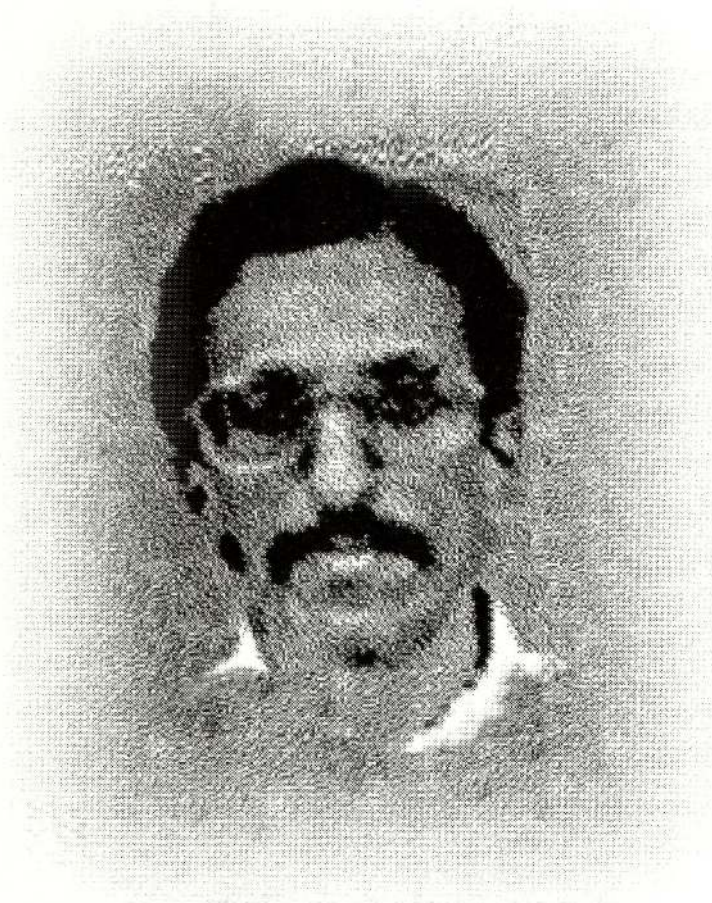
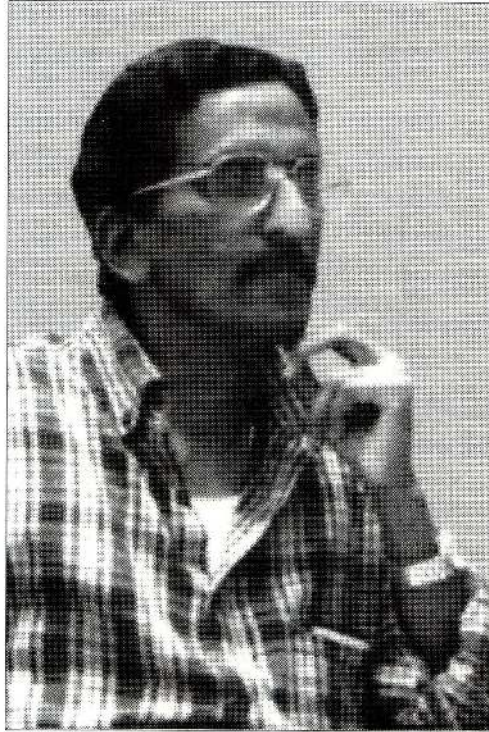


Remembering
KETHESH
LOGANATHAN



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Remembering Kethesh Loganathan

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Like a Prophet, He Spoke the Truth

Described as one of the sharpest analytical intellect, and one of the finest Sri Lankan minds of his day, Kethesh Loganathan fell victim to an assassin's bullet on 12 August 2006 joining the unending roll-call of Tamil political leaders, intellectuals, academics, human rights and political activists who have become victims to the gun and bomb culture that has characterised Tamil politics for the last two decades. By the political assassination of Kethesh, an intrepid and unequivocal voice for Tamil democracy and human rights has been cruelly silenced by the LTTE.

Like many other courageous and outspoken Tamil leaders and intellectuals whose lives have been snuffed out, Kethesh stands out as one whose life spanned a varied and rich political trajectory.

A former militant, then academic, journalist, and tireless advocate of human rights and a return to democratic values in Tamil politics, Kethesh was one of the leading activists of the dissenting Tamil community who genuinely strived for a negotiated democratic political solution based on the principles of pluralism and human rights. At seminars and conferences, Kethesh passionately promoted and advocated a federal solution to the ethnic conflict by which regional autonomy, equal rights and the unity of the country could be secured to the satisfaction of all the communities.

Emerging out of that generation of politicised Sri Lankan Tamils who were able to make the transition into democratic politics, Kethesh championed the cause of the Tamil people while battling hard to free Tamil society from the forces of militarism and nihilism that had gained a suffocating grip. He gave voice to those who wanted to speak out, but were deterred by an all consuming culture of fear. He believed that "the liberation of a people could not be founded on fear, the celebration of death, the negation or even suspension of basic democratic values. This made him a stringent and fearless critic of the LTTE for their insistence on being the sole representatives of the Tamil people and for their reliance on terror, repression and violence." (P. Saravanamuttu)

"When the LTTE first began its campaign of assassinations, less than a year after they signed the Ceasefire Agreement, Kethesh insisted that civil society organizations should take up the matter. He warned that the neglect of human rights, and the failure to uphold the right of people to live without fear of being gunned down by assassins, was fundamental to the peace process. Like a prophet in the ancient tradition, he spoke truth in the face of power, and it is a tragedy that his prophecy has come true." (Jehan Perera)

It was his unswerving commitment to the cause of the Tamil people winning their legitimate rights within the framework of democratic pluralism that made him to remain in Sri Lanka. At a time when many Tamils chose to leave the island seeking greener pastures abroad, Kethesh's decision to continue to remain at home, in spite of the security threat he faced, demonstrated his sense of dedication and sacrifice which had been the hallmark of his entire life.

We salute Kethesh for his exceptional courage and dedication in championing and upholding the cherished values of democracy, human rights, pluralism and peace with justice for all.

Even as we continue to remain grief-stricken by the enforced, untimely and tragic demise of Kethesh, we present this memorial volume as a mark of honouring and celebrating the remarkable life and work of this rare human being.

March 2007

Sri Lanka Democracy Forum



School Boy at St. Thomas' - 1961

The voice that refused to play dead



Truth, and nothing but the Truth

"Sathya, as the name indicates, will strive to abide by *Sathyam* or Truth. Truth of course is a relative term, although it has its innate universal elements. Sathya will speak and write the "Truth" till such time as he is convinced that what he has been uttering and writing is wrong. At which point he will truthfully admit his mistakes and rectify. Till then he will voice and write the Truth as it appears to him. Of course, Sathya is fully aware that there are other means by which dissent can be and is "silenced". Till such time, Sathya has no intentions of turning over and playing dead!"

- Sathya, 16 February 2004

Reluctance to speak the truth

"As to why there is a reluctance, inhibition to call a spade a spade or to speak the truth in this country, I would say one factor is a fear psychosis, particularly when it relates to affairs in the North and East - particularly when it applies to a Tamil person given the culture of violence and intolerance that crept into Tamil society and polity and later spread like a cancer. There is a high degree of fear to express one's own opinion. That is the situation that prevails in the North and East." (*'lines'*, May 2003)

Peace and Human rights

"...If the peace cart topples it is not because of constructive criticism, but because of continuing violation of the principles of pluralism, democracy and human rights - not to mention the right to life. Therefore, if the peace process is to be saved, all of the above principles need to be observed in word and deed."

- Sathya, 23 August 2004

On civil Society & Peace constituency

"But one problem that I see in the peace constituency and civil society engaged in peace work, is that unwittingly we may have given peace a bad name by stressing only on what we call negative peace or the mere absence of war. In other words, the tendency not to speak about Peace with Democracy, or Peace with Human Rights or Peace with Pluralism or a Permanent Peace Settlement perhaps has given peace a bad name, and may have contributed to a certain amount of public cynicism about NGOs and about the Peace Constituencies. It may have even provided more ammunition to chauvinist forces. So this is one problem that I can see in relation to the deficiencies of the Civil Society engaged in peace work."

- Weekend Standard, 14 January 2006)

Armed resistance and nihilism

"....., it must be clearly borne in mind that armed resistance to oppression bordering on a genocidal situation is an inalienable collective and an individual right. But it is a right that should be exercised as a last resort since violence has a habit of turning inwards as it happened in the case of the Tamil Resistance. The Tamil armed resistance particularly following the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983 was a necessity. And, in this LTTE was only one of several Tamil organizations that had taken to arms. In short, the history of Tamil Resistance against state-sponsored violence and discrimination did not begin with the LTTE. But, the history of Tamil Resistance is also a history of violence turning inwards in the form of nihilism and internecine conflict that consumed the lives of hundreds of Tamil freedom fighters who died while fighting each other. There was neither self-respect nor dignity for the Tamil people when Tamil militant organizations tried to destroy each other in trying to establish themselves as the "sole" protectors of the Tamil people. The LTTE was singularly responsible for this phenomenon in its pursuit of the "sole" representative status which has today destroyed the very "soul" of the Tamil People."

- Sathya, 16 February 2004

On Neelan's Assassination

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

- Tamil Times, August 1999

On Child Soldiers

".... it is psychologically traumatic not only to the child, but to all those who come face to face with these children of war or read reports that high light their plight. Those of us who are not traumatized, need to have our heads examined."

-Sathya, 5 July 2004

On ethnicity & Politics

"Ethnicity would cease to be factor only when the Ethnic Question is resolved in manner that is equitable and just. That is more so the reason that I would stress on the importance of the resolution of the Ethnic Question. This does not mean that I believe in a stage by stage theory where the resolution of the ethnic conflict is seen by some as the pre-requisite for the democratization and the healing process within the Tamil community. On the contrary, these are the two sides of the same struggle and constitutes the real challenge that all of us have to take up. Just as much as how peace is indivisible, so is democracy and social justice."

- 'lines', May 2003

The myth and the reality

"In a way the argument that the Tamils today live in self-respect because of the LTTE is both a reality and a myth (a relative Truth?). It is a reality to those who lack self-respect and a backbone to do their own fighting and those who remain as cheerleaders while living in comfort in Colombo, London, Washington and Sydney and send their children for higher

studies, while the children of the under-privileged are martyred in the name of liberation. It is a myth to those who, in the presence of their sole representative, fear expressing a viewpoint that is different from that of their sole representative, while living in their own traditional homeland.”

- Sathya, 16 February 2004

Who are the culprits?

“The principal parties in the history of our past attempts at a negotiated settlement are invariably the principal culprits in violating all the norms and rules of principled negotiations. To Sathya principled negotiations is all about firstly knowing one’s own interests and then placing them at the table up-front, so that both sides know exactly what they are negotiating about and why. In the context of a lack of either clarity or a surfeit of duplicity on both sides, a dignified and a just peace will remain elusive to all peoples of this country.”

- Sathya, 24 May 2004

Tamil people, orphaned and powerless

“....., Tamil society continues to be bedeviled by internecine and fratricidal killings. It has spread like cancer and has eroded the very legitimacy of the struggle for justice and equality vis-a-vis the Sri Lanka State. The LTTE, including its alienated Karuna faction, continue on the path of nihilism of destroying everything that stands in its way. The Tamil people, despite the military might of the LTTE and their sabre-rattling proxies in parliament, are becoming increasingly orphaned and powerless. Other ex-militant groups who have entered the so called democratic mainstream are yet to go beyond being half-democrats with ambitions of becoming the sole alternative to the sole representative. Their failure in projecting a common democratic front to the LTTE proxies is a case in point. The notion that “if you are not one of us, then you are a traitor” is what consumed the lives of Tamil intellectuals and political activists who were committed to ensuring the dignity, security and socio-economic advancement of the People of the North-East, along with the Peoples of other regions. The list is far too long to be cited in this column. In fact it may need a separate column to merely list out the names. Pluralism and political diversity has become an anathema to those who claim to struggle for emancipation and justice. It is also a contradiction that will continue to dog Tamil nationalism in its struggle against Sinhala chauvinism. Tamil nationalism is fast losing its high moral ground. Perhaps it already has and is fast decaying.”

- Sathya, June 7, 2004

Karuna and Eastern Regionalism

At the outset it must be emphasised that the Karuna episode is not something that relates to a single, deranged individual as the LTTE leadership has put out. In fact, it must be noted that almost all Tamil militant organizations had to contend with a Eastern local leadership that constantly demanded autonomy. As such the assertion by Karuna should not come as a surprise..... it must be clearly understood that regionalism in the East is not a new phenomenon. In fact it is the result of years of perceived grievance that the East is being dominated by the North. But, it is a perception that is shared largely by the intelligentsia and the ruling elites of the East against the intelligentsia and the ruling elites of the North. Karuna and Pirabhakaran are only the agents of these ruling elites who have manipulated them to serve their own interests. There in lies the ingredients of the unfolding Greek Tragedy.”

- Sathya, 15 March 2006

Tamil Nationalism at its Crossroads

“The time has come for Tamil Nationalism to look inwards. It has reached its crossroads. It is not Sathya’s contention that Tamil nationalism will wither away. Neither would the notion of a Tamil traditional homeland that encompasses the North and East as one single politico-administrative entity simply fade away simply because of the Karuna factor. It will not as long as Sinhala Nationalism holds sway over the body politic in Sri Lanka and denies the Tamil People their due identity, democratic and political rights. At the same time the North and the Jaffna-centric Tamil nationalist leadership cannot afford to take the East for granted or deny political diversity and pluralism within the totality of the Tamil nationality.”

- *Sathya, 15 March 2006*

Lessons to be learnt

“The lessons that Sathya learnt about the seeds of violence in relation to the ethnic conflict can be summed as follows. Firstly, the peaceful and non-violent forms of struggle against institutionalised discrimination by the State may not have taken a violent form if not for the use of violence by the State to crush these non-violent and democratic forms of struggle. The ethnic conflict may well have become protracted and intractable. But, it was the violence unleashed by the State to crush all forms of dissent that led to the ethnic conflict itself becoming violent. Secondly, the victims of violence soon become the mirror image of the perpetrators of violence. That is what happened to Tamil militancy. It began to acquire the ugly face of the State that it was fighting against.

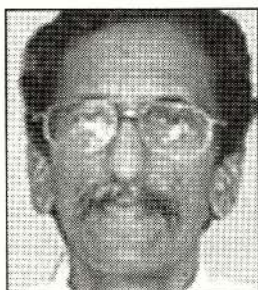
The lesson that Sathya learnt (or is in the process of learning) on the seeds of peace and reconciliation can be summed as follows. While the past must be addressed in order to reach the future, the present is an all important key to reconciliation, since it is in the present that the past ends and the future begins. Let us acknowledge the past, but not get bogged down in it. Let us rectify ourselves in the present and envision a better future, since the future is always carved out in the present. To be overburdened by both the remorse of the past and the anxieties of the future only lead to a state of paralysis.”

- *Sathya, 2 August 2004*



August 2006 - Ketheshwaran Loganathan, 53, until recently Head of the Conflict Analysis Unit at the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), and lately Deputy Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat in Colombo, was shot dead allegedly by two suspected Tamil Tiger gunmen at his residence in Dehi-wala.

According to police, his assassins had arrived in a van at around 9.15 pm on Saturday (12) and had rung



Assassination of Kethesh Loganathan

the home bell. Conversing both in Sinhala and Tamil, the gunmen introduced themselves as CID officers and asked Mr. Loganathan to open the gate. Before he was shot, the assailants had repeatedly asked him to confirm his name. As Mr Loganathan came out to open the entrance gate and asked the men show their identity, he was shot many times. The post mortem examination revealed that Mr. Loganathan had been shot at point blank range and had suffered injuries in the head, chest and one hand.

Kethesh and his wife Bhawani lived in an old-style house along Vandervert Place in Dehiwela, some eight miles from the capital Colombo. The police said that Mr. Loganathan's residence was in an isolated area where there was hardly any security. "There was an army patrol moving regularly in that area but there was no permanent police post or any special security provided to Mr. Loganathan."

"Prabhakaran must now come out of his den and tell us what he wants and how much more blood he requires to quench his thirst. No man with any sense will kill a person like Kethesh, a perfect gentleman and a great intellectual. His demise is a great loss to the Tamil community in particular and the country as a whole. A soft spoken man, he was acknowledged by many as the best choice for the very important post he held,"

**TULF Leader
V. Anandasangaree**

Holding a senior position as Deputy Secretary General of Peace Secretariat, he would have been entitled to be provided with adequate round-the-clock security and be housed in secure premises. In fact, it is learnt that he was offered such facilities, but Mr Loganathan had refused the offer as he wanted to remain as detached and independent as possible from the Government.

The remains of Kethesh Loganathan lay at the Art Gallery, Colombo for the public to pay their last respects before his cremation which took place on 15 August at 4 pm at the General Cemetery, Kannelly, Borella in Colombo attended

by a large and distinguished gathering of academics, foreign diplomats, politicians, human rights and peace activists and journalists.

After the Hindu last rites were concluded, with the blowing of the conch shell, the remains of Kethesh Loganathan left the funeral parlour to the cemetery at 4 pm.

Bhawani, the widow of Kethesh Loganathan was accompanied by her brother who lit the remains.

A close relative of Kethesh who was at the crematorium said that C. Loganathan, the late father of Kethesh, who was the first Sri Lankan General Manager of Bank of Ceylon, was an ardent devotee of Thiru Ketheshwaram, in Mannar which is one of the foremost temples of Hindu God Siva in Sri Lanka. It was late Loganathan's devotion to the temple that made him to name his son as Ketheshwaran, who later came to be known as just Kethesh among his kith and kin and

the large circle of colleagues and comrades.

Kethesh had a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Georgetown University, Washington DC and a MA in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague. He worked at MARGA and then took over his father's institute in Jaffna.

Loganathan was also engaged in Tamil politics from 1983 as a member of the Eelam People's Liberation Front and was a member of the Tamil delegation at the Thimpu peace talks in 1985. He withdrew from Tamil militant politics and the EPRLF in 1994. He continued to be engaged in proximity talks leading to the Indo-Lanka Accord of August 1987 and also made representations to the Managala Moonesinghe Parliamentary Select Committee process tasked to formulating a constitutional solution to the national question. In 1996 Loganathan wrote a book "Sri Lanka: Lost Opportunities" published by the Centre for Policy Research and Analysis (CEPRA), University of Colombo. He was a founder board member of the Centre for Policy Alternatives before joining the Peace Secretariat recently.

Academic and political commentator, Dayan Jayatillake, said, "Kethesh Loganathan was one of those 'best minds'. He was above all else a committed, engaged intellectual. He was indubitably one of the sharpest analytical intellects, one of the finest Sri Lankan minds of his day..... Kethesh Loganathan, Neelan Tiruchelvam, Rajini Thiranagama, Lakhman Kadirgamar. Brilliant minds, interesting, attractive and even compelling personalities, with diverse choices and trajectories, and yet, a common fate: murdered by the Tigers. These names and many more, are a roll-call of the Tamil tragedy and larger Sri Lankan lament..... Neelan, Lakshman Kadirgamar, Kethesh: Harvard, Oxford, Georgetown. What gems of the small Sri Lankan Tamil community! What priceless resources for their society and South Asia! They went their different ways and died violently, assassinated in the same town, by the same organisation, the Tigers,

led by the same man, Velupillai Prabhakaran."

Condemnation

A statement issued on behalf of the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Monday (14) said that he "deplores the assassination over the weekend of Ketheshwaran Loganathan, deputy secretary general of the Government Peace Secretariat and veteran Tamil human rights advocate."

The United States Embassy in Colombo in a statement on Tuesday (15) said: "The United States condemns the August 12 murder of Deputy Secretary General of the Government Peace Secretariat, Ketheshwaran Loganathan, and mourns the loss of an individual dedicated to bridging communities and building peace in Sri Lanka."

The Nordic Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) condemned the assassination. In a letter to Peace Secretariat Chief Dr. Palitha Kohona, SLMM head Maj. Gen. Ulf Henricsson said, "After having worked with Ketheshwaran Loganathan, and last time met him on Friday 11 August 2006, the message of his death came as a shock, not only for SLMM, but also for all people longing for peace. Taking part in his experiences, his well founded arguments and his professionalism has been a pleasure for all people who got to work with him. There are no words strong enough to condemn this vicious and cold blooded murder of yet another statesman living for peace."

In condemning the assassination, President Mahinda Rajapakse said, "This contemptible act by the LTTE, coming, exactly one year after the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, shows the LTTE's determination to eliminate those of the Tamil community who dare to oppose its terrorism and are dedicated to the cause of peace and democratic rights for all people in Sri Lanka."

"The killing of Loganathan who had the courage to accept the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat demonstrates the contempt that the LTTE has for

intellectuals among the Tamil community who differ with its views, and once again raises serious doubts of the LTTE's acceptance of negotiations towards peace and more importantly its commitment to a lasting peace in Sri Lanka."

Director of the National Peace Council Jehan Perera said that "Kethesh Loganathan worked relentlessly to usher in a political solution based on power devolution. His assassination would weaken any prospects for a speedy settlement of the current conflict".

Perera vehemently condemning the assassination said, the LTTE which has allegedly carried out the killing, lacks the basic ethics in democracy and governance. He urged the Government and the international community to adopt the carrot and stick method in peace building where it is appropriate to keep the LTTE within a democratic frame. "I believe all the parties concerned with the peace process should exert pressure on the LTTE to reform itself and to change their ways," he said adding that the pressure should be accompanied with correct incentives.

Rt. Revd. Dr. Duleep de Chickera, Bishop of Colombo, said in a statement, "The utterly senseless killing of Kethesh Loganathan, a relentless advocate of a peaceful solution to the ethnic question, has shocked the Nation and must be condemned unreservedly. He gave his life for the cause of peace and justice and will be remembered for this."

Constitutional Affairs and National Integration Minister and General Secretary of the Communist Party, DEW Gunasekera, in a statement said, "We condemn the brutal assassination of our dear friend Ketheswaran Loganathan, Deputy Head of the Government Peace Secretariat and Secretary of the Political Committee of the All Party Conference.

"His contribution to the social thinking in relation to national unity, communal harmony, and good governance was strikingly significant. I value his intellectual inputs immensely. He was an invaluable asset to the Peace Secretariat.

"His analytical mind, cheerful disposition, sharp insight, spirit of collectivism, indomitable courage - all were sterling qualities required for the assignment he was entrusted with. His loss is deeply felt by us. He joins the galaxy of those Tamil leaders who were brutally murdered for having stood fearlessly for the cause of reason, and human dignity. He will live forever in our hearts."

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka in a statement said that the "Muslim Council of Sri Lanka joins the rest of the peace loving citizens of the country in unreservedly condemning the murder of Kethesh Loganathan, who fearlessly voiced and worked towards achieving the aspirations of the Tamil and Muslim people in establishing peace with human rights, democracy and dignity in the country where all communities could live as equal citizens.

"The Muslim community will remember Kethesh Loganathan as a courageous and outspoken Tamil intellectual who understood the aspirations of the Muslim community and voiced against the marginalization and alienation of Muslims from the peace process as Deputy Secretary General of the Government Peace Secretariat."

Describing the assassination as a great shock to him personally, Tamil United Liberation Front Leader V. Anandasangaree said: "Prabhakaran must now come out of his den and tell us what he wants and how much more blood he requires to quench his thirst. No man with any sense will kill a person like Kethesh, a perfect gentleman and a great intellectual."

"His demise is a great loss to the Tamil community in particular and the country as a whole. A soft spoken man, he was acknowledged by many as the best choice for the very important post he held," he said adding, "This type of killings will not help Prabhakaran and his gang. Ultimately he will find only Thamilselvam as the sole representatives of the Tamils."

(Tamil Times, August 2006)



'LTTE silenced a voice for Tamil democracy'

- Sri Lanka Democracy Forum

Shocked and grief-stricken, SLDF (Sri Lanka Democracy Forum) unreservedly condemns the murder of Kethesh Loganathan, a rare man for his times who continued to fearlessly voice the aspirations of the Tamil people - of peace with human rights, democracy and dignity," SLDF said in a press release on 14 August.

Kethesh stood for truth and justice, yearned and worked tirelessly for peace with human rights for his people. He has been silenced by the guns of the LTTE, who at this moment are taking the Tamil people on a journey of destruction. Like many other courageous and outspoken Tamil intellectuals who have fallen victim to LTTE's terror, Kethesh stands out as one whose life spanned a varied and rich political trajectory.

A former militant, then academic, journalist, and tireless advocate of human rights and a return to democratic values in Tamil politics, Kethesh was one of the leading activists of the dissenting Tamil community who firmly believed in a negotiated democratic political solution to the ethnic conflict as opposed to the bleakness of a maudlin Tamil nationalism.

Kethesh himself in rethinking the narrow nationalism of his early militancy, challenged among other things its marginalization and alienation of Muslims. Kethesh's contributions to peace efforts began in 1985 when he represented the EPRLF at the Thimpu conference.

He was involved in the discussion that framed the Indo Lanka peace accord and later the Mangala Moonesinghe Parliamentary Select Committee discussions for devolving power to the North and East.

After his resignation from the EPRLF in 1995 he continued with his attempts on working for peace and a democratic solution as the Director of the Conflict and Peace Analysis Unit of the think-tank, Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA).

His consistent campaign to make human rights

central to the peace process, his critique in arguing for a redesign of the Ceasefire Agreement, showed his independence of mind and spirit, intellectual honesty and political integrity.

Many progressive Sri Lankans involved in the campaign for peace with democracy and human rights were inspired by Kethesh's determined campaign for human rights and against political killings.

It is precisely his sense of urgency and concerns over human rights and political killings and the slow progress on the part of the Southern political formations in arriving at a formula for a peace settlement to devolve power to the minorities that motivated Kethesh to join the Peace Secretariat.

The totalitarian hold of the LTTE on the Tamil polity and the resultant barrenness of the Tamil political terrain the deafening silence of the Tamil media on the relentless campaign of political killings by the LTTE and other armed groups, leave very little space for people like Kethesh to make a meaningful contribution.

It was his unwavering commitment to the cause of the Tamil people winning their legitimate rights within the framework of democratic pluralism that made him to remain in Sri Lanka.

At a time when many Tamils chose to leave the island seeking greener pastures abroad, Kethesh's decision to continue to remain at home, in spite of the security threat he faced, demonstrated his sense of dedication and sacrifice which had been the hallmark of his entire life.

By the political assassination of Kethesh, an intrepid and unequivocal voice for Tamil democracy and human rights has been cruelly silenced by the LTTE. SLDF calls upon progressive Sri Lankans of all communities to look to Kethesh's memory and rededicate their commitment and to redouble their efforts in the struggle for human rights and democracy." (14 Aug 2006)

W learned last week that a distinguished colleague and friend of ours, Kethesh Loganathan, had been murdered in Colombo, in one of the countless acts of violence that have plagued Sri Lanka for decades. To the world, this is just a tiny footnote in an endless tragedy unfolding on a small island in an ocean far away. To us, and to Kethesh's family and friends, it is an immense personal loss.

He was a brave and honourable man who sought the good of his country, and cared greatly for his fellow citizens. For four years, we worked

the Tamil language take a back seat, that there be quotas on Tamil speakers in colleges and universities, and that the symbols of the island, including its name, Sri Lanka, should reflect the values of the Sinhalese majority.

A bitter political struggle degenerated into a brutal civil war, stopped only by a 2002 ceasefire agreement between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). While world attention turned briefly to Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami, whose horrific coastal flooding killed 30,000 people there, relatively little

A brave and honourable man

Bob Rae and David Cameron who, as members of the Forum of Federations, participated in the Sri Lankan peace talks from 2002 until their cessation in the spring of 2004. Bob Rae is a former Prime Minister Ontario, Canada:



with him on the peace process during many trips to Sri Lanka. Kethesh represented the future of so many fine Sri Lankans who are struggling to build a country - pluralistic, respectful of human life and human rights, deeply democratic. His life stands as a symbol of what is good and right in the country. But his death is profoundly discouraging.

At the end of the Second World War, Sri Lanka, then the British colony of Ceylon, had a standard of living and literacy rate far ahead of most Asian countries. It had the potential to lead south Asia, to become a contemporary Singapore.

However, the Buddhist Sinhalese majority, flushed with independence, felt a strong need to assert itself. The Sinhalese felt the British had favoured the Tamils, and insisted the new country reflect the power of a nationalist generation. Successive Sinhalese-dominated governments insisted

global attention has been paid to the effective collapse of the ceasefire agreement in 2006.

Sri Lanka's tragedy can be described in numbers — tens of thousands dead, hundreds of thousands made homeless, billions of dollars in damaged infrastructure, billions more in lost investment and human talent. But the tragedy can be emotionally grasped by the violent death of a single human being.

In recent months, each day marks an increase in violence, and there is now open conflict between the two sides. Since January, more than 700 have been killed. There are naval battles, plane strafings, grenade attacks, bombings of buses, markets and schools. The initial optimism that heralded the ceasefire agreement has long since evaporated. Neither side appears willing to overcome resistance within its own ranks. The

He was a brave and honourable man who sought the good of his country, and cared greatly for his fellow citizens. For four years, we worked with him on the peace process during many trips to Sri Lanka. Kethesh represented the future of so many fine Sri Lankans who are struggling to build a country - pluralistic, respectful of human life and human rights, deeply democratic. His life stands as a symbol of what is good and right in the country. But his death is profoundly discouraging.

divided political leadership of the Sinhalese community appears unable or unwilling to come to grips with the painful compromises necessary to build a just and inclusive national community.

An internal split within the LTTE ranks, the assassination of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, the failure to use the post-tsunami relief effort as a basis for national reconciliation – all have contributed to widening the schism.

The international community looks on helplessly. Canada and the European Union have joined the British and Americans in listing the LTTE as a terrorist organization. Denmark and Sweden are leaving the ceasefire-monitoring mission. The death toll mounts with depressing predictability.

The LTTE is unwilling to make the transition – as did the African National Congress and the IRA – from guerrilla army to political party. The gov-

ernment is unable to present a coherent plan for a constitution that would give important powers and guarantees to the parts of Sri Lanka that have historically been the homeland of the Tamils.

Making peace in such circumstances requires life-altering shifts in perception and behaviour. This applies not only to the government and LTTE, but to the citizens, and to the Canadian Tamil and Sinhalese diaspora communities who find it all too easy to shout at each other from opposite sides of the fence.

Canadian policy vis à vis Sri Lanka needs to be relentlessly focused on helping all parties to make this shift, and to return to the peace talks with a genuine will to succeed.

All the Kethesh Loganathans of Sri Lanka deserve nothing less.

(Globe & Mail, Canada, 21 August 2006)

I was deeply shocked by the assassination of your colleague and Deputy Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat Mr K Loganathan.

I can imagine how you must be feeling on this tremendous loss, both at private and official levels. My deepest sympathies are with you at this moment.

**- Mr Reynout van Dijk,
Ambassador of The Netherlands, 14 Aug 2006**

On behalf of the Norwegian Government, and the staff at the Embassy, I take this opportunity to express our shock and horror over the brutal assassination of Kethesh Loganathan, Deputy Secretary General of SCOPP. We knew Kethesh as a peace-loving person who dedicated his life to the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka. The killing of Kethesh is a devastating blow to all who work for peace in this country. I hope you will pass our condolences to Kethesh' wife and family and to all the staff at SCOPP

**- Mr Hans Brattskar,
Ambassador, Royal Norwegian Embassy,
15 Aug 2007**

'A man with peace in his heart'

It was with deep shock and regret, that we heard of the sad and untimely demise on Saturday, 12 August 2006, of Mr Loganathan, the highly respected Deputy of the Peace Secretariat, with whom we had the honour and the privilege of dealing with, in regard to the noble ideals of building peace in the Country. We strongly condemn this brutal and meaningless act of murder, of a man who strived for the rights of people, with peace in his heart.

During the short time we had worked with Kethesh, as he was endearingly referred to, we quickly realized the intellect in him and his quick grasp of issues that became a great sense of encouragement and a pleasure for us to be proactively involved with the SCOPP, in the long and arduous task of Peace Building in Sri Lanka.

We have recently begun to forge a close

relationship with SCOPP and had planned many activities for the "International Peace Day", 21 September 2006 and beyond.

The best tribute we could pay to Kethesh, is to continue on the path that he, under your leadership, together with your colleagues at the SCOPP, have chartered for the sake of the future generations of Sri Lanka, ie. The path of Peace !!!

Rest assured of our continued close co-operation in achieving the mandate that is common to both the SCOPP and SLNCU.

Please accept and convey our heartfelt sympathies, to his family, his colleagues and all those who were associated with him, in the pursuit of peace.

- R P Perera, Secretary General,
Sri Lanka National Commission for
UNESCO, 14 Aug 2006

Murder of 'a man of peace'

Mr. Kethishwaran Loganathan, Kethish as we all knew him, was essentially a man of peace. He was one who, while deeply concerned about the demands and aspirations of the Tamil people, believed in negotiation as the means of solving the ethno-centered crisis in Sri Lanka. I strongly condemn his killing as one more severe blow at a search for a negotiated solution to the prevailing crisis in Sri Lanka, and yet another example of the LTTE's rejection of the path of peace and negotiation. This contemptible act of the LTTE, coming exactly one year after the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, shows the LTTE's determination to eliminate those of the Tamil community who dare to oppose its terrorism and who are dedicated to the cause of peace and democratic rights for all people in Sri Lanka.

The killing of Mr. Loganathan, who had the courage to accept the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Sri Lanka government's Peace Secretariat, demonstrates the contempt the LTTE has for intellectuals among the Tamil community who differ with its views, and once again raises serious doubts of the LTTE's acceptance of negotiation towards peace, and, more importantly, its commitment towards a lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

This tragic and contemptible act should draw the serious attention of the international community and the Co-Chairs of the Peace Process as to the commitment of the LTTE to peace, as well as its position on dissent, pluralism, human rights and democracy in Sri Lanka, especially among the Tamil people whose liberation it claims to be fighting for.

Mr. Loganathan, a former member of the EPRLF, had a deep insight into the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka. He was a member of the Tamil negotiating team at the Thimpu talks. He later abandoned militant politics and entered the democratic process and worked hard to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic issue through negotiation, upholding the principles of political pluralism and democracy. His voice was that of understanding and conciliation.

With his killing, the Tamil community of Sri Lanka has lost one more member who had a genuine commitment to their cause and opposed the forces of terrorism that distort their

aspirations. This killing has also robbed Sri Lanka of an important human asset who could make a lasting contribution to the future of our country and its people.

I extend my deepest sympathies to the members of his family, to his associates in the cause of peace, and to the members of the Tamil community who have lost one more courageous voice that dared to be raised against the forces of terror.

- *President Mahinda Rajapakse*
14 Aug 2006

'His only sin was to be a dissident'

Ketheshwaran Loganathan, Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) of Sri Lanka was gunned down at his home on Saturday, 12 August, late in the evening by members of the pistol group of the LTTE. Mr. Loganathan was a prominent Tamil political activist and an intellectual with a long history of commitment to peace in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Loganathan joined SCOPP as its Deputy Secretary General in March this year, resigning from his post as Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) and Head of its Conflict & Peace Analysis Unit. He had wide experience in research and analysis as well as communications and journalism. Since the appointment of the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) in July this year, Mr. Loganathan played a pivotal role as the Secretary to the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) providing vital secretariat support to the deliberations of this committee. He had a strong belief that the national question must be resolved through negotiations.

The LTTE felt threatened by the deliberations of the APRC and the efforts of the government to formulate a permanent settlement to the national question. The LTTE are known to have on several occasions threatened Tamil representatives on the APRC in an effort to

cripple the process. The assassination of Mr. Loganathan, a key Government official in the APRC process is reminiscent to the assassination of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, a co-architect of the 1995 constitutional reform proposals. It is also symbolic that Mr. Loganathan was assassinated on 12 August, one year to the date of the assassination of the late Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar.

Kethesh was also engaged in Tamil politics from 1983 -1995 as a member of the Eelam People's Liberation Front and was a member of the Tamil delegation at the Thimpu peace talks in 1985. He continued to be engaged in proximity talks leading to the Indo-Lanka Accords and also made representations to the Managala Moonesinghe Parliamentary Select Committee on behalf of the EPRLF. He withdrew from Tamil politics and the EPRLF in 1995.

Mr. Loganathan had a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Georgetown University, Washington DC and a MA in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague in the Netherlands.

The government of Sri Lanka unreservedly condemns this brutal assassination of Ketheshwaran Loganathan, DSG of SCOPP and expresses its condolences to his wife Bhavani.

The only sin committed by Kethesh, the gentle intellectual, was to be a Tamil dissident voice which challenged the sole representative status of the LTTE.

(13 Aug 2006)

'We salute your courage'

- Center for Policy Alternatives

Kethesh Loganathan was a valued colleague, a former Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) and the first head of its Peace and Conflict Analysis Unit. He was a passionate advocate of human rights, an unflinching champion of the rights of the Tamil people and of an end to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka with democracy, justice and dignity for all. CPA condemns his murder and extends our sincere condolences to his widow Bhawani and members of his family for their and our tragic loss.

Whilst Kethesh was an ardent and proud nationalist, he brought the same fervour, passion and commitment to the cause of unity in diversity, multi-culturalism and a settlement of the ethnic conflict based on meaningful power sharing. He uncompromisingly believed that the liberation of a people could not be founded on fear, the celebration of death, the negation or even suspension of basic democratic values. This made him a stringent and fearless critic of the LTTE for their insistence on being the sole representatives of the Tamil people and for their reliance on terror, repression and violence. Kethesh never failed to criticize successive governments of Sri Lanka for their espousal of majoritarian democracy and insensitivity to the rights and aspirations of all the people who inhabit our island. He believed in the liberation of the Tamil people through the espousal of democratic values and in the reform of the state through a social contract based on human dignity and mutual self respect. Whilst the identity of his killers has not been established and no single organization or actor has the monopoly of political killing in the current climate of division and violence in our country, the LTTE's record of assassinations of political opponents and Kethesh's public profile as one of their most trenchant critics, invariably marks them out as prime suspects. We call on the LTTE to refute this by unequivocally condemning his murder. We call on the Government of Sri Lanka to conduct a speedy and impartial investigation into Kethesh's murder and to ensure that the perpetrators are apprehended and brought to justice.

His killers have senselessly taken a life. They have not destroyed the values that life championed and upheld. These values live on and will have to be enshrined in a peace settlement, if it is to be one with justice and democracy for all. Kethesh, we salute you for your courage, independence and integrity, passion and commitment in the advancement of this cause.

- *Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu,*
Executive Director, Centre for Policy Alternatives



‘Kethesh stood out as a beacon of hope’

The Coalition of Muslims and Tamils for Peace and Coexistence in the East joins all champions of democracy, human rights and social justice in condemning the cowardly act of the murder of Kethesh Loganathan by the LTTE. We call upon all peace activists to raise their voices in unison in the condemnation of this champion of peace and human rights.

As we all know Kethesh Loganathan had for a long time campaigned for the rights of Tamil people in the north and east and in Sri Lanka as a whole. Kethesh stood for the principles of democracy so critical today in our war ravaged country.

A long-standing activist, Kethesh was a founder member of the EPRLF and spearheaded the first ever peace talks on the national question in Sri Lanka at Thimpu in 1985. While he distanced himself from militant Tamil politics and narrow Tamil nationalism, he continued to fight for the rights of the marginalized and the minorities. In re-evaluating Tamil militancy of the 80s and 90s, he also held the view that the ethno-nationalism of the militants marginalized and alienated the Muslims of the north and east.

