ties. Among the leading Gurus rendering their service to the South Asian community are Sridevi Thirumalai, Jothi Raghavan, Gita Murali and Tara Anand who not only impart their expertise with tremendous commitment to their students, but also orient them to the distinct facets of the sishya tradition as a third parent to them from the community.

It is heartening to note that more Gurus are taking up the challenge to meet the popular demand from parents to ensure that their children are given opportunities to understand their culture and heritage through music and dance.

Dr. K. Thirunavukkarasu – An Appreciation

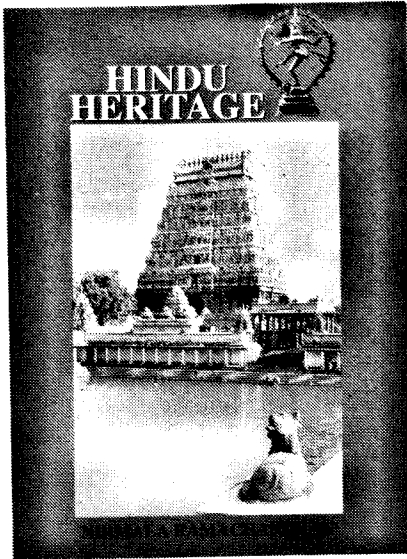
Dr. K. Thirunavukkarasu, D.Ph. (Oxen), DIC (Lond), Mi Mech E was greatly loved by the family and many people whom he helped throughout his lifetime. His generous and unrelenting commitment to encourage and support young aspiring students to achieve their goals won the hearts and respect of those who knew him. There were times when he liberally financed students to further their academic careers, as he believed in empowering young people through education. Born in Sri Lanka, Dr. Thirunavukkarasu, affectionately known as Thiru, graduated from the University of Ceylon with an honours degree in Chemistry. He was a lecturer at the University for two years, after which he joined the Ceylon Government railway as an Assistant Transportation Superintendent and Qualified as a Chartered Mechanical Engineer in 1961. He left Sri Lanka for England to pursue his academic career at Imperial College of Science and Technology of the University of London, where he was conferred the Diploma of Imperial College (DIC).

His natural scientific ability led him to work in the field of rocket technology in the Aerospace industry, California and he won a Senior Scientific Award from the UK Atomic Energy Authority. He was attached to Trinity College, Oxford and carried out research on Bubble Nucleation at Solid Surfaces due to Pressure Transients and earned a justly deserved D. Ph. Following a period of post graduate research at the University of Leeds, Thiru moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where he worked in industry. Six years later, the family returned to Cambridge, England where Thiru worked as a Consultant Engineer in Thermo-dynamics until his retirement.

The fourth of nine children, Thiru's deep-rooted sense of duty, sustained his family after his father's early demise. He undertook the Herculean task of educating his brothers and sisters, all of whom have gone on to succeed in their chosen professions.

He will be sorely missed by his family and a wide circle of friends. May his soul rest in peace.

Book Review



'Hindu Heritage'

by Nirmala Ramachandran

Mrs. Nirmala Ramachandran of Colombo has laid the Hindu World under an everlasting debt of gratitude through her timely book 'Hindu Heritage'. It is a genuine and heartfelt attempt on her part to create greater awareness among the many Hindus who, due to the temptation of the modern world tend to become more and more distanced from the eternal values of life which are enshrined and preserved in the hallowed scriptures and in the not so ancient epics and puranas.

Humans are tempted to write for various reasons: fame, name, money etc. The fact that Mrs. Ramachandran has agreed to donate sixty percent of the sale proceeds is indicative that she did not write this book with a view to amassing wealth. She has refrained from writing even an introduction, suggestive that she is not after name or fame. A good part of the best icons and statues featured in the book is from her personal collections giving ample proof that it was her deep interest in and great admiration for Hindu Philosophy, Hindu Art and Hindu Culture that was the driving force behind her writing this modestly large book.

Hinduism, a great ocean which is a property of the whole world is indefinable and the essential spirit of it is to live and let live. Hinduism in its past and present forms, embraces a multitude of beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, which are apparently contradictory and opposed to one another. A perusal of the twenty one articles in the book will reveal that the author has striven to prove that the spirit of Hinduism is to live and to let live though the multifarious beliefs and practices enshrined in Hinduism are always seemingly contradictory. The great historian and statesman of the Independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru said in his reputed

masterpiece **Discovery of India** 'Indian Art was not addressed to a narrow coterie of literati. Its intention was to make the central ideas of religion and philosophy intelligible to the masses.'

Even a cursory glance of this book which has been painstakingly authored by Mrs. Ramachandran after laborious research reveals that the sole purpose of this book is to inculcate the basic notions of Hindu tenets, Hindu religion and metaphysics in the minds of the present day Hindus all over the world, who of late appear to be wilfully drifting aimlessly, little realising that Hinduism is the greatest anchor of hope to which they could firmly attach themselves.

Hindu culture and architecture are so intricately interconnected with Indian religion and philosophy that it would be not easy to appreciate and admire the Indian art unless one has some knowledge of the ideals that governed the Indian mind and thought through the ages. Realising this incontrovertible fact, the author has structured her book in such a way as to juxtapose the theory of Indian religion with photos of appropriate icons and statues in the form of sculptures and paintings so as to make the one intelligible and discernible with the help of the other. Though every great art of any climate affords an intimate revelation of the national thought and ideals of that country, yet that revelation could not be comprehended or appreciated unless the ideals behind those great arts are really understood correctly. It is refreshing to note that Mrs. Ramachandran has managed to bear this stark truth in mind throughout her work. This accounts for the success of her work.

This big book of 180 pages printed on good quality gloss paper and punctuated with beautiful and artistic colour photos is moderately priced at £ 15.00. It is a price that no reader of great books would grudge to pay. I am pleased to commend 'Hindu Heritage' to anyone who is interested in knowing the history and grandeur of Hinduism in great depth and to have a panoramic view of Hindu Culture.

The Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Sri Lanka Railway Past Employees Association will be held at John Innes Youth Centre, 61 Kingston Road, Wimbledon (nearest tube – South Wimbledon on Saturday, 20th May 2001 commencing at 10.30am followed by a get together. All members and their families are cordially invited.

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