For us, Tamils and Muslims of the north and east, the space for dialogue is becoming more and more constricted. At the mercy of the armed forces, becoming increasingly vicious and brutal, and the military fanaticism of the LTTE, seemingly actualizing their rhetorical claim to fight to the last Tamil alive, on north-eastern soil, and elsewhere, the minorities have no space for dialogue, action, even in the sphere of the everyday..

We live in a deeply militarized culture of activism. All civil action is being squeezed out of our lives in the east and in the north. There are small and large groups acting out agendas of peace. But there is no concerted action for democracy anywhere. In this climate of collapse of civil society Kethesh Loganathan stood out as a beacon of hope, He longed for peace, he longed for a just solution for the Tamils and the Tamil-speaking peoples. But he also longed for justice for all people in the north and east, not just Tamils and Muslims.

He never wavered from that vision of justice that made him found the EPRLF with leaders like Pathmanabha and others. It is this same impetus for a negotiated settlement that pushed him to make that ultimate move to join the Peace Secretariat at the beginning of this year; his yearning for a peaceful settlement.

The LTTE feared just that; that Loganathan's involvement in the peace negotiations might take it in the direction of a just solution, lending it credibility and acceptance by the battle weary Tamil populace of Sri Lanka. Kethesh might just infuse the failed peace talks with a dynamism that would undermine the suicidal politics of the LTTE.

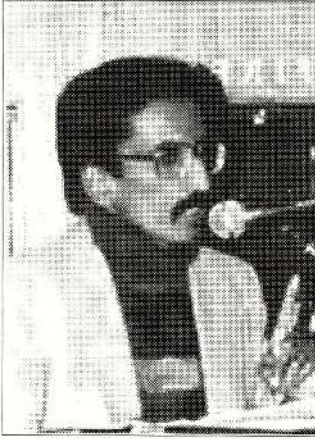
There is no room for peace loving persons like Kethesh Loganathan within the culture of politics promoted by the LTTE. The murder of Kethesh Loganathan is a victory for the militarism of the LTTE and for those who see militarism as an alternative to a negotiated settlement.

Muttur and the surrounding areas in the east continue to simmer; Killings and hartals mark the lives of the people in Batticaloa; Armies on both sides battle one another, bombing and counter bombing civilian settlements, schools and hospitals, in the north and in the east, and slaying aid workers;

Bombs explode in the streets of Colombo as regularly as motor vehicle accidents. In the midst of such bleakness, the action of leaders like Kethesh expressed some hope and future for a build up towards democracy.

There is a task that awaits us today, in the name of Kethesh Loganathan. We urge all people of this country and the international community to cry out against this murder of this political figure who rose above sectarianism and narrow nationalism. In the name of peace and justice among Muslims and Tamils, we urge all Tamils and Muslims to express their solidarity with the cause for democracy that Kethesh so tragically but also heroically espoused.

*- Coalition of Muslims and Tamils
for Peace and Coexistence in the East.*



The demise of a great humanitarian

Statement by the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF):

“EPRLF condemns the cowardly murder of Ketheesh Loganathan at his residence on the 13th of August 2006. The perpetrators of this dastardly act arrived at the gate of his home at around 9.30 P.M and shot him at point blank range, causing a fatal wound. He succumbed to this wound on his way to the hospital. EPRLF expresses its deepest condolences to his wife Bhawani and to all other family members.

Ketheesh joined the EPRLF in the early eighties when the civil strife was still at its early stages. By this time Ketheesh was already a distinguished academic and a socially conscious activist. After completing his studies in the USA and the UK he returned home and worked with the Social Scientist Association. During this time he also managed an institute for Development Research Education and Communication, founded by his late father Mr. Loganathan in Jaffna.

When the conflict intensified Ketheesh joined the ranks of the EPRLF and became a prominent leader of the organisation. His discipline, dedication to what he did and unrelenting humanitarian concern set an example within the organisation and inspired hundreds of cadres. He was an accomplished strategist and an articulate spokesperson of the organisation. He played a crucial role along with Com. Pathmanaba in forging the united front ENLF in the mid eighties and the subsequent negotiation with the Government of Sri Lanka in the Bhutanese capital Thimbu in 1985.

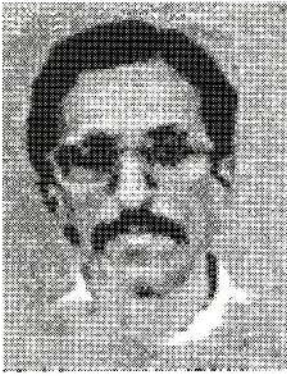
Following the Indo - Lanka accord he did not take part in the North-East provincial Government, he instead travelled to Europe and pursued his academic career in developmental studies. During this time he interacted with International organisations and continued actively engaged in campaigning for peace and human rights in Sri Lanka.

Following the dissolution of the North East Provincial government hundreds of EPRLF cadres and leaders were forced into exile in India. Ketheesh returned to India in 1990, at this critical time in order to be with the cadres and undertake the task of rebuilding the organisation. He was based in New Delhi and developed contacts and understanding with academics, intellectuals and political leaders in India.

Following the assassination of Com Pathmanaba, Ketheesh played a vital role in the Party's second congress in Chennai. He returned to Sri Lanka to pursue the Party work during a most difficult time and worked with the Party until 1994. He left the Party in 1994 and decided to pursue his academic work and continue to work for peace, democracy and human rights.

In the last decade Ketheesh maintained contacts with the leaders and activists of all sections of society and relentlessly worked to bring an end to this inhumane war. He never stopped striving to find a solution to this conflict and aspired to one day see a unified Sri Lankan Nation where all sections of society can live with dignity.

Ketheesh will be remembered by the EPRLF and all Sri Lankans as a great visionary Sri Lankan leader, an exemplary humanitarian and a courageous and consummate political activist. □



APRC Pays Tribute to Kethesh

The All Party Representative Committee (APRC) observed two minutes silence in honour of the late Mr Kethesh Loganathan, Deputy Secretary General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP), at the commencement of their meeting held on 15 August 2006.

The Chairman Hon. Professor Tissa Vitharana paid a special tribute to Mr. Loganathan, who had been Secretary to the APRC, and members unanimously moved a vote of condolence on the tragic loss. They wanted their deepest sympathies conveyed to his widow Mrs Bhavani Loganathan.

Hon. Prof. Tissa Vitharana expressed his profound sorrow on the killing of Mr. Loganathan. He stated that Mr Loganathan, Deputy Secretary General of SCOPP and Secretary to the APRC was killed on Saturday 12 th of August, one year after the death of Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar.

Hon. Prof. Vitharana stated "It is very sad we have lost Mr Loganathan at a time when he could have contributed so much to help us in getting alternative indigenous proposals, for a solution to the national problem. In particular, a solution that we can put to the Tamil people to satisfy their aspirations." Hon. Prof. Vitharana stated he deeply appreciated Mr. Loganathan's contribution to resolving the ethnic conflict in the country. Mr. Loganathan was deeply concerned about the issues confronting the Tamil people. He was a political and human rights activist and had been a member of the EPRLF. He had participated in the Thimpu Talks. Kethesh stood firm by his principles despite the threats to his life. Hon. Prof. Vitharana concluded by stating that the best tribute that can be paid to Mr. Loganathan is to carry forward the APRC mandate to finding a solution. He said "I appeal to all of you here to take this process forward and in that way to make sure that his death was not in vain." The members of the APRC were unanimous in stating that they affirmed the sentiments expressed by the Chairman. □

'A courageous and outspoken intellectual'

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka joins the rest of the peace loving citizens of the country in unreservedly condemning the murder of Kethesh Loganathan, who fearlessly voiced and worked towards achieving the aspirations of the Tamil and Muslim people in establishing peace with human rights, democracy and dignity in the country where all communities could live as equal citizens.

The Muslim community will remember Kethesh Loganathan as a courageous and outspoken Tamil intellectual who understood the aspirations of the Muslim community and voiced against the marginalization and alienation of Muslims from the peace process as Deputy Secretary General of the Government Peace Secretariat.

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka, which is a network of more than 70 National Muslim organisations spread across the country joins the rest of the peace loving citizens of the country in conveying to his family the deepest sympathies of the Muslim community.

He stood for the cause of reason

On behalf of the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration and on my own behalf, I convey to the bereaved family of K. Loganathan our heart-felt condolences, constitutional Affairs and National Integration Minister DEW Gunasekera said issuing a statement on the assassination of Ketheswaran Loganathan.

We condemn the brutal assassination of our dear friend Ketheswaran Loganathan, Deputy Head of the Government Peace Secretariat and Secretary of the Political Committee of the All Party Conference.

I knew him for over two decades since the days of Thimpu Talks and was closely associated with him in all work connected with ethnic affairs, national integration and constitutional reforms etc.

His contribution to the social thinking in relation to national unity, communal harmony, and good governance was strikingly significant. I valued his intellectual inputs immensely. He was an invaluable asset to the Peace Secretariat.

His analytical mind, cheerful disposition, sharp insight, spirit of collectivism, indomitable courage - all were sterling qualities required for the assignment he was entrusted with.

His loss is deeply felt by us. He joins the galaxy of those Tamil leaders who were brutally murdered for having stood fearlessly for the cause of reason, and human dignity. He will live forever in our hearts.

(13 Aug 2006)

In war torn Sri Lanka, a widow remembers

M.R. Narayan Swamy

New Delhi, Aug 27 (IANS) It is tough to be a widow. Tougher if the husband is gunned down at your home. Worse, if the frail man had been actually wondering how to cope if his wife died before him. A fortnight after suspected Tamil Tigers killed Ketheshwaran Loganathan, his wife of 28 years is still in shock.

Bhawani Loganathan, 56, breaks down as she recalls the fears Kethesh, as he was popularly known, had voiced barely 10 days before his Aug 12 murder about his many ailments that included failing hearing, weak eyesight and an irritable bowel syndrome that had never spared him since childhood.

"How will I manage if you go away before me?" he had asked me one day," said a sobbing Bhawani, speaking over the telephone from her Colombo home. "And I never thought that such a thing would happen, and so soon."

It was about 10 p.m. on Aug 12 when some men appeared at their Colombo home and called him out. He stepped out warily - and was shot dead.

Bhawani remembers that Saturday night, but recovers quickly and speaks highly of the man she fell in love with about three decades ago in Jaffna and who slowly graduated from a hardcore Tamil militant to eventually become the deputy in the Sri Lankan peace secretariat.

"He was a man of courage and he believed in certain values," says Bhawani. "I did fear for him after he joined the peace secretariat. I never thought it will happen at home," she adds, referring to the killing blamed on gunmen from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Like in many such incidents, the LTTE has not accepted responsibility.

Kethesh began his political career as an activist of the Left-leaning Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), was its long-time spokesperson and passionately opposed the LTTE. But he took no part in the

India-backed, EPRLF-led administration in Sri Lanka's northeast in 1987-90.

He took a fellowship in Norway in the 1990s and then lived in New Delhi for two years. He quit the group in 1994, dabbled in journalism and then took to more scholarly pursuits.

Kethesh and Bhawani had no children. Both were voracious readers, in Tamil and English, and led private lives, never hosting any parties and going to one only if it was a must. He was 54 when he was killed - two years junior to her.

Early this year he quit a think tank to join the Sri Lankan government's peace secretariat, a move some friends felt was a mistake, since the body plays a key role in Colombo's campaign against the Tigers.

But despite the dangers the new job posed, Kethesh politely declined to accept any security from the government that is now locked in a virtual war against the LTTE.

Bhawani, who has two brothers and a sister, recalls fondly the many years she spent in Tamil Nadu as a hospital employee and a state she now plans to visit to scatter Kethesh's ashes in the Hindu holy towns of Rameswaram and Kanyakumari.

"We had money problems but I spent my time treating patients. Nobody in the hospital treated me differently though I was a foreigner. I was treated like one of them. I will go there next month with his ashes."

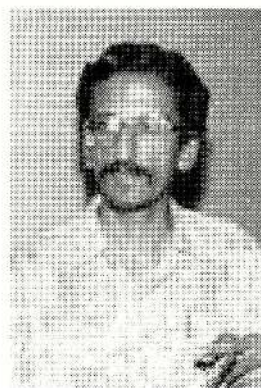
Life is not easy now. She takes homoeopathy medicines to relax. The telephone receiver is kept off the hook during nights and afternoons so she can sleep undisturbed. But she has resumed her reading habit and is hopeful of pulling through as a library consultant.

There is one gift Kethesh has left behind that she immensely treasures - a volume of the Hindu epic Bhagavad Gita, authored by Swami Chinmayananda. "He used to read it at night before sleeping. It is with me. It is immortal."

(Indo-Asian News Service)

Farewell Kethesh

Rashomi Silva



Ketheshwaran Loganathan, 'Kethesh' as he was fondly known to one and all, died doing what he believed in. He was pursuing peace and a political solution to the ethnic crisis, that was plaguing his country for the last three decades.

The Deputy Head of the Government Peace Secretariat Kethesh often said that it was we the people of this country who have to make peace.

I often used to ask him if his new appointment will not increase the risk to his life?, "You will die when your time comes, but I prefer to die doing something that I believe in", was his prompt reply.

During my numerous visits to his office in the Twin Towers, for a good story, the lady at the reception would call to tell him that a journalist from the Daily News has come to meet him.

Instead of asking the receptionist to send me up he would come down to the reception to receive me. Such was his simplicity and unassuming nature. When I first met Kethesh Loganathan he was an active member of civil society and was working as a Research Consultant with the CPA.

Despite the increased risk to his life Kethesh refused the additional security offered to him, his colleagues at the secretariat said.

Journalists from different media institutions called at his office to sound out the opinion of the civil society and to obtain the feedback from the secretariat on the latest move on the peace front. He obliged us all with his profound insight to the problem.

Kethesh was always busy, attending some meeting or the other, but he would always 'come to the phone' or will make sure to call back.

He was an independent thinker who nevertheless always respected the views of others and was never dogmatic.

Farewell Kethesh you will be sorely missed by all peace loving citizens of this country.

(Daily News, 15 Aug 2006)

The killing of Kethesh Loganathan

Dayan Jayatilleka

1956, half a century ago, the year I was born, was a strangely seminal year: it was the year that Fidel and Che landed on the shores of Cuba, the year of the Suez crisis, of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist party and de-Stalinisation; it was the year of Elvis Presley and rock-and-roll. It was also the year that Alan Ginsberg published his poem 'Howl', which began unforgettably:

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked..."

Looking back on my country in my times, the indelible impression is of seeing the best minds of my generation murdered by those once thought to belong to the same side; believers in the same ideas and project; comrades even. A collective Abel slain by a collective Cain.

Kethesh Loganathan was one of those 'best minds'. He was above all else a committed, engaged intellectual. He was indubitably one of the sharpest analytical intellects, one of the finest Sri Lankan minds of his day. He and I had a generation, social background, ideological formation and historical-political experience in common.

Kethesh Loganathan, Neelan Tiruchelvam, Rajini Thiraganama, Lakshman Kadirgamar. Brilliant minds, interesting, attractive and even compelling personalities, with diverse choices and trajectories, and yet, a common fate: murdered by the Tigers. These names and many more, are a rollcall of the Tamil tragedy and larger Sri Lankan lament.

Kethesh belonged to the Sri Lankan and larger South Asian Who's who: C. Loganathan's son (or simply "Loganathan's son" in Colombo). An alumnus of Georgetown and Sus-

sex, he could have wound up a member of the Asian-American elite, but he chose another path, or another path chose him: that of Marxism. Within that Marxism, he could have been an academic, teaching in a Western university or heading a policy studies think tank. Indeed he worked at MARGA and then took over his father's institute in Jaffna. If world history, that of the twentieth century, marked by the magnetism of socialism and Communism, shaped part of Kethesh's destiny, the contemporary history of the country and society he was born into, determined the rest of his life: July '83 and the Tamil struggle. What decided his death was a third factor and fact; the evolution of that struggle, the obduracy of the Sinhala state and society, the character of Tamil society and the nature of the LTTE.

This is summed up and prefigured in a paragraph from an article written just last year by Kethesh; a paragraph which contains the very crux of his thinking on the Sri Lankan conflict, in an article which was transparently self-revelatory. Kethesh's core idea contained here is the message he leaves us all- from the Sri Lankan state to civil society; from the Lankan left to the Tamil Diaspora, from his Indian friends to the Western DPL and donor community:

"This absence of "enlightened self-interest" in my opinion, although now largely rectified in relation to Indo-Lanka relations but not necessarily irreversible, continues to dog the Colombo political establishment on other matters relating to the peace process, and has provided the LTTE its very mode of existence. The confusion between engagement and appeasement of the LTTE is a case in point. Another is the failure to forge a southern consensus on the Ethnic Question based on self-rule and shared-

rule....' (Kethesh Loganathan, 'Mervyn's Insights were Foresights', Sunday Observer, June 19th 2005).

Kethesh agrees with Mervyn de Silva's identification of the wellspring of our problem as the absence of enlightened self-interest on the part of the governing classes or ruling elite, and goes on to develop the analysis. He lists four huge follies on the part of state and society, which have resulted in the current catastrophe and provide, as he says 'the LTTE's very mode of existence'. These are:

- ◆ The absence of enlightened self interest
- ◆ The mismanagement of Indo-Lankan relations.
- ◆ The practice of appeasing the LTTE and mistaking it for engagement; and
- ◆ The absence of a solution - and a Southern consensus on a solution - to the ethnic question based on a combination of self rule and shared rule. In other words the LTTE's conditions of existence are not supplied by the LTTE itself but by others, including those who claim to oppose separatism and terrorism. There are two types of people and policies which furnish the Tigers with their mode of existence; policies of appeasement in the name of engagement, conflict management and resolution, and policies which obstruct power sharing, self rule, the very recognition of the existence of an Ethnic Question, and thereby the most constructive relations with our strong neighbour, India.

Let there be no mistake: Kethesh didn't die because he turned Marxist or didn't take his place in the Tamil elite, or joined the EPRLF, or left in frustration the smarmy civil society outfit he worked for, or because he worked for the Government as deputy of the Peace secretariat. Neelan Tiruchelvam did none of these things and indeed was the opposite of Kethesh and Rajini Thiraganama: he stayed with the programme, in the mainstream, a pacifist intellectual who was the epitome of liberalism and civility. And he was blown up by an LTTE suicide bomber within sight of his civilised institutional space.

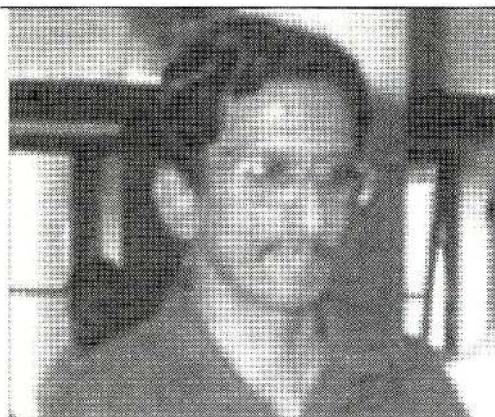
Neelan, Lakshman Kadirgamar, Kethesh: Harvard, Oxford, Georgetown. What gems of

the small Sri Lankan Tamil community! What priceless resources for their society and South Asia! They went their different ways and died violently, assassinated in the same town, by the same organisation, the Tigers, led by the same man, Velupillai Prabhakaran. That Prabhakaran chose to snuff out lives as precious as these, that the LTTE's struggle could regard these individuals as traitors to their community, tells us as much about Prabhakaran, the Tigers and Tamil Eelam, as the fact that individuals so gifted, courageous and committed chose to oppose, dissent or stand apart from the LTTE, tells us about them. These are the real heroes of our time.

How does a mature democracy like Sri Lanka breed such fanaticism? Nothing exemplifies the very essence of the LTTE, more than murder at its hands of those who in any other place, would have been its members, supporters or sympathisers, just as nothing exemplifies the essential nature of the JVP better than the list of those Sinhala leftists who died at its hands in '86-89, and who in any other struggle would have been the natural supporters of the radical left. In both cases, the deviation from the norm of behaviour of liberation movements world-wide is the pathway to understanding the nature of these movements.

In the Sunday Observer article cited above, Kethesh described himself as an internationalist. Both the LTTE and the JVP (the JHU leaders were JVP during the last insurgency) killed precisely the internationalists, the antiracist progressives on both sides; those who stood for 'self rule and shared rule' as a solution to the Ethnic Question.

From Vijaya Kumaratunga to K. Pathmanabha, from Nandana Marasinghe to Neelan Tiruchelvam, from Daya Pathirana to Rajini Thiraganama - over the last two decades the fanatics and fundamentalists on both sides snuffed out the most engaged and engaging, the best, of our people. The practices of these movements illustrate their policies, and the practices and policies taken together indicate the worldview, the ethics, morals, and values, of these entities. The reality that reveals itself is not of liberation, but of fanaticism, savagery, barbarism. ●



Kethesh:

From Tamil Militancy To Tamil Democracy

Ahilan Kadirgamar

Kethesh Loganathan, friend, activist, mentor, political analyst and former militant was also one of those few who came out of that generation of politicized Lankan Tamils that were able to make the transition into democratic politics. One of his major pre-occupations was to challenge the culture of political killings and political violence, which was decimating Tamil politics and any possibility of Tamil democracy. It is therefore all the more tragic that one of those few in our community that understood and attempted to challenge the culture of political killings and political violence himself became the victim of a cowardly movement and a cowardly leader, that targets unarmed dissenters. The assassination of Kethesh so committed to transforming a politics of militarism to democratic politics, is also an unpardonable attack on Tamil democracy.

There are many perspectives as to why the prevalent culture of political killings is disastrous for any community and the definition of political killings itself can be contentious, see for example my editorial in lines two years ago in the November 2004 issue, titled 'Defining Politi-

cal Killings' or the more recent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Execution. And while Kethesh would have agreed with all these perspectives, particularly in terms of its assault on dissent and democratization, Kethesh also had a unique perspective, which came out of his depth of experience having participated in the Tamil militant movement, namely EPRLF. His last dozen years of work in civil society and the last few months in the government, were indeed based on his previous twelve years of experience as a militant. He knew intimately the culture of political violence that decimated a generation of politicized and committed youth, willing to come forward for the struggles for justice. Kethesh had great sympathy for those men and women

Kethesh had great sympathy for those men and women who had taken up arms and were often trapped into a culture of violence. He struggled to think of a process by which former militants could enter the political mainstream through self-criticism and broader societal acceptance.

who had taken up arms and were often trapped into a culture of violence. He struggled to think of a process by which former militants could enter the political mainstream through self-criticism and broader societal acceptance. It was this shared experience of a militant past and the torment of seeing others who were trapped in a politics of violence, which he himself

had left behind, that pre-occupied Kethesh during the first year of the Ceasefire Agreement in 2002. It was this concern for those active with former militant groups and even those in the ranks of the LTTE that made him think about how the LTTE's military structures can be transformed into political and administrative structures, and how the former armed groups including his own EPRLF can be transformed into democratic political parties. He recognized that this not only involved self-criticism and political will among the armed militants but also an openness and acceptance by state and society, as well as those activists and groups in the Tamil community that can facilitate such a transformation.

The acceptance of the former militants by the broader Tamil society was critical, but it was a product of a tension that Kethesh was very much aware. In a May 2003 interview with lines, Kethesh had the following to say:

“One area of difference was on the relations between the people and the organization. The LTTE consciously relegated the people to the state of mute “observers” who would contribute resources and manpower as and when their “saviours” sought it. The more left-oriented organizations like the PLOTE and EPRLF held the notions of “People’s War” and “mass-based” armed struggle. Both were in a way extreme positions which either led to militarism and nihilism, as in the case of the LTTE, or “revolutionary romanticism”, as in the case of EPRLF and PLOTE. Ultimately, myopic organizational interests was the winner – and the people the losers.”

Such a problem that may have emerged due to the approach of the militants to society was now both a problem for those armed groups as well as society. Three decades of armed militancy had destroyed the very fabric of Tamil society, and democracy was sacrificed for militarism and “myopic organizational interests.” A peace process should

have addressed this issue in parallel with all the other issues, but to Kethesh's disappointment, such matters were sidelined. And by early 2003, a year after the CFA, the LTTE initiated a major campaign of political killings, which more or less closed the door for any effort towards bringing the former militants into democratic politics. While political killings is the modus operandi of the LTTE, the state, society and international community, did not seem too concerned about such killings until the murder of the Foreign Minister two and a half years later.

Kethesh for his part, when he saw that the political space for transforming Tamil militants into Tamil democrats was shutting down, put all his energy into preserving society. He opposed forced recruitment and political killings, which he knew if unchecked will consume all of society in the North and East. Today, when we mourn Kethesh, his worst fears have come true. Daily, there is an increasing count of killings by State-backed forces and the LTTE. We hear of continuing child and youth recruitment by the LTTE and the Karuna faction. The LTTE and the State are bent on sacrificing the people of the North and East, by forced training and by recruiting home guards. Any residual space for democratization in Tamil society is being eclipsed by a militarization by all sides, and from Kethesh we know that the people will be the losers. And militarization and repression will not be limited to the North and East, for we know from the two decades of war and the last few years of “peace” that political violence and militarization will spread like cancer to the entire country.

In mourning Kethesh and honouring his life, we must oppose all political killings and the culture of political violence. We must put forward dissent over militarism and military expediency. That will be the first step towards reclaiming the space for democracy and a people centred politics. □

unfinished poem dedicated to the memory of kethesh

-sumathy

*august is the cruelest month,
but so are others
and have become
justly indistinguishable.
we have painted the town all
red, read in tooth and claw,
the tigers's clasp
on our grasp
of our destiny, writ large
in red.
our land, our sand, nation-mad-sad..*

*i dream, over and over,
a picture painted in the colour
of kumkum, a goddess
bathed in sweat;
the assassin's hand pointing,
an over the shoulder shot, medium, long.
its not me.
the news print is violent.
rites of passage
write of blood; tales
lulling children to sleep
through the shelling
and the crack of the pistol.*

*death haunts
every corner
of our word
misbegotten on an illfated day
as the nation and land
creep into our bloody
existence.
a red hot fever
burns it,
a newspaper boy
delivers news of his
gunman's victory, gunning him down*

*in the light of day – his youth
ful body
took up
too much space
in our minds – our home
land.*

*words politic;
here lies a body, uncaring,
footprints already erased,
like marks left on the water's edge
by soft silken slippers.
a nation mourns for the foreign minister
it seems, as the sniper
lands a bullet, made in foreign,
on his neck, he is foreign
too, traitor.
my words see the blood curling up
on the edges of the body
as hope quickly dies;
for we did hope for him
and for us.*

*i scour each face
i encounter for traces of
death, lurking in the corner of
every smile,
in laughter breaking out in dimples,
and creases of love and life;
the jeweled finger
tugs at the strings binding my heart tight
against love
the muzzle
on
where the heart
pounds wild
with new born blood
spilled all over the asphalt.*

she, a broadcaster, urgently puts a call
through
to the world, to make love to it,
publicly, in a public booth,
for another lease of life on this earth, our home
land.
to broadcast other words of hope,
of struggle

sivaram i knew
and did not like,
yet words must flow in blood for him too
the memory of his face undimmed by years
of hostility. the bodies
lie across the front page
of the cheap newspaper i scan
and the closeknit words

jump out at me, the order to the hangman
reversed that last minute
tell:
its not me, me, me,
not you; we
can mourn today, let tears flow
let your feelings slip
through when the flat screen
in my life's room
turns red in its daily ritual telling;
i lie in a heap, lusting,
in a dream hovering against my
sleep, waiting for
the crack of dawn
in another crack of the pistol
chaste, unlying.

(2005-2006)

A note about the poem

I had written exactly two poems, 'my teacher talks of a sri lankan english,' and 'scarred scarred my land' by 1998. These were early days written in the inchoateness of our long-ing for a meaning of nation. Poetry is not something I read regularly or even like for that matter very much. Yet, one day, in late 1998, in the middle of so many other matters, for no reason whatsoever, perhaps prompted by a recurring memory that would not go away- the haunting memory of Kugamoorthy suddenly materializing from nowhere, that fateful day of Rajani's funeral, I picked up the pen and out flowed the poem "to kugamoorthy," eight years after the long silence over his death and 9 years after Rajani's killing. The poem just happened. There was no need to polish, no revision no retrospection, a photograph of loss; From then on, that time in late 1998, a careless moment of careworn thought, I began to write poems, insistently and urgently, again, for no reason whatsoever. All or most of these poems are about death, death not carefully prepared for by a process of painful ageing,

but as sudden, violent, blood gushing acts— death that is always, always about the nation.. I wish I did not write about death. 'un-finished poem' completes that process that began in 1998. It took a long time to come and was being written throughout the year, marking the paralysis of our collective inability and incompetence to handle the political situation, the intimidation and intolerance and above all fear. Then one day last year, August, 12th, in the middle of an International Conference on Translation at the University, the call comes through; and all effort at translation fails. When Kethesh died, the words died too, when he fell silent, the words were strangled in their birth and the 'unfinished poem' came to a halt. There is no more to be said about death that haunts us in every corner. From Kugamoorthy to Kethesh, there has been a long line of deaths. And more to come, daily, in lots, dropping down at our feet, in our beds, flopping down in our dreams. 'unfinished poem' is a eulogy to death; and like most eulogies signifies a completion, a finality, a direction, to move on and to move off. And there will be no more words. Only silence.



For an indivisible peace

Saatvika

Last week we buried Ketheshwaran Loganathan, deputy-head of the government Peace Secretariat, former director of the Center for Policy Alternatives, writer and thinker. In Kethesh's death, civil society mourns the loss of a mentor, colleague and friend. We mourn the loss of a fine intellectual and an incisive political commentator. We also mourn the loss of another alternate voice in Tamil politics and the shrinking space for alternate voices in the landscape of conflict transformation in Sri Lanka. The last few years were difficult ones for those of Kethesh's ilk. Having identified himself squarely within the Tamil nationalist struggle and having fought long and hard for the rights of the Tamil people, the post-CFA environment found men like Kethesh within realist power paradigms and new-fangled conflict transformation discourses, both of which took their cues on the Tamil nationalist struggle from the LTTE and its proxies. In 2003/2004, during the fashionable height of peace building workshops in Colombo, Kethesh's concerns over the rising incidences of fratricidal killings and his pleas for a peace process founded on human rights and pluralism were often met with uncomfortable silences or worse, with tokenistic appreciation.

The likes of Kethesh and others like him were uncomfortable reminders for some in civil society of the need to acknowledge the deep fissures within the Tamil community and to listen to the multiple - and muted - voices within this community. Even the more enlightened in these circles saw people like Kethesh and his dogged perseverance on issues of human rights and pluralism as rocking the peace boat before it had set sail.

Four years down the road from the most recent ceasefire and negotiations process, the

resolution to the ethnic conflict has never seemed more elusive. The last threads of the Ceasefire Agreement have come undone. The Government and the LTTE, blinded by ignorance and arrogance, continue to state their commitment to a resolution through negotiation. These statements grow more hollow with each passing day and with every mounting act of terror and violence unleashed against the people of this country. There are two additionally worrisome elements to the current state of play. The first worrisome element is the unprecedented bestiality to the violence plied by all sides.

This is reflected in the high number of civilian casualties claimed in the military crossfire; the cold-blooded killings of civilians whether in Pesali, Muttur, Kayts or Kebethigollawa; the targeted attacks against aid workers; and the mounting humanitarian crisis of the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in the North and East. The second worrisome element is the increasing animosity and fragmentation among the different groups that make up this country. This too is unprecedented. The clamours for all-out war and the sentiments of intolerance and prejudice are no longer on the lips of the rabble-rousing extremists alone. One hears it everywhere, from everyone, whether at home, at work, in the media and on internet blogs. The protracted violence combined with the continued non-resolution of the conflict is fast contributing to a hardening of attitudes and to a deepening of communal and ethnic divides that is almost irreversible.

Against this precarious and worrisome scenario, it is important to ask a few salient questions. If four years ago, the peace process so to speak had been configured differently, could we have avoided the crisis that has be

fallen us now? Could a combination of stronger political will and civil society leadership, vision and ingenuity have contributed to the design of a more radical process of political and societal transformation necessary for achieving lasting peace in Sri Lanka? Could the process have better withstood the challenges it now faces, if it had been equipped to accommodate the multiple and alternate voices in the South, North and East and if it had been built on stronger foundations of democracy, inclusiveness and respect for (and a zero-tolerance for the violations of) human rights? This kind of soul-searching is necessary from both political and civil society quarters. This kind of soul-searching is necessary in the wake of the loss of individuals like Kethesh who engaged with both the political establishment and civil society in order to push them to think beyond realist paradigms and falsely-constructed conflict transformation dichotomies, towards how things could indeed be different and better.

How could (or optimistically, how can) things be different and better? This is not the time for needless naiveté. The 2002 Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was founded on a necessary military-political power-balance. However, the peace negotiations process does not have been built on the same narrow foundations. On the contrary, using the CFA as a springboard, a peace negotiations process has to accommodate a larger group of stakeholders and a larger package of issues.

This calls for investment in process-design towards the establishment of time-lines, sequences, systems and infrastructures necessary for paying heed to multiple positions, interests, needs and fears. For example, the issue of Muslim representation in the peace process needs to be tackled with more than the occasional photo-op meeting with SLMC leaders. It calls

for a negotiations structure that accommodates those groups with a stake in the process, whether by way of phased-out negotiations, parallel tables or auxiliary dialogue processes. If the political establishment suffers from a creativity block in this regard, the onus is on civil society organizations to step-in and offer concrete proposals and recommendations in this regard. Continuing to rely on an exclusive and solitary dialogue process between the GoSL and the LTTE to deliver on all contentious issues is to set ourselves up for the fall time and time again.

The second point for reflection is on how differently and inter alia more effectively can we move from peace negotiations process (essentially the domain of political actors) to a conflict transformation process that captures the hearts and minds of the people of this land? How can we translate, contextualize and communicate the ideas of internal self-determination, power-sharing, federalism, minority rights and safeguards, interdependence and reconciliation in ways that resonate with the people of Sri Lanka? The task of informing and educating citizens on the goings-on at the negotiations table cannot be left solely in the hands of one to two government negotiators

who, although may possess the credentials and lexicon for impressing Washington and Delhi, have neither the charisma nor vocabulary for communicating with ordinary citizens.

The job of building public support for peace cannot be undertaken by a Peace Secretariat that has neither mandate nor resources for doing so and is, by its own admission, merely a body that facilitates logistics for the peace process. Most seriously, no number of residential workshops in 5-star locations, no number of 'working' dinners at the Gallery Café, no number of gobbledygook research papers and no number of parachuting international resource-persons, can assist civil society organizations in Sri Lanka in their critical work of preparing constituencies for the

He was a man of peace, but instead of revising his notion of peace to fit in with realist paradigms and conflict transformation fads, he chose to remain a voice in the wilderness, seeking a peace with dignity, freedom, justice human rights, a peace that saw no need for sequencing, soft-peddling or sacrificing one against another.

political and social transformation necessary for peace. All those tasked with or inspired to inform, educate or transform hearts and minds towards peace have to, even at this late juncture, make a radical assessment of how successful they have been to-date and be prepared to make radical alterations to their methods and mechanisms accordingly. Looking back over the past few years, all those involved and concerned could have done much more to build a peace process based more on the principles of human rights, pluralism and democracy and less on the pragmatics of security, power and political realities. The resolution to Sri Lanka's ethno-political conflict and the achievement of a just and sustainable peace is contiguously linked to the transformation of two actors, the Sri Lankan state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Each actor is strong in its own right, essentially centralized and fundamentally resistant to change.

The transformation of these two actors requires a combination of forces and factors, whether external or internal, international or national, political or civil, incentives or disincentives, carrots or sticks, good cops or bad cops. It is unlikely that we will ever develop the perfect balance of forces necessary for advancing this transformation. It is likely that we will err time and time again in striking the ever-tenuous balance between some or all of them. However, whatever the balance, there are certain inviolable principles that cannot be sacrificed on the alters of political expediency, military might or constructive engagement.

These are the principles of human dignity, human rights, social justice and democracy. If the process by which we arrive at a resolution to the national question(s) does not hold true to these principles, it is likely that the resolution will also be devoid of the same. It is a fallacy to believe that once Sri Lanka arrives at a settlement to the ethno-political conflict, the parties to the conflict will, automatically and overnight, undergo processes of self-transformation and begin upholding the values of human rights and democratic pluralism, values which they blatantly disregard and disrespect at present. We cannot continue to take our cues on the Tamil nationalist struggle from the LTTE and its proxies alone in the hope that

in time the LTTE will of its own choosing embrace the political, geographic and socio-economic diversity of the community it claims to represent and heal the differences among them through dialogue, not violent suppression. In an interview with LINES Magazine in May 2003, Kethesh gave voice to the same when he said, "This does not mean that I believe in a stage by stage theory where the resolution of the ethnic conflict is seen by some as the prerequisite for the democratization and the healing process within the Tamil community. On the contrary, these are two sides of the same struggle and constitute the real challenge that all of us have to take up". Even against the backdrop of an almost hopeless situation, those entrusted with or inspired to take up the cause of peace must continue their work. However, if we subject ourselves to sincere reflection, we must acknowledge that this work cannot simply be more of the same. The peace negotiations process must be fundamentally restructured to cope with competing priorities; the peace process must be radically overhauled to build and sustain public support for peace; and most importantly, the process must be built on stronger foundations of human rights and democratic pluralism. On all these issues, particularly on the last, civil society actors and organizations must lead instead of opting to follow the status quo.

Last week we buried Ketheshwaran Loganathan. Kethesh was a principled pragmatist; he engaged with the dynamics of a limited and exclusive peace process, while at the same time, sought at every turn to remind those around him of the need and indeed potential to envision and work towards something bigger and better. He was a man of peace, but instead of revising his notion of peace to fit in with realist paradigms and conflict transformation fads, he chose to remain a voice in the wilderness, seeking a peace with dignity, freedom, justice human rights, a peace that saw no need for sequencing, soft-pedaling or sacrificing one against another.

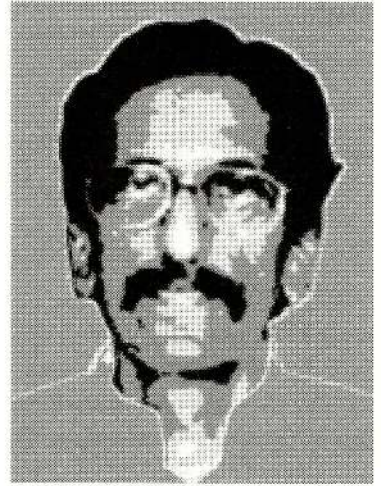
In Kethesh's memory, let us renew our commitment to an indivisible peace.

(Daily Mirror, 26 August 2006

*- This article is dedicated to the memory of
Ketheshwaran Loganathan)*

Kethesh vindicated amid unfolding tragedy

Jehan Perera



"Like a prophet in the ancient tradition, Kethesh spoke truth in the face of power, and it is a tragedy that his prophecy has come true."

It was a week of tragedies. The tragedies were micro and macro in their impacts, personal and less so. But they were tragedies all the same. Their was the death of the three year old girl due to a botched assassination attempt on an anti-LTTE politician opposite a girl's school and barely a hundred meters from where I live in a residential part of Colombo. The sight of her grandfather, who worked in the home of a rich family nearby, weeping by the side of the little bundle on the road was a pathetic television image. It is ironic that the children of top government and LTTE leaders live richly abroad while those on whose behalf they claim to fight for, and also child soldiers, die in pathetic circumstances.

There was the assassination of Kethesh Loganathan, deputy head of the government's peace secretariat in his home in a manner unbecoming of a national liberation struggle. Kethesh was a friend, a peace activist, a newspaper columnist and a teacher.

There was also the uprooting of 40,000 people, most of them Muslims, due to the LTTE attack on the town of Muttur. Overnight, these Muslim people became the chief victims of a fight that was not their own. There was also the killing of over a hundred of them, allegedly by the LTTE, after being separated from the rest. There was the execution style killing of 17 Tamil aid workers in Muttur by suspected security forces personnel. There was the air force bombing in Vakaraai that has reportedly killed refugees that fled to LTTE controlled areas from Muttur. The list can go on and on.

Today Sri Lanka faces a humanitarian disaster of major proportions. According to humanitarian workers, the situation is as bad as it has ever been in the 20 years of war, or even worse. Over a hundred thousand people have become refugees in a matter of a fortnight.

These are people who did not expect the war to come back after the Ceasefire Agreement. What is most tragic about this phase of war is that it is undeclared, although it is raging in full force in parts of the north east. Both sides continue to say that they are prepared to uphold the Ceasefire Agreement even as their military forces engage in pitched battles. Perhaps due to the disjuncture between words and deeds, there is a climate of impunity.

Humanitarian organizations have been complaining that they cannot take relief supplies to where they are most needed. Roads may have been closed due to security considerations by the security forces.

These have implications that go beyond providing relief to refugees. These road closures have implications for the economic life of the people, in the same manner as the closing of the water sluice gate by the LTTE at Mavil Aru had economic implications on the rice farmers of the area.

When roads are closed, people on one side of the road cannot access their rice fields on the other side of the road. People cannot transport their perishable crops to the market or sell their milk. They suffer and no one outside knows of their suffering.

Peace now

From the people's point of view the killings must stop and they must be allowed to live in their familiar habitats. Therefore the news that the LTTE had sent a message through the head of the international monitoring mission that it wished to negotiate with the government came as the best news in a desperate situation. Whatever the temporary vicissitudes of the military battlefield, one factor remains uppermost, and this is that ethnic conflicts do not end through war. They only end through political reforms that win the acceptance of the masses of people.

If there is no political solution that comes through negotiation, what is guaranteed is a festering conflict that will be full scale war at worst or a sapping guerrilla war at best.

LTTE spokespersons have been reported as denying that the LTTE made any such offer of peace negotiations with the government. They have pointed out that in the past all their dealings with the government in respect of negotiations was through the facilitation of the Norwegian government.

But on this occasion the offer to negotiate has been communicated by Ulf Henricsson, the Swedish head of the SLMM. Perhaps this was an LTTE strategy to ensure deniability, if their offer to negotiate was spurned by the government. Or it could have been a general expression of the LTTE's willingness to talk peace if the government is committed to peace.

There will undoubtedly be a school of thought within the government that argues that any LTTE offer to cease hostilities at this stage and engage in negotiations is due to their military weakness, and the desire to gain time to regroup and recoup their strength. On the other hand, there will be other voices within the government that argue that the war has already cost far too many lives, and if it is prolonged it can lead to the loss of more lives and to economic disaster. It will also be only a matter of time before the LTTE is able to hit a soft target that causes massive dislocation throughout the country. In the past the LTTE have been able to penetrate all defences and attack the country's Central Bank, oil refinery and international airport, and wreak tremendous economic damage. There is always a better time to cease hostilities and to negotiate. That time is now. It is sooner rather than later.

Tragically, the elimination of Kethesh Loganathan from the government's peace secretariat will do much harm to the prospects for a negotiated settlement that is based on a sharing of power and on a respect for human rights. Kethesh was a person who used to argue that the peace process, as it was conceptualized in 2002, was flawed. He pointed out that the peace process relied too much on the Ceasefire Agreement as its centre piece. The Ceasefire Agreement had many deficiencies as an instrument of peace all by itself. Kethesh grieved when time and again his former comrades in the Tamil militancy who had joined the mainstream society were gunned down by the LTTE.

Political solution

When the LTTE first began its campaign of assassinations, less than a year after they signed the Ceasefire Agreement, Kethesh insisted that civil society organizations should take up the matter. He warned that the neglect of human rights, and the failure to uphold the right of people to live without fear of being gunned down by assassins, was fundamental to the peace process. Like a prophet in the ancient tradition, he spoke truth in the face of power, and it is a tragedy that his prophecy has come true. It is now clear that the Ceasefire Agreement did not adequately address the issue of human rights and of the participation of the Muslim community in the peace process.

The LTTE attack on the town of Muttur which is predominantly Muslim made them helpless victims of another community's fight. This was also the pattern throughout the peace process when the government and LTTE took decisions on behalf

of the Muslim community, which was rendered helpless. As refugees today they are again helpless, and the government's blocking of humanitarian access to the conflict areas has made their vulnerability even greater. The fact that the Muslim community has got pummelled in times of both war and peace makes it necessary that they should be represented by their own representatives in any future peace talks.

Kethesh also pointed out that another weakness in the peace process was that the Ceasefire Agreement was formulated in a political vacuum. The tragedy is that while the LTTE leadership wages a war for Tamil rights, it eliminates Tamil intellectuals who could provide an alternative vision of the future to Tamils and Sinhalese and Muslims alike. The gentle Neelan Tiruchelvam, with his Harvard doctorate, his incisive mind with its broad sweep of the principles of constitutional law, and his ability to get along with all types of people, both local and international, could have been a great strength to Sri Lanka in helping to us to find our way to a mutually acceptable and just political solution. But this was the man the LTTE sent a suicide bomber to eliminate. In the case of Kethesh, his assassins shot him through the gate of his house when he came to meet them.

At seminar after seminar, Kethesh promoted a federal solution to the ethnic conflict. He was a founding member of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, which has become the leading institution that educates the general population on a constitutional solution to the ethnic conflict and on possible federal solutions. Kethesh was in the forefront of advocating a federal solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, in which regional autonomy, equal rights and the unity of the country could be obtained. If there are to be talks between the government and LTTE now, or in the future, this is the issue that will need to be dealt with first, and not put off for an indefinite future time, like in the peace process that commenced in 2002 and ended this year. Hopefully the war will stop and peace talks will start sooner rather than later. ●



கேதீஸ்வரனுக்கு முன்னம் பின்னம்

போய் வராதே நண்பா
நாங்களும் வருவோம்
இன்னும் சில நாள்கையில்
புல்லரிப்புக்களில்
கிறங்கிக்கிடக்கும் இவ்வினத்தில்
எதை நாம் சாதிப்போம்
புத்திஜீவிகளெல்லாம்
புற்றீசலாய் கொல்லப்பட
புளகாங்கிதம் கொள்ளும்
எம்மினத்தில்
நாம் ஏன் இருக்க!
போய் வராதே நண்பா
நாங்களும் வருவோம்
இன்னும் சில நாள்கையில்
உயிரின் பெறுமதியறியா
பிண்டங்களெல்லாம் நடமாடும் தேசத்தில்
நடப்பவை போராட்டம்!
தலை நிமிர்வது தேசியம்
கிடைப்பது தமிழீழம்
இதில் எங்கே ஆத்மா இருக்கும்?
ஒருவேளை
தனது பட்டறிவுக்கு கீழேதான்
அனைத்துத் தமிழனும் என்பதால்
துருத்திக்கொண்டிருக்கும்
ஒவ்வொருவரும் கொல்லப்படுகிறார்களோ
தலைவா!
நீ வாழி
நின் குடும்பம் வாழி
நாமெல்லாம் நடுத்தெருவில்
பிண்டங்களாய்!

- ஜீவா

Peace Without Appeasement: Honouring Kethesh

Qadri Ismail



Kethesh Loganathan's decision to join the Rajapakse regime's "peace" secretariat was bewildering at the time. It still is after his assassination, presumably at the hands of the LTTE.

A strong argument can be made that Tamils of conscience – and I don't mean Lakshman Kadirgamar, a Tamil with U.N. Secretary-General ambitions – should have helped Chandrika Kumaratunga's peace efforts. Of all postcolonial Sri Lanka's heads of government, she – a leftist – alone viewed the national question as a matter of justice for the Tamils. Yes, she made early tactical mistakes about the protocols of the process. Worse, she was later willing to tolerate the military's molestation of Tamils; not to mention her party's role in the murder of Mawa-

nella Muslims. But she always knew that justice was on the side of the Tamil people.

To Ranil Wickremasinghe, peace is simply a profitable proposition. The future might place him in the position of being the Sinhala leader who finally makes the deal that stops the war. But it would be just that: a deal. To the perspective that he articulates, to local and international capital that supports him, the LTTE must be appeased because it is bad for business. Wickremasinghe is quite willing to tolerate the LTTE as long as it targets only Tamils and Muslims, as long as it leaves the south alone.

Unlike his immediate predecessors, Mahinda Rajapakse reminds one of the truly terrible days of that war criminal, J.R. Jayewardene. To win the election, he actively cultivated the support of Buddhist priests who desire and demand violence. Among his first acts as president was to appoint Sinhala supremacists – notably, Sarath Fonseka and H.M.G.B. Kotakadeniya – to leading positions in the defense establishment. That alone was signifier enough that the Tamil people could look forward, once again, to war. (Something the LTTE, for its own reasons, welcomed.) The refusal to investigate the January killings, presumably by the police, of the five Tamil youth in Trincomalee – details of this case have been made public by D.B.S. Jeyaraj, amongst others – was a blue-light to the troops that they could treat Tamil citizens like vermin; in Kurtz's infamously racist phrase, "Exterminate all the brutes!" Wherever possible, they have.

In that context, Kethesh's belief that he could somehow influence what is clearly a rabidly Sinhala nationalist government – work within the system – was, at best, a miserable mistake.

But we all misstep, don't we?

Only, Kethesh's – and make no mistake about it – was an error of judgment made in the interests of peace. For he wanted, as he had all his life, to make a difference. His decision to quit the Centre for Policy Alternatives was spurred, in part, by his increasing isolation within the more influential sections of the peace lobby. They think hope is spelled R-a-n-i-l. They understand peace as the absence of war. To Kethesh – no mere nationalist, but a leftist, after all – things were not so simple.

He argued consistently (the articles are available at the

CPA website) that peace wasn't synonymous with appeasing the LTTE at any cost; that the process should be inclusive - of other Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala opinion; that human and democratic rights should not be exchanged merely for an LTTE promise to stop killing Sinhalese.

This made him inconvenient to sections of the peace lobby, which has made a habit of excusing LTTE massacres of Sinhala and Muslim civilians, of not protesting its systematic stifling of oppositional Tamils. And, as the UTHR(J) noted, he got marked as an opponent by the Norwegians.

The blondes - daft, dismal and disgracefully unwilling to learn from their own mistakes - are desperate, having screwed up the Oslo talks, for some international diplomatic success. But they have almost certainly outlived their usefulness in Sri Lanka. Which, however, is not necessarily a good thing.

For the Rajapakse regime has made it clear, even to the most massively myopic that, unless its hand is twisted by some outside force, it will not make any "concessions" to the Tamils - despite the president's public posture as a peacenik. Indeed, it has made it superabundantly clear that it will condone rape in Mannar, massacres in Mutur and continue a policy that has already transformed thousands of northeastern Tamil and Muslim Sri Lankan citizens into homeless, displaced persons.

Mahinda Rajapakse once championed Palestinian rights. (Which may explain why Kethesh was optimistic about him.) He now sounds like an emulator of Ehud Olmert. He, too, is fighting a purely "defensive" war. (A ranch in Texas awaits the first person to guess who taught him to say that!) He, too, must bomb children in self-defense.

So, those who banned the LTTE, on the grounds that most of its attacks target civilians - Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese - should wonder whether consistency alone doesn't demand that equal sanctions be applied to the Sri Lankan government.

Except that, of course, just as much as the EU ban only strengthened the unilateralist element within the LTTE, international sanctions will invariably strengthen unilateralist elements within the Sinhala right, notably the JVP/JHU. (By the way, those who still insist on calling the JVP Marxist should realize that national socialist is the more accurate term. The best known representative of that politics, of course, is a short, ugly Aryan with a miniature moustache who tried to exterminate all the Jews.) On the other hand, I am prepared to bet that if the entire Sri Lankan cabinet, including its many Ministers for Inconsequential Affairs, is banned from travelling to - or just hitting the shopping malls in - the west, it will convert to federalism faster than you can say "Buddhu-Ammo!"

For that is the distressing dilemma facing those of us who do not understand peace in Sri Lanka as the vanishing of war. The LTTE is to democracy what Darrell Hair is to

good umpiring. Any settlement that strengthens them cannot produce a comprehensive, transformative peace. But who amongst us does not want the killing to end?

So, we cannot but beg that all the parties and "paramilitaries," even if they don't care about the suffering of civilians, stop the fighting. And then:

With Kethesh, we can also demand that peace requires not the appeasement of the LTTE, but the recognition that all the peoples of the northeast - and the rest of the country - are ensured a safe, secure and substantially democratic future. Rajapakse's "maximum devolution within a unitary constitution" and his majoritarian committee of experts don't even begin to address those concerns. For, as Kethesh argued, peace requires a transformation of the entire Sri Lankan state, not just the establishment of an autonomous area in the northeast, through a process that includes as wide a selection of Sri Lankan political opinion as possible.

Yes, this means that Muslim representatives participate as equals to the LTTE and government in any negotiations. Yes, it means other Tamil opinion is also involved, not just informed. And, yes, it means - as much as it troubles me to say this - that the JVP and JHU cannot be left out, either. Peace in Sri Lanka means abiding by even the unabidable.

But it also means that everything will be open to negotiation. Everything. Including that noxious flag, dominated by the armed Sinhala lion, which reminds me every time I encounter it that the minorities are insignificant in Sri Lanka.

That way, we could have peace without appeasement. And honour Kethesh's memory. ●



Remembering Kethesh, Again:

A Response To Qadri Ismail

Vaanmathy Pathmanathan

Memories are always difficult and different to word. The memory of Kethesh Loganathan who lived and died serving the cause of peace in Sri Lanka may mean different things to different people, even in the activist world. But there is one commonality that binds us all together in the activist-academic political field. Political and cultural activism has become, unfortunately, a life and death struggle in Sri Lanka and is underlined by life and death decisions. Whatever choice we make in our country and perhaps outside will always be beset by such questions, is this the right decision toward life, my life and other's lives?

This is the question that would have driven and underlined Kethesh's decision to join the Peace Secretariat at the beginning of this year: Will I be furthering the life of the failed peace process and will I be furthering the lives of other people in this country, of Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese, in the east and in the south? Today, for an activist, within the political muddle we are in, this is what would drive a choice; the desire to live.

Did Kethesh make the right choice in joining the Peace Secretariat? Here I am slightly puzzled by Ismail's pronouncement: He seems to be certain of his own take – that Kethesh's decision to join the Peace Secretariat was a mistake. What exactly is a mistake is the question I am prompted to ask here. For many of us, Tamils, there is no space for activism in Sri Lanka or outside, constrained by the deep seated militarism pervading our cultures. Given that, can I, we, characterize a decision as that made by Kethesh, a mistake? Why would Kethesh, a founder member of the EPRLF, and an activist who stuck it out at CPA for so long as he did, within the culture of a politicized civil society, join the Peace Secretariat? The answer is staring at anyone in the face. Why did the LTTE kill Kethesh Loganathan? At the risk of sounding repetitive, I would say, regardless of LTTE's 'actual' reason, the answer for this seems to depend on LTTE's decision to do away with him. Yes, Kethesh seems to have made the right decision; for he appears to have posed the right threat to the LTTE, in whatever decision he had made. In my response to Qadri Ismail, I will say this: With Qadri Ismail I too mourn Kethesh; not because he mistepped. But because he walked with a certain step toward peace; he walked to displaced camps. His stepped his way toward exposing child conscription. He spoke up again and again for a just solution based on devolution of power. He walked toward change. And he struggled for a change of heart and mind in the thinking of civil society. He asked hard questions from all of us, all the time. I will always remember his challenges; and his support in all activity people made toward peace; his recognition of the EPRLF's lapses in the past. He broke down that mental block in the Tamil activist's mind against political partnership with the government. He worked for a political solution. He worked for political change.

His was a difficult life; some of our lives are also difficult; some more than others. We face daily difficult challenges. Let us make our challenges, and the questions we ask ourselves and others, questions that drive us toward life, a struggle against wanton death. That is the "right" choice. If Kethesh

missed his step, he mistepped in the right direction

Its up to us today to continue with the work he wanted so much to carry out. By honouring Kethesh along with Ismail, I implore the Peace Secretariat to fight for a negotiated settlement for the country. I ask the government to commit itself to peace and to desist from its current militarism, particularly its alarmingly increasing jingoist rhetoric and its celebration of militarism. I ask the government, along with Kethesh Loganathan, to unconditionally commit itself to a just solution to the conflict, in which all communities of the country, and specifically, communities in the north and east, Muslims, Tamils, Sinhalese, Veddhas, the Burghers and others attain a measure of security and belonging. The government MUST commit itself to devolution of power, and set to work on a peace package immediately.

The government's efforts at inclusivity in building consensus is truly laudable. But it should not confuse inclusivity with political expedience, making the minorities lose hope, over and over again; it should make inclusivity truly democratic and work toward a programme of dialogue with displaced people of all communities; with representatives of women; with minority communities. Inclusivity today means not just round table talks, but also taking on positions of the powerless on board, including those of unarmed persons and communities.

Inclusivity means taking extra judicial killings by state forces seriously and dealing with them swiftly; it means acting justly with those anti social and anti minority elements that pervade our land. The government has to address itself seriously to the human rights situation in the country, like the killing of the five youth in Trincomalee in January and the more recent violations. Today, despite the low popularity of the LTTE among the Tamils, we see Tamils and Muslims losing faith in the government. In this climate, if the government sees its position as one of winning a contest with the LTTE, then its project, smacking of adolescent identity crises, is doomed to fail from the beginning. It must show to its people there is no military option possible.

The government has to show to Muslim and Tamil people of the north and east and elsewhere its commitment to peace by engaging in fruitful discussion at multi level levels with diverse elements. How much has the government attempted to assess the situation on the ground in the east? Despite lip service done to the language rights of the Tamil speaking peoples, police stations and other dangerous places

today are woefully inadequate in dealing with matters in Tamil. This increases the insecurity of those who feel targeted not just because they are Tamil but also because they speak Tamil. Kethesh suggested a way of working with the government that could prove fruitful to us; Tamils, Muslims, Sinhalese, women, men, working class and others. Can the government, in whose name too, Kethesh died, now prove to the minorities that it is sincere in its efforts toward peace? Importantly, the government should show its unwavering commitment to the peace talks and a settlement. It owes that to the memory of all who lived and died for the sake of peace.

Today, tensions are high, and they are not just between the LTTE and the state. We all know of the rampant violence of the LTTE against the Muslims in the east and the north. LTTE's programme of terror against Sinhalese in the border villages. Its arbitrary abductions of personnel of the service forces and civilians. There is of course the unerasable issue of long standing tension between the Tamil people and the LTTE. On the other hand, inter ethnic violence has seeped into the fabric of society itself, particularly the communities of the north and the east. Is there an answer to this? I would have asked Kethesh at one time what he thought could be done. Today, I ask, perhaps in his name, peace activists and political scientists, feminists and trade unionists and political parties, how they are going to act toward a culture of peace; toward a national consensus; toward peace and devolution. □

Three days had passed since my article had been published and I still hadn't heard from Kethesh. He was usually quite prompt, always encouraging and willing to suggest improvements to arguments and to point out gaps. I didn't want to call him as I didn't want to hear his disapproval if he didn't like it. The compliments of only a few people matter to me, he being one of those few. It was Saturday evening and I was heading into a dance recital when I finally got a text from Kethesh congratulating me. I meant to reply and thought that I would call the next morning so that we could have a chat and catch up. A few hours later he was dead.

I will always regret that I didn't speak to him that evening. And regret so many other conversations that I wish I had had with him: conversations about the radicalization that brought about his involvement in the militancy, his years as spokesperson for the EPRLF, his years in Europe, the political and personal exile in Sri Lanka, and the transition from militancy to civil society. I did meet him a few weeks before he was killed. It had been four months since we had met face to face. We were both working at the Centre for Policy Alternatives, where Kethesh was Head of the Peace and Conflict Analysis Unit before joining the Government's Peace Secretariat. We talked about work, his new job and the current situation. He was just as I remembered him at CPA - forthright, decidedly convinced of his own politics, but willing to point out its flaws.

In death people become cari-

atures of what they were in life, but sometimes they become symbols. We often lose the human being, full of complexities and contradictions. Kethesh would have been 55 today.

He was both my boss and my colleague at the Centre for Policy Alternatives for almost 2 years. In those two years I learned a lot from him in terms of analysis, politics and articulating one's views. He was a private person, yet always willing to engage. Above all, he offered an example of the importance of value-based politics - that human rights and justice should not just be negotiated for the sake of a pragmatic peace.

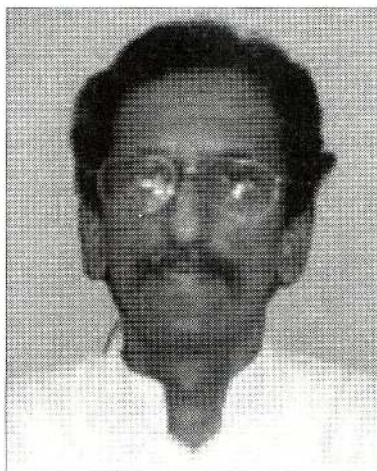
Working with him was both rewarding and challenging. He had a rare ability to digest information and translate its meaning into simple but powerful messages. Through him I gained confidence because he would always be ready to encourage. He was someone who firmly believed in youth speaking out and playing a prominent role. Whenever anyone interesting was visiting him he would insist that I sit in and participate in the discussion. When he was unable to attend an event as a speaker he would suggest my name saying "he will say the same thing but diplomatically." This spirit of encouragement marked Kethesh's relationship with many young people. He warmly welcomed visiting scholars and activists once he had ascertained the depth of their interest. Like me, many of them warmed to him not just because he was a font of knowledge, but because he was generous with his time and his intellect and shared his thoughts freely. He sensed in many of us the desire for guid-

Kethesh Loganathan

- An Appreciation -

Birth Anniversary November 17

Mirak Raheem



ance, something that we hid behind our bold questions and confidently argued positions, and responded graciously. He could also be obdurate and there were times when Kethesh and I waged our cold wars and had stand-offs that lasted short periods, but the camaraderie always returned.

Kethesh could be idealistic, but at the same time be deeply cynical.

For instance, he would acclaim the work of those attempting to highlight the abuse of human rights and to fight for social justice and to devise a solution to the ethnic conflict based on democracy and justice. On the other hand he was deeply critical of those who he said "gave peace a bad name," be they politicians, diplomats or civil society actors who in their efforts to kow tow to one party or the other and who down-played issues such as human rights, inclusiveness of alternate Tamil voices and the Muslim issue. Over the course of this peace process, as the talks faltered and the killings surged, his cynicism grew.

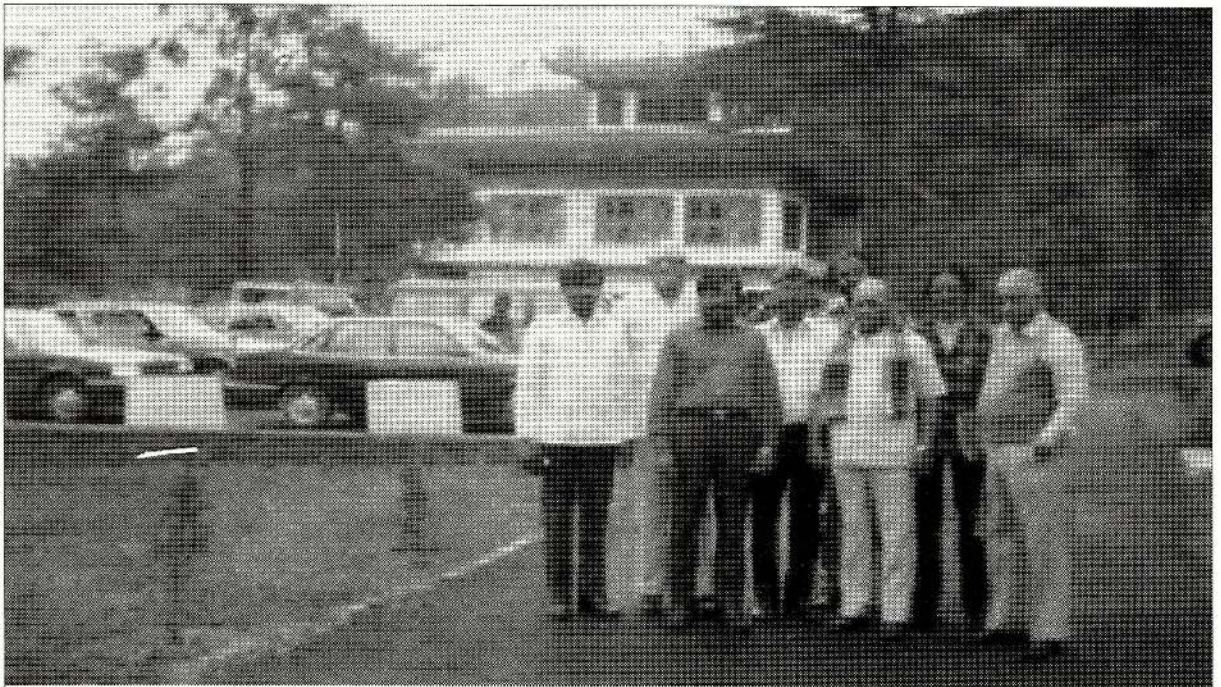
Yet, he was determined to continue working for the cause of peace, because he knew it would be a prolonged struggle that might take

many years, even after a peace agreement was signed. Peace for him was not about agreements, the end of large-scale violence, or peace for its own sake, but one critical step in strengthening social justice and democracy.

I am truly grateful that I had the opportunity to know him and to learn from him. I am sad that I can no longer turn to him for advice, even though I can sometimes guess what he would have told me. Kethesh tried to convince me of the merits of meditation, but with little success. He was more spiritual than religious, every morning he would meditate to prepare for the day's travails and to combat stress. I have no mantra or supplication from a religious text to bid him farewell and wish him peace, so I am turning to the secular canon, to Rabindranath Tagore, for a prayer in which I know Kethesh would have joined me:

*Where the head is held high
And the mind is without fear
Into that heaven of freedom
Let my country awaken*

(Daily Mirror, 17 Nov 2006)



Thimpu Peace Talks - 1985

Ketheeswaran Loganathan and the Tamil Dissidents' Dilemma

University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), UTHR, 15 Aug 2006

Ketheeswaran's assassination fell on the first anniversary of Lakshman Kadirgamar's. Neelan Thiruchelvam's seventh was less than a fortnight earlier. Ketheeswaran follows a long list of committed Tamils who desired that their community would enjoy peace with dignity within a united Sri Lanka. They all knew that despite the reasonableness of their cause this was an uphill task. Current developments give us ample insight into why this is so and might so remain for decades to come.

The LTTE-intelligence related web site Nitharsanam devoted 7 lines to the killing of Kethees. It began, "Infamous traitor of the Tamil race Ketheeswaran Loganathan was shot dead a short while ago. Known as Tamil Betrayer Kadirgamar Junior, he was deputy head of the government Peace Secretariat..." This derisive snigger is the stamp of the killers, their very nature and their values that are the antithesis of decency and true heroism. The implicit boast in the killing and its timing is that this organisation can and would pick off its unarmed opponents at will, should they persist in giving hope to the people.

As for hope, this killing of one individual comes amidst

a massive humanitarian catastrophe in the North-East, and its significance is prone to easy misrepresentation at popular level, which is also a significant factor in the timing. The humanitarian catastrophe throws into relief the institutional incapacity of the Sinhalese dominated State to respect civilian life and property of minorities in the North-East. Following the mainly government shelling of Muslim-dominated Mutur town, refugee camps of the Tamil displaced and places of refuge such as churches where civilians gathered during confrontations, have been relentlessly bombed or shelled. Inevitably the Muslim civilians are caught between the duplicity of both the security forces and the LTTE.

Take the experience of the twice or thrice displaced in the last 4 months from a camp of about 1500 families south of Mutur: "When the planes bombed I ran, barely looking behind, I saw the dead scattered like fish on a dry tank bed." No LTTE military facility was nearby nor could its cannon threaten Trincomalee harbour from there. There are literally hundreds of such testimonies. Amidst such suffering where the final civilian death tolls might rise to several hundred, what is then the relevance of the Ketheeswaran, Kadirgamar, Thiruchelvam and what is presented as a handful of other dissidents? The answer is literally, everything.

There are also other testimonies coming from experiences victims and that is why, however many of its people the LTTE kills, the dissident phenomenon shows no signs of abating. Both in print and in interviews with refugees, one hears a good deal of spontaneous dissidence. People question the LTTE's right to attack the Army in a manner that places civilians at risk, often using them effectively as shields; its strategies that deliberately contrive civilian casualties and its by now well known incapacity to agree to any political settlement that obliges it to respect human rights.

In conversations among ordinary people they are well aware of the hypocrisy. When LTTE functionary Daya Master had a heart ailment, they appealed to Kethees' Peace Secretariat, which arranged for urgent medical attention. According to well placed media reports in Colombo, children of LTTE functionaries used their privileged contacts with the Government during the peace process to send their children abroad for a Western education, while the young at home were being dragged from their mothers and seasoned as cannon fodder. Why were

then Ketheeswaran and other dissidents traitors?

The dissidents knew well that fascism, hypocrisy, criminality and systemic reliance on assassination were natural outgrowths of the LTTE's past choices coming from intolerance and egomania and a total rejection of common morality. They also knew that the Sinhalese polity was the root cause of this phenomenon acquiring a totalitarian grip over the Tamil people. Meanwhile Tamil dissidents with clarity of mind faced a constant thinning down of their ranks. There was absolutely no room for them to talk to the Tamil people, give them hope and to form mass organisations. If they chose to remain in this country, they were condemned to lead fairly lonely lives in Colombo with just a few friends who gave them some space to articulate their ideas.

Lonely Battles

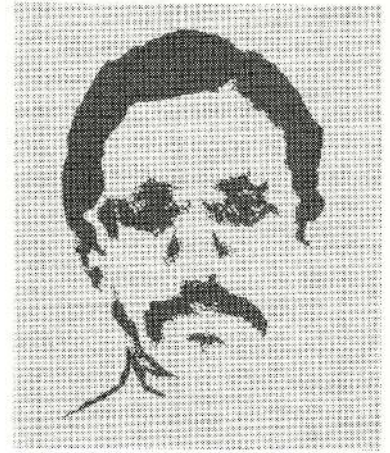
It is the universal conviction of dissidents that only a political settlement that offered the Tamils and Muslims peace with dignity would undermine the LTTE's grip. The cause of the Tamil-speaking people of the North-East was articulated more than 50 years ago by S.J.V. Chelvanayakam of the Federal Party and more urgently after the intolerance signalled by the Sinhala Only Act of 1956. His demands were for an end to discrimination on the basis of language, and a working recognition of the home of the Tamil-speaking people - the Northern and Eastern Provinces - so that the cultural and linguistic character of the region would be protected without prejudice to the rights of the Sinhalese.

Such a demand would have seemed fair and necessary in most parts of the world and, many would argue, sanctioned as a basic right in UN covenants such as the ICCPR and ICESR to begin with. Instead of addressing the basic issue, which became also one about Tamil security, we have spent 50 wasted years on hair splitting arguments about national sovereignty, homeland and differences between federalism and separatism. The basic issue became so confused among the Sinhalese that writers often tended to dwell on pros and cons without reaching any finality. Meanwhile there have been deliberate attempts backed by the State to solve the problem by violence and attrition particularly in the East. This lay at the root of the problems in Trincomalee this year that precipitated the resumption of war.

The Sinhalese polity had two choices. One is to treat the Tamils as a fifth column to be degraded and marginalised by a mixture of violence, attrition and deceit. The second is to trust them, take the plunge into federalism and build up a relationship of amity. Tamil dissidents have held that the latter is the only course that could keep Sri Lanka united.

After Chandrika Kumaratunge became president, there seemed to be an opportunity for Tamil dissidents to contribute towards pushing the second option.

Neelan Thiruchelvam MP contributed actively towards drawing up new constitutional settlement. A. Thangathurai MP



used the thaw to obtain resources for the badly needed rehabilitation of displaced Tamils in Trincomalee District. Both were killed by the LTTE. The Kumaratunge government's initial commitment to a political settlement also enabled some dissident Tamils to contribute towards this objective through the state media. To the Tigers they were simply all traitors.

What the Tamil dissidents did not have is a mass organisation, only ideas and their commitment. Their fate thus became subject to changing illusions and volatility, both in the Sinhalese polity and also the NGO community in Colombo. After President Kumaratunge's attempt to push through a new constitution in August 2000 was undermined by the UNP at the 11th Hour by allying with the chauvinistic opposition, Kumaratunge's People's Alliance abandoned the urgency of a political settlement and tried to compete for the chauvinist vote. Among the consequences were the Bindunuwewa massacre of young Tamils at the rehabilitation centre in October 2000 and attempts to cover it up,

followed by communal violence against Muslims in Mawanella in early 2001.

Ranil Wickremasinghe's UNP in collusion with a number of influential NGOs by late 1999 advocated a novel notion that since the LTTE had no interest in a political settlement, the way forward was to appease the LTTE, keep it quiet and let the rest of the country outside the North-East get on with economic growth and donor aid. Violation of human rights, not a novel idea in Southern politics, was to be winked at. This was the basis for the 2002 Norway-brokered ceasefire agreement, which literally signed the death warrant of hundreds of Tamil dissidents.

The UNP's calculation was that the Sinhalese voters would be grateful for ending open warfare. It took little account of the LTTE's past behaviour and that its provocations and habitual preparations for war would make the Sinhalese voter nervous. The result was, with tactical help from the LTTE, the election of Mahinda Rajapakse as president in 2005, whose government was hamstrung by its extremist allies, the JHU and JVP. On the one hand the Government had to show a nominal interest in a political settlement of the minority problem because of pressure from the international community and India. On the other, the extremist JHU and JVP influence was strong in the Defence Ministry, and the Government's human rights record particularly in the North-East took a downward spiral.

First there was nervousness in the South about the government forces being able to hold their own in the face of signs that the LTTE would resume open hostilities. Then early spring of this year saw new global strictures against the LTTE led by its banning in the EU and Canada, owing much to active voice of Tamil dissidents and supported by the US and India. In the same breath, the Western nations and India placed also the Government on notice demanding that it put forward a political settlement. Extremist elements in the Government urged by the JHU and JVP misread the signals and took the new spate of strictures against the LTTE as a cue for military adventurism to fulfil their ideological dreams in the East, ignoring the demand for a political settlement.

Warnings by the international community were met with an outburst of xenophobia with a strong anti-Tamil tinge, placing the country once more on the threshold of anarchy. A disturbing development was the presence of the Patriotic National Movement with its secretary Wimal Weerawansa of the JVP in Jaffna on 22nd July to address the security forces. The JVP's constant refrain in recent months has been that there is no ethnic problem, but only a terrorist problem; and that foreign agencies, the UN and Norway are on the side of the terrorists. The latter is an oversimplification that fails to ask how outsiders would be struck by the Sinhalese polity's long and dismal record?

50 years after 1956, President Rajapakse found himself in a position similar to that of the SLFP's founder, Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, a vacillating tool of extremist elements that had helped his rise to power. This leaves Tamil dissidents with no role except to sit back and wait for the violence and illusions to exhaust themselves.

The lack of a clear perception of self-interest and a love of deceptive shortcuts did not allow the Sinhalese polity to take Tamil dissent into constructive partnership, with a clear long-term vision of the good of all Sri Lankans. Tamil dissidents were useful when campaigning for global strictures on the LTTE. Tamil human rights activists were useful when violations by the LTTE were a closely guarded secret that few dared to talk about. But today violations by the State too are hidden under a veil of terror, so that people are mortally afraid to come forward as witnesses. Does the South have the same space for human rights activism that many fought hard for during the decade prior to the 2002 CFA?

In joining the Norway-UNP bandwagon of appeasement of the LTTE, rather than building a robust human rights infrastructure and culture that entailed challenging the elimination of Tamil dissidents, the progressives in the South surrendered their capacity to resist repression. On the political front, the JVP and other extremists, who claimed to care about the human rights of Tamil dissidents during the years of ceasefire and who praise the Tamil Lakshman Kadirgamar for being useful in articulating Sri Lanka's case abroad, have conveniently forgotten that he also constantly pleaded for a federal

solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. Tamil dissidents, who struggled for the rights and aspirations of their community, have found few genuine friends in the South, be it be among the “progressives” or the “chauvinists”.

Ketheeswaran’s Place in the Tamil Saga

Ketheeswaran was consistent in his dedication to the welfare of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. In the early 1980s which saw growing communal violence directed at Tamils it was natural for a decent left oriented Tamil with an intellectual bent to join the EPRLF, which he did. The struggle he joined was destroyed by the LTTE in 1986. After very difficult times for his people, Ketheeswaran found openings for his interests in justice and a political settlement among Colombo-based NGOs. He strongly objected to the degradation of human rights in the 2002 ceasefire agreement and on occasions was almost alone in voicing his concern over the conscription of children in the Colombo NGO fora, which Norway, the NGOs and the Government wanted to downplay. Erik Solheim was quick to mark him out as an adversary.

Ketheeswaran never forgot that he had been a militant. He stayed on in the EPRLF and left it only in 1994 after differences with an individual who too later left. His background enabled him to easily make the transition to activism in civil society. He was constant in his concern that other militants too should be given the means and opportunity to come out into civil and political life. He pushed for the Norwegian initiated peace process to address this cause for all militants including from the LTTE. But after the Karuna split the Norwegians pinned the label ‘paramilitary’ on all non-LTTE groups and this effort came to a standstill.

Ketheeswaran wanted the Norwegian initiated process to go on, but became very upset and utterly disillusioned when the LTTE started a campaign of political killings, culminating in the assassination of T. Subathiran of the EPRLF in June 2003, a man he had known as a fine and committed human being. Kethees’ writings and analyses became critical for dissenters who challenged the Norwegian approach to the peace process. This approach, while lax on human rights and democracy, looked for quick fixes as some crude arrangement convenient to the Government and the LTTE. Kethees was neither a romantic nor a mere analyst. Where possible he collaborated closely but quietly in challenging the forces opposed to human rights and democracy, whether it be the LTTE, the Government or the Norwegian facilitators. Unfortunately for him and his security, he became isolated even within the INGO and NGO community in Colombo that had been his home turf. His insistence on ensuring human rights in the peace process and his opposition to appeasement of the LTTE to the detriment of the people, resulted in his being further isolated, and to his peril, singled out and labelled a critic of the LTTE or simply ‘anti-LTTE’.

Kethees would not be silenced, he voiced his own concerns

about human rights and the primacy of a political settlement in a series of articles under the pen name Sathya in the Daily Mirror. The earlier Peace Secretariat headed by Jayantha Dhanapala had kept itself above the local political fray. When the Rajapakse presidency committed itself to a political settlement and offered Ketheeswaran the position of deputy head of the new Peace Secretariat, Kethees sought the opinion of his dissident friends. All were concerned for his security, but if the President was committed to a political settlement, many felt that it would be good for a Tamil to be in that position to push both a political settlement and human rights concerns. They were thinking of the Peace Secretariat as a body that could advise the President while keeping above the political fray. After his death and given the current reality where his fears are coming true, some of his NGO colleagues have expressed agreement with him. Had they done so four years ago, his cause would have developed the critical mass that would have minimised the danger to his life.

In time both the Government’s human rights record and its commitment to a political settlement began to look dubious as the Defence Ministry and the President’s allies, the JHU and JVP, began pushing him in their direction and he seemed to be caving in. The Peace Secretariat was being driven into a partisan role. Kethees constantly on his own asked his contacts for independent in

formation on human rights violations and was determined to pressure the Government from within. Kethees knew about the plight of the 17 ACF workers stranded in Mutur. When the news of their killing came out on 6th August, Kethees was upset over his helplessness in the situation and was convinced that the Army was responsible. Six days later he was killed. As a person playing the role of a conscientious civilian he felt that he did not need security and had declined offers of it. He died another Tamil dissident caught up in fateful developments beyond his control.

When will the Sinhalese polity learn? While there is nothing sacrosanct about a united Sri Lanka after 50 years of dreary misgovernment in the North-East, most Tamils know that separation will result in the diminish-

ment of all of us. We would go down as peoples who had so much in common, but could not muster enough tolerance and humanity put aside fond nationalist myths and live together.

When will the Sinhalese polity learn that the dwindling numbers of Tamil dissidents who are picked up and dropped to suit the momentary whims of those in power are the last hope of a united Sri Lanka? There will be no united Sri Lanka after the fantasies of the JHU and JVP.

When will the Tamil expatriates learn to think responsibly about a force that has five times in 20 years presided over Jaffna being overrun or massively destroyed and civilians evicted and killed without any end in sight? They would easily do it five times again in the next 20 years simply for the egomania and survival of the leaders.

When will they learn about a force that has tortured and killed thousands of dissidents and has only to show as its achievements thousands of vanished youths and children it used as cannon fodder and covered up its crime by flattering them with rows of martyrs' tombs?

In the context of today's humanitarian catastrophe, the hapless people living in the LTTE controlled areas, long abused by the LTTE whom they cursed, are being callously attacked with government missiles. A number of children are among the injured in the Vanni receiving very rudimentary care in Killinochchi Hospital. Whether they were conscripts or school children, the Government dismisses them as cadres under training. In representing their plight, the LTTE today carries no credibility internationally. This places on Tamil dissidents the responsibility to speak on their behalf. ●



Kethesh with Indian HC Jha - 1994

தோழர் கேதீஸ் லோகநாதன் மறைவு அருவியை முடியாத இழப்பு

-ஈழ மக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணி

இங்கை சமூக விஞ்ஞானிகள் மன்றத்தில் பணியாற்றியவரும் ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியில் மிக நீண்டகாலம் அங்கத்தவராக இருந்தவரும் மத்திய குழு அரசியல் பீடங்களில் அங்கத்துவம் வகித்தவரும் திம்பு பேச்சுவார்த்தையில் சரித்திர முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்த பங்கை ஆற்றியவரும் தோழர் பத்மநாபாவுடன் மிக நெருக்கமாகச் செயற்பட்டவருமான கேதீஸ் லோகநாதன் இன்று பாசிசவாதிகளால் படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டார்.

நேர்மை, கண்ணியம், அர்ப்பணம் என்பன அவரின் அருங்குணங்கள்.

அவர் ஈபிஆர்எல்எப் இன் பேச்சாளராகப் பணியாற்றியபோது அவரால் வெளியிடப்பட்ட அறிக்கைகளும், கருத்துக்களும் தமிழ் பேசும் மக்களின் நிலைபற்றி சர்வதேச ஊடகங்களினதும், சர்வதேச கொள்கை வகுப்பாளர்களினதும் கவனத்தை ஈர்ப்பதில் பெரும் பங்கு வகித்தன.

அவர் முன்னாள் உலகவங்கி ஆலோசகராகவும், இலங்கை மத்திய வங்கியின் அத்தியட்சகராகவும் பணியாற்றிய காலஞ்சென்ற திரு லோகநாதனின் புத்திரராவார். அவர் உலகின் எந்த மூலையிலும் மிகச் சௌகரியமாக வாழ்ந்திருக்க முடியும். ஆனால் இலங்கையில் தான் பிறந்த சமூகத்தின் சுதந்திரத்திற்காகவும் ஜனநாயக உரிமைகளுக்காகவும் தன்னை

அர்ப்பணித்திருந்தார். சமூக உரிமைகளுக்கான அவரது குரல் வெளிப்படையானதாகவும், தர்க்க ரீதியாகவும், ஆணித்தரமாகவும் அமைந்திருந்தது. யாருக்கும் அஞ்சி உயிருக்குப் பயந்து தனது கருத்துக்களை விட்டுக் கொடுப்பவர் அல்ல அவர்.

அவர் கல்விமான்கள் மத்தியிலும், ஜனநாயக சக்திகள் மத்தியிலும், சர்வதேச சமூகத்தின் மத்தியிலும் பெரிதும் மதிக்கப்பட்ட ஒரு பெருமகனாகத் திகழ்ந்தார்.



அவர் மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையத்தின் இயக்குநர்களில் ஒருவராகவும், பின்னர் இலங்கை சமாதானச் செயலகத்தின் பிரதிப்பணிப்பாளராகவும் பணியாற்றினார். 'இழந்த சந்தர்ப்பங்கள்' என்ற மகுடத்தின் கீழ் அவர் ஒரு நூலை வெளியிட்டார். அது இனப்பிரச்சினைக்கு தீர்வுகாண்பதற்காக கிடைத்த வாய்ப்புக்கள் பல எவ்வாறு கை நழுவிப் போயின என்பதை ஆவணப்படுத்தியிருந்தது.

ஈபிஆர்எல்எப் இல் அவர் அங்கத்துவம் வகித்தபோது 'ஈழப்போராட்டத்தில் ஈபிஆர்எல்எப் இன் பங்கு' என்ற தலைப்பில் ஒரு கொள்கை வகுப்பு நூலை எழுதியிருந்தார். ஆங்கிலத்தில் இனப்பிரச்சனை பற்றி மாதாந்த சஞ்சிகையொன்றை வெளியிட்டவர். 'சத்தியா' என்ற புனை பெயரில் அவர் ஆங்கில ஊடகங்களில்

எழுதிய பல கட்டுரைகள் தமிழ் மக்களின் அவல நிலையை கச்சிதமாக வெளிப்படுத்துவதாகவும் தீர்வை நோக்கிய ஆக்கபூர்வமான திசையிலும் எழுதப்பட்டன. ஆவர் வீரகேசரியின் சகோதர ஆங்கில வாராந்தரியான 'வீக் என்ட் எக்ஸ்பிரஸ்'இன் ஆசிரியராகவும் சிறிது காலம் பணியாற்றினார்.

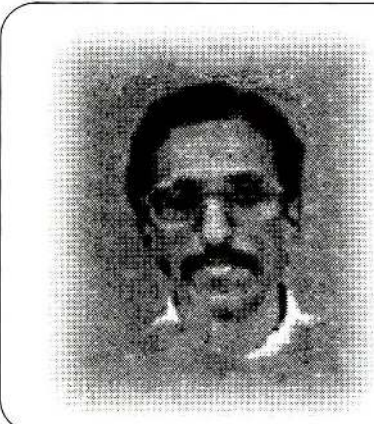
இங்கிலாந்தின் சசெக்ஸ் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தின் பட்டதாரியான இவர் பலசர்வதேச கருத்தரங்குகளில் கடந்த கால்நூற்றாண்டில் பல ஆய்வறிக்கைகளை சமர்ப்பித்திருக்கிறார். பல சர்வதேச உள்ளூர் கருத்தரங்குகளில் பலரது கவனத்தையும் ஈர்க்கும் வகையில் ஆய்வறிக்கைகளை சமர்ப்பித்திருக்கிறார். ஆரோக்கியமான விவாதக் களங்களையும் அவர் கருத்தரங்குகளில் உருவாக்குபவர். கடந்த கால்நூற்றாண்டில் இனங்களின் பிரச்சனைகளுக்கு இலங்கையில் தீர்வுகாண்பது தொடர்பிலும் ஒரு தேசமாக பரிணமிக்க வேண்டியதன் அவசியத்திலும் ஒரு புலமைத்துவ அக்கறை கொண்டிருந்தார். அதற்காக அவர் தன்னை அர்ப்பணித்திருந்தார். அதற்காக ஓய்வு ஒழிச்சலின்றி தனது இறுதிமுச்சு வரை உழைத்தார்.

இலங்கையில் பெரும் அரசியல் புயல் வீசிய நாட்களிலெல்லாம் இங்கிருந்து தொடர்ந்து செயற்பட்டவர். நோர்வே பல்கலைக்கழகமொன்றில் அவர் அபிவிருத்தி தொடர்பான ஆராய்ச்சி யாளராகவும் பகுதி நேர விரிவுரை யாளராகவும் கடமையாற்றியவர். வசதி வாய்ப்புக்களுடன் கூடிய வாழ்க்கையை உதறித் தள்ளி மக்களின் விடிவுக்கு தன்னை அர்ப்பணித்த ஒரு கீர்த்தி வாய்ந்த மனிதனை எமது

சமூகம் இழந்து விட்டது. தோழர் கேதீஸின் இழப்பு ஈடற்றது. தோழர் கேதீஸ் யார்? அவரது இழப்பு எத்தகையது என்பதை புரிந்து கொள்ள முடியாத பரிதாபகரமான நிலையில் எமது சமூகம் நின்று கொண்டிருக்கிறது.

பேய்கள் அரசோச்சம் எமது சமூகத்தில் தோழர் கேதீஸ் போன்றவர்களைப் புரிந்து கொள்வதற்கான இடைவெளி அரிதானதே. இது மிகப் பெரிய அவலமாகும். தோழர் கேதீஸின் படுகொலை எந்தளவு தூரம் காட்டுமிராண்டித்தனம் எமது சமூகத்தில் செல்வாக்கு செலுத்துகிறது என்பதையே காட்டுகிறது. அவர் ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியின் முக்கிய தலைவர்களில் ஒருவராக இருந்த போதிலும் சரி, இன்று சமாதானச் செயலகத்தின் உதவிப்பணிப்பாளராக இருந்த போதிலும் சரி எந்த வித பாதுகாப்பையும் பெற்றுக் கொண்டவரில்லை. தமிழ் பேசும் மக்கள் கௌரவமாக வாழவேண்டும் என்பதிலும், இலங்கை ஒரு பல்லின மக்களின் தேசமாகப் பரிணமிக்க வேண்டும் என்பதிலும் அவர் கொண்டிருந்த உறுதியான நம்பிக்கையை நிஜமாக்குவதே தோழர் கேதீசுக்கு தமிழ் சமூகமும் அனைத்து இலங்கை மக்களும் செய்ய வேண்டிய உண்மையான அஞ்சலியாகும்.

அவரை படுகொலை செய்த அற்ப பாசிசப் பதர்கள் அவரின் தார்மீக வலுவைக் கண்டஞ்சியே அவரைப் படுகொலை செய்தார்கள். நிராயுதபாணியான தார்மீகத் துணிவு கொண்ட ஒரு மனிதனைப் படுகொலை செய்ததில் பாசிசவாதிகள் எத்தகைய கோழைகள் என்பதை அம்பலப்படுத்தி நிற்கின்றனர். ●



“நாம் வாழ்க்கையை நேசிப்போம்.
மரணத்தை அல்ல.
ஆனால் எமது தார்மீக உணர்வுகளுக்கு
மரண அச்சுறுத்தல் தடைபோடமுடியாது.”
- தோழர் கேதீஸ்

தோழர் கேதீஸ் சில நினைவுகள்

- ஸ்ரீதரன் (சுசு)



1980களின் முற்பகுதியில் யாழ்ப்பாணம் ஆடியபாதம் வீதியில் யாழ் பல்கலைக்கழக ஆசிரியர்களுக்கான விடுதியொன்றில் ஒரு இரவுப் பொழுதில் அவரை முதன் முதலில் நான் சந்தித்தேன். அப்போது அவர் எதிர்காலத்தில் எங்களுடன் இணைந்து செயற்பட போகிறார் முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்த வரலாற்றுப் பாத்திரமொன்றை ஆற்றப் போகிறார் என்று நான்கனவிலும் நினைத்திருக்கவில்லை. யாழ் குடாநாட்டு கிராமப் புறங்களில் வர்க்க ரீதியாகவும், சாதி ரீதியாகவும் ஒடுக்கப்பட்ட மக்களின் சமூக பொருளாதார மேம்பாடு தொடர்பாக அவருடன் பேச்சு சென்ற கிராமிய உழைப்பாளர் சங்கம், ஈழமாணவர் பொது மன்றம் ஆகியவற்றின் பிரதிநிதிகள் அடங்கிய குழுவினரையே நானும் சென்றிருந்தேன். தோழர் கேதீஸ், காலஞ்சென்ற இடதுசாரி புத்திஜீவி நியூட்டன் குணசிங்க, இன்னுமொருவர் அவரை

சரியாக ஞாபக மில்லை. யாழ்குடாநாட்டு செம்ண் பிரதேச வறிய கூலி விவசாயிகளின் வாழ்வை மேம்படுத்துவது எவ்வாறு என்பதே எமது கல

கார்ல்மார்க்ஸ் மரணித்தபோது ஏங்கல்ஸ், “ஒரு உலகின் மாபெரும் சிந்தனையாளன் இன்று தான் சிந்திப்பதை நிறுத்திக் கொண்டான்” என்று அந்த மரணத்தின் இழப்பை ஒரு வார்த்தையில் விபரித்திருந்தார். எம்மை பொறுத்தவரை கேதீஸின் மரணமும் அவ்வாறுதான்.

ந்துரையாடலில் கருப்பொருளாக இருந்தது. அவர்கள் நிலங்களுடன் கட்டப்பட்டிருப்பதில் இருந்தும் சமூக அடிமைத்தனத்தில் இருந்தும் விடுபடுவதற்கான மார்க்கம் பற்றி விவாதித்தோம். தோழர் கேதீஸ் சில மாற்று ஏற்பாடுகள் தொடர்பான முன்மொழிவுகளை முன்வைத்தார். விவசாய விளைபொருட்களை சைக்கிள்களில் கொண்டு சென்று தரகர்களுடாக அல்லாமல் நேரிடையாக விநியோகம் செய்வது சில உள்ளூர்

வளங்களை கொண்ட தொழிலகங்களை நிறுவுவது பற்றி பேசினார். ஒடுக்கப்பட்ட மக்கள் சுயமரியாதை கௌரவத்துடன் வாழ்வதற்கான வழிவகைகள் பற்றிய பேச்சு முதன்மை பெற்றிருந்தது. அப்போது அவர் இலங்கை சமூக விஞ்ஞானிகள் மன்றத்தின் அங்கத்தவராக இருந்தார். எங்களது பேச்சு சமூக பொருளாதார விடுதலையுடன் தேசிய விடுதலை பற்றிய எல்லைகளுக்கும் சென்றது. நியூட்டன் குணசிங்கா இனங்களின் சுயநிர்ணய உரிமை பற்றி தெளிவான நிலைப்பாட்டைக் கொண்டிருந்த ஒரு இடதுசாரி கல்விமான். எங்களது பேச்சு சர்வதேச விவகாரங்களுக்கும் விரிந்தது. கெடுபிடி யத்தக்காலம் சோவியத் சார்பு அணி, அமெரிக்க சார்பு அணி என உலகம் இரண்டு முகாமாக இருந்த காலம். தொழிலாளர் வர்க்கத்தின் தாயகம் சோவியத் யூனியன் என்றிருந்த காலம். நியூட்டன் குணசிங்க அவர்கள்

அவ்வீடத்தில் நகைச்சுவையான கதையொன்றை கூறினார். பிரித்தானிய வெளிவிவகார அமைச்சராக இருந்த டக்ளஸ் கியூமும் சோவியத் யூனியனின் வெளிவிவகார அமைச்சராக இருந்த அன்ரி குரோமிக்கோவும் சந்தித்துக் கொண்ட போது டக்ளஸ் கியூம் கூறினாராம், ‘தொழிலாளி வர்க்கத்தைப் பற்றி பேசுவதற்கு எனக்குத்தான் தகுதி உண்டு நான் தொழிலாளி வர்க்கத்தில் இருந்து வந்தவன் நீர் முதலாளி வர்க்க பின்புலத்தை கொண்டவர்’ என்று குரோமிக்கோவை பார்த்து பேசினாராம். அதற்கு குரோமிக்கோ அமைதியாக ஆம் நாங்கள் இருவருமே பிறந்த வர்க்கங்களுக்கு துரோகம் செய்து விட்

டோம் என்று. இந்த நகைச்சுவை பலருக்கும் தெரிந்த பிரபலமான ஒன்றுதான் ஆனால் நான் அப்போதுதான் அதை கேள்விப்பட்டேன்.

தோழர் கேதீஸ் தேசிய இனங்களின் சுயநிர்ணய உரிமை பற்றிய சில கருத்துக்களை தெரிவித்தார்.

நிரஞ்சனா என்ற புனை பெயரில் கேரள நாவலாசிரியராக இருக்க வேண்டும் எழுதப்பட்ட நினைவுகள் அழிவதில்லை என்ற நாவல் எம்மால் ஓரளவுக்கு வாசிக்கப்பட்டிருந்தது. நாம் எழுத வேலைகளிலும் ஒடுக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுக்காக நின்ற அந்த கதாபாத்திரங்களால் வெகுவாக ஈர்க்கப்பட்டிருந்தோம்.

இந்த சந்திப்பிற்கு பின்னர் நாங்கள் ஈழ மாணவர் குரல் பத்திரிகை விநியோகிக்க வீடு வீடாக சென்றிருந்த சமயம் கோவில் வீதியில் அவரது நிறுவனம் ஒன்றிலும் அவரை சந்தித்தோம். ஈடுபாடும் ஈர்ப்பும் அதிகமாகியது. பின்னர் கோயில் வீதியில் உள்ள அவரது வீட்டிற்குச் சென்று கலந்துரையாடல்கள் நடத்தினோம். அப்போது பயங்கரவாதத் தடைச்சட்டத்தின் கீழ் நிகழ்ந்து கொண்டிருந்த கைதுகள் ஒடுக்கப்பட்ட மக்களை அணிதிரட்டுவது எவ்வாறு என்பதெல்லாம் எமது கலந்துரையாடல் விடயங்களாக இருந்தன. அவர் எங்களை உற்சாகப்படுத்தினார். மனித உரிமைகளுக்கான சிறையில் இருந்து தமிழ் அரசியல் கைதிகளை விடுவிப்பதற்கான எமது ஈழ மாணவர் பொதுமன்றத்தின் முன்னெடுப்புக்களுக்கு பகிரங்கமாகவும் பகிரங்கமில்லாமலும் உதவினார்.

இக்காலப் பகுதியில் எங்களை ஆட்களாக மதித்து உற்சாகப்படுத்தியவர்களில் பேராசிரியர்

கைலாசபதியும் ஒருவர். யாழ்ப்பாணம் தபால்கட்டைச் சந்தியில் எங்களை எதே ச சையாக கண்ட கைலாசபதி தனது ஸ்கூட்டரை நிறுத்தி தம்பியவ நல்ல வேலை செய்யீ

யள் விடாமல் தொடர்ந்து இதே வழியில் செல்லுங்கள் என்று குறிப்பிட்டது ஞாபகம்.

பேராசிரியர் கைலாசபதி தோழர் கேதீஸின் நண்பர் என்பதும் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கது.

பின்னர் யாழ் சிறாம்பியடி ஒழுங்குகையில் அவர் அபிவிருத்திக்கும் ஆய்வு கல்வி தொடர்பாடல் ஆகியவற்றுக்கான நிறுவனமொன்றை நடத்தினார். அங்கு சமூக பொருளாதார விடயங்கள் பற்றிய பல கருத்தரங்குகள் நடந்து கொண்டிருந்தது.

மணியம் கட்டிடத்தில் மேல் தளத்தில் அந்த நிறுவனம் அமைந்திருந்தது. அந்தக் கட்டிடத்தில் எமது பல கருத்தரங்குகள் கூட்டங்கள் ஆகியவற்றை நடத்துவதற்கு தோழர் கேதீஸ் தாராளமாக அனுமதித்திருந்தார். நாங்கள் கூலி விவசாயிகளுக்கான கருத்தரங்குகள் பெண்களுக்கான கருத்தரங்குகள் மாணவர்களுக்கான கருத்தரங்குகள் என எண்ணற்ற கூட்டங்களை நடத்தினோம். யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் ஒட்டப்படும் அனேகமான சுவரொட்டிகள் அங்குதான் வரையப்பட்டன. அந்த வகையில் அது எம்மைப் பொறுத்தவரை ஒரு சரித்திர முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்த இடம். தெற்கில் இருந்து வந்த விவசாயிகள் சங்கத்தலைவர்கள் குருணாகல் திருத்தந்தை யோகான் தேவானந்தா தெற்கின் விவசாயிகளின் அனுபவங்களை எம்முடன் அங்கு வைத்து பகிர்ந்திருக்கிறார். அக்கால கட்டத்தில் கியூபாவிற்கும் பல லத்தீன் அமெரிக்க நாடுகளுக்கும் விஜயம் செய்துவிட்டு திரும்பியிருந்த தயான் ஜெயதிலக்க நிக்கரகுவாவின் சான்டினிஸ்டா இயக்கம் எவ்வாறு மக்களை அணிதிரட்டி ஒரு போராட்டத்தில் வெற்றி பெற்றது என்பது பற்றிய கருத்தரங்கொன்றை நடத்தினார். தோழர் வரதராஜப் பெருமாள் அப்போது யாழ் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் விடுவரையாளராக இருந்தவர் அவரது உரையை மொழி பெயர்த்தார். தோழர் கேதீஸ் சட்டப்பூர்வமான சமூக பொருளாதார அபிவிருத்திக்காக தொடங்கியிருந்த அந்த நிறுவனம் ஏறத்தாழ எமது ரகசிய தலைமைக்காரியாலயம் போல் செயற்பட்டது. அவருடைய வீட்டிலும் நாங்கள் தெற்கிலிருந்து வந்த தோழர்களுடன் உரையா

ஏகபிரதிநிதித்துவத்தையோ அல்லது ஏகமாற்று அல்லது அரைகுறை ஜனநாயகத்தையோ அவர் ஏற்றுக்கொண்டது கிடையாது. கூட்டு முடிவுகளில் அவர் நம்பிக்கை கொண்டிருந்தார். ஜனநாயகம் மனித உரிமைகளை அடிப்படையாக கொண்ட சமூகத்தை அவர் அவாவுற்றிருந்தார்.

டல்களை நடத்தினோம். அன்று இது மிகவும் ஆபத்தான காரியம். தோழர் கேதீஸ் ஆபத்தை எதிர்நோக்குவதற்கும் தயாராக இருந்தார். அவருடைய யாழ்ப்பாணத்து செல்வா

க்கு மிக்க பின்புலத்தைச் சேர்ந்த யாரும் நினைத்துப்பார்க்க முடியாத காரியத்தை அவர் செய்து கொண்டிருந்தார். அவர் விடுதலையைப் பற்றி வாய்ச்சவாடல் விடும் புத்திஜீவியல்ல அவர் நடைமுறை ரீதியான எண்ணங்களை கொண்டிருந்தார். அவர் தனது செல்வாக்கான பின்புலங்களை துறந்து எங்களுடன் ஐக்கியமாக்கிக் கொண்டிருந்தார். 1982 ஒரு விடிகாலைப் பொழுதில் அவரது நிறுவனத்தில் இரவை கழித்து விட்டு நானும்

தோழர் நாபாவும் சைக்கிளில் தோழர் கேதீஸின் வீட்டிற்கு சென்றோம். தோழர் நாபா சைக்கிளை வலித்துக் கொண்டிருந்தார். நான் பாரில் அமர்ந்திருந்தேன். இடையில் கோவில் வீதியில் லங்காராணி அருளர் வீட்டில் இறங்கி அவருடைய மனைவி பிள்ளைகளிடம் சுகம் விசாரித்து விட்டு திரும்பவும் தோழர் கேதீஸின் வீட்டிற்கு புறப்பட்டோம். அந்தக் காலத்தில் டெலிபோனில் நேரம் ஒழுங்கு செய்துவிட்டு செல்வது வழக்கமில்லை.

அங்கு அப்போதுதான் தோழர் நாபாவை தோழர் கேதீஸ் முதன் முதலில் சந்திக்கிறார். தோழர் நாபா நீண்ட உரைகளை ஆற்றுவதில்லை. சுருக்கமாக கனதியாக அமைதியாக பேசுவார். அந்தச் சந்திப்பு விவேகானந்தருக்கும் ரமணருக்கும் இடையே நிகழ்ந்த சந்திப்பு போல் அந்த வெயில் ஏறாத காலைப் பொழுதில் எனக்கு ஒரு உணர்வை ஏற்படுத்தியது.

தோழர் கேதீஸ் ஒருமுறை என்னுடைய பின்னணியில் ஒரு வரையறைக்கு மேல் வரமுடியுமா என்று அமைதியாக கேட்டார். 80 களின் முற்பகுதியில் வடக்கில் தேசிய ஒடுக்குமுறை அரசு பயங்கரவாதம் தலைவிரித்தாடிய காலத்தில் தெற்கில் மக்களின் ஜனநாயக உரிமைகள் மறுக்கப்பட்டிருந்தன. வேலை நிறுத்தம் செய்த தொழிலாளர்கள் வேலையில் இருந்து வீதிக்கு விரட்டப்பட்டிருந்தார்கள். ஜனநாயக உரிமைகளுக்காக போராடுபவர்கள் கைது செய்யப்பட்டும், தாக்கப்பட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தார்கள். லங்கா சமசமாஜக் கட்சியின் சிரேஷ்ட அங்கத்தவரும் முன்னணி பெண்கள் உரிமை வாதியுமான விவியன் குணரத்னா பொலிசாரால் தாக்கப்பட்டிருந்தார்.

இந்தச் சந்தர்ப்பத்தில் தோழர் கேதீஸின் ஏற்பாட்டில் ஈழப் பெண்கள் விடுதலை முன்னணிக் கும் கொழும்பு கலாபவன மண்டபத்தில் நடைபெற்ற சர்வதேச மகளிர் தின கருத

தரங்கிற்கு எமக்கு அழைப்பு வந்தது. அப்போது நான் வவுனியாவில் நின்றிருந்தேன். நானும் காலஞ்சென்ற தோழர் வேதநாயகம் பத்திநாயகம் அய்யாவும் இன்னுமொரு காலஞ்சென்ற தோழரும் வவுனியாவில் இருந்து ரயில் ஏறி கொழும்பு புறப்பட்டோம். யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் இருந்து மூன்று ஈழ பெண்கள் விடுதலை முன்னணி

யைச் சேர்ந்த தோழர்கள் வந்திருந்தனர். விகாரமகாதேவி பூங்காவிற்கு அருகாமையில் உள்ள கலாபவனத்தின் முன்னால் தெற்கில் உள்ள பெண்கள் அமைப்புக்கள் எல்லாம் சேர்ந்து ஆர்ப்பாட்டம் நடைபெற்றது. வடக்கு கிழக்கில் மக்களுக்கு எதிரான தேசிய ஒடுக்குமுறைக்கு எதிராகவும் தெற்கில் ஜனநாயக உரிமைகளுக்காகவும் கோஷங்கள் எழுப்பப்பட்டன. பின்னர் கலாபவனத்தில் சர்வதேச மகளிர் தின கூட்டம் நடைபெற்றது. அதில் வடக்கில் இருந்து வந்த ஒரேயொரு பெண்கள் அமைப்பான ஈழ பெண்கள் விடுதலை முன்னணியும் வந்திருந்தது. கொழும்பில் தலைமறைவாக நின்றிருந்த தோழர் நாபாவும் வந்திருந்தார். எமது வெகுஜன அமைப்புக்கள் ஒரு அரைபகிரங்க நிலையில் வேலை செய்யக்கூடிய சாத்தியம் இருந்தது.

இக் கூட்டத்தின் பின்னர் இலங்கையின் பிரபல சமூக ஆய்வாளரும், இடதுசாரியும் பெண்ணியவாதியுமான குமாரி ஜெயவர்த்தனவிடம் தோழர் கேதீஸ் எங்களை அழைத்துச் சென்றார். அவருடன் கலந்துரையாடுவதற்கு கேதீஸ் உதவி செய்தார். நாங்கள் அப்போது கொண்டிருந்த கருத்து நிலையின் அடிப்படையில் பெண் விடுதலை என்பது சோஷலிச புரட்சியின் ஒரு பகுதியே என்ற கருத்து என்னுள் வேரூன்றி இருந்தது. நான் இதனை குமாரி ஜெயவர்த்தன அவர்களிடம் தெரிவித்தேன். அப்படியானால் இலங்கையில் சோஷலிசம் வரும்வரை உங்கள் தேசிய விடுதலைப் போராட்டத்தை ஒத்திப்போட முடியுமா என குமாரி ஜெயவர்த்தன என்னிடம் வினவினார். நீண்ட பல

மாற்றுக் கொள்கைக்கான நிலையத்தின் கருத்தரங்குகளின் போது அவர் வெவ்வேறு கருத்து நிலைகளின் பிரசன்னத்திற்கான இடைவெளி இருக்க வேண்டும் என்பதில் ஆழமான நம்பிக்கை கொண்டிருந்தார். 2002 சமாதான ஒப்பந்தத்தின் பின்னர் நிகழ்ந்த மனித உரிமை மீறல்கள் தொடர்பாக மிகுந்த விசனமும் வேதனையும் கொண்டிருந்தார்.

வருடங்களுக்குப் பின்னர்தான் அவர் கூறியது எனக்கு புரிந்தது. அவர் கூறியது பெண்களின் சுதந்திரத்துக்கான இயக்கம் சுயாதீனமானது அது தொடர்ச்சியானது அதனை வேறு எந்த வேலைத்திட்டத்துடனும் இணை

த்து ஒத்திப்போட முடியாது அதேபோல்தான் தேசிய இனங்களின் சுய நிர்ணயத்துக்கான கோரிக்கையும் என்பது பின்னாளில் எனக்குப் புரிந்தது.

1983 இற்குப் பிந்திய சூழலில் நெதர்லாந்தின் ஹெய்க்கிற்கு தனது புலமைசார் செயற்பாடுகளுக்காக சென்ற கேதீஸ் அங்கும் இலங்கையில்

தேசிய ஒடுக்குமுறை மற்றும் சமூக செயற்பாட்டாளர்களுடன் தொடர்பு கொண்டார். பின்னர் சென்னையில் இருந்த தோழர் நாபாவுடன் தொடர்பு கொண்டு ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப் இல் முழுநேரமாக பணி செய்வதற்கான தனது விருப்பத்தை தெரிவித்தார். ஈழப் போராட்டத்தில் ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப் இன்பங்களிப்பு என்ற ஒரு சிறு கைநூலை அவர் ஆங்கிலத்தில் எழுதியிருந்தார். அதில் வடக்கு கிழக்கில் நாங்கள் செய்த வெகுஜன வேலைகள் எதிர்ப்பு இயக்கங்கள் பற்றி கால வரிசைப்படி குறிப்பிட்டிருந்தார். அவர் சென்னைக்கு வர இருந்த சமயம் நான் சென்னையில் நின்றிருந்தேன். குறுகிய நாட்களில் நாடு திரும்பிவிட்டேன். திரும்பிய சில மாதங்களில் நான் மயிலிட்டியில் வைத்து இலங்கை இராணுவத்தினரால் கைது செய்யப்பட்டேன். 1986 களின் இறுதிப்பகுதி வரை இராணுவ முகாம்கள், வெலிகடைச்சிறை என காலம் ஓடிக்கொண்டிருந்தது. தோழர் கேதீஸ் எமது அமைப்பின் பேச்சாளராக செயற்பட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தார். 1984 இல் நிகழ்ந்த எமது முதலாவது காங்கிரசில் அவர் பங்குபற்றியதையும் அவர் 1985 இல் திம்பு மாநாட்டில் வகித்த வரலாற்றுப் பாத்திரத்தையும் நான் சிறையில் இருந்த போது அரசல் புரசலாக வந்த செய்திகளினூடாக அறிந்து கொள்ள முடிந்தது. ஈழ தேசிய விடுதலை முன்னணியின் உருவாக்கத்தில் தோழர் கேதீஸின் பங்கு முக்கியமானது. பல கூட்டங்களில் பங்குபற்றியிருக்கிறார். தமிழகத்தின் இடதுசாரி தலைவர்கள் திராவிட இயக்கங்களைச் சார்ந்தவர்கள், கல்விமாண்களை மாத்திரமல்ல டெல்லியிலும் அவர் ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப் இற்கு பலமான ஒரு பரிச்சயத்தை ஏற்படுத்திக் கொடுத்தார். 1987 முற்பகுதியில் சிறையில் இருந்து விடுதலையாகி சென்னை சென்ற போது சென்னை சர்க்காரியா கொலனியியில் தோழர் நாபா உட்பட 13 பேர் கொல்லப்பட்ட அதே வீட்டில் அவரை நான் சந்தித்தேன். மிகவும் உணர்ச்சிகரமான கணங்கள் அவை. எமது இயக்கம் புலிகளால் தடைசெய்யப்பட்டு பல தோழர்கள் படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டு நிரீக்கதியாக இருந்த சூழலில் ஒரு துயரமான மனோநிலை நிலவிய காலத்தில் நான் அவரை சந்தித்தேன். தோழர்

ஒரு விஸ்தாரமான ஜனநாயக மாற்று அமைப்பொன்று ஏற்பட வேண்டும் என்பதில் அவர் தீவிர அக்கறை கொண்டிருந்தார். இயக்கங்கள் இயக்கங்களுக்கு அப்பாற்பட்டவர்கள் என பலரையும் இணைத்து ஒரு அமைப்பு நிறுவப்பட வேண்டும் என்பதில் அவர் தனது புலமைத்துவ செயற்பாடுகளுடன் தனது கருத்தை வழங்கிக் கொண்டிருந்தார்.

பத்மநாபா நாட்டில் எமது தோழர்களுக்கு நிகழ்ந்த அனர்த்தங்கள் காரணமாக அவர்களுக்கு உதவுவதற்கான செயன்முறைகளில் ஈடுபட்டிருந்தார். அவர் இராமநாதம் மாவட்டத்தில் இருந்து எமது நாட்டிலுள்ள தோழர்களுடன் தொடர்புகளை ஏற்படுத்துவதற்கான பணிகளில் ஈடுபட்டிருந்தார்.

தோழர் கேதீஸின் வீடு சர்க்காரியா கொலனியில் எமது காரியாலயத்துக்கு அருகாமையில் ஒரு மாடி குடியிருப்பில் அமைந்திருந்தது. அன்று மாலை அவருடைய வீட்டிற்குச் சென்றிருந்தேன். அவரது மனைவி அப்பலோ மருத்துவமனையில் மிகவும் குறைந்த சம்பளத்தில் ஒரு வரவேற்பாளராக வேலை செய்து கொண்டிருந்தார். அதில் தோழர் கேதீஸின் துணைவியாரான பவானி அவர்களின் பங்களிப்பு மகத்தானது. அவர்கள் இருவரும் ஒருவரையொருவர் நேசித்த அமரத்துவமான தம்பதிகள். அந்த சம்பளத்தில் வறுமையில் செம்மையாக வாழ்ந்து கொண்டு செயற்பட்டார். இயக்கம் அவ்வப்போது எதையும் உதவிகளை செய்யக்கூடியதாக இருந்ததே தவிர தொடர்ச்சியாக எதையும் எதையும் செய்யக்கூடியதாக இருக்கவில்லை. தோழர் கேதீஸ் தான் போக்குவரத்து செய்வதற்கு அந்தக் கால ரி.வி.எஸ் சைக்கிள் ஒன்றை வைத்திருந்தார். அவர் தனியாக சகல இடங்களுக்கும் சென்று பலரையும் சந்தித்து வந்தார். அந்த வாழ்க்கையை அவர் மனதார ஏற்றுக் கொண்டார். உலகின் ஏதோவொரு மூலையில் உட்கார்ந்து கொண்டு சௌகரியமாக இருந்திருக்கலாம். ஆனால் சக தோழர்களின் இன்ப துன்பங்களுடன் தானும் ஒருவராக வாழ்ந்தார்.

தன்னம்பிக்கையும் சவால்களும் இழப்புக்களும் முரண்பாடுகளும் ஐக்கியமும் என்று ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப் யதார்த்தமான ஒரு சமூக இயக்கம் என்ற வகையில் பயணப்பட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தது. 1987 இந்திய இலங்கை ஒப்ப

பந்தத்தை ஏற்று செயற்படுவது பற்றிய மத்தியகுழு கூட்டங்களில் இறுதியாக நடைபெற்றக் கூட்டத்தில் அத்தினத்தில் அன்றே அவருடைய தாயார் வேறு நாடொன்றில் மரணித்திருந்தார். கூட்டத்தின் இறுதியில்தான் அவர் இதனைத் தெரிவித்தார். இதன் பின்னர் அவர் தனது புலமைத்துவ செயற்பாடுகளை தொடர கட்சிப்

பணிகளில் இருந்து ஒதுங்குவதற்கு அனுமதி கோரினார். அது ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளப்பட்டது. மேற்கு வங்கத்தில் இந்திய மார்க்சிஸ்ட் கம்யூனிஸ்ட் கட்சியின் விப்லோதாஸ் குப்தா என்ற இவரது பல்கலைக்கழக சகா. இந்திய மார்க்சிஸ்ட் கட்சியின் மத்தியகுழு உறுப்பினராக இருந்தவர். சமகாலத்திலேயே இருவரும் இவ்வாறான ஒரு புரட்சிகர அரசியல் சக்தியின் தலைமைத்துவத்திற்கு வந்திருப்பதாக அவர் நினைவு கூர்ந்தார்.

நோர்வேயில் தனது பல்கலைக்கழக படிப்பு விரிவுரை நேரங்கள் போக மிகுதி நேரத்தில் கட்சிப் பணியாற்றினார். 1988 இன் இறுதிவாக்கில் அவர் திருமலை வந்து எம்மையெல்லாம் சந்தித்து சென்றார்.

நோர்வேயில் புலி பாசிஸ்டுக்களின் ஏஜண்டுகளால் கூட்டமொன்றில் வைத்து தாக்கப்பட்ட சம்பவங்களும் உண்டு.

1990 இல் வடக்கு கிழக்கு மாகாணசபை புலிகள் பிரேமதாசா கூட்டு சதியினால் சீர்குலைக்கப்பட்டு இந்திய அமைதிகாப்பு படை வெளியேற வேண்டிய சூழ்நிலை ஏற்பட்டு ஈழ மக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியின் தோழர்கள், ஆதரவாளர்கள் குடும்பங்கள் இந்தியாவிற்கு இந்தியாவிற்கு புலம் பெயர்ந்து செல்ல வேண்டிய நிலை ஏற்பட்டது.

தோழர் பத்மநாபாவின் அழைப்பின் பேரில் இயக்கம் கடுமையான நெருக்கடிகளை எதிர்நோக்கிய காலத்தில் தனக்கு நோர்வேயில் கிடைத்த வசதி வாய்ப்புக்களை எல்லாம் துறந்து டெல்லியில் வந்து கட்சிப் பணியாற்றினார்.

இக்காலகட்டத்தில்தான் தோழர் பத்மநாபா சென்னையில் 1990 ஜூன் 19 படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டார். அவர் உடனடியாகவே விரைந்து வந்து அவரின் இறுதி அஞ்சலி நிகழ்ச்சிகளில் பங்கு பற்றியதோடு கட்சியின் எதிர்காலம் தலைமைத்துவம் பற்றிய கலந்துரையாடல்களில் ஈடுபட்டார்.

தோழர் நாபாவின் நினைவு மலர் தயாரிப்பதில் அதற்காக இரங்கல் செய்திகளை இந்தியாவின் முன்னாள் பிரதமர் ராஜீவ்காந்தி உட்பட பல்வேறு அரசியல் கட்சித் தலைவர்கள், கல்விமாத்கள், பத்திரிகையாளர்களிடம் அனுதாபச் செய்திகளை சேகரித்து அனுப்பி நினைவு மலரின் கனதியை அதிகரித்தார். அவர் இலங்கைக்கோ அல்லது சென்னைக்கோ தொலைபேசி எடுப்பதானால் தற்போதைய வசதிகள் எதுவும் கிடையாது. தொலை பேசி நிலையங்களுக்குச் சென்றோ அல்லது ரூபா நாணயங்களை போட்டு பேசும் சில பிரத்தியேகமான தொலைபேசிகளுக்கு சென்றோ தகவல்களை, செய்திகளை பரிமாறிக்கொள்வார்.

சௌகரியமில்லாத வீதியோரங்களில் நின்று இக்காரியத்தை அவர் வழமையாக நேர்த்தியாக செய்தார்.

1992 இல் இலங்கை வந்த தோழர் கேதீஸ் ஈழ மக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியின் சார்பில் தனது செயற்பாடுகளை கொழும்பை மையமாக வைத்து மேற்கொண்டார். அவருக்கு கொழும்பில் உள்ள புலமைசார் செயற்பாட்டாளர்கள் இராஜதந்திர வட்டாரங்களிலும் இடதுசாரி கட்சிகள் ஏனைய அரசியல் கட்சிகளின் தலைவர்கள் மத்தியிலும் பரிச்சயம் ஏற்பட்டது. பல புதுப்பிக்கப்பட்டன. தமிழ் கார்டியன் என்ற ஆங்கில மாதாந்த பத்திரிகையொன்று அவரால் கட்சிக்காக கொண்டுவரப்பட்டது. அவர் இனப்பிரச்சினை தீர்வுக்காக உருவாக்கப்பட்ட மங்கள முனசிங்க குழுவினும் அங்கத்துவம் வகித்தார். அதிகார பகிர்வினாடு இலங்கை ஒரு தேசமாக பரிணமிப்பதே அவருடைய அரசியல் புலமைத்துவ அக்கறைக்குரிய விடயமாக இருந்தது.

ஏகபிரதிநிதித்துவத்தையோ அல்லது ஏக மாற்று அல்லது அரைகுறை ஜனநாயகத்தையோ அவர் ஏற்றுக்கொண்டது கிடையாது. கூட்டு முடிவுகளில் அவர் நம்பிக்கை கொண்டிருந்தார். ஜனநாயகம், மனித உரிமைகளை அடிப்படையாக கொண்ட சமூகத்தை அவர் அவாவற்றிருந்தார். கட்சியின் பத்திரிகையை அதிகார பகிர்வு தொடர்பான ஆவணங்களையோ அவர் செல்லும் கருத்தரங்குகளில் அல்லது வேறு நிகழ்ச்சிகளில் விநியோகிப்பதிலும் அவர் ஒரு கட்சி ஊழியர் போல் செயற்பட்டார்.

கட்சியில் நிலவும் தவறான போக்குகளை அவ்வப்போது விமர்சிக்கவும் தவறவில்லை. தலைமைத்துவ பாங்கு நிதி ஆதாரங்களை கையாள்வது கூட்டு செயற்பாடு தொடர்பில் அவர் பல விடயங்களை வலியுறுத்தி இருக்கிறார். ஜனநாயகவாதிகள் அவருக்கு பக்கத்துணையாக நின்றார்கள். பேராசையையும் சுயநலமும் தனிநபர் வழிபாட்டு ஊக்குவிப்பும் அவருக்கு அறவே பிடிக்காத விடயங்கள். பரிவாரங்கள் வைத்து நடத்தும் அரசியல் அவருக்கு ஒத்துவராது. கட்சியினுள் அவ்வப்போது இத்தகைய ஆட்களின் சுய உருவங்கள் வெளிப்பட்டபோது தயவுதாட்சணியமில்லாத விமர்சனங்களை முன்வைத்தார்.

ஆங்கிலத்தில் கடந்த 20 ஆண்டுகளில் ஈழ மக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியினால் வெளியிடப்பட்ட அறிக்கைகள் கைநூல்கள் அனைத்திலும் தோழர் கேதீஸின் செல்வாக்கு இருக்கவே செய்யும். அவர் கொழும்பில் வேலை செய்த காலத்தில் கூட பாதுகாப்பை பெற்றுக்

கொண்டவரல்ல. ஒருபுறம் புலிகளின் ஊடுரு வலும் மறுபுறம் பிரேமதாசா அரசின் மனித உரிமை மீறல்களும் என்றிருந்த காலத்தில் கூட அவர் தனக்கென பாதுகாப்பை ஏற்படுத்திக் கொண்டவரல்ல. அவர் எந்த வீட்டு வாசலில் வைத்து படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டாரோ அதேவீட்டில் இருந்து தான் தனது அரசியல் புலமைத்துவ கடமைகளுக்காக வெவ்வேறு இடங்களுக்கு சென்று வந்தார்.

1994 இல் கட்சியில் இருந்து விலகி தமது புலமைத்துவ செயற்பாடுகளுக்காக சென்ற இடங்களில் எல்லாம் அவர் தனித்துவமாக மிளிர்ந்தார். முதலில் கொழும்பு பல்கலைக்கழக அரசியல் விஞ்ஞான பீடத்தில் அதிகார பகிர்வு தொடர்பான ஆய்வு நடவடிக்கைகளில் ஈடுபட்டார். பின்னர் மாற்றுக் கொள்கைக்கான நிலையத்தில் இணைந்து பணியாற்றினார். இன முரண்பாடுகள் தொடர்பான ஆய்வு பிரிவிற்கு அவர் தலைவராக இருந்தார். மாற்றுக் கொள்கைக்கான நிலையத்தில் அவர் வேலை செய்யும் போது அவர்களால் நடத்தப்பட்ட பல கருத்தரங்குகளில் அவர் தனித்துவமாக மிளிர்ந்தார். அவர் மிக கூரிய அவதானிப்பாளர் என்றும் மிகத்துல்லியமாக தர்க்க வலுவூடன் கருத்துக்களை வைப்பவர் என்றும் கருதப்பட்டார். இத்தகைய கருத்தரங்குகளில் அவர் அதிகார பகிர்விற்கான பொறிமுறைகள் கொள்கைகள் தொடர்பாக மாத்திரமல்ல ஏகபிரதிநிதித்துவம் மாற்றுக் கருத்துக் கொண்டோர் படுகொலை செய்யப்படுவது முஸ்லீம் மக்களின் தனித்துவம் தொடர்பாகவும் அவ்வப்போது அவர் கருத்தரங்குகளிலும் தனது கட்டுரைகளிலும் வலியுறுத்தி வந்தார். யாருக்கும் அஞ்சி எதையும் பூசி மெழுகும் பழக்கம் அவரிடம்

கிடையாது. எதுவும் நெற்றிக்கு நேரே தீட்சணியமாக அவர் கட்சியிலிருந்து தனது புலமைத்துவ செயற்பாடுகளுக்காக சென்

றிருந்தாலும் தான் ஒரு பின்புலத்தில் செயற்பட்டு வந்தவர் என்பதை எப்போதும் மறந்தது கிடையாது. நாங்கள் எமது பத்திரிகையில் எழுதும் விடயங்களிலும் சரி நாங்கள் விடுக்கும் அறிக்கைகளிலும் சரி அல்லது எமது நடவடிக்கைகளிலும் சரி அவர் ஒரு அவதானிப்பை எப்போதும் வைத்திருந்தார். அவருக்கு விமர்சனங்கள் இருப்பின் உடனடியாகவே தொலைபேசி ஊடாக எம்மிடம் அதனை விமர்சனமாகவோ அல்லது தவறுகளை திருத்துவதற்கான ஆலோசனை

களாகவோ முன் வைப்பார்.

தோழர் றொபேட் யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டபோது தொலைபேசி ஊடாக அந்த செய்தியை அவருக்கு தெரிவித்த போது அவர் உடனடியாக அழுதுவிட்டார். பின்னர் யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் இருந்து தோழர் றொபேட்டின் உடல் கொழும்புக்கு கொண்டுவரப்பட்டபோது தான் முதலில் அவரை பார்க்க வேண்டும் என்று ஐயரட்னா மலர்சாலைக்கு வந்து அஞ்சலி செலுத்திச் சென்றார். தோழர் றொபேட்டின் பூதவுடலுக்கு அருகே தோழர் பத்மநாபாவின் படத்தை வைக்குமாறு என்னிடம் கேட்டுக் கொண்டார்.

அவர் தனது புலமைத்துவ செயற்பாடுகளில் ஈடுபட்டபோது அவருடனான தொடர்புகளை வைத்திருப்பதில் மிக அவதானமாக இருந்தோம். நாங்கள் மிகவும் அன்னியோன்னியமானவர்களாக இருந்தபோது பகிரங்கமான இடங்களில் ஒரிரு புன்முறுவலுடன் நிறுத்திக் கொண்டோம்.

ஒரு விஸ்தாரமான ஜனநாயக மாற்று அமைப்பொன்று ஏற்பட வேண்டும் என்பதில் அவர் தீவிர அக்கறை கொண்டிருந்தார். இயக்கங்கள், இயக்கங்களுக்கு அப்பாற்பட்டவர்கள் என பலரையும் இணைத்து ஒரு அமைப்பு நிறுவப்பட வேண்டும் என்பதில் அவர் தனது புலமைத்துவ செயற்பாடுகளுடன் தனது கருத்தை வழங்கிக் கொண்டிருந்தார். அவருடைய இழந்த சந்தர்ப்பங்கள் என்ற நூலும் சத்தியா என்ற பெயரில் அவர் எழுதிய கட்டுரைகளும் அவர் 80 களின் முற்பகுதியில் இருந்து வெவ்வேறு காலகட்டங்களில் எழுதிய குறிப்புக்கள் கைநூல்களும் மீள் வாசிக்கப்படுவதும் எதிர்காலத்தில் தமிழ் மக்கள் மத்தியில் ஒரு நாகரீகமான அரசியல் செயற்பாட்டை முன்னெடுத்துச்

செல்வதற்கு அவசிய

மாகும். அவர் மர

ணத்தை அல்ல

வாழ்க் கையை

கொண்டா டுவோம்

என்று எழுதிய கட்

டுரை எமது தற்போ

தைய சமூக அவலத்தை சுட்டிநிற்கிறது. தோழர் பத்மநாபாவின் நினைவு நூலில் எங்களது தலைவரும் வழிகாட்டியும் என்ற மகுடம் அவரால் இடப்பட்டது. அவர் தோழர் பத்மநாபா நீலன் திருச்செல்வம் தோழர் றொபேட் பற்றி ஞாபகார்த்த கட்டுரைகளை வரைந்துள்ளார்.

மிகவும் எளிமையானதும் சிக்கனமானதும் அவரது வாழ்க்கை அவருக்கு சில உடல் ரீதியான பிரச்சினைகள் இருந்த போதும் அவரது கட்டுப்பாடான வாழ்க்கை முறையினாலேயே அவரால் கடுமையாக உழைக்க முடிந்தது.

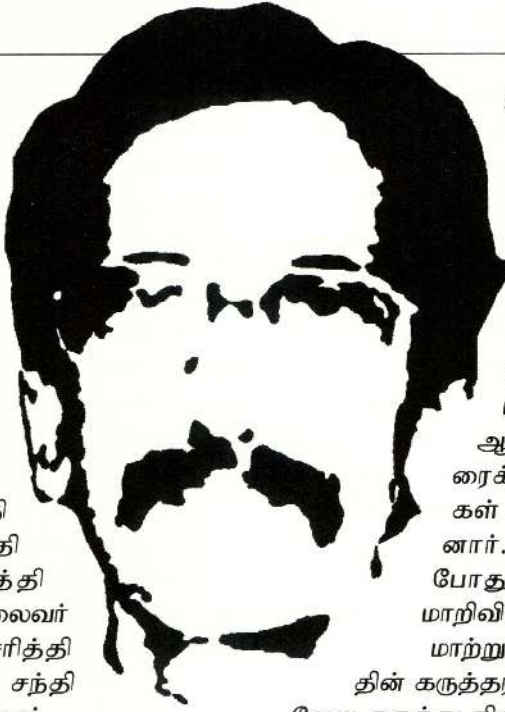
**அவர் மிக கூரிய அவதானிப்பாளர் என்றும்
மிகத்துல்லியமாக தர்க்க வலுவூடன் கருத்துக்களை
வைப்பவர் என்றும் கருதப்பட்டார்.**

அவர் வெறும் இன அடையாளங்களுக்குள் தன்னை அடக்கிக் கொண்டவரல்ல. அவர் ஒரு சர்வதேசவாதியாக ஒரு மானிடனாக தன்னை அடையாளப்படுத்தி இருந்தார்.

இலங்கையில் மாத்திரமல்ல ஐரோப்பாவில் வட அமெரிக்காவில் அவர் பல கருத்தரங்குகளில் பங்குபற்றியிருக்கிறார். படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்ட முன்னாள் இந்தியப் பிரதமர் ராஜீவ் காந்தி அவர்களையும் ராமமூர்த்தி போன்ற மார்க்சிய கட்சி தலைவர்களையும் ஸ்ரீகர் போன்ற சரித்திர வி யலாளர்களையும் அவர் சந்தித்து கலந்துரையாடியிருக்கிறார்.

1990 இல் சென்னையில் இருந்து என்னையும் இன்னுமொரு தோழரையும் டெல்லிக்கு அழைத்திருந்தார். இந்திய அரசியல் கட்சிகளின் தலைவர்கள், ஊடகவியலாளர்களை சந்திப்பதற்கான ஒரு வார செயற்பாடாக அமைந்திருந்தது. அவர் இந்திய மார்க்சிய கட்சியின் அகில இந்திய செயலாளராக இருந்த சுர்ஜித் அவர்களையும் அப்போதைய பேச்சாளரான பிரகாஷ்கரட் அவர்களையும் இந்திய கம்யூனிஸ்ட் கட்சியின் தலைவராக இருந்த பரதன் அவர்களையும் எமக்கு அறிமுகப்படுத்தி வைத்தார். அப்போது மத்திய அமைச்சராக இருந்த தமிழகத்தைச் சேர்ந்த காங்கிரஸ் காரரான ப.சிதம்பரத்தின் வீட்டிற்கும் நாங்கள் சென்றோம். நாராயணசாமி உள்ளிட்ட ஊடகவியலாளர்களையும் நாம் சந்தித்தோம் அக்காலகட்டத்தில் இலங்கையில் புலிகள் முஸ்லீம்களை வடக்கை விட்டு விரட்டிக் கொண்டிருந்தார்கள். அவர் டெல்லியில் இந்திய மார்க்சிய கட்சியுடன் ஏற்படுத்திய உறவு கேரளாவினும் எமக்கு ஒரு ஆதரவு தளத்தை உருவாக்கியது.

தோழர் பத்மநாபா மரணத்திற்குப் பின்னர் 1992 இல் சென்னை புழல் அகதி முகாமில் நிகழ்ந்த இரண்டாவது காங்கிரஸில் தோழர் கேதீஸ் பங்குபற்றியிருந்தார். இரண்டாவது காங்கிரஸின் ஆங்கிலத்தில் வெளியிடப்பட்ட அறிக்கை அவரால் மொழி பெயர்க்கப்பட்டது. அவர் அந்த காங்கிரஸிலும் ஒரு ஜனநாயக நிறுவனமாக ஈ.பி. ஆர்.எல்.எப் ஐ தகவமைப்பதிலும் தூர நோக்குடன் செயற்படுவதற்குமான பங்களிப்பை வழங்கினார். ஆக்க சக்திகளை எப்போதும் ஊக்கு வித்



தார். அதற்கான உள்ளூணர்வும் தெளிவும் புரிதலும் அவருக்கு இருந்தது.

தோழர் கேதீஸ் எம்முடன் செயற்பட்டது எமக்கெல்லாம் ஒரு பெருமிதத்தையும் நம்பிக்கையையும் ஏற்படுத்துவதாக அமைந்திருந்தது. அவருடைய மொழிப்புலமை கருத்துவளம் விவாத ஆற்றல் என்பன இங்கு குறித்துரைக்கப்பட வேண்டியன. குழந்தைகள் மீது அவர் பேரன்பு செலுத்தினார். அவர்களுடன் உரையாடும் போது தானும் ஒரு குழந்தையாக மாறிவிடுவார்.

மாற்றுக் கொள்கைக்கான நிலையத்தின் கருத்தரங்குகளின் போது அவர் வெவ்வேறு கருத்து நிலைகளின் பிரசன்னத்திற்கான இடை வெளி இருக்க வேண்டும் என்பதில் ஆழமான நம்பிக்கை கொண்டிருந்தார். 2002 சமாதான ஒப்பந்தத்தின் பின்னர் நிகழ்ந்த மனித உரிமை மீறல்கள் தொடர்பாக மிகுந்த விசனமும் வேதனையும் கொண்டிருந்தார். நோர்வே தரப்பினரிடம் வடக்கு கிழக்கில் ஜனநாயகத்திற்கான இடை வெளி தொடர்பாக அவர்களுடைய விழிப்புணர்வின்மை குறித்து நேரிடையாகவே தனது விமர்சனங்களை முன்வைத்திருக்கிறார்.

சமாதான செயலகத்தில் அவர் பணியாற்ற சென்ற போது இதில் உங்களது அபிப்பிராயம் என்ன என்பதையும் கேட்டார். அவர் யுத்தமற்ற பாதையில் இந்த நாடு செல்ல வேண்டும் தனது அதிகாரப்பகிர்வினூடான ஐக்கியமான இலங்கை கட்டியெழுப்பப்படுவதற்கான பங்களிப்பை தான் இதில் வழங்க முடியும் என கருதியிருந்தார். சவாலான பணியை அவர் முன்னெடுத்திருந்தார். தமிழ்பாசிசம் சிங்கள அதிதீவிரவாத சக்திகள் இவற்றின் விமர்சனங்கள் வன்முறைகளுக்கிடையே தனது பணியை முன்னெடுத்தார். அது ஒரு புலமைத்துவ பணியாகவே அமைந்திருந்தது. அதிகார பகிர்ந்தளிப்பிற்கான கட்சிகளின் பிரதிநிதிகளின் குழுவிற்கும் அவர் தலைவராக இருந்தார். இனப்பிரச்சினையில் துறை தோய்ந்த அனுபவம் வாய்ந்தவர்கள் இல்லாதவொரு பெருங்குறை இருந்த இடத்தில் அவரது பணி முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்ததாக இருந்தது.

மனித உரிமை மீறல்கள் மற்றும் செயற்பாடுகள் தொடர்பில் அவ்வப்போது தொலைபேசியூடாக கேட்டுக்கொள்வார். அவர் மரணித்த அன்று

காலையில் கூட ஊர்காவற்றுறையில், மண்டைத் தீவில் என்ன நடைபெறுகிறது என்று கேட்டிருந்தார். அன்றைய தினம்தான் அவருடைய குரலை நான் இறுதியாக கேட்பேன் என்று கனவிலும் நினைக்கவில்லை. தனது பிரியாவிடையை அவர் அறிவித்தாரோ என அன்று இரவு அவரது மரணச் செய்தி கேட்டு என் மனம் துன்புற்றது. அவரது மரணச் செய்தி ஒரு பாரிய வெறுமை உணர்வை ஏற்படுத்தியது. கார்ல்மார்க்ஸ் மரணித்தபோது ஏங்கல்ஸ் ஒரு உலகின் மாபெரும் சிந்தனையாளன் இன்று தான் சிந்திப்பதை நிறுத்திக் கொண்டான் என்று அந்த மரணத்தின் இழப்பை ஒரு வார்த்தையில் விபரித்திருந்தார். எம்மை பொறுத்தவரை கேதீஸின் மரணமும் அவ்வாறுதான். எமது சமூகத்தின் எதிர்காலம் நல்வாழ்வு தொடர்பில் இதயபூர்வமாக அக்கறை செலுத்திய ஒரு உன்னத மனிதன் உலகமானிடன் 2006 ஆகஸ்ட் 12 இல் தனது சிந்தனையை நிறுத்திக் கொண்டார்.

இந்த சமூகத்திற்கு என்ன நடந்திருக்கிறது தான் எதை இழந்திருக்கிறது என்பதை புரியாததுதான் மிகவும் அவலமானது. இவ்வாறு எத்தனையோ மனிதர்கள் எமது சமூகத்தில் உயிரை

மாய்த்திருக்கிறார்கள். இவர்களை நாம் என்றோவொரு நாள் இவர்களின் புதைகுழிகளில் இருந்து இவர்களை எமது தோள்களில் தூக்கிச் செல்வோம். வரலாற்றின் அந்த நாள் வெகு தூரத்தில் இல்லை. தோழர் கேதீசுடன் சமகாலத்தில் வாழ்கிடைத்தவர்கள் என்ற பெருமதி உணர்வு எமக்கு என்றைக்கும் உண்டு.

தோழர் கேதீஸ் மெலிந்த உடல்வாகு கொண்ட மென்மையாக பேசும் கம்பீரமான மனிதர். அவரது கண்ணில் மனிதத்தை நேசிக்கும் தீட்சணியம் இருந்தது. ஒளிவீசும் அகன்ற நெற்றி. உன்னதமான மானிடன்.

ஒரு மனிதன் எப்படி வாழ வேண்டும் என்று வாழ்ந்து காட்டிச் சென்ற மனிதன். தோழரே உங்கள் பணியை நாம் தொடர்ந்து முன்னெடுப்போம். நீங்கள் எங்கள் இதயங்களில் வீற்றிருக்கிறீர்கள். பெருந்துயருடன் எம் பிரியாவிடை.

**தோழமையுடன்
சுகு-யூதரன்
ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணி
(பத்மநாபா)**

கண்ணீர்க் கவலை

அழுங்கள்..
கண்ணீர் வற்றும் வரை
அழுங்கள்....

நாளையும் கண்ணீர்
நிச்சயமாய் ஊறும்
நாளை அழுவதற்காய்

ஒவ்வொரு தோழனின் பிரிவிலும்
மனம் ரணமாகும்
தினவெடுத்த தோள்கள்
துடிக்கின்ற போதிலும்
வெடிக்கின்ற கண்ணீர் மட்டும்
உணர்வுகளாக....

பாடைகளின் ஊர்வலம்
நாளையும் தொடரும்
இன்னொரு தோழனை
சுமந்தபடி..

கே தீஸ்வரன் லோகநாதன் படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டார்!

இலங்கையில் தினசரி நிகழ்வுகளின் சாதாரண செய்தியாகிவிட்ட படுகொலைச் செய்திகளில் ஒன்றாக, அதுவும் இப்போது ஆரம்பித்துள்ள யுத்த நிலவரத்தில் இரு தர்ப்பும் அறிக்கையிடும் நூற்றுக்கணக்கான கொலைச் செய்திகளுக்கு மத்தியில், ஆரவாரமின்றிக் கொல்லப்பட்ட இந்தச் சிந்தனையாளனை உய்த்தறிந்து இச் சம்பவத்தின் பாரதூரத்தைப் புரிந்துகொள்ளமுடியாத

லப்படு முன்னரே இவ்விணையத்தளத்தின் நினைவு அடுக்குகளில் அவருக்காகச் சுடச்சுடத் தயாரித்து வைக்கப்பட்டிருந்தது. இந்த அவதூறை, சராசரிக்கும் மிகக் கீழான புத்தி மட்டத்தில் உழுவும் காட்டுமிராண்டித் தரச் சிந்தையை மட்டுமே வாய்க்கப்பெற்ற ஒருவன், கணனியின் முன் குந்தியிருந்து தன் விரல்களால் சில கணங்களுக்குள் பொறித்துவிட, பல சகாப்த வரலாறு கொண்ட ஒரு சமூகச் சிந்தனையாளனின் செயற்பாடுகளெல்லாம் கேள்வியின்றி நிராகரிக்கப்பட்டு, அவன்பற்றிய ஒரு அகோரத் தோற்றப்பாடு சமூகத்தின்முன் காட்சிப்படுத்தப்பட்டுவிடுகிறது.

இப்படியாக எந்தப் பெறுமதிமிக்க மனிதனின் உயிரையும் நினைத்த மாத்திரத்தில் பிடுங்கி, சுத்தத்துரோகி என முத்திரை குத்தி இழிவுபடுத்திச் சித்திரித்து உலகெங்கும் காட்டக்கூடிய நியதிக என்ற ஊடக அராஜகம் கோலோச்சும் நாட்களில்

மனிதனை வென்று நிற்கும் கேதீஸ்

உணர்வற்ற உயிர்ப்பிழந்த சமூகமாக்கப்பட்டு விட்ட ஒரு பரிதாபகரச் சமூகத்தின் முன்னிலையில் அதே பரிதாப நிலையை மாற்றுவதற்காக உணர்வுடன் உழைத்த இந்தச் சிந்தனையாளன் பரிதாபகரமாகக் கொல்லப்பட்டான்!

மரணங்களைக் கண்டு, மறுபக்கம்சுடத் திரும்பிக்கொள்ளும் உறுத்தலின்றிக் கடந்து செல்லப் பழகிப்போய்விட்ட எம் சமூகத்தின் சடத்துவக் கண்களுக்குத் தென்படாதே போய்விட்டக் கூடிய இந்தக் கொலைகளின் விளைவுகள்பற்றி என்ன தான் அச்சமோ தெரியாது, கொலைஞர்களின் ஊதுகுழல்கள் தாமாகவே இச் செய்திகளைப் பூதாசிர்ப்படுத்தி, தமது சித்திரிப்புக்களையும் வசைகளையும் பொழிந்து, பொதுசனம் தப்பித் தவறிக் கூடத் தன் சுயபுத்தியால் சொந்தக் கணிப்பீடுகளைச் செய்துகொள்ளக் கூடாதென்ற பிரயத்தனத்தில் இறங்கிவிடுகின்றன. கேதீஸ் கொல்லப்பட்ட உடனடியாகவே நிதர்சனம் டொட் கொம் இணையத்தளம் எழுதிவிட்டது, துரோகி கொல்லப்பட்டான்!

இன்று எம் சமூகத்தில் மிக மலிந்த பட்டமாகி விட்ட புலிகளுக்குச் சார்பாக மரணிக்காத எவருக்குமே சுலபமாக வழங்கிவிடக்கூடிய பட்டமாக ஆகிவிட்ட இத் துரோகி பட்டம் கேதீஸ் கொல்

வீழ்ந்துபோன இந்த விருட் சத்துக்காக, அன்று பாரதி எழுதிய ஒரு நம்பிக்கை வாசகத்தைத் தைநாம் சொல்லிக் கொள்வோம். 'தர்மத்தின் வாழ்வுதனைச் சூது கௌவும், ஆனால் தர்மம் மறுபடி வெல்லும்!'

ஓரிரு வருடங்களுக்கு முன் கேதீஸின் வீட்டுக்கு சில இளைஞர்கள் தேடிச் சென்றனர். தம்மைப் புலிகள் என்று அடையாளப்படுத்திக் கொண்டு அவர்கள் கேதீஸிடம் அவரது எழுத் துக்கள் பற்றி எச்சரிக்கை விடுத்தனர். அவர்களிடம் கேதீஸ் சிரித்தபடியும் நிதானமாகவும் கூறி அனுப்பிய விடயம் இதுதான்.

நான் எனது மனசாட்சிக்கு எது சரி என்று நினைக்கிறேனோ அதைத்தான் செய்வேன். எதன் நிமித்தமும் நான் மனசாட்சிக்கு விரோதமாக நடக்க மாட்டேன். நான் எல்லாத் தரப்பையும் பாரபட்சமற்ற முறையில் தான் பார்க்கிறேன். இப்படியேதான் நான் இருப்பேன். என்னை மிரட்டுவதன் மூலம் நிறுத்த முடியாது. உங்கள் தலைவருக்கு என்னைப்பற்றி மிக நன்றாகத் தெரியும்.

அவர் கூறியது முற்றிலும் உண்மை. அவர் முன்னர் ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப்.அமைப்பின் பேச்சாளராக இந்

தியாவில் செயற்பட்ட வேளை, விடுதலை இயங்கங்களின் ஐக்கிய முன்னணி ஒன்று அமைக்கப்பட்டிருந்த காலத்தில் அவருடன் பலதடவைகள் கலந்துரையாடிய புலிகளின் தலைவர் பிரபாகரனுக்கு அவரின் நேர்மையும், அஞ்சாமையும், கொள்கைப்பற்றும், அர்ப்பண உணர்வும், செயல்திறனும், திண்மமான அறிவுச் சுடரும் மிக நன்றாகவே தெரியும். திம்புப் பேச்சு வார்த்தைகளின் போது, இப்போதுகூட அடிக்கடி மேற்கோள் காட்டப்படுகின்ற திம்புக் கோட்பாடுகளை வடிவமைத்த வரலாற்றுப் பங்களிப்பில் முன்னிலைப் பாத்திரம் வகித்தவர் அவர். வீடுவந்து பேசி, தேனீர் அருந்திவிட்டு அமிர்தலிங்கத்தையும் மற்றைய தமிழர் கூட்டணித் தலைவர்களையும் சுட்டுக் கொன்றுவிட்டுச் சென்ற புலிகளின் செய்கையை நன்க

இவரது சிந்தனையானது வெறும் இன விடுதலை என்ற வட்டத்துடன் குறுகிக் கொள்ளாது, ஒட்டுமொத்தமான சமூக மாற்றத்தை முன்னிறுத்தியதாகவும், குருட்டுத்தனமான இனவெறியை நிராகரித்ததுமான ஓர் அர்த்தபூர்வமான தீர்வை நோக்கியதாகவே அமைந்திருந்தது.

றிந்தும், அதே பாணியில் தனது வீட்டுக்கு வந்து பேசிய புலிகளிடம் இப்படி நிதானமான முகத்துடன் அழுத்தம் திருத்தமாகச் சொல்லிய னுப்பக் கூடிய நெஞ்சழுத்தம் மிக்க அசாத்திய வீரம் அந்த மெல்லிய உருவம் கொண்ட மனிதரிடம் இருந்தது. அது அவரின் ஓங்கிநிற்கும் அறிவுச் சுடரின் தீட்சண்யத்திலிருந்து பிறந்திருந்தது. அவர் கொழும்பில் தெஹிவளையிலமைந்த தன் வீட்டில் தன் மனைவியுடன் எதுவித பாதுகாப்புமின்றி மிகச் சாதாரணமாகவே வாழ்ந்து வந்தார்.

அவர்கள் வந்து எச்சரித்ததையிட்டுத்தன்னும் தனக்கான சிறு அளவிலான பாதுகாப்பைக்கூட அவர் தேடிக்கொள்ள விரும்பவில்லை. ஆனால் அவர்கள் இரண்டாம்தரமும் வந்து எச்சரித்தார்கள். குறைந்த பட்சம் ஒரு காவற்காரரைத் தன்னும் நியமிக்க அவருக்குத் தோன்றவில்லை. அதற்கு வசதியில்லாமலல்ல. ஆனால் தான் செய்யும் பணி புனிதமானதென்ற எண்ணமும் தான் ஒரு முழுமையான ஜனநாயகவாதி என்ற நம்பிக்கையும் அவருக்கு பாதுகாப்புபற்றிய எந்தக் கரிசனையையும் ஏற்படுத்தவில்லை. அவர்கள் மூன்றாம் தரமும் வந்தார்கள். இந்தத் தடவை அவர்கள் அவரை உயிரோடு விட்டு வைக்கவில்லை.

புலிகளின் தலைவர் பிரபாகரன் அடிக்கடி சொல்லும் ஒரு வார்த்தை என்னவென்றால், இந்தப் படிச்சுவங்களையெல்லாம் காசுக்கு வாங்கிடலாம்.

எனக்கு சொல்வதைச் செய்யிறவன்தான் தேவை. ஆனால் காசுக்கு வாங்க முடியாத, மிரட்

டல்களால் பணிய வைக்க முடியாத, ஒரு கர்ம வீரனாய் கேதீஸ் தன்னை ஒரு உதாரணமாய் முன்றிறுத்தி வைத்துவிட்டுச் சென்றுவிட்டார். இது ஒரு மிகப் பெரிய சவால், எவரும் எட்ட முடியாத ஒரு தனிப் பிரதேசத்தில் ஆயிரம் ஆயிரம் ஆயுததாரி களைச் சுற்றவர வைத்துக் கொண்டு அவர்களையே கூட முழுமையாய் நம்பாமல் அதற்குள்ளும் தலைமறைவாய் மிகப் பாதுகாப்பாய் வாழ்ந்துகொண்டிருக்கும் உலகின் வலிமை வாய்ந்த அமைப்பொன்றின் தலைவர், தனது கையாட்களை அனுப்பி சாதாரணமாக வீட்டில் வசித்துக்கொண்டு, அழைப்பு மணியை அழுத்தும் எவருக்கும் தானே வந்து கதவைத் திறந்து யூ ஆர் வெல் கம் என்று கைகுலுக்கி உள்ளே அழைத்துச் செல்லும் ஒரு கனவானைச் சுட்டுக்

கொலை செய்வதில் என்ன பெரிய வீரம் இருக்கிறது? ஆக, கேதீஸின் கருத்துக்களைத் தன்னால் கருத்துரீதியாக எதிர்கொள்ள முடியாது போய் விட்ட தோல்விக்கான அப்பட்டமான ஒப்புதலாகவன்றி இது எவ்வாறு அர்த்தப்பட முடியும்?

கேதீஸின் பாத்திரம் வெறும் இயக்க அரசியலுக்குள்ளோ, அல்லது தனியே அறிவியல் தளத்தினுள்ளோ மட்டுப்படுத்தப்பட்டதாய் இருக்கவில்லை. அது அவர் உணர்வுபூர்வமாக ஏற்றுக் கொண்ட வரலாற்றுக் கடமைகளுக்கான பாத்திரமாகவே அமைந்திருந்தது. கேதீஸ் ஒரு தீட்சண்யம் வாய்ந்த அறிவாளி! அந்த அறிவின் வீச்சு அவர் ஏற்றிருந்த போராட்ட அரசியலால் முடக்கப்பட்டும் இல்லை. அதேவேளை அவரது அறிவியல் நிபுணத்துவ மேதமை அவரைப் போராட்ட அரசியலிலிருந்து பிரித்து வைக்கவும் இல்லை. அதனால் அவர் பல அறிவாளிகள் செய்யத் தவறிய வரலாற்றுக் கடமையைத் தன் மனசாட்சியின் பால் நின்று ஆற்றிய அரிய மனிதர்களில் ஒருவராகிறார்.

தமிழ்ப்பேசும் மக்களின் உரிமைப் போராட்டம் ஆயுதப் போராட்டமாகப் பரிணமித்த காலகட்டத்தில் எமது சமூகத்தின் பெரும்பாலான அறிவியற் குழாம் அதிலிருந்து எட்ட விலகி நின்று கொண்டதே உண்மை. ஒருபுறம் அது தன் அறிவியல் தகமைக்கான அந்தஸ்துக்களையும் வாய்ப்பு வசதிகளையும் இழந்துகொள்ளத் தயாராக இருக்கவில்லை. மறுபுறம் இப்போராட்டத்தின்

கடுமையையும் ஆபத்தும் நிறைந்த பயணத்தில் நடைபோடும் துணிவும் அதற்கு இருக்கவில்லை.

ஆனால் அந்தக் காலத்திலேயே தான் அன்று இத்தகைய பாத்திரத்தைத்தான் வகிக்க வேண்மென்று துணிந்து முடிவெடுத்து, ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியில் உணர்வுபூர்வமாக இணைந்துகொண்டவர் கேதீஸ். சமூகத்தின் மிக உயர்ந்த மேட்டுக்குடியில் பிறந்து, அமெரிக்கப் பல்கலைக் கழகத்தில் பயின்று, நிதி நிறுவன மொன்றின் நிர்வாகப் பணிப்பாளர் பதவியுட்பட பல உயர் பதவிகள் வகித்துவந்த அவருக்கு அப்படி எந்த நிர்ப்பந்தமோ, அவசியமோ இருக்கவில்லை.

அவரது தந்தையார் லோகநாதன் இலங்கை வங்கியின் முதலாவது அத்தியேட்சகரும் உலக வங்கியின் ஆலோசகருமான புகழ்பெற்ற செல்வாக்கு மிக்க மனிதர். ஆனால் கேதீஸ் இத்தனை சௌகரியங்களையும் ஒதுக்கிவிட்டு தமிழ்ப் பேசும் மக்களின் உரிமைப் போராட்டத்துக்காக தன் அறிவையும் ஆற்றலையும் நேரத்தையும் - ஏன் வாழ்க்கையையுமே வழங்கியவர். அவர் வெறும் இன உணர்வினாலன்றி அரசியல் ரீதியாக தெளிவாக சிந்தித்து அன்றைய காலகட்டத்தின் தனது வரலாற்றுக் கடமையாக கருதியே இம் முடிவை மேற்கொண்டிருந்தார்.

இதேவேளை இவரது சிந்தனையானது வெறும் இன விடுதலை என்ற வட்டத்துடன் குறுகிக் கொள்ளாது, ஒட்டுமொத்தமான சமூக மாற்றத்தை முன்னிறுத்தியதாகவும், குருட்டுத்தனமான இனவெறியை நிராகரித்ததுமான ஓர் அர்த் தபூர்வமான தீர்வை நோக்கி யதாகவே அமைந்திருந்தது. இதற்கு அமைவான தெரிவு ஒன்றையே அவர் மேற்கொண்டிருந்தார்.

அவர் விடுதலைப் போராட்டத்தில் பங்காற்றிய காலத்தில் தனக்கான எந்தப் பிரத்தியேகமான வசதிகளையும் அவர் கோரியதில்லை. அவரின் அன்றைய அரசியற் பங்களிப்பு பாரியது. உலக முற்போக்கு சக்திகள் மத்தியில் உறவை வளர்ப்பதிலும், சர்வதேச அரங்கிலும் இந்திய அரசியற் களத்திலும் தமிழ்ப்பேசும் மக்களின் உரிமைப் போராட்டத்தின் நியாயங்களையும், குறிக்கோள்களையும் தெளிவு படுத்த துவதிலும், இனப்பிரச்சினை தொடர்பான பல்வேறு பேச்சுவார்த்தைகளை ராஜதந்திர மட்டத்தில் மேற்

கொள்வதிலும் குறிப்பாக திம்பு பேச்சுவார்த்தைகளில் தமிழ்ப்பேசும் மக்கள் சார்பாக முன்வைக்கப்பட்ட திம்புக் கோட்பாடுகளை வரைவு செய்வதிலும் அப்பேச்சுவார்த்தைகளை நெறிப்படுத்த துவதிலும் துல்லியமான பங்காற்றியிருந்தார்.

இலங்கை - இந்திய ஒப்பந்தத்துடன் சற்று ஓய்வு பெற்று நோர்வேயில் தனது புலமைக் கல்வியை முடித்துக்கொண்டு, சிலகாலம் அங்கு பல்கலைக்கழக பகுதிநேர விரிவுரையாளராகப் பணியாற்றியபின் மீண்டும் இலங்கை வந்து தனது கட்சிப்பணியை ஆற்ற முன்வந்தார். இக் காலத்தில் இலங்கை இந்திய ஒப்பந்தத்தின் பிரகாரம் இலங்கையின் வடக்குக் கிழக்கில் மாகாணசபை ஆட்சி ஏற்பட்டு அதில் அவரது கட்சி ஆட்சிப் பொறுப்பை ஏற்றிருந்தபோதும், அவரது கட்சி பாராளுமன்றப் பிரதிநிதித்துவங்களை வகித்திருந்த போதும், அவரோ இத்தகைய எந்தவித அரசியற் பதவிகளையும் வகிக்க விரும்பவில்லை.

அவரது கட்சியின் செயலாளர் நாயகம் பத்மநாபாவின் மறைவுக்குப் பின் அக்கட்சிக்குள் ஏற்பட்ட உள்ளியக்க முரண்பாடுகளுக்கு மத்தியில் தலைதூக்கிய சில போக்குகள் அவரது அரசியல் நேர்மைக்கும் தெளிவுக்கும் ஏற்றுக்கொள்ள முடியாதவையாக உணர்ந்த நிலையில் அவர் தன்னை இயக்க அரசியல் வாழ்க்கையிலிருந்து விலக்கிக் கொண்டார். ஆனாலும் அவர் தன் சமூகப் பங்களிப்பை நிறுத்திக்கொள்ளவோ, தனது சொந்த வாழ்க்கையை மட்டும் பார்த்துக்கொள்ளவோ வினையவில்லை. மாறாக அவர் சமூகவிஞ்ஞானக் கழகம், மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையம் போன்ற அரசு சார்பற்ற அமைப்புகளில் தன் புலமையைப் பயன்படுத்தி பல காத்திரமான சமூக ஆய்வுகள், கருத்தரங்குகள் போன்ற வேலைத்திட்டங்களை மேற்கொண்டார். அத்துடன் சண்டே எக்ஸ்பிரஸ் ஆங்கிலப் பத்திரிகையின் ஆசிரியராகவும் சில காலம் செயலாற்றினார். சத்தியா என்ற பெயரில் பல அரசியற் கட்டுரைகளை எழுதிவந்தார். அதனது நேரடி அனுபவத்தையும் அரசியல் அறிவையும் உள்ளடக்கி இலங்கைப் இனப்பிரச்சினை பற்றிய நூல்களை எழுதினார். லொஸ்ட் ஒப்பசனிட்டீஸ் (இழந்துவிட்ட சந்தர்ப்பங்கள்) என்ற இவரது நூல் மிகக் காத்திரமான ஒரு வரலாற்று ஆவணமாகத் திகழ்கிறது.

கேதீஸ் போன்ற அற்புதமான மனிதர்களையெல்லாம் தன் இராட்சதச் சில்லினால் நசித்து அழித்தபடி செல்லும் இந்த அழிவுப் பேரியந்திரம் எதை மிச்சம் வைக்கப் போகிறது? இதனால் எமது சமூகம் ஒருபடி முன்னேறும் விடுதலை நெருங்கும் என்று எண்ணுபவனைவிட அடி முட்டாள யார் இருக்க முடியும்?

இறுதிக் காலங்களில் அவர் சமாதானச் செயலகத்தில் பிரதிப் பணிப்பாளராகச் செயலாற்றி, ஒரு சாத்தியமான அரசியற் தீர்வை வரைவு செய்வதற்கு தன்னாலான முயற்சியொன்றையும் மேற்கொண்டார். ஆனால் அதற்கான ஆரம்பப் பிரயத்தனங்களை மேற்கொண்டிருந்த வேளையில் அவர் படுகொலை செய்யப்பட்டுவிட்டார். இந்த இழப்பு உண்மையில் யாருக்கு? கேதீஸைப் பொறுத்தவரை யாவரும் ஒருநாள் மரணிப்பதைப் போல அவரும் மரணத்தை அடைந்தார். இறுதிக் காலத்தில் நோய்வாய்ப்பட்டு வேதனை அனுபவித்து இறக்கும் ஒருவரின் இறப்பைவிட இந்த இறப்பு அவரைப் பொறுத்தவரையில் இலகுவானதாகக் கூட இருக்கலாம். ஆனால் அவர் தான் வீட்டு வாசலில் கொல்லப்படக்கூடாது என்று தன் நெருங்கிய நண்பர்களிடம் ஆதங்கப்பட்டிருந்தார். அதுகூட தன் மரணத்தைக் கண்ணூற்று தன் அன்புக்குரியவர்கள் நிர்க்கதியாக ஏங்கி நின்றுவிடக்கூடாதே என்பதற்காகத்தான். அதற்கான தயவுகூட இக் கொலைஞர் கூட்டத்திற்கு இருக்கவில்லை. இச் சமுதாயத்துக்காக தன் வாழ்க்கையை அர்ப்பணித்திருந்த தற்குப் பரிசாக அவரது உயிர் அவரது வீட்டு வாசலில் வைத்தே பறிக்கப்பட்டு அவரது பெறுமதியிக்க சேவைக்கான நன்றி அறிதல் மிக நல்லவிதமாகத்தான் செலுத்தப்பட்டுள்ளது! இதற்காக வெட்கப்படக்கூட எம் சமூகத்துக்கு உணர்வில்லை. பரவாயில்லை. கேதீசுக்கு இது ஒருவகையில் விடுதலைதான்!

ஆனால் நாம் ஒரு கேதீஸை இழந்துவிட்டோம்! இந்த உண்மை புரிகிறதா? கேதீசுடன் ஒரு பாரிய வரலாற்றை அடியோடு இழந்துவிட்டோம். ஒரு அனுபவம் வாய்ந்த, அறிவார்ந்த, அர்ப்பணம் மிக்க மேதையின் வழிகாட்டலை இழந்து விட்டோம். அவரன்றி இன்னொருவரால் அதை ஈடுசெய்ய முடியாத நிலையில் அவரை நாம் இழந்துவிட்டோம். எம் இழப்பின் தார்ப்பரியம் புரிகிறதா?

ஆனால் இதை யார் இன்று உணரப்போகிறார்கள்?

அவரின் உணர்வார்ந்த வரலாற்றுப் பங்களிப்பை எமது சமூகம் எந்த அளவு கௌரவிக்கப்போகிறது? குறைந்த பட்சம் அதை எடைபோடக்கூடத் தெரியாத நிலைக்குச் சமூகம் தள்ளப்பட்டிருப்பதே பரிதாபகரமான உண்மை. அதையும்விட அது ஒரு தொடர்ச்சியான விஷப் பிரச்சாரப் போதைக்குள் மூழ்கடிக்கப்பட்டு உழன்றுகொண்டிருக்கிறது. பைத்தியம் பீடிக்கப்பட்ட ஒரு தொழு நோய்க்காரன் தன் செயலையே உணராதவனாய் தன் உறுப்புக்களைத் தானே கடித்துச் சுவைத்து உண்டபடி, தான் ஏதோ ஆரோக்கியம் பெற்று வளர்வதாய் எண்ணிக்கொள்வதைப்போல், சுய அழிவையே வளர்ச்சியென எண்ணி மயங்கும் போதைக்குள்ளாகப்பட்டிருக்கிறது சமூகம். அதற்கு கேதீஸ் யார், அவரின் பெறுமதி என்ன என்பதையெல்லாம் யார் இருந்து சொல்லிக்கொடுக்க முடியும்?



இன்று எம் சமூகத்தில் மிக மலிந்த பட்டமாகி விட்ட புலிகளுக்குச் சார்பாக மரணிக்காத எவருக்குமே சுலபமாக வழங்கி விடக்கூடிய பட்டமாக ஆகிவிட்ட இத் துரோகி பட்டம் கேதீஸ் கொல்லப்பட்டு முன்னரே இவ்விணையத்தளத்தின் நினைவு அடுக்குகளில் அவருக்காகச் சுடச் சுடத் தயாரித்து வைக்கப்பட்டிருந்தது.

கேதீஸ் போன்ற அற்புதமான மனிதர்களை யெல்லாம் தன் இராட்சதச் சில்லினால் நசித்து அழித்தபடி செல்லும் இந்த அழிவுப் பேரியந்திரம் எதை மிச்சம் வைக்கப்போகிறது? இதனால் எமது சமூகம் ஒருபடி முன்னேறும், விடுதலை நெருங்கும் என்று எண்ணுவனை விட அடி முட்டாள்கள் யார் இருக்க முடியும்? ஆனால் எம் மக்கள் அனைவரும் அப்படியான ஒரு கூட்டமாக ஆக்கப்படுவதைத் தானே இந்தச் சக்திகள் விரும்புகின்றன. அறிஞர்கள் என்று கூறிக்கொள்ளும் பலர் இந்தப் பயங்கரவாதத்தின் அடிவருடிகளாக மாறிச் செல்கின்ற போக்கினை நோக்குக்கும்போது சாமானியர்கள் மௌனிகளாகி விடுவதில் அதியசப்படுவதற்கு எதுவுமில்லை. இவ்விடத்தில் தான் கேதீஸ் போன்றவர்களின் துணிச்சல் மிக்க பாத்திரம் மலைக்க வைக்கும் ஒரு அசாத்திய வீரமாக மிளிக்கிறது.

கேதீஸ்! நாம் உம் முன் தலை வணங்குகிறோம். ●

அது நீயே நானே...



இறப்பதற்கு முன்னால்
நாளைய அஞ்சலியை
நாமே எழுதி விடுவோம்
சுமக்கும் தோழர்களுக்கு
அழுவதை மட்டும்
மிச்சமாக்கி செல்வோம்

சுதந்திர வாழ்வுக்காய்
போராடினோம்..
இருந்த வாழ்வையும்
தொலைத்துவிட்டு
மனித வேட்டையில்
நாமே பலியாகினோம்.

இதுவும் ஒரு திருப்பலிதான்
இன்றைய புனிதர்கள்
சிலுவையில் அல்ல
துப்பாக்கி ரவைகளின்
துளைகளில் பலியெடுப்பு

ஆயிரம் வருடங்களில்
எங்கள் வாக்கும்
வேதமாகலாம்
ஆனால் அடுத்த சந்ததிக்காகவும்
எங்களால் அழமட்டும் தான்
முடிகிறது

பொலிவிய மலைகளில்
லட்சியம் தாங்கி
படுத்துறங்கினான்
அந்த சே..

உன் கைகள் துப்பாக்கி
தொடாதவை.
பேனாவின் பலத்தையும்
உன் புத்தியில் முளைத்த
சிந்தனை முத்துக்களையும்

எங்கள் இலட்சியங்களாய் விட்டு
விட்டு
நீ படுத்துறங்குகிறாய்.

பாசிசம் பொறுக்கவில்லை
ஆம் அதற்கு தெரியும்
துப்பாக்கிகளைவிட
உனது சிந்தனை வீரியது என்று

பேய்கள் நடமாடும் ஊரினிலே
தேவர்களுக்கு என்ன வேலை
ஆதனால்தானோ காலம்
உன்னை
பறித்து கொண்டது..

நீ உயரத்தில் வாழந்திருக்கலாம்
பள்ளத்தில் இருந்தவரின்
பரிதாபம் கண்டு இறங்கி
வந்தாய்
துணிச்சலோடு..

மேட்டுக்குடியின் உச்சாணியில்
நீ உலக மூலையில் எங்கோ
கடற்காற்று அணைக்கும்
நந்தவனத்தில்
குடிக்கொண்டிருக்கலாம்

பள்ளத்து பாலைவனங்களை
கண்டு
நெஞ்சில் ஈரத்தோடு வந்தாய்

மெல்லிய உடலும்
மேவிய நெற்றியும்
கூரிய பார்வையும்
மென் பேச்சும்..
ஆடம்பரமில்லா
எளிமை கொண்டவனே

பாசிசத்தின் மத்தியில்
துணிச்சலோடு நின்றவனே
உன்னை காத்திட
திராணியில்லா நாங்கள்
வெட்கத்தோடு அடிகிறோம்
நாங்கள் எங்களையே
காக்க முடியாமல்

பாசிசத்தின் துப்பாக்கி குழல்
என்றும் வென்றதில்லை.
அது ஓர் நாள் மரணிக்கும்
உங்கள் இலட்சியங்களும்
அந்நாள் உயிர் பெறும்

ஆனால் அதுவரைக்கும்
எத்தனை உயிர்களை
விலை கொடுக்கப்போகிறோம்..
நிழலாடும் சூனியம்தான்
எங்கள் முன்னே
நிஜமாகி கிடக்கிறது.

**கண்ணீரோடு
தோழர் யோவ்**

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ஓர் ஆழமான சமூக அரசியல் சிந்தனையாளன். திறமை மிக்க எழுத்தாளன். புலமை கொண்ட அறிவாளன். இலங்கை வாழ் தமிழ், முஸ்லிம், சிங்கள மக்களின் அரசியல் சமூக பொருளாதார விமோசனத்திற்கு தன்னாலான பங்களிப்பையே தனது வாழ்க்கையின் குறிக்கோளாகக் கொண்டு வாழ்ந்தவன். இந்த உன்னத நோக்கை

கள் செய்தால் இவர்களின் மனித இரத்த தாகம் தணியும்? தமிழ்ச்சமுதாயம் இன்னுமொரு புத்திஜீவியை தனது மத்தியிலிருந்து இழந்துவிட்டது- தமிழ்ச்சமுதாயத்தின் மத்தியில் இன்னுமொரு கொலையாளி பிடிபடாமல், செய்த கொலைக்குத் தண்டனை பெறாமல் நடமாடுகிறான். அவன் புலிகளின் தலைமைத்துவத்திடமிருந்து பணமும்

என்று தணியுமிந்த புலிகளின் மனித இரத்த தாகம்?

- அசிமன்யு

அடைவதற்காக, முதலில் ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணியுடனும், பின்னர் இனப் பிரச்சனைக்கான அரசியல்தீர்வு, மனித உரிமைகள் ஆகியவற்றை முன்னெடுக்க முனைந்து கொண்டிருக்கும் புத்திஜீவிகளின் பல்வேறு அமைப்புகளில் தன்னை இணைத்துக் கொண்டு தன் பங்களிப்பை தொடர்ந்த பெருந்தகையாளன்!

தமிழர்கள் மத்தியில் அருகிவரும் இப்படியான ஒரு உன்னத மனிதனைத்தான் இரவோடிரவாக நிராயுதபாணியான அவரை, அவரது வீட்டுக்குச் சென்று வஞ்சகமாகக் கொலை செய்துவிட்டுப் போய்விட்டார்கள் பாதகர்கள் சிலர். இலங்கை வாழ் மக்கள், குறிப்பாக தமிழ் பேசும் மக்கள், அவர்களது அரசியல் அபிலாஷைகளை அடைந்து, சமாதானமாகவும் சமத்துவமாகவும் வாழ்வதற்கு தன்னை அர்ப்பணித்து உழைத்த அந்த மனிதனின் வாழ்வை கொலீரமாக திடீரென முடிவுக்குக் கொண்டு வந்து விட்டார்கள்! தமிழர் விடுதலை என்ற பெயரில், கொலைவெறி கொண்டலையும் புலிப்பாசிச மனநோயாளிகள் இன்னுமொரு

தமிழ் புத்திஜீவியை, கொழுந்து விட்டெரிந்த சுடரை, வலோத்தாரமாக அணைத்து விட்டு ஓடி ஒழித்துக் கொண்டார்கள். புலிகளால் கொல்லப்பட்ட பற்பல புத்திஜீவிகளின் பட்டியலில் கேதீஸ் லோகநாதன் பெயரையும் சேர்த்து விட்டார்கள். நிராயுதபாணியான ஒரு மென்மை மனங்கொண்ட மனிதனைக் கொல்வதில் என்னதான் கெட்டித்தனம் இருக்கிறது? இன்னும் எத்தனை படுகொலை

பாராட்டுகளும் பெற்றிருப்பான். அவன் இன்னமும் படுகொலைகள் பல புரியத் தன்னை மேலும் தயார்படுத்திக் கொண்டிருப்பான்! இன்னுமொரு நாதம் பரப்பும் நல்லதோர் தமிழ் வீணை நாசமாக்கப்பட்டு விட்டது! சூறாவளிக்காற்றில் மிதந்து வரும் சருகுகளும், கஞ்சல்களும், குப்பைகளுந்தான் தமிழர்கள் மத்தியில் மிஞ்சுகின்றன. அறிவுக்கண்களை மறைக்கும் தும்புகளும் தூசிகளுந்தான் பரவுகின்றன. புலிகள் அதைத்தான் வேண்டுகிறார்

கள். அவர்களின் தலைமைத்துவம் படிப்பறிவற்றவர்களைக் கொண்டபடியால், புத்திஜீவிகள் என்றால் அவர்களுக்குப் பிடிக்காது- அதுவும் தங்களுக்கு அடிபணியாத புத்திஜீவிகள் இத்தரணியில் வாழ்வதற்கு அருகதை அற்றவர்கள்- இதுதான் புலிகளின் தலைமைத்துவத்தின் கொள்கை, ஆரம்பத்திலிருந்து இன்று வரை அவர்கள் தவறாது கடைப்பிடிக்கும் அவர்களது கோட்பாடு!- இந்தப் புத்திஜீவிகளைப் படுகொலை செய்யும் கொலையாளிகளும் படிப்பறிவற்ற காடைக் கும் பல்கள்தான்! தமிழ்மக்கள் சரியான ஏமாளிகள் என்று புலிகளுக்கு நன்றாகத் தெரியும்! கொன்று விட்டு மௌனம் சாதிப்பார்கள். சிறிது சிறிதாக, தங்களால் கொலைசெய்யப் பட்டவர்களுக்கு அவர்களின் பிணாமி ஊடகங்கள், இணைய தளங்கள் மூலம், எதுவித உண்மையுமின்றி, துரோகிகள் என்று ஒருதலையாக சேற்றை வாரி வீசுவார்கள். சுயமாகச் சிந்திக்க வழியோ திராணியோ இல்லாத இலங்கை வாழ் தமிழினம் அதனை நம்புகிறதோ இல்லையோ, வாய்முடி மௌனமாக இருக்கும். இலங்கை அரசாலும் புலிகளாலும் தங்கள் உயிருக்கு ஆபத்தெனக் கூறி அரசியல்தஞ்சம் கோரி தங்களது பிள்ளைகளைப் பத்திரமாகப் பாதுகாத்துக் கொண்டு, குடும்பத்துடன் சுகவாழ்வு வாழ்ந்து கொண்டு சகட்டுமேனிக்கு தமிழினத்திற்காகக் பாடுபடுவதாகக் கூறிக்கொண்டு, வறட்டுக் கூச்சல் போட்டுப் போர்முரசம் கொட்டும் சில புலம்பெயர் தமிழர்கள், புலிகளின் பொய்யான

பிரச்சாரத்திற்கு சப்பைகொட்டிக் கொண்டு தமிழினத்தின் அவலத்திற்கு தங்களாலான பங்கினைச் செய்வார்கள். கேதீஸ் துரோகிதான்! அவர் அடைந்த வித்துவத்திற்கு இலங்கையை விட்டு வெளிநாடு சென்று ஏதாவது ஒரு பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் பேராசிரியராக விளங்கி இருக்கலாம் - அதனைச் செய்யாதது அவரிடம் கல்வி கற்கப் பேறு கிடைக்காத வெளிநாட்டுப் பல்கலைக்கழக மாணவர்களுக்கு அவர் செய்த துரோகந்தான்! வெளிநாடு சென்று பெரும் பணம் ஈட்டி வாய்ப்புகள் பல கிடைத்தும், அவற்றை உதறித்தள்ளி இலங்கையிலிருந்தே மக்களுக்காக உழைக்கவேண்டும் என்று அவர் வாழ்ந்தது, இப்பொழுது அவரை சடுதியாக இழந்து பரிதவிக்கும் அவர் மனைவிக்கு அவர் செய்த துரோகந்தான்! செல்வக் கொழிப்புள்ள பிரபல்யமான ஒருவரைத் தனது தந்தையாகக் கொண்டும், சுகவாழ்வு வாழாமல், இளவயதி லேயே ஈழமக்கள் புரட்சிகர விடுதலை முன்னணி இயக்கத்தில் தன்னை இணைத்துக் கொண்டு, துணி யிலான நீண்ட பையை தனது தோளில் மாட்டிக் கொண்டு இந்தியத் தெருக்களில் இரவும் பகலுமாக அலைந்து திரிந்து பல அரசியல்வாதிகளுடனும், புத்திஜீவிகளுடனும் ஈழத்தமிழர்களின் போராட்டத்தின் தார்மீகத்தை எடுத்து விளக்கி தமிழர்களின் அபிலாஷைகளை முன்னெடுத்துச் சென்றது அவர் தனது பெற்றோர்களுக்குச் செய்த துரோகந்தான்! திம்பு பேச்சுவார்த்தைகளில் ஈழத்தமிழர்களின் போராட்டத்தின் அரசியல் பரிமாணங்களையும் அடிப்படைக் கோட்பாடுகளையும் வடிவமைத்துப் பங்காற்றியது, சிங்களப் பேரினவாதிகளுக்கு அவர் இழைத்த துரோகந்தான்! மனச்சாட்சியையும் தன்மானத்தையும் அடகுவைத்து சில சோரம்போன அரசியல் வாதிகள், புத்திஜீவிகள் போல், புலிகளின் பினாமியாக வாழாதது அவர் பாசிசத்திற்குச் செய்த துரோகந்தான்! ஈற்றில் பரஸ்பர புரிந்துணர்வு, பேச்சுவார்த்தைகள் ஆகியவை மூலமாகத்தான் இனப்பிரச்சனைக்கு ஒரு சுமுகமான தீர்வை எட்டிட முடியும் என்ற அரசியல் யதார்த்தத்தில் நம்பிக்கை கொண்டு, தமிழ்மக்களின் அழிவிற்கு முடிவுகட்டும் சீரிய நோக்கோடு அரச சமாதான செயலகத்தில் உதவிப் பணிப்பாளராகத் தன்னை இணைத்து அவர் செயற்பட்டமை, இந்த வேண்டாத யுத்தத்தினால் மரணத்தைத் தழுவாது வாழ்ந்து கொண்டிருக்கும் மிகுதித் தமிழர்களுக்கு அவர் செய்த துரோகந்தான்! இலங்கையில் வாழத் தகுதியுள்ளவர்கள், தமிழ்த்

தேசியம், தமிழீழம் என்ற பெயரில் தமிழர்களின் அழிவில் தங்களை வளர்த்துக் கொள்கிறார்களே அவர்கள் மட்டுந்தான்! - கேதீஸின் கொலையுடன் புலிகளின் மனித இரத்த தாகம் தணிந்து விடும் என்று யாரும் தப்புக் கணக்குப் போடவேண்டாம். அரசியல் தலைவர்கள், அரசியல்வாதிகள், கல்விமான்கள், புத்திஜீவிகள், பொதுமக்கள், தொடர்ந்தும் கொல்லப்படுவார்கள். புலிகளின் கொலை வெறி தொடரும்-

புலிகளின் தலைமைத்துவம் தாங்களாகவே தங்களை அழித்துக்கொள்ளும் வரை அல்லது அழிக்கப்படும் வரை அவர்களது கொலைவெறி தொடரும்! புலிகள் அவ்வப்போது சிருஷ்டிக்கும் மாய்மாலங்களில் மேன்மேலும் சிக்குண்டு பிச்சை வேண்டாம் நாயைப் பிடி என்ற நிலைக்குத் தமிழர்கள் தள்ளப்படுவார்கள்! தமிழர்கள் அரசியல் தீர்வு எதுவும் அடையாது புலிகளால் மேன்மேலும் அழிவுப்பாதையில் இட்டுச் செல்லப்படுவார்கள். இந்தக் கைங்கரியத்தில் வியாபார நோக்கும் சய நலமும் கொண்டோரும், மனித அழிவில் சுகம் காண்போரும், தங்களின் தற்போதைய இழிநிலைக்கு காரணம் யார் என்பதினைப் பகுத்தறிந்து பார்க்காத தமிழர் சிலரும் தொடர்ந்தும் கைகொடுப்பார்கள்!

சாசுவதமான, யுகயுகாந்திரமாக நிலைநாட்டப்படும் ஒரு பேருண்மையை நாம் என்றுமே நினைவு கூர்ந்திட வேண்டும். எப்பொழுது ஒரு செயல்முறையின், ஒரு போராட்டத்தின், தார்மீகத்தன்மை அடிப்பட்டுப் போகிறதோ, அதன் பின்னர் அவை வெற்றியடைய முடியாது, வெற்றியடையாது! தமிழினம் நாட்பட நாட்பட நாற்றமும் சேறும் மிகுந்து பயனீர் இலதாய் அழிந்து கொண்டே போகும்!

சென்றுவா கேதீஸ் தோழா! அசுரர்கள் கோலோச்சம் இந்த நாட்டில் மேன்மையாளன் உனக்கு என்ன வேலை! கிங்கரர்கள் தாண்டவ மாடும் இந்த மண்ணில் மென்மை மாந்தன் உனக்கு என்ன வேலை? சைத்தான்கள் உலாவுவ இந்தத் தேசத்தில் தேவதூதன் உனக்கென்ன வேலை! கொடிய விலங்குகளும் விஷப்பாம்புகளும் கட்டுப்பாடின்றி வலம்வரும் இந்தக் காட்டில் மனிதன் உனக்கு என்ன வேலை! ஆனாலும் உன்னோடு பழகியவர்களுக்குத் தெரியும் - உன் ஆத்மா இலங்கையைச் சுற்றியே வலம் வந்து கொண்டிருக்கும். இந்த தறிகெட்ட, நெறிகெட்ட மனிதர்களை ஈடேற்ற என்ன செய்யலாம் என்ற வேட்கையோடு உலா வந்து கொண்டிருக்கும்! ●



கேதீஸ்: சில குறிப்புகள்

தோழர் கேதீஸ்வரன் செல்லையா லோகநாதன் திலகவதி தம்பதிகளின் கடைசிப் புதல்வர். 17 நவம்பர் 1951 இல் அவர் பிறந்தவர். பருத்தித்துறை துன்னாலை தெற்கு அவரது பூர்வீகம். லோகநாதன் இலங்கையில் பிரபல்யமான

பொருளியலாளர். இலங்கை வங்கியின் முதலாவது தலைவர். உலக வங்கியிலும் ஆலோசனைப் பணிகளில் ஈடுபட்டிருக்கிறார். கணக்காளர் சதானந்தன், டாக்டர் ஸ்ரீதரன் காலஞ்சென்ற கருணைரட்ணம் ஆகியோர் இவரது மூத்த சகோதரர்கள். திருமதி வாசுகி மகேஸ்வரன், காலஞ்சென்ற திருமதி லலிதா யோகசுந்தரம் இவரது மூத்த சகோதரிகள். 1940களில் பருத்தித்துறை பாராளுமன்ற உறுப்பினராக இருந்த தர்மகுலசிங்கம் இவரது பெரியதந்தையார் என அறியப்படுகிறது.

தோழர் கேதீஸ், 28 ஆண்டுகளுக்கு முன்னர் பவானி குமாரசாமி அவர்களை திருமணம் செய்துகொண்டார். அவர் மீன்பிடிக்கூட்டுத்தாபனத்தில் அப்போது ஆய்வாளராகப் பணியாற்றினார். மனமொத்த தம்பதிகளாக அவர்கள் வாழ்ந்தனர்.

- கல்விஆரம்பம்: றோயல் கல்லூரி, ஆரம்ப பாடசாலை கொழும்பு.
- 1958-62 சர்ச் பார்க் கொன்வன்ட் சென்னை. பின்னர் சென்தோமஸ் கல்லூரி கொழும்பு. 1965-1968 சென்னைக் கிறிஸ்தவக் கல்லூரி, லயோலாக்கல்லூரி. பின்னர் ஜோர்ஜ் டவுன் பல்கலைக் கழகம்.
- 1983 நெதர்லாந்து ஹெய்க் பல்கலைக்கழகம் ஆரம்பத்தில் சமூக ஆய்வுமன்றத்தில் பணியாற்றினார். பின்னர் 1980 களின் முற்பகுதியில் அபிவிருத்தி ஆய்வு மற்றும் கல்விக் கான நிறுவனத்தின் இயக்குனராகச் செயற்பட்டார்.
- 1984-1985ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப் இல் திம்பு பேச்சுவாதத்தில் ஈபிஆர்எல்எப் இன் பேச்சாளராகப் பங்கு பற்றினார். ஈழ தேசிய விடுதலை முன்னணி உருவாகுவதில் பங்களித்தார்.
- 1988 -1990 வரை நோர்வேயின் பல்கலைக்கழகமொன்றில் பகுதிநேர விரிவுரையாளராகவும் மாணவராகவும் இருந்தார்.
- 1990-1992 வரை டெல்லியில் ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப் பணிகளை முன்னெடுத்தார்.
- 19902-1994 வரை ஈ.பி.ஆர்.எல்.எப். இன் பேச்சாளராக கொழும்பில் செயற்பட்டார்.
- 1995 இல் கொழும்பு பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் அரசு அறிவியல் பீடத்தில் இன விவகாரங்கள் சம்பந்தமான ஆய்வில் பேராசிரியர் ஜெயதேவ உயங்காவுடன் இணைந்து செயற்பட்டார்.
- 1996- 2005 வரை மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையத்தின் இனமுரண்பாடுகள் பற்றிய ஆய்வுப் பிரிவின் முகாமையாளராக கடமையாற்றினார்.
- 2006 இன் முற்பகுதியிலிருந்து இலங்கை சமாதானச்செயலகத்தின் பிரதி செயலராகச் செயற்பட்டார். அதிகாரப்பகிர்விற்கான அனைத்து கட்சிகளின் பிரதிநிதிகள் குழுவினரைக் கொண்ட ஆலோசனைக்குழுவின் செயலாளராவும் பணியாற்றினார்.



Human Rights Seminar - London - 1995

Questions & Answers

with Ketheshwaran (Kethesh) Loganathan

(Ketheswaran Loganathan interviewed by Co-Editor of 'Lines',
Ms Vasuki Nesiah, May 2003)

Q: Could you reflect back on the origins of Tamil militant movement and speak on the mood of the 70s?

A: Although Tamil nationalist politics was already on the political and electoral agenda in Sri Lanka from the time of independence, due to discrimination in the spheres of language and employment which largely affected the professional or the middle class, the Tamil militant movement in the 70s was characterized by extreme youth alienation stemming from discrimination in the sphere of education, most inappropriately labeled by the Government as "standardization". This coupled with increasing youth unemployment at the national level led to the youth, in particular, school students to actively engage themselves in the Tamil nationalist struggle. Undoubtedly the increase in State violence, anti-Tamil riots and the recanting of memories of discrimination by the elders at home as well as teachers at schools would have contributed to the politicization of Tamil school students. Key personalities like Sivakumaran, Pathmanabha, Pirabhakaran, Varatharaja-perumal, Sritharan (Sugu) either dropped out of school or used the school as a medium of struggle. The formation of the Tamil Student Federation and later the General Union Eelam Students were manifestations of the role being played by the Tamil youths, in particular school students.

While there were instances of direct action involving bank heists and assassination of Tamil politicians belonging to the UNP or the SLFP as well as Tamil policemen, there were also moves to link the militant youth movement to class-based struggles involving landless agricultural workers, poor peasants and fisherfolks. The EPRLF through its student wing the General Union of Eelam Students, and other front organizations, for instance, was in the forefront of social mobilization based on class.

The above combination of the ideological and direct militant actions was also seen as a threat by the traditional parliamentary political parties (i.e. TULF and ACTC) and

landed and propertied interests in Tamil society. While the TULF, for instance, was engaged in ethno-populist rhetoric as a means of electoral mobilization, it also felt insecure in the face of youth militancy with strong ideological overtones. There were instances where the TULF were seen to be collaborating with the State to contain the militant tendency, while at the same time engaging in high voltage nationalist rhetoric and propaganda.

Q: How would you characterize the historical record of the Tamil militant movement? How was the political landscape of contemporary politics shaped by the nature of Tamil militancy?

A: As I had mentioned in my response to the previous question, the origins of the Tamil militant movement, stemming from extreme youth alienation, was typically fired by idealism based on egalitarianism and selflessness. In addition to Tamil nationalist sentiments, youth militancy was also fuelled by the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which was prevalent even before the 70s, as well as the increasing influence of lib

eration theology from Latin America and the national liberation struggles in Africa and Indo-China. Hence there was a strong anti-Imperialist and an egalitarian content in the Tamil youth militant movement. The virtual one-to-one relationship between caste and class, particularly in the Jaffna peninsula, also inevitably brought in the caste factor into the Tamil militant movement.

However, the militant youth movement with a strong egalitarian and ideological content soon became subordinated to the compulsions of Tamil Resistance in the face of increasing state repression. This was particularly evident after the firing and baton charging at the International Tamil Conference in Jaffna in 1974, the anti-Tamil riots of 1977, the passage and the ferocious implementation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979, the burning down of the Jaffna Library in 1981 and of course the state-sponsored anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983. The militarization of the ethnic conflict, with India emerging as a rear base to the Tamil Resistance, led to the traditional parliamentary party, the TULF, giving way to the "boys". This was particularly evident at the Thimpu Peace Talks of 1985. Thus began the struggle for legitimacy by the militant organizations.

However, the killing of the TELO leader, Sri Sabaratnam and 200 of TELO cadres by the LTTE in the streets and the fields of Jaffna in mid-1986 and the attack on EPRLF in December

1986 signalled the beginning of bloody fratricidal conflicts which was to consume the lives of hundreds of Tamil youths who lost their lives fighting one another than in fighting the State. In fact, more Tamil youths were killed in fratricidal conflicts during 1986-87 than in combat with the security forces. This was despite the fact that only an year earlier the LTTE joined the united front, the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) comprising the EPRLF, EROS and TELO which had been formed in 1984. This was also despite the fact that all four organizations (i.e. LTTE, EPRLF, EROS and TELO) and the PLOTE and TULF together formulated a common negotiating position at the Thimpu Peace Talks of July and August 1985. They collectively called themselves the "Tamil Delegation" while making joint written submissions at the talks. This included the formulation and submission of the 'Thimpu Principles'.

In addition to the fratricidal conflicts, the subsequent killing of Tamil intellectuals and politicians (eg. Amirthalingam, Pathmanabha, Rajani Thiranyagama and Neelan Tiruchelvam) who did not subscribe to the LTTE's way of thinking and doing created a vacuum in the political landscape of Tamil politics, as well narrowed the scope for involvement by the intelligentsia.

But, it would be incorrect to say that the LTTE was the sole perpetrator. The internal killings that took place within PLOTE during the 80s, the assassination of TULF politicians Dharmalingam, Alalasundram and others by TELO in mid 1985, the forced conscription of adults and children by the EPRLF and its allies in the post Indo-Lanka Accord and the killing of sympathizers of the LTTE, the hegemonic politics and thuggery of PLOTE in Vavuniya during the early 90s, the rampage of the EPDP as a "para-military" during the early 90s under the patronage of President Premadasa and the use of violence to silence its critics even while functioning as a parliamentary party, all contributed to the rot that began to set into Tamil militancy and created distortions in their transformation into mainstream democratic parties.

Successive governments and their military-intelligence apparatus also contributed to the rot through the creation of "para-militaries" which were accountable to no one, but to their "handlers". The tendency by the Sri Lankan State to use the ex-Tamil militant organizations as instruments in the military campaign against the LTTE, instead of empowering them as political parties by evolving a package based on substantial autonomy for the North-East, further discredited the non-LTTE Tamil organiza

tions. They came to be stigmatized as “para-militaries”. In short, all of the above (i.e. the hegemonic campaign of the LTTE and the self-seeking collaborationist politics of the other ex-militant organizations, contributed to the rot that afflicts contemporary Tamil politics.

Q: What were the internal debates and tensions regarding alternative paths? What were the roads not taken? Looking back with the benefit of hindsight, what were the critical turning points that may have charted a different course for politics in the Tamil community today?

A: One area of difference was on the relations between the people and the organization. The LTTE consciously relegated the people to the state of mute “observers” who would contribute resources and manpower as and when their “saviours” sought it. The more left-oriented organizations like the PLOTE and EPRLF held the notions of “People’s War” and “mass-based” armed struggle. Both were in a way extreme positions which either led to militarism and nihilism, as in the case of the LTTE, or “revolutionary romanticism”, as in the case of EPRLF and PLOTE. Ultimately, myopic organizational interests was the winner – and the people the losers.

Another debate within the Tamil militant movement was regards the ultimate goal. While organizations like LTTE and TELO were firmly committed to the creation of a separate State of Tamil Eelam and were fired by Tamil nationalist fervour, organizations like EPRLF, and PLOTE were more amenable to building links with the left, secular and progressive forces in the south, and were open to “alternative” paths. However, the failure of left politics in the south and the hegemony of Sinhala chauvinism only served to strengthen its mirror image – namely, Tamil chauvinism. In this context, the left agenda within the Tamil national movement never stood a chance. In due course, even organizations like the EPRLF which was committed to seeking alternatives to a separate State by linking with “revolutionary” forces in the south, which in themselves were weak and fragmented, were compelled to adopt a Tamil nationalist position. But, even here they were no match to the “authentic” nationalists and ended up falling between two stools.

On the other hand, the “respectable” and seasoned Tamil parliamentary parties like the TULF and the ACTC which were seeking to ride on the back of the Tamil militants found themselves thrown off their backs and clinging instead to their tails. The present “Tiger by the Tail” situa-

tion that the TULF and ACTC find themselves in is a case in point.

Q: Could you highlight the issues around which there were key debates/divisions. For instance, class, Caste, Gender, Upcountry Tamils, Organizational Structure and Relationship between militarization and politics.

A: My response here again refers to the late 70s and 80s (i.e. the formative stages of the Tamil militant organizations) and may not be of relevance today.

Organizations like the LTTE and TELO, which have a common “heritage”, structured themselves as primarily military organizations. Politics was subordinate to the military. The EPRLF, on the other hand, created a military wing which was under the direct control of the political leadership. However, this eventually led to tensions between these two with the militarization of the conflict. This could also explain as to why the LTTE and TELO proved to be militarily superior to the EPRLF. On the other hand, EPRLF was clearly ahead of the other organizations when it came to mass mobilization. However, following the militarization of the conflict in the aftermath of July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, political and mass mobilization came to be subordinated to the gun and armed propaganda..

Another area of difference related to territory. The EPRLF for instance viewed the Plantation Tamils as a people who were ex-

exploited as a working class and oppressed on the basis of their ethnicity. Its programme was based on the right of the plantation Tamils to fight for their rights while remaining in their own 'traditional homeland' (i.e. the Up-country) – and not to be used as cannon fodder to the Tamil nationalist movement or to be settled in the North-East as a buffer against Sinhala colonization as some Tamil NGOs with a political agenda were engaged in. However, it must be mentioned that the ferocity of the anti-Tamil riots that affected the Plantation areas in 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983 led to an inevitable exodus of the plantation Tamils to the Vanni. They were over-night converted from the status of a plantation proletariat to that of a pauperised peasantry and landless agricultural workers. It is this situation that also enabled the LTTE to later recruit them into their fighting forces.

Q: If we were today trying to reflect back on traditions of dissent and emancipation in Tamil politics to inspire a more democratic and inclusive path for the future – which are the moments – or who are the individuals – you would high-

light?

A: The individual I would highlight is Pathmanabha who was a revolutionary humanist who gave emphasis to love of the People as opposed to the Soil. The moment I would highlight is the when Pathmanabha prevailed on Pirabhakaran to join the united front (i.e. ENLF) in forging an inclusive and a democratic Tamil alliance. But, this alliance was not to last. His assassination by the LTTE is the cruel destiny that has befallen an entire people – the destiny of bloodletting within the Tamil community.

Q. Today bitterness and distrust between Tamils with affiliations to different groups appears to be as deep as that between Tamils and the Sri Lankan State. Does it suggest that Tamil politics focused too much on ethnicity as the principal reference point for diversity that was relevant for minorities?

A: Yes and No. The bitterness is evident and palpable – and I suppose is also manifest in my answer to the earlier question. But, it would be incorrect to say that the bitterness and distrust that has arisen and the decay that has set into the Tamil national movement is due to an excessive reliance on ethnicity. Ethnicity would cease to be factor only when the Ethnic Question is resolved in manner that is equitable and just. That is more so the reason that I would stress on the importance of the resolution of the Ethnic Question. This does not mean that I believe in a stage by stage theory where the resolution of the ethnic conflict is seen by some as the pre-requisite for the democratization and the healing process within the Tamil community. On the contrary, these are the two sides of the same struggle and constitutes the real challenge that all of us have to take up.

Just as much as how peace is indivisible – so is democracy and social justice. □

(Courtesy of 'lines', May 2003)



Peace activist with a welcome difference

(Weekend Standard, Saturday January 14, 2006)

Virtually the same people are hogging the primarily foreign funded peace lobby year after year mouthing hosannas ad nauseum, more to appease the LTTE, but thereby discrediting their whole exercise in the public eye. This week we spoke to a peace activist, who has been maintaining a rather low profile, but has been brave enough to speak his mind in the cause of telling the truth. He is Ketheshwaran (Kethesh) Loganathan presently a member of the Board of Directors of the Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Head of its Peace & Conflict Analysis Unit. He was during the period 1983-95, in the leadership of the EPRLF and also a member of the Tamil delegation at the Thimpu Peace Talks in 1985. Academically, he did his first degree at Georgetown University, Washington DC and his Master's in Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. He is the son of the first "Ceylonese" General Manager of the Bank of Ceylon following its nationalization in the mid-50s, the late Chelliah Loganathan.

WS:- You are one person in the peace front who is not afraid to call a spade, a spade. But we hear less and less from people like you, who are even handed. Why is that?

KL:- Well I am flattered. I always believe that the most convincing argument is one which is based on truth. As much as possible I try to articulate what I consider to be the truth which may not be the truth at all, but till such time that I'm convinced that it is not the truth, I will stand by it. So it is in that context perhaps that I may be seen as someone calling "a spade, a spade".

As to why there is a reluctance, inhibition to call a spade a spade or to speak the truth in this country, I would say one factor is a fear psychosis, particularly when it relates to affairs in the North and East - particularly when it applies to a Tamil person given the culture of violence and intolerance that crept into Tamil society and polity and later spread like a cancer. There is a high degree of fear to express one's own opinion. That is the situation that prevails in the North and East. But this is not to say

that there is a climate of freedom in other parts of the country. In different periods, particularly during the Premadasa Regime, there was this similar fear of expressing one's opinion- a fear psychosis in the South. And also given the culture of political violence and political killings which have not been confined only to the North and East, I would say there is also a certain amount of fear that might prevail in the South in terms of articulating one's own opinion.

WS:- Sometimes the peace message gets discredited because it seems the same people are sort of, shall we say hogging the limelight mouthing hackneyed and well rehearsed monotony. So don't you feel that if people with a balanced out look like you who are able to speak their minds come forward and speak out, that can restore some credibility.

KL:- I am sure there are others who are speaking out as well. But perhaps they lack an organizational frame work or an institutional frame work where things that they might say or utter might be that of an opinion of an individual and not necessarily of a movement as such which can take the message to

the people.

But one problem that I see in the peace constituency and civil society engaged in peace work, is that unwittingly we may have given peace a bad name by stressing only on what we call negative peace or the mere absence of war. In other words, the tendency not to speak about Peace with Democracy, or Peace with Human Rights or Peace with Pluralism or a Permanent Peace Settlement perhaps has given peace a bad name, and may have contributed to a certain amount of public cynicism about NGOs and about the Peace Constituencies. It may have even provided more ammunition to chauvinist forces. So this is one problem that I can see in relation to the deficiencies of the Civil Society engaged in peace work.

WS:- Since things are getting out of hand. Don't you think that instead of allowing Norway to just stumble along, the co-chairs should step in actively and bring about some sort of solution?

KL:- Yes. But it must be said that Norway is also a constituent member of the Co-chairs. Now the problem in relation to Norway, as I see it, is the dual role of Norway - one that of a facilitator and two that of a monitor. By monitor, I am referring to Norway as the Chair of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission. The particular problem of facilitator also being a monitor is unprecedented in other Peace Processes. In addition to overburdening Norway's role it also

led to perhaps a conflict of interest where Norway gave prominence to its role as a facilitator. Therefore in the process as a monitor it perhaps in many instances, as in the case of political killings and child conscription by the LTTE, decided to keep quiet or look the other way for fear of rocking the peace boat. And that problem continues and it has led to a credibility problem as far as Norway is concerned.

In that context perhaps the time has come for the co-chairs to play a more proactive role in monitoring the peace process, in particular monitoring the human rights aspects of the peace process and having its own independent monitoring mechanisms, while allowing Norway to concentrate on its role as a facilitator. I think a very strong case exists for the co-chairs to have its own monitoring mechanism given that the co-chairs are playing in any case a proactive role in the peace process.

WS:- This so called Oslo Agreement in which it is stated that the LTTE had accepted Federalism, is it just the imagination of the others and not that of the LTTE? The LTTE clearly did not say it.

KL:- The Oslo Communiqué is not exactly a Declaration. The Communiqué issued by Norway, like in most communiqués after the conclusion of each round of talks, said that the two parties have committed themselves to exploring federal structures in relation to resolving the ethnic conflict within a united Sri Lanka based on the principle of internal self-determination. Therefore the emphasis was on exploring and not a categorical commitment to federalism. Now the problem I see with the Oslo Communiqué' is whether it had actually internalised within the two parties. It appears that the Oslo Communiqué was more a case of addressing the international community rather than addressing each other or even addressing within oneself about Federalism. You see, one year after the Oslo Communiqué', Anton Balasingham went on record saying that the LTTE had not committed itself to Federalism. Similarly it is not clear, despite some rhetorical references to Federalism by the UNP leadership, as to whether the UNP is committed to federalism in principle or as a mere strategy. As to whether Federalism as a concept and as a system had actually internalized within the parties, I have my doubts.

WS:- Even the Indo-Lanka Accord was something thrust upon like that?

KL:- Perhaps, yes. To a large extent the parties responding to external or international pressure all devise strategies to neutralize such pressure and not address each other. In other words, rather than internalizing the resolution of the conflict through dialogue and restructuring, the emphasis has shifted towards internationalizing the resolution of the conflict.

WS:- So how do you go about tackling this issue. Prabhakaran has said that his people can shoot him if he digresses from the Eelam goal. So in your opinion what can be done by the co-chairs or the international community?

KL:- Firstly I think there must be a demonstration of political will of parties within the country. There's only so much that the international community can do. So clearly there must be a political will both on the part of the LTTE as well as the government of the day and the southern political formation to seriously address the issue. It cannot be just tossed over to the international community and say you come and solve our problem. And therein I see a deficit of the political will both on the part of the LTTE as well as the southern political parties. So unless we handle that particular lacuna, challenge, there is very little that the international community can do. So I would emphasize on the need for taking forward the internal processes of solving the conflict.

Certainly the international community can make its presence felt by nudging this or that party towards the resolution of the Tamil question and of course there had been doing their part. But sometimes one feels uncomfortable whether the international community is also now beginning to think more in terms of interim arrangements as opposed to a permanent peace settlement. I think the international community should once again remind themselves of the Tokyo Declaration which while referring to the need for interim arrangements, also stresses on parallel processes, leading to a permanent peace settlement. There are also references to demilitarisation and human rights. The problem with the Tokyo Declaration is that the LTTE did not attend the Tokyo Donor Conference in 2003. By that time they had pulled out of the direct negotiations. And therefore it is conceivable that the LTTE could argue that they were not party to the Tokyo Declaration. But that is a matter for negotiations. It could be a frame work which can be placed before all parties.

WS:- One of the reasons given by the Western coun-

tries for not exerting actual pressure on the LTTE to come to a settlement is that they feel that the Sinhala Governments are not sincere in what they are saying. Now to overcome that what if the South unilaterally provide the type of devolution available to states in India. Will the West then reciprocate or are they playing a double game?

KL:- Incidentally the Indian Constitution does not call itself federal or unitary. Many analysts use the term semi federal or quasi-federal to describe the Indian constitution. It has many federal features but it also has a central parliament which can intervene in many issues, many areas, which have been devolved to the states. But what is important is to capture the spirit of the Indian Constitution, not just the content. As you know in the Indian Constitution there is a provision where by the Central Government can dissolve the state assemblies and it was used for narrow partisan political reasons in the past. But what is interesting is that for the past twenty years that particular article 356 has not been used. So the spirit is very much there. So what we need is to catch the spirit of the devolution of power.

Further, the mere reference to unitary or federalism is misleading and in that sense I think I would strongly urge the government and other parties to get out of this futile debate, Unitary vs. Federalism, concentrate on a scheme of devolution of power,

a maximum devolution of power to the North and East using three basic criteria that has to be addressed—the issue of security, the issue of identity, the issue of socio economic advancement without always having to rely on the Central Government or Colombo. Most importantly the powers that are devolved should not be taken back unilaterally or at the whims and fancy of the Central Government. These are the elements that are needed. The labels are irrelevant. And in that sense I think it is encouraging that the President is increasingly using the term “maximum devolution of power” without reference to “unitary”. Likewise the UNP and the Tamil parties should be encouraged to talk about “maximum devolution of power” without reference to federalism. So there are ways of moving forward.

WS:- One good thing is despite all these problems there has been increased integration in the South. In the sense that there has been lots of investments by Tamils in Colombo and there are lots of Tamils living here. So shouldn't we also think of concentrating on guaranteeing more individual rights where ever people are than particularly thinking in terms of race or religion?

KL:- Unfortunately Sri Lanka is divided by identity consciousness. That is the reality. So while recognizing the need for safe guarding individual rights and the rights of citizens that goes beyond race and ethnicity, reli-

gion and so on, there is also a strong case to recognize the need for collective rights of the various categories that make up this country. After all this is a multi ethnic, multi religious, multi lingual country. And it is also important that we recognize that there should be unity in diversity and one cannot simply wish away that diversity or differences.

WS:- We should encourage pluralism as much as possible?

KL:- Certainly. There's no contradiction. In fact pluralism, individual and collective rights go hand in hand and are not mutually exclusive.

WS:- What is your evaluation of the current situation and where are we headed?

KL:- Many of us called the process no war, no peace, after the ceasefire agreement. No war because the big guns had fallen silent. No peace because there is no peace settlement and there were lots of problems taking place during the CFA. Unfortunately we are even going beyond that into undeclared war by the LTTE on the one hand and possibly an intensification of what is referred to as proxy war by the state on the other. In other words it is slipping into an all-out war situation. That is a very dangerous development and therefore it is important that as soon as possible, at the very earliest, both the Government and the LTTE should sit down and talk. Of course there are complications that have arisen. The first being the venue. Where does one sit down and talk. Although Norway and perhaps sections of the peace lobby say that the venue is not important and it does not matter, the fact of the matter is it does matter to the two parties. To the LTTE the insistence that it should be Norway is a strategic one, clearly aimed at rolling back the travel ban imposed by the EU and also pre-empting a total ban. Likewise on the part of the government they want to counter that strategy. Neither does government want to be seen going to Norway under duress, particularly given the escalation of violence by the LTTE. So despite what Norway is saying, to the two parties the venue is important. How does one resolve that? In my opinion the international community had already endorsed the offer by Japan as a venue by its Special Envoy Akashi in the statement of the Co-chairs of 19th December, where it referred to this offer of Japan as a venue and urged the two parties to proceed on that basis. So clearly as I see it, one way of resolving the problem is for an indication to be

given to the LTTE through Norway that following the first round of talks in Japan, the next meeting could be in Norway. Provided an agreement is reached in Japan that leads to a complete cessation of all hostilities. Another way out is for the first meeting to take place in No-man's land in Sri Lanka, between Muhamalai and Omanthai, and after a cooling off period perhaps the second round could take place in Norway. There are ways of overcoming this impasse. But it cannot be overcome by someone saying that it does not really matter. I recall Eric Solheim saying in a media interview that he is even prepared to go to the moon. We know that is not a practical solution to the problem. So this problem has to be sorted out.

Secondly it is important that the government is not being provoked into retaliating in a military sense, which would lead to an all-out war. Although the government has shown restraint in not militarily responding, there are very worrying situations pertaining to human rights particularly the recent incident in Trincomalee, where four or five students were executed.

WS:- Were they carrying grenades?

KL:- First report, I think was that a grenade had been lobbed and the students were injured. Also implying that possibly the grenade may have been thrown by the students. Subsequently the post-mortem revealed that the cause of death was bullets fired at close range. This is what also compelled the President to call for an immediate inquiry. Assuming the possible scenario that the students were members of the LTTE auxiliary force, some media reports indicate that they were only injured and were seen being bundled into a military vehicle. If that report is correct, clearly they in that sense died or were killed in custody. Under peace time conditions this can come under extra-judicial killings. Under war time conditions, it clearly comes under the ambit of war crimes. What is important is that there should be no culture of impunity. It is important that in responding to LTTE's provocations, one does not end up alienating the Tamil people. If the Tamil people are alienated there is no question of defeating the LTTE.

WS:- The LTTE provocations are non stop. The Mahaveerar Day speech even indicated a time period for the government to get its act together, but all that is being violated. What is the answer?

KL:- As far as a military threat from the LTTE is concerned and if it is a continuing threat, then any sovereign State has to be in a state of military preparedness. That is a very logical and obvious thing.

WS:- Why not the co-chairs and India come up with a road map with clear markers, as then each side can be held to account?

KL:- As I said before the priority lies with forces within Sri

Lanka and this is something that is being asked by the international community and by India from the government as to what is its road map? How do you intend proceeding, other than facing the military threat from the LTTE? How do you intend proceeding politically in terms of resolving the problem? And there it is important for the government to be able to demonstrate to the international community and to India that it does have a road map.

WS:- May be the solution might not be reached by having someone like Prof. G.L. Peiris at the helm, because it is not the glib talk that will do the trick. As in the Middle East, where the solution finally came from a one time notorious hawk like Sharon, so it might be better to have the JHU and JVP in the thick of it from the very start.

KL:- They must be involved. The process must be inclusive. It is exclusion that creates spoilers. It is part of a consensus building process. Perhaps there might also be case for a group of eminent persons, comprising of individuals both nationally and internationally, who can feed into this process in an advisory capacity. So there are various modalities by which it can be done.

WS:- Do you feel threatened because of the opinions that you have voiced?

KL:- As much as possible I don't allow myself to get into a state of paralysis by being crippled by fear. That does not mean that I'm fearless. That does not mean that I'm reckless. But as much as possible I don't allow fear psychosis to paralyse me. To me the essence of existence is self respect. □



From the 'Sathya' Column

While working as Head of its Conflict & Peace Analysis Unit of the Colombo-based Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Kethesh Loganathan, in his individual capacity, recommenced his role as a regular weekly columnist in the Daily Mirror from February 2004. He wrote under the pen name of "Sathya" and reproduced hereafter are some of his contributions.

Democracy and Peace are Indivisible

By Sathya, 16 February 2004

Sathya is pleased to return as a Columnist after a span of 5 years and extends his appreciation to the Daily Mirror for providing this space to him. What this columnist will attempt in his columns is to articulate the apprehensions and aspirations of Tamils who value democracy in their homeland and cherish the idea of peaceful coexistence with their Sinhalese and Muslim brethren all over the country. In this Sathya, as the name indicates, will strive to abide by Sathyam or Truth.

Truth of course is a relative term, although it has its innate universal elements. Sathya will speak and write the "Truth" till such time as he is convinced that what he has been uttering and writing is wrong. At which point he will truthfully admit his mistakes and rectify. Till then he will voice and write the Truth as it appears to him. Of course, Sathya is fully aware that there are other means by which dissent can be and is "silenced". Till such time, Sathya has no intentions of turning over and playing dead! By now, I guess those who attend civil society confabs would have realized the identity of Sathya!!

Now to the theme of this weeks column.

Democracy as in the case of Peace is indivisible. It is a truism that no one can negate. But it was negated by no other than a well-meaning Sinhala democrat and a friend who told me casually that the Sinhalese should be grateful to the LTTE that there is democracy in the south. And, that the Tamils should be grateful to the LTTE that their rights are respected by the Sinhalese. This comment came in the wake of another Sinhalese democrat who argued in a public forum a few months ago that the issue of democracy in the North-East is a matter that should be left entirely in hands of the LTTE and the Tamils.

I have been for sometime bothered by such utterances, particularly when it comes from progressive Sinhalese,

or at least by those who claim to be progressives. Hence, this first column by Sathya will focus on this vexed issue.

Firstly, it must be clearly borne in mind that armed resistance to oppression bordering on a genocidal situation is an inalienable collective and an individual right. But it is a right that should be exercised as a last resort since violence has a habit of turning inwards as it happened in the case of the Tamil Resistance. The Tamil armed resistance particularly following the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983 was a necessity. And, in this LTTE was only one of several Tamil organizations that had taken to arms. In short, the history of Tamil Resistance against state-sponsored violence and discrimination did not begin with the LTTE. But, the history of Tamil Resistance is also a history of violence turning inwards in the form of nihilism and internecine conflict that consumed the lives of hundreds of Tamil freedom fighters who died while fighting each other. There was neither self-respect nor dignity for the Tamil people when Tamil militant organizations tried to destroy each other in

trying to establish themselves as the "sole" protectors of the Tamil people. The LTTE was singularly responsible for this phenomenon in its pursuit of the "sole" representative status which has today destroyed the very "soul" of the Tamil People.

In a way the argument that the Tamils today live in self-respect because of the LTTE is both a reality and a myth (a relative Truth?). It is a reality to those who lack self-respect and a backbone to do their own fighting and those who remain as cheerleaders while living in comfort in Colombo, London, Washington and Sydney and send their children for higher studies, while the children of the underprivileged are martyred in the name of liberation. It is a myth to those who, in the presence of their sole representative, fear expressing a viewpoint that is different from that of their sole representative, while living in their own traditional homeland. Where, Sathya asks, is that self-respect leave alone the respect from their Sinhalese brethren liv-

ing in the south?

Secondly, it is forgotten by those well-meaning Sinhalese progressives, who perhaps as a result of their Sinhala "guilt" see the LTTE as having given the Tamils their self-respect, that barring the LTTE all other Tamil militant organizations which came into the democratic mainstream soon found them stigmatized for being "quislings" and "traitors" for having done so. Those who speak eloquently today about the need to empower the LTTE in the process of transforming them were quite unconcerned when other Tamil ex-militant organizations were going through the painful process of transforming themselves in the face of continuing chauvinism by the State and adventurism on the part of the LTTE. The same applies to international NGOs who take the task of engaging the LTTE with a missionary zeal, but view with contempt those Tamil militant organizations which laid down arms and entered the democratic mainstream, only to find that the stream was polluted.

It is about time that Sinhalese progressives and democrats, who give expression to a collective Sinhala "guilt" by extending to LTTE the credit of giving the Tamil people their self-respect and dignity, do some soul searching. Their position is untenable and also contrary to the principles of democracy, human rights and peace. Peace, Democracy and Human Rights cannot be enjoyed in one part, while the people living in another part of the country are denied these cherished values which alone give meaning to human existence and dignity.

Sathya will return next week with more heretical thoughts and alternative perspectives. □



Humbert Humphrey Fellowship - Maryland University, USA - 1999

Grand Tamil Alliance: United or Under?

By Sathya, 23 February 2004

Tamil society is keenly watching the political manoeuvring currently being enacted by the LTTE, the Tamil National Alliance, those Tamil parties in the North-East opposed to them and the Tamil Parties representing the Up-country Tamils and the Tamils of the Western Province. As such it is incumbent on Sathya to air his random thoughts on this issue which will appear in print on the penultimate day to the closing of the filing of nomination papers by the contesting parties and independent groups.

This then is the theme of this week's column.

The Tamil Net, the "unofficial" organ of the LTTE (if there is such a term) had this report on what Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan had to say to the press following the meeting that he had with the Tamil National Alliance on 17th February: "We unanimously decided today that the Tamil people should vote only for policies of the Tamil National Alliance. This is the wish of our leader and our leadership. Tamils should unite under one leadership and one policy or this election". (Emphasis is mine). These sentiments were once again expressed with some difference in emphasis in the meeting that Mr. Thamilselvan had with the leader of the Western province People's Front (WPPF), Mr. Mano Ganeshan and the leader of the Up-country People's Front (UPF), Mr.P.Chandrasekharan.

The stage was thus set for the formation of what could be termed a Grand Tamil Alliance that would contest not only in the North-East, but in districts in the Up-country as well as the Western Province. At the time of writing this column it is not clear whether the UPF and the WPPF will go along with the TNA in their own areas of support constituencies. Be that as it may, even if they contest separately, they stand committed to the unity of the Tamils of Sri Lanka, irrespective of their origins and places of domicile.

It is undeniable that unity is paramount in advancing the struggle of any oppressed peoples and the Tamils of Sri Lanka do constitute an oppressed people. But, it is also important to recognize that the Tamil People do not constitute a homogenous entity. While the Tamils of Sri Lanka have faced the common problem of institutionalized discrimination and state-sponsored anti-Tamil riots, there are other issues and problems specific to the Tamils of the North-East, the Up-country and Colombo. The Tamils of the North-East for instance faced the brunt of the war and suffered from loss of lives and limbs, destruction to property and livelihoods and psychological trauma. The Up-country Tamils for instance being primarily of a working class background face the problems of deprivation, pauperization and, of course, till recently faced the problem of statelessness. Likewise the Tamils of Colombo are affected by the non-implementation of the official languages act as well as ethnic stereo-typing.

If Sathya may digress into the area of academic pretensions,

he wishes to quote from a book written by Prof Ashutosh Varshney titled *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*. To quote: "Civic links across communities have remarkable local or regional variations. Depending on how different communities are distributed in local businesses, middle-class occupations, parties and labour market, they tend to differ from place to place. As a result, even when the same organization is able to create tensions and violence in one city or region, it is unable to do so in another city or region where civic engagements crosses communal lines. Local and regional variation in ethnic violence, its uneven geographical spread, is thus a function of civic engagement, which tends to vary locally and regionally".

It appears that the leader of the Ceylon Workers' Congress Arumugam Thondaman as well as the leader of the Western Province People's Front (WPPF) Mano Ganesan have come to grips with this reality. While the former has reaffirmed the wisdom of his grand-father's strategy based on coalition politics with the ruling party at the Centre, Mano Ganesan told reporters following his meeting with Thamilselvan, "In the Western province the WPPF should be victorious in the forthcoming elections. Thamilselvan requested that while the WPPF fights for the rights of the Tamil people living in the Western province, the WPPF should lend

its fullest support for the struggle of the North-East Tamils. We fully support his request". The leader of the Upcountry People's Front, P.Chandrasekeran also told reporters after his meeting with S.P.Thamilselvan last week and reported in the TamilNet, "We have already made an agreement with TNA in certain areas of the hill country and work independently or use other strategies suitable to the local communities. Only Nuwara Eliya district can be considered a dominantly Tamil region such as the North. In other districts we have to employ different strategies".

As regards the North-East, no one who is sane will contest the argument that the Tamil National Alliance are the proxies of the LTTE. What ought to be contested whether this symbolises Tamil unity or a case of the TNA coming under a hegemonic leadership – and a leadership which is not contesting the elections. In fact although it is now reported that the Tamil National Alliance will contest on the "single policy", namely support for the Interim Self-Governing Authority for the North-East (ISGA) of the LTTE, it is curious that none of the leading members of the TNA were sighted in Dublin when the LTTE delegates and its advisors sat down and finalized its ISGA proposals. So, is it "unity or under"?

Again, if one were to take the non-TNA Tamil parties coming forward to contest in the North-East, it appears that the EPDP is unable to overcome its self-perception that it is the "sole alternative" to the "sole representative". In the process, it has failed to shape a broad-based alliance. On the other hand, the Anandasangaree faction of the TULF appear more bent on teaching their detractors within the TULF a political lesson rather than projecting a democratic alternative to the LTTE-led Tamil alliance.

In short, the Tamil polity remains factionalised and tribalised, although the outcome of the elections in the North-East is a foregone conclusion. However, Sathya true to his name will not speak an un-truth. Instead, he chooses to remain silent on what that foregone conclusion is which to him is an unpalatable truth.

In short, Sathya is frustrated!

□

Election Campaigning and Monitoring in the North-East - A One Way Street?

By Sathya, 1 March 2004

With the closing of nominations for the forthcoming April 2 General Elections, the stage is now set for election campaigning and monitoring. Given the political culture and the past performance of the candidates and their goons who follow them on their campaign trail, election-related violence, intimidation and rigging is very much on the card. The presence of election monitors, local as well as foreign, has failed to act as a major deterrence to these practices which violate the basic norms of democracy and the conducting of free and fair polls. As such, it is imperative that we look closely at the monitoring of elections and the challenges and tasks that those who come forward to monitor would face. It is also important that the monitoring agencies, local as well as foreign, look closely into the manner in which they had monitored elections and election-related violence in the past.

The theme of this week's Sathya column focuses on the task and challenges of election campaigning and monitoring in the North-East.

Firstly the monitors of the electoral process as well as election-related violence such as PAFRELL and CMEV must remember that the conditions prevailing in the North-East and the rest of the country are different and would require different approaches and methodologies. As far as the North-East is concerned we have a situation where the dominant Tamil political formation, the Tamil National Alliance is contesting as the proxies of the LTTE. In fact, the TULF General Secretary Mr. Sampanthan, immediately following the filing of nominations, declared in public that the TNA was contesting on behalf of the LTTE. But that is putting it mildly since it was widely reported in the media that the TNA candidates had to take an oath of allegiance before the photograph of the LTTE leader before filing their nomination papers. The punishment for any violation of that oath, needless to say, goes far beyond a fine.

The crucial point that the monitors, local and foreign, should bear in mind is that the LTTE is not contesting, but has instead fielded its proxies in the form of the Tamil National Alliance. As such the TNA is fully responsible

for the conduct of the LTTE in the run-up to the elections. If the LTTE intimidates, then it is intimidating on behalf of the TNA. If the LTTE resort to violence then it does so on behalf of the TNA. The TNA in short will have to be held accountable and responsible for the acts of the LTTE that has a direct bearing on elections, including malpractices and the more serious matter of intimidation, violence and assassinations.

A more serious matter is the lead story in yesterday's state-controlled Sunday Observer that the LTTE has called for the setting-up of polling stations in LTTE-controlled areas. The election monitors and observers need to bear in mind that the entireties of the districts of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi which are under the complete control of the LTTE are not even referred to in the Ceasefire Agreement and where the SLMM have no access to. At the same time, it is clear from the statements and the conduct of LTTE that it is going to allow the people of these districts to vote in large numbers. This augurs well for democracy. What is not acceptable and a clear assault on the basic norms of democracy is if political parties, barring the TNA, are not allowed free access to LTTE-controlled

areas and the people residing in areas. They will not be able engage in any campaigning leave alone challenge the LTTE's claim that it is the sole representative of the Tamil People which incidentally also constitutes the main electoral platform of its proxies, the Tamil National Alliance. It is therefore imperative that the agencies monitoring the electoral process as well as election-related violence flag this incongruence in the electoral process in the North-East and prevail on the authorities to allow all political parties contesting in the North-East to campaign in areas under the control of the LTTE.

But, how is this to be done? When the SLMM itself has no access to the LTTE-controlled areas in these two districts, and given that these two districts also constitute the military nerve centre of the LTTE, it is somewhat impractical to expect the LTTE to allow political parties which are not prepared to act as its proxies and recognize it as the sole representative of the Tamil People to campaign in areas under their direct control. It is, however, conceivable that LTTE may in fact announce that anyone is free to engage in political campaigning, which undoubtedly would be met with a round of applause by the monitoring agencies as well as the international community. But, that round of applause could well end up as the sound of anguish and grief by the loved ones of the victims of possible abductions and political killings by the LTTE. The Amnesty Interna-

tional has already expressed its concern over this eventuality in recent statement released a couple of days ago. Sathya will not rule out the possibility of LTTE making its usual tokenism for international consumption and as a diplomatic offensive by declaring that areas under its control would be open to all political parties contesting in those districts and that election monitors would be allowed to function in those areas. But that clearly would be a case of the spider welcoming the fly into its parlour. Or to use a metaphor that is particularly pertinent, it is akin to walking into the Tiger's den. Cynicism and wry humour aside, the international community and the monitors must engage in serious reflection on how to ensure that any arrangements that would allow the people in LTTE controlled areas to vote in large numbers is balanced by similar arrangements that would allow political parties not belonging to LTTE proxies to have access to the people living in those areas without restrictions on their movement and risks to their lives. It is therefore imperative that all steps are taken by election monitors and the international community which fund them to ensure that the condition of access to voters by all contesting political parties be guaranteed ensured along with the access of voters to polling stations. It is indeed alarming that the EPDP has alleged that the LTTE has prevented them from engaging in a door to door campaigning even in Government-controlled areas. That the EPDP did precisely that in Kayts at the last General Elections is another matter and is no justification of allowing another wrong in the forthcoming elections

Any imbalance between access of voters to polling stations and access of political parties to voters would tantamount to a one way street, akin to the ceasefire agreement. It would also make a mockery of the electoral process and would render it a farce with the election monitors, observers and their international donors giving their routine certificate of validation to a farcical process. This danger looms large given the pre-existing, the present as well the emerging situation in the North-East.

Election monitors and observers, local as well as foreign, carry a tremendous burden on their shoulders to ensure that the norms of democracy and free and fair elections are met in the North-East. The monitors and observers should also realize that what they do and report will also come under close scrutiny by other actors in civil society and that monitoring can work both ways, although the election campaigning in the North-East in all likelihood is bound to be a one way street. □

Finding False Answers to Some False Questions

By Sathya, 8 March 2004

Sathya in his last column focused on the challenges that election monitors would face in monitoring elections in the North-East and the dilemma that they and other civil society actors face in balancing the right of voters to polling stations and the right of contesting political parties to voters. These are rights that it seems almost impossible to meet in the North-East.

On the one hand, some have argued that the decision of the LTTE to allow polling stations to be set-up in areas under their control is a positive development since this is tantamount to the LTTE accepting the writ of the State in "Tamil Eelam" as well as giving the people in those areas, who have been virtually disenfranchised for more than a decade, the right to exercise their franchise. On the other hand, others, including Sathya, have argued that the electoral process would be rendered farcical if the contesting political parties do not have access to the voters, as is the case in the areas under the control of the LTTE. In fact this is also the case in Government-controlled areas which was brought into sharp relief by the two political killings of last week.

Sathya reliably understands that Anandasangaree who is gallantly taking on the proxies of the LTTE in the Jaffna district, had to drop the idea of fielding a slate in Batticaloa because of threats and intimidation that his potential candidates suffered at the hands of the LTTE. It was this that Sathya characterised as the "One Way Street" syndrome.

In a bid to break this impasse, some international actors, led by Norway, and local NGOs and civil society actors have been reflecting on several scenarios. The first relates to the opening up of polling stations in LTTE controlled areas as well as giving access to international monitors. The LTTE was clearly in favour of this proposal, but ran against some valid practical reasons. The Sri Lanka police and security personnel cannot be deployed in LTTE controlled areas by the Election Commissioner, leave alone

the fact that the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) itself has no permanent presence in the districts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu and other nerve centres of the LTTE. That the SLMM has taken the position that monitoring or facilitating the electoral process does not come within its mandate did not help matters either. Neither can the SLMM be blamed for taking this position since the Cease-fire Agreement does not even mention the districts of Kilinchchi and Mullaitivu. The proposals to allow international monitors into the LTTE-controlled areas in the absence of political parties not having access to these areas would amount to giving legitimacy and the issuance of a certificate of validation to a fraudulent process.

A second option that is being considered seriously is to set-up polling stations in "buffer zones" or "No Man's land" along the de facto "line of control" to allow the Vanni voters access to polling stations. It has also been suggested that facilities be provided by way of vehicles to bring the voters in. But, any such arrangements if not met by similar facilities being given to Tamil political parties, other than LTTE's sole proxies, to

travel to the LTTE-controlled areas and campaign without hindrance to mobility and risk to lives would again tantamount to monumental farce – a farce that international actors and their local beneficiaries may be party to.

The “One Way Street” syndrome hence would remain unresolved and the issue of disenfranchisement or franchisement would remain a false question. The fact of the matter is that conditions simply do not exist for a free and fair elections in vast areas of the North-East and the LTTE is primarily responsible for this state of affairs. Further, just as much as Sathya would argue that the authoritarian character of the Sri Lankan State, the repressive nature of the security forces and the chauvinism of the political formations and the bureaucracy in the south led to the creation of the LTTE, it is the intransigence of the LTTE and its undemocratic and nihilist nature that has created the situation of the people living in the areas controlled by it being disenfranchised.

Now Sathya moves to yet another false question. The curious question that was posed by a political commentator to the DIG Election...in a telephone interview, as to whether the political killings in the North-East constitute a violation of the ceasefire agreement or constitute an election violence. This was akin to the issue that was

raised several months ago when the LTTE went on a killing spree after the signing of the ceasefire agreement as to whether these killings constituted violations of the ceasefire agreement or a law and order problem. Like the DIG Election who was left stuttering when confronted by this question, the SLMM spokespersons were also left stuttering when the confronted with the other question. But why? In fact, why pose those questions at all. Is not the killing of civilians a violation of the ceasefire agreement and a crime under the penal code? Is not the killing of a candidate a crime under the penal code as well as an election violence?

Moving to yet another false question, who should be held responsible for the recent killing of election candidates and party activists in the North-East. The mainstream Tamil dailies either evaded the question or came out with the rank “third force” argument. Others pointed the finger at the LTTE. But, what was left unasked was if it was a third force, then pray who?

As both PAFRELL and CMEV pointed out in their statements, it is the LTTE and the Government authorities who are in control of those areas. On the other hand, if it was the LTTE, then where does the TNA stand on this matter? The TNA has officially announced that it contests on behalf of the LTTE and the LTTE has officially announced that it campaigns on behalf of the TNA. It is therefore clear that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two. And, by logical extension if the LTTE kills it does so on behalf of the TNA. And, if the TNA spins a yarn in their election campaigning it does so on behalf of the LTTE.

And the best of the false question is why would the LTTE kill, intimidate and possibly rig if victory by their proxies the TNA is a foregone conclusion. It must be clearly understood that the LTTE does not want its proxy to win – it wants TNA to sweep the polls and give validity to its claim that it is the sole representative of the Tamil people. That is what makes LTTE desperate – and, therefore dangerous.

In short, all the questions posed above are false, since those who pose them either know what the answers are or pretend not to know the answers. This to Sathya is an intolerable truth! □

Tamil Nationalism at its Crossroads

by Sathya, 15 March 2006

'Colonel' Karuna, the Batticalo/Amparai leader of the LTTE, in his letter to LTTE leader Veluppilai Pirabhakaran made public on 5th March declared that he wished to serve the people of 'South Tamil Eelam' and that it was his wish to die at their feet. He further appealed to Pirabhakaran that if he believed in the People and the fighters of Batticaloa/Amparai, he should allow them to work independently under his (i.e. Pirabhakaran's) leadership.

The response of the LTTE leader and the Vanni-based "National Leadership" was predictable. In a statement issued the following day at a Press Conference in Killnochi, the LTTE announced that Karuna had been "discharged from the Liberation Tigers and relieved of his responsibilities" for having "planned to secede himself from the liberation organization". The charge was that Karuna, "instigated by some malicious elements opposed to the Tamil Eelam Liberation struggle, acting traitorously to the Tamil people and the Tamil Eelam National Leadership, has planned to secede himself from the liberation organization".

The stage was thus set for an internecine conflict that could prove to be bloody with wires and cyber space getting clogged with reports of clashes, assassinations and conspiracies involving an "external hand", including the Indian intelligence RAW and Sri Lanka's military-intelligence apparatus. The involvement of western actors in either trying to patch up the differences between Pirabhakaran and Karuna or in tilting towards the Vanni-based leadership has also drawn the attention of conspiracy theorists. This is not to suggest that these conspiracy theories are necessarily wrong. Time is the best judge.

What is of particular concern to Sathya are not the reports centred on personality clashes, power struggle and conspiracy theories relating to the Karuna episode. The theme of this week's column, however, is a reflection on the particular conjuncture in which Tamil Nationalism finds itself today. A reflection prompted by the Karuna episode and the wider ramifications it has on Tamil nationalism and its future trajectory. Sathya, being a Tamil whose ancestral roots are in Vadamarachchi in Jaffna district on his father's side and in Vanni on his mother's side, does so in a sombre mood which could well reflect the collective Tamil psyche and all

the apprehension and anxieties that go along with it.

Tamil Nationalism has always prided itself in its self-perceived homogeneity and manifest destiny. Tamils were a distinct nationality. Tamils had a clearly identifiable homeland comprising the Northern and Eastern provinces. And, as such the Tamils had the inalienable right to self-determination that includes the right to secede. The above was the basis on which Tamil nationalism advanced its case, initially through peaceful means, and later through the force of arms in the face of State repression. These are concepts and assertions that were taken for granted by Tamil nationalism, embodied in the 'Thimpu Principles'. Its antecedent could also be found in the Federal Party convention in the 50s and the Vaddukkodai resolution of May 14, 1976. Identities based on class, caste, gender, religious and regional diversities were all subsumed under this homogenous category. Everything had to be placed on hold till the Tamils got their "Tamil Eelam".

Gradually, the socialist and Marxist-Leninist influences began to challenge this notion of homogeneity and stressed on the importance of differentiating the Tamil Nationality into the equally important sub-categories and sub-strata cited above. This was the

focus of youth radicalism during the mid-70s and the early 80s. However, the intensification of State repression against the legitimate peaceful and democratic struggles of the Tamil national movement and frequent state-sponsored pogroms, pushed the broad Tamil National Movement as well as its progressive and left-oriented components into giving primacy to armed resistance. In this, the ultra-Tamil nationalist tendencies gained ascendance till today we have the claim of the LTTE as the "sole representative" that would give leadership to the entire Tamil struggle under a single national leader and leadership. This came out in sharp relief when LTTE's Political Wing leader S.P.Thamilchelvan told the media following his meeting with the TNA in Kilinochchi on 17th February, "We unanimously decided today that the Tamil people should vote only for the policies of the TNA. This is the wish of our leader and leadership. The Tamils should unite under one leadership and one policy for this election". Incidentally the "one policy" included the demand for the acceptance and implementation of the LTTE's proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) for the North-East. That the proposal is in itself unitarist and majoritarian in form and content within the North-East is conveniently ignored by Tamil nationalism. The Tamil nationalist demand for autonomy and federalism it appears is only vis a vis the State.

At the outset it must be emphasised that the Karuna episode is not something that relates to a single, deranged individual as the LTTE leadership has put out.

In fact, it must be noted that almost all Tamil militant organizations had to contend with a Eastern local leadership that constantly demanded autonomy. As such the assertion by Karuna should not come as a surprise. But it did come as a rude shock to the Tamil ultra-nationalist who believed that it is only an organization like the LTTE which is centralized, authoritarian and which stood by the dictum, "might is right" that could deliver their "Tamil Eelam". The assertiveness of Karuna and the challenge thrown by him to the centralized leadership has shattered this image. The only way that the LTTE could restore that image is to carry out a swift military putsch against Karuna or a cloak and dagger assassination bid. It is beyond the LTTE innate character to accommodate pluralism and diversity within its organization, akin to Tamil Nationalisms' innate tendency to negate diversity and pluralism within Tamil society. This is not in any way to project Karuna as the democrat or as the alternative to God himself as Karuna referred to Pirabhakaran in his open letter to him in a tone that combined defiance with reverence. In fact, Sathya is of the opinion that Karuna had begun seeing himself as the Pirabhakaran of the East and the challenge posed by Karuna to the LTTE leader is both an assertion of regionalism as well as his military power centre.

Here again it must be clearly understood that regionalism in the East is not a new phenomenon. In fact it is the result of years of perceived grievance that the East is being dominated by the North. But, it is a perception that is shared largely by the intelligentsia and the ruling elites of the East against the intelligentsia and the ruling elites of the North. Karuna and Pirabhakaran are only the agents of these ruling elites who have manipulated them to serve their own interests. There in lies the ingredients of the unfolding Greek Tragedy.

The time has come for Tamil Nationalism to look inwards. It has reached its crossroads. It is not Sathya's contention that Tamil nationalism will wither away. Neither would the notion of a Tamil traditional homeland that encompasses the North and East as one single politico-administrative entity simply fade away simply because of the Karuna factor. It will not as long as Sinhala Nationalism holds sway over the body politic in Sri Lanka and denies the Tamil People their due identity, democratic and political rights. At the same time the North and the Jaffna-centric Tamil nationalist leadership cannot afford to take the East for granted or deny political diversity and pluralism within the totality of the Tamil nationality.

The time has come for Tamil Nationalism to be People-centred rather than Land-centred. Sathya will have more to say on this theme at an appropriate time and conjuncture.□

General election most foul!

By Sathya, 12 April 2004

The electoral process in the North-East was not free and fair. In the words of the Heads of Mission of the European Union, "it was a matter of deep concern that the election process in the North and East was tainted by intimidation and violence".

What is of greater concern to Sathya is that the statement of the European Union was itself an under-statement. The Oxford Dictionary defines the term "taint" as a "trace of a bad or undesirable quality or substance". A trace indeed! To use an oft cited Tamil proverb, it is akin to trying to hide a whole pumpkin in a bowl of rice!

Firstly, the run-up to the elections was not only fraught with violence and intimidation, but also punctuated (not "tainted") by the denial of the right to vote, the right to choose and the right to life.

The withdrawal of Anadasangae from fielding an independent list in Batticaloa district was entirely due to intimidation from the LTTE, when potential candidates started dropping-off one by one. This was followed by the UNP candidate in Batticaloa district S.Sunderampillai dropping dead at the feet of "alleged" LTTE assassins. The term "alleged" of course has now become a joke.

Suffice it to say the Sudar Oli of 16th February had a front page lead story with the heading "There is no room for chauvinist parties in the Tamil motherland".

And the strap line read, "Says Tamilchelvan on his return to Kilinochchi after meeting Bala". This report was followed by other reports that made it clear that the LTTE had issued a diktat that no Tamils should contest in the North-East on the UNF or the UPFA slates. Suffice it to say again, following the assassination "allegedly" by the LTTE, four UNP candidates announced that they were dropping out of the race. A cartoon in a leading Tamil daily depicted these candidates as feigning illness with

much dark humour. With the split in the LTTE, the bloodletting in Batticaloa-Amparai almost took the life of the Batticaloa GA and Chief Returning Officer Mounaguruswamy, while consuming the life of TNA candidate and Karuna supporter, Rajan Sathyamoorthy. Sathyamoorthy was not even allowed to rest in peace, when his body was dug out and set on fire.

In Jaffna, the election scene was largely characterized by assault and intimidation of the candidates and supporters of the TULF leader Anandasangary, who was heading the independent list, and candidates and supporters of EPDP-EPRLF. They were simply not allowed to campaign. The candidates were stalked, stoned, attacked and assaulted whenever an opportunity arose.

The perpetrators included LTTE cadres who were engaged in 'political activities' courtesy the ceasefire agreement, goon squads of Tamil National Alliance contesting on the Light House symbol of the Federal Party founded by the revered Gandhian "Thanthai Chelva" who must surely be turning in

his grave, and members of the LTTE front within the Jaffna University, who Sathya fondly referred to as the 'Monkey Brigade' in an earlier column.

That the TNA candidate Gajendran, the former student leader from Jaffna University should lead in the preference votes with more than 100,000 votes, speaks volumes for the sheer perseverance, creativity and the hard work that went into the massive impersonations that took place on the day of the elections led by sections of the students.

It therefore did not come as a surprise that the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) issued a statement that the only conclusion one could reach was that there was a strong case for the annulment of polls in Jaffna district - or, something to that effect.

As regards the Vanni voters who turned out in large numbers with their families and infants at the clustered polling booths in transport vehicles arranged by the respective GAs and the LTTE, it was indeed a carnival atmosphere.

Sathya was almost in tears when he saw video footage showing the sheer enthusiasm demonstrated by the voters in voting for the only symbol that they were allowed to see, and

the only political formation that they had been instructed to vote for. Actors in the international community who had shown similar enthusiasm prior to the elections in ensuring that the Vanni voters be allowed to exercise their franchise, applauded and nodded their heads that this was indeed democracy at work.

No one bothered to ask the question whether the Vanni voters had a choice and as to whether they were in fact aware of such a choice. The outcome of the elections was a foregone conclusion. Sathya and anyone with a modicum of understanding of the Tamil psyche would have predicted that the proxies of the LTTE would have secured the majority number of seats in the North-East in a free and fair election. This is indisputable. But, a majority was just not enough, since the TNA were the proxies of the 'sole' representative. And, therefore, winning was not enough.

There had to be a clean sweep. Hence the over-kill. In the process, there is no doubt that the Tamil Alliance contesting on behalf of the LTTE and for whom the LTTE campaigned with much gusto that included rigging, intimidation, impersonation, violence and assassinations has lost all legitimacy in the eyes of those who know what happened, and in the eyes of those who pretend that nothing really happened. Some of the election monitors recorded their observations honestly and accurately, while others felt that to report what they witnessed would have impaired the peace process and the legitimacy of the LTTE on which they believe the peace process hinges.

Those monitors who forward this argument forget that they were mandated only to record and report what they see, hear and investigate. They were not mandated to be the peacemakers or peacekeepers.

Before concluding this column, Sathya has a riddle for the readers. On the day of the elections PAFFREL inserted a full-page advertisement in the print media giving the names of all their District Coordinators under the caption, "Our Non-Partisan Coordinators". The list did not include Jaffna District! So, what does it mean? □

Reassertion of Tamil Nationalism – A Time Bomb!

By Sathya, 26 April 2004

“Time is running out” said a re-elected Tamil member of parliament affiliated to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in a recent telephone interview to the morning News line programme. That telling remark which was made following the meeting that the elected TNA members of parliament had with the LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabhakaran following the General Election, in a way, is a wake-up call to all concerned and constitutes the theme of this week’s Sathya column. That the Member of Parliament is the son of a first cousin of Sathya, whose father is also a first cousin of the grand-father of the Tamil Member of Parliament, is another matter. So much for Sathya’s family tree which today stands like the Palmyra bereft of branches. Now to theme of this week’s column.

The message that has been emanating from the election campaign conducted so democratically by the TNA with the able-bodied backing of the LTTE conforming to all the norms of the electoral process in Sri Lanka, including impersonations, rigging and killing, and the message emanating after the elections could be paraphrased as follows: “The Tamil people have overwhelmingly accepted the LTTE as their sole, authentic representative and have given an overwhelming mandate for the implementation of the Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) proposal of the LTTE. It is now for the Sinhala People and their polity to decide whether they recognize this mandate or not. This would ultimately decide whether we will continue to be a part of Sri Lanka or go our separate ways. The ball is now in your court and Tamil Nationalism is the name of the game”. But such phraseology is not alien to Sathya.

It may be recalled that the TULF based its 1977 General Election campaign on high-voltage Tamil nationalism. In

its manifesto, it called for the establishment of “an independent, sovereign, secular, socialist state of Tamil Eelam”. The manifesto also made explicit its intention of forming a Constituent Assembly comprising the TULF members elected into the National Assembly (as the Legislature was then referred to) for the purpose of establishing “the independence of Tamil Eelam by bringing that constitution into operation either by peaceful means or by direct action or struggle”. The TULF ended up the second largest party in Parliament and the main opposition in an election that gave the UNP a 5/6ths majority. The SLFP was virtually decimated.

However, soon after the General Elections of July 1977, Prime Minister J.R.Jayawardene (he made himself the all-powerful Executive President the following year) issued the “if you want to fight, let there be a fight, if it is peace let there be peace” challenge to the TULF and to the Tamil People after having softened up the Tamil psyche through a state-sponsored anti-Tamil pogrom just one month

after the General Election.

The TULF ultimately settled for the District Development Councils (DDCs) in 1981. It was indeed a giant leap backwards from "Tamil Eelam" to the DDCs. Incidentally, J.R.Jayawardene assured a delegation of Buddhist clergy who had protested against the DDC Bill, that the District Councils did not even have powers enjoyed by the Municipal and Village Councils! Further, the leader of TULF and leader of the opposition in explaining to David Selbourne, a British academic cum journalist, as to why the TULF had accepted the DDCs, mentioned, "If I had told Jayawardene to go to hell, so many Tamils would have gone to heaven".

Coming to the present, the TNA parliamentarians, the avatar of the TULF, continue to engage in high-voltage nationalist rhetoric for their political existence and physical survival. What is different now is that then the TULF had only the "boys" to contend with when they exerted pressure on them not to compromise. Likewise, J.R.Jayawardene was then certain that "terrorism" could be wiped out in one year. Well, it was to last till now! Now, the State has an entire conventional LTTE army staring at them across lines of control in the North and a long porous "border" in the East. The TNA parliamentarians have the conventional suicide bombers and pistol gangs to contend with waiting with "garlands" and the "pottu" in case they

compromise or violate the oath they took before the photograph of the "national leader" before the elections. As to whether they re-took the oath in Kilinochchi after the election is a moot point. The presence of Pottu Amman, the head of LTTE's Intelligence Wing, in all the meetings that the TNA have had with the LTTE in Kilinochchi must be somewhat disconcerting to the TNA parliamentarians, to say the least. Media reports and other "sources" indicate that the LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabhakaran had stipulated to the TNA parliamentarians in no uncertain terms that if the ISGA is not obtainable, then all steps should be taken to expose Colombo before the international community and proceed thereafter to asserting the external right to self-determination and, if necessary, separation. The Supremo does not mince words, although he certainly knows how to mix it with much humour.

On the flip side of the coin, the political instability in the South with a hung-parliament and a cohabitation crisis of a totally different nature within the ruling political alliance, the strident Sinhala-Buddhist platform of the JHU and the anti-devolution stance of the JVP all contribute to an unfolding scenario that clearly threatens the peace process. The recent statement of the Presidential Secretariat, confirmed by the Norwegian Government, calling on Norway to reassume its role in facilitating direct talks between the Government and the LTTE gives some assurance that the stalled peace talks will recommence, although with some delay. But, to sustain the peace process requires a sense of commitment and singularity of purpose on all sides.

So, what is to be done? Firstly, the UPFA should subordinate their petty political rivalries and get down to the task of Governance as expected by at least those who they claim have given them a mandate. The UPFA should further "hasten slowly" as Sathya argued in his column last week on its Constituent Assembly project that hinges on a unilinear or a bilinear agenda (i.e. Abolition of the executive Presidency and electoral reforms) and strive towards a wider and an incremental consensus, which includes devolution.

Secondly, the UNP should play the role of a responsible opposition and not count the days when they can topple the Government, as hinted by Ranil Wickreminghe in his address following the elections. The UNP should also give a firm commitment to federal structures, which it has dodged so far, as stipulated in the Oslo Declaration of

December, 2003. Needless to say, the urgent task of rehabilitation and the reconstruction of the devastated North-East, to which the UNF and the UNFA manifestos referred to, should be given top priority.

Thirdly, the stalled peace talks with the LTTE should recommence unconditionally on both sides. The LTTE must realize that the notion of exposing Colombo before international opinion would only apply if the ISGA proposals are seen to be realistic. The notion of “take it or leave and if you leave it we will go our own way” is not negotiations. It is arrogance and, it is conceivable that it is the LTTE that may end up being exposed before international opinion. The LTTE should further realize that there is something called national opinion that includes Tamil opinion. And, Tamil opinion is for a peace that ensures their identity, dignity and security. It would indeed be ironic if the LTTE, the “sole representative” denies the Tamil People the above in their own homeland.

If the above conditions are not satisfied, then not only is time running out, but the time bomb would start ticking - assuming that it has not already.

Sathya as usual finds it difficult to conclude his columns without digressing into paradoxes which are profoundly trivial! A case in point is the news item that the LTTE has declared the “Karthigai Poo” (a variant of the Lily flower) as the national flower. Following this announcement, numerous Tamil websites have been attributing the flower

to Lord Murugan who is characterized in these websites as the “Tamil God” and the “War God”. In Sathya’s opinion, this characterization is an anathema to everything that Lord Murugan stands for. The feet of Lord Murugan or Karthikeyan stands for surrender - the surrender of one’s own ego. It is following that surrender of one’s ego and megalomania should one call on His “Vel” (the spear) to protect oneself from the forces of evil. To think of the “Vel” as the destroyer of others, without having destroyed one’s own ego and megalomania is asking for trouble. And, finally the face of Lord Murugan, radiates nothing but serenity and love. There is no hatred or venom. Suffice it to say, none of these attributes of Lord Murugan symbolizes the ferocity of the Tiger emblem. It is a negation of everything that Lord Murugan stands for. □



CPA - Colombo - 2002

Sole Representative: Much Ado About Nothing!

By Sathya, 31 May 2004

The UPFA Secretary Susil Premjayanth on Saturday 9th May issued a statement which sought to clarify the UPFA's stand on LTTE claim that they are the sole representative of the Tamil People. The statement further sought to clarify an observation made by Lakshman Kadirgamar that the Government by "implication" recognizes the LTTE as sole representative of the Tamils.

The JVP, a constituent member of the UPFA, however, issued a statement the following day on 10th May, that "that the LTTE should be a principal party to the negotiations. We will not accept the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamils".

So, what exactly is LTTE's status? This then constitutes this week's Sathya Column.

Going back to the UPFA statement, the following is the operative section: "Negotiations concerning the resolution of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka have always been conducted between the Government of the day and the LTTE except at Thimpu. On all such occasions the Government and the LTTE

have been the principal negotiating partners. This was so during the time of President Premadasa, during the first administration of President Kumaratunga and during the two year regime in which former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's government was conducting the negotiations on behalf of Sri Lanka. This historical fact is reflected in the current Ceasefire Agreement which was signed only by the leader of the LTTE and the former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Thus, taking into account the political and ground realities concerning the conduct of the negotiations it is clear that the two principal parties at the negotiation table can only be the Government and the LTTE. It is on this basis that Foreign Minister Kadirgamar was correctly quoted by the "Island" Newspaper on 30th April 2004 under the headline, "Govt recognizes by implication LTTE as sole representative of Tamils".

Firstly, it is factually incorrect that all negotiations after Thimpu on finding a negotiated settlement had taken place only between the Government and the LTTE. To set the record straight, following the collapse of the Thimpu Talks in mid-1985, the Government of India, playing the role of a mediator, initiated a series of "proximity talks" that involved primarily the Sri Lankan Government and the TULF. However, all other Tamil politico-military organizations represented at Thimpu (i.e. LTTE, EPRLF, TELO, EROS and PLOTE) continued to be consulted. The "proximity" talks were based initially on what was called the "Draft Framework of Accord and Understanding" of 30th August 1985 which later evolved into what came to be termed the "December 19" proposals of 1986. The Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 recognized these two proposals as the basis for future negotiations. Unfortunately and, this remains the main flaw in the Accord, future negotiations on "residual matters" were to be conducted only between the two Governments. But, the point to be

noted is that all Tamil parties that took part in Thimpu were invited to a meeting with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the eve of the signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord in July 29, 1987 to ascertain any apprehensions or observations that they may have on the terms of the Accord and related matters. This meeting took place the day before Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi left for Colombo

If one moves on to the tragic developments following the signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord and the renewal of armed hostilities, this time between the LTTE and the IPKF, what we had was the passage of the 13th Amendment which was rushed through parliament without any meaningful negotiations on "residual matters". Be that as it may, elections to the North-East Provincial Council were held in November 1988 and the EPRLF-led coalition formed the first and the only elected N-E Provincial Council to date. That the polls were severely flawed with the EPRLF-led coalition enjoying the full patronage of the IPKF is no secret. But, what is relevant to the issue is that negotiations commenced between Chief Minister Varadarajaperumal of North-East Provincial Government and President Premadasa on giving effect to devolution of power embodied in the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. In fact, the North-East Provincial Government in its first policy statement on assuming office declared that the powers devolved under the 13th Amendment "hardly satisfy the aspirations of the Tamil speaking people of the North East province" and that it would commence negotiations with the Premadasa Government with a view to "working out a satisfactory package of devolution". That the outcome of these negotiations was far from satisfactory is another matter. But the fact of the matter is that negotiations did take place with Tamil political parties other than the LTTE. This again belies the statement issued by the UPFA that negotiations after the Thimpu Talks, concerning the resolution of the ethnic problem, had been held only between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka Government.

Again, one cannot ignore that in both the All Party Conference convened by President Premadasa in 1989-90 as well as in the Mangala Moonesinghe Parliamentary Select Committee of 1991-92, the Tamil interests were represented by Tamil political parties other than the LTTE. Neither were these parties the "proxies" of the LTTE. In fact, when the issue of de-merger cropped-up, seven Tamil organizations, TULF, EPRLF, ENDLF, ACTC, EROS and PLOTE presented a Joint Memorandum to the Chairman

of the Select Committee stressing that "We are of the considered view that, as far as the Tamil People are concerned, any meaningful attempt at solving the Tamil Question can only be on the basis of an unified politico-administrative entity" for the merged North-East". Here again, the issue that Sathya is raising here is not the pros and cons of merger/demerger, but the fact that Tamil political parties, other than the LTTE were in fact engaged in negotiations on resolving the Ethnic Question during this period.

Still again, following the collapse of the PA-LTTE peace talks of 1994-95, for the first time in Sri Lankan contemporary history, the Government of the day recommended the dismantling of the unitary state and its replacement with a "union of regions" based on the federal idea. One of the architects was the late Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam, a Tamil intellectual cum politician, who was by no means a LTTE ideologue or a LTTE proxy! He was in fact blown to bits by a LTTE suicide bomber!

In sum, the stand taken in the UPFA statement that "Negotiations concerning the resolution of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka have always been conducted between the Government of the day and the LTTE except at Thimpu." is, to put it mildly, untenable.

Now let us proceed to the claim by the LTTE that it is the sole representative of the Tamil Peo

ple and the statement of the UPFA that the LTTE are the sole representative by "implication". That the LTTE should explicitly assert that it is the sole representative of the Tamil people is understandable and predictable. It cannot be otherwise. That is the very nature of the LTTE which stands for everything that is a negation of democracy!

But, pray how could anyone else imply or confer the "sole representative" of the Tamil people on the LTTE or on anyone else for that matter? The LTTE, obviously, has a role to play as the principal negotiator when it comes to negotiations and the direct talks. But that is negotiations. How does that make the LTTE the sole representative of a People? While the term "principal" negotiator is consistent with the principles and norms of negotiations given the ground politico-military reality, the term "sole representative" has far reaching connotations and consequences. The very term itself is obsolete, archaic and undemocratic.

It is indeed ironic that many cite the outcome of the polls in the North-East as sufficient cause to extend to LTTE this status of "sole representative". That the manner in which both the election campaigning and the electoral process was conducted was farcical is now well recorded and will no doubt resurface if the election petition of the

EPDP and the Fundamental Rights Case of Anandasangary are taken up by the judiciary. But, even if one were to assume that the LTTE proxies swept the polls in a free and fair elections, does it make the victors the sole representative of an entire people for all times? Are we then saying that there is no need for elections in the North-East in the future? Are we not ignoring the fact that although the LTTE may be monolithic, Tamil society is not? Are we not rejecting the principles of pluralism and political diversity? Or, if one takes the national level, is it in fact necessary for a political party to be represented in parliament to be considered as representing the interests of those who voted for them? For instance prior to 1994, when the JVP had no representation in parliament, could one have argued that the JVP did not represent sections of the Sinhalese People? Or. Conversely could one have argued that the UNP and the SLFP together constitute the sole representatives of the Sinhalese People?

As H.L.de Silva, with whom Sathya had locked horns on several occasions in the past and across the ethnic divide, noted in a recent public lecture, "there can be no question of a single group being the 'sole representative' of a people, even though they claim to be their liberators and the repositories of ultimate wisdom. That is naked hegemonism which is the very anti-thesis of self-determination". Suffice it to say, the concept of Sole Representation has no place in any discourse on democracy or for that matter in any democratic society.

The notion of a principal negotiator, on the other hand, is quite consistent with acceptable norms and principles of negotiations. In this context, the clarification of Lakshman Kadirgamar during the discussion that followed his presentation at the Brookings Institute in Washington D.C last week that the Government sees the LTTE by implication as the sole representative of the Tamil people only "at the negotiating table" and would include "the whole community outside the negotiating table to ensure that everyone understands the issues and the progress in negotiations" somewhat salvages the confusion created by the earlier reported comment when he was in India.

It was at the end all a case of much ado about nothing!□

Core Issues or ISGA? A Classic Case of a False Question!

By Sathya, 24 May, 2004

“Institutionalize ISGA, then the core issues can be discussed!”. This was the headline in the LTTE Peace Secretariat website given to a lead news item as regards LTTE’s position on the agenda for future talks, following the meeting that Norway’s Special Envoy Erik Solheim had with Thamilselvan, the Head of LTTE’s Political Wing on 26th May. In further elaborating, Thamilselvan is quoted as saying, “institutionalizing the ISGA should take place first so that we can demonstrate to the people that their urgent humanitarian needs would be effectively met with by the ISGA”.

Although the official position of the Government is not known at the time of writing this column, the LTTE website quotes Erik Solheim of saying that the “President is of the view that the discussion on ISGA proposals should take place parallel to the discussion on core issues”. To digress a bit, the LTTE Peace Secretariat’s added observation that “the Norwegian team agreed with the sentiments expressed by Mr. Tamilselvan” must clearly be an embarrassment to Norway, who continues to claim that they are only a postman and a facilitator and not a mediator.

Be that as it may, the theme of this week’s Sathya column is not Norway’s role, but the implications of “parallel vs stage-by-stage” debate that dominated the 1994-95 peace talks between the then Kumaratunga Government and the LTTE and which has now come back to haunt the on-going peace process.

The 1994-95 PA-LTTE Talks perhaps is the forum where the interconnectedness between Substance (or core issues) and Process were discussed extensively – but, with no agreement reached on the relative importance of each at a given conjuncture. To digress once again, that these

“discussions” took place through a series of exchange of letters perhaps also underscores the importance of a neutral third party facilitator. To return to the theme of this column, the PA Government’s position perhaps was most explicitly stated in the letter of 9th March 1995 by President Chan-drika Kumaratunga to LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabhakaran, when the negotiations were already beginning to go awry. To quote: “The government has also insistently stated that negotiations to (these matters) need not delay the commencement of political talks since the two could proceed parallelly”. The letter further proposed that “talks regarding the political settlement of the ethnic problem should commence on any dates between 2nd to 10th April... Our package of proposals for a political settlement would be sent to you in advance.” These talks, of course never took place. The LTTE pulled out leading to the commencement of Eelam War 3, hence reinforcing the commonly held belief that the LTTE shuns negotiations on core political issues, since it would ne

cessitate the public abandonment of its goal of a separate and a sovereign State of Tamil Eelam.

The LTTE's perspective on this issue, on the other hand, is best brought out by Anton Balasingham in his analysis of the 1994-95 talks in his book *Duplicity in Politics*: "...there was a total misreading in the government circles that the LTTE was avoiding political negotiations.... It was our concern that a permanent political settlement should satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people and also alleviate the apprehensions of the Sinhala masses. We knew this to be a difficult task. It would require a great deal of mutual dialogue; possibly over a long period of time. It was precisely for this reason we wanted the urgent day to day problems of the people to be addressed and resolved in the initial stages of the dialogue".

It is not the intention here to look into the pros and cons of the stance taken by both sides, then. What is relevant now is that the debate (i.e. parallelly or stage-by-stage) is once again occupying centre-stage in the peace process, except that this time around there is a concrete proposal by the LTTE to establish what it terms "An Agreement to Establish an Interim Self-Governing Authority for the North-East of the Island of Sri Lanka" or popularly known as the ISGA. The explicit purpose according to the proposal is to provide for the urgent needs of the people of the North-East relat-

ing to resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in the North-East.

However, what the LTTE refuses to concede in public is that its ISGA proposals go far beyond the task of setting up an appropriate institutional mechanism to absorb and disburse humanitarian assistance so as to address the day-to-day problems of the people of the North-East. On the contrary, the ISGA embodies core political issues and is in a sense a proto-model of both an autonomous State within a unified Sri Lanka or a separate and a sovereign State of Tamil Eelam State. The ISGA proposals address issues that span "plenary power for the governance of the North-East" and "revenue raising including imposition of taxes, revenue, levies and duties, law and order, and over land", "separate institutions for the administration of justice", all expenditures in or for the North-East "shall be subject to the control of the ISGA", "powers to borrow internally and externally, provide guarantees and indemnities, receive aid directly, and engage in or regulate internal and external trade" and, if Sathya is allowed to take a deep breath, so on.

If all of the above are not core political issues relating to self-rule and autonomy, then what are core political issues? This clearly demonstrates that the debate between core political issues versus ISGA or the debate relating to addressing the causes of the conflict as opposed to the consequences of the conflict, in fact becomes a false debate. Paradoxically, the LTTE by placing its ISGA proposals has in effect brought the core political issues into agenda for talks, and the sooner it acknowledges this reality the better as far as the re-commencement of peace talks are concerned. Alternatively, the LTTE, if it wants an interim administration only for the purpose of addressing the day-to-day problems of the people and related humanitarian and developmental activities, then its proposal for an interim administration should be so structured.

Likewise, if the UPFA Government insists on parallel negotiations on core political issues, then it has to reveal its package of proposals relating to devolution and regional autonomy. It is conceivable that the Government may well refer the LTTE to the devolution proposals spanning the 1995 August proposals to the 2000 Draft Bill. It is not clear, however, as to how JVP, a key constituent member of the UPFA, would respond to these sets of proposals. A Party that considers devolution to be obsolete and speaks

only of decentralization of administration will have to go through the same process of transformation that the LTTE will have to undergo in being able to address the issue of self-rule and shared-rule within a transformed Sri Lanka State. The same applies to the UNP which although remaining coy on the ISGA issue and despite the Oslo declaration on exploring federal structures has not taken a clear position on these vital issues.

So, how does one break the impasse?

Para 4 of the Preamble to the ISGA proposals in fact states that the LTTE is "Determined to establish an interim self-governing authority for the North-East region and to provide for the urgent needs of the people of the North-East by formulating laws and policies and, effectively and expeditiously executing all resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development in the North-East, while the process for reaching a final settlement remains ongoing" (*Italics mine*). This is a clear recognition of the reality that any interim arrangement can only be an integral part of a final negotiated political and a constitutional settlement to the Ethnic Question. Is this not a sufficient base to commence negotiations on the interim as well as the final? So why is the LTTE balking at stating the obvious and why is the Government excluding devolution from

the brief given to Advisory Committee on Constitutional reforms, if it is committed to negotiating on core political issues?

The answer to Sathya is obvious. The principal parties in the history of our past attempts at a negotiated settlement are invariably the principal culprits in violating all the norms and rules of principled negotiations. To Sathya principled negotiations is all about firstly knowing one's own interests and then placing them at the table up-front, so that both sides know exactly what they are negotiating about and why. In the context of a lack of either clarity or a surfeit of duplicity on both sides, a dignified and a just peace will remain elusive to all peoples of this country. □



Kethesh with Naba and Suresh - 1989

Duplicity in Killings

By Sathya, June 7, 2004

The cowardly killing of Aiyadurai Nadesan a reputed political columnist, writer and a Tamil nationalist, is yet another act of brutality in the ongoing serial internecine killings that plagues the Batti-Amparai region, following the split in the LTTE. These killings have generated both a fear psychosis as well as revulsion amongst the people, with neither the Vanni-based leadership nor the Karuna faction paying heed to these concerns and condemnations. It is meaningless looking into who started it first, although it is no secret that the Vanni-based LTTE leadership did choose to resort to the force of arms to quell dissent from Karuna and his rank and file in the Batti-Amparai region.

Although the initial victims in the bloodletting, following the move by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership to wrest control of the Batti-Amparai region from the Karuna faction, were the functionaries and cadres on both sides, the victims in the recent spate of killings are what could be termed as "soft targets". These soft targets include a politician (Sathyamurthy), an academic (Thambiah) and a journalist (Nadesan), while a senior bureaucrat (Maunaguru swamy) and another academic (Thirchelvam) survived an assassination attempt. The "soft

targets" also include pauperized sections of society as well as former members, whose only mistake may have been to give food and shelter or provide information to this or that faction of the LTTE under duress and paid a heavy price as a result.

That, in all these cowardly acts, both the LTTE as well as the breakaway Karuna faction were involved is beyond any doubt. In this bloodletting, there is also an interesting difference in the propaganda and rhetoric adopted by both sides. On the part of the LTTE, it has consistently claimed that the perpetrators of these killings are the military and Tamil paramilitary groups. There is almost an aversion at pointing the finger directly at Karuna's group, lest this belies its claim that the Batti-Amparai region has been cleared of the Karuna menace. Further, in those cases where the LTTE is the perpetrator, it adopts its usual stoic silence, while allowing its media fronts to do the necessary justification, cover-up or plain news blackout in the Tamil media. The Karuna faction on the other hand appears to be falling over backwards in a might hurry to either claim responsibility for some of these killings or justifying them, so as to register their presence on the ground to the public as well as the international community.

In all this the role of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission is typically ambivalent. When the LTTE went on the rampage last year by resorting to an orgy of political killings of its adversaries who do not recognize them as the sole representatives, as well as Tamil members of the Sri Lankan intelligence, the SLMM took the position that they came within the ambit of a law and order problem and not a violation of the ceasefire agreement and, therefore, was not within its mandate. However, in the present spree of killings where the supporters of Vanni-based LTTE had suffered more at the hands of the Karuna faction, as Nadesan pointed out in his last article in the Sunday Veerakesari, the SLMM has suddenly begun expressing horror at the barbaric killings. They have also secured the commitment of the LTTE to track down the "criminal" elements. It is to its credit that Norway has suddenly woken-up, although it may have prevented the killings in the past had they done so then. It now remains to be

seen as to how the SLMM would respond when the Vanni-based LTTE leadership unleashes its counter-re-taliatory killings (if there is such a term) against soft targets in the endless orgy of killings and counter-killings. The recent firing on devotees at a Hindu temple in Batticaloa and the decapitating of two persons who were abducted from the temple is indicative of the anarchy prevailing in the Batti-Amparai region is a case in point. Another factor which needs close scrutiny is the Sri Lankan security apparatus in the Eastern province. The killings, in particular, of Thambiah, the don from Eastern University and Nadesan in the heart of Batticaloa, widely believed to be the work of the Karuna faction, have led to allegations of complicity in the killings by the military-intelligence apparatus. Whether it is true or not, it is somewhat naïve to assume that the security personnel would be unhappy about the internecine killings. When the politicians and policymakers in Colombo associated with the peace process under the UNF Government (with temptations on the part of the UPFA government to follow suit) were not too disturbed about handing over the Tamil people to the LTTE as their "sole representative" (and may have even cynically thought to themselves, "they deserve each other in any case"), one cannot rule out the temptation on the part of the security apparatus to fish in troubled waters.

Be that as it may, Tamil society continues to be bedevilled by internecine and fratricidal killings. It has spread like cancer and has eroded the very legitimacy of the struggle for justice and equality vis-a-vis the Sri Lanka State. The LTTE, including its alienated Karuna faction, continue on the path of nihilism of destroying everything that stands in its way. The Tamil people, despite the military might of the LTTE and their sabre-rattling proxies in parliament, are becoming increasingly orphaned and powerless. Other ex-militant groups who have entered the so called democratic mainstream are yet to go beyond being half-democrats with ambitions of becoming the sole alternative to the sole representative. Their failure in projecting a common democratic front to the LTTE proxies is a case in point. The notion that "if you are not one of us, then you are a traitor" is what consumed the lives of Tamil intellectuals and political activists who were committed to ensuring the dignity, security and socio-economic advancement of the People of the North-East, along with the Peoples of other regions. The list is far too long to be cited in this column. In fact it may need a separate col-

umn to merely list out the names. Pluralism and political diversity has become an anathema to those who claim to struggle for emancipation and justice. It is also a contradiction that will continue to dog Tamil nationalism in its struggle against Sinhala chauvinism. Tamil nationalism is fast losing its high moral ground. Perhaps it already has and is fast decaying.

Aiyadurai Nadesan (or G.Nadesan as he signed off his columns in the *Veerakesari*) loved his People more than his pen. He was more a Tamil nationalist than a journalist. Hence he embodied all the contradictions contained in Tamil nationalism. The Tiger flag placed across his body at the funeral perhaps epitomizes this contradiction. As D.B.S.Jeyaraj observed about Nadesan in his column in the *Sunday Leader*, "His comments too never go to the extent of unbridled LTTE sycophancy like some others, since he himself is a Tamil nationalist and much of what he wrote was from that perspective....Since he was a 'pro-Tiger' due to compulsion rather than conviction, he sometimes took on a 'Tigerish' line. This was the case with many journalists in his position."

Sathya couldn't agree more. Yet, whatever be the contradictions, Nadesan had the right to live and write as he sought fit, in keeping with his conscience. That right was denied to him by his assassins. □

Chandrika - TNA Talks: Cautious Optimism

By Sathya, 14th June 2004

The meeting that President Chandrika Kumaratunga had with members of the Tamil National Alliance on the night 10th June was eventful, to say the least. The first indicator of the seriousness of the talks was that the President did not keep them waiting (for too long) and that the meeting went on till around mid-night. That was certainly a good beginning. The second indicator was the responsible and an objective account of what transpired at the meeting given to the media by the TNA spokesperson R Sampanthan, who is usually more prone to theatrics.

And, basically what transpired was that Chandrika Kumaratunga had agreed to commence negotiations with the LTTE, cantered around the LTTE's ISGA proposals, despite some reservations about the LTTE proposals for an interim mechanism for the North-East. The President, according to R Sampanthan, had further indicated that negotiations on the core political issues will have to be taken up for negotiations at some stage, in the not too distant future. The above account was confirmed by the President

in her address to the Nation on 12th night. She said that while the Government was committed to a dialogue with the LTTE on a lasting solution (read "core issues"), the Government was also ready to discuss with the LTTE interim measures (read "ISGA proposals") that addresses the urgent need for development work in the North and East.

The green light given by the LTTE to the TNA to go ahead with the meeting with President Kumaratunga and Mr. R.Sampanthan's responsible rendition of the broad areas discussed to the media, despite attempts by our favourite morning telephone talk show moderator in the electronic media to ask him and Gunadasa Amerasekera the usual provocative and leading questions aimed more at embarrassing the UPFA Government than in enlightening the public of events and analysis, augurs well for the recommencement of peace talks between the Government and the LTTE. In this, the media has a responsible role to play as a custodian and watchdog, rather than as an agent provocateur.

Mr Sampanthan, of course, also had to engage in the public posturing that invariably goes parallelly with negotiations. The Tamil Net cited the TNA spokesperson of having raised issues relating to the High Security Zones, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and that "the Tamils couldn't be deceived any more by the Sinhala political leadership". The Daily News of 12th June, on the other hand, in an inspired leak reported that Government sources said that the talks with the TNA were "cordial and constructive" and that "as a sequel to the discussions, the Government was 'cautiously optimistic' that direct talks would resume soon and that direct talks with the LTTE would be resumed soon and the peace process would go forward".

But, this is only the beginning and there is a long way to go before we can go to sleep – including Sathya. The cynics would argue that Chandrika Kumaratunga’s move has an ulterior motive. The motive being, the need to neutralise the TNA members in parliament and secure their support to her Government. or, at least prevent its collapse. But, then it is motives and enlightened self-interest that galvanizes people into action. In that, it could also be argued that the Government was also galvanized into action by the communiqué of 1st June issued by the Sri Lanka donor Co-Chairs (i.e. the United States, the European Union, Japan and Norway) following their review meeting in Brussels. The Joint Press Release, began with the rather ominous tone, “in a world of competing crises, Sri Lanka Co-chairs came together and urged in the strongest possible terms a rapid resumption of the peace negotiations so that Sri Lanka can benefit from the generosity of the international community. They noted that, with so many other demands on donors, donor attention and funding might go elsewhere unless the peace process makes progress”.

While the above operative section in the Joint Press Release of the Co-Chairs was a clear signal to the Government, it is also clear that a strong signal was sent to the LTTE, both, in relation to human rights as well as the need for a pragmatic interim-interim arrangement for the North-East, till such time as negotiations conclude on the LTTE’s ISGA proposals. In addition to the ritualistic call on the LTTE to cease recruitment of children, not to mention the problem of re-recruitment of children following their demobilization by Karuna, and to release all remaining “underage soldiers”, the Co-Chairs appear to have recognized the reality that the ISGA Proposals do not contain the ingredients for a speedy agreement between the two parties. In its concluding paragraph, the Co-Chairs noted that “until effective administrative structures are in place in the North and East, the Co-Chairs encouraged the parties to agree on the establishment of effective delivery mechanisms for donor-financed development activities in the North-East”. (read” interim-interim measures”)

However, where the Co-Chairs are unclear is as to what they exactly mean by “progress” in the peace talks. The fact of the matter is that the two parties (i.e. the Government and the LTTE) have different perceptions of “progress”. To the LTTE, progress implies institutionaliz-

ing the ISGA and ensuring absolute control over the North-East for a protracted period. The “core” issue to the LTTE is precisely this, while the task of addressing the causes of the conflict has become more academic in view of its self-projection as a ‘state-in-the-making’. To the UPFA Government, “progress” implies addressing the core issues (i.e. the causes of the conflict) as a means of forging a durable and a permanent settlement that would eventually lead to the demilitarization and demobilization of the LTTE.

The paradox, as Sathya pointed out in an earlier column, is that while the ISGA proposals of the LTTE contain all the elements of the ‘core’ issues relating to self-rule for the North-East, but bereft of shared rule, the UPFA has embarked on a process of constitutional reforms in the South that is bereft of core issues (i.e. Self-rule and devolution of power to the North-East). This contradiction must surely make the Co-Chairs swivel in their chairs! But, as President Chandrika Kumaratunga observed in her address to the Nation, there is a “coincidence of interests” between the Government and the LTTE and it is perhaps this which may yet lead to a breakthrough – or a speedy collapse, after the coincidence of interests reach their maturity and the conflicts of interest resurface.

Be that as it may, confidence building measures, such as the meeting between CBK and

TNA, should be intensified, while the fears and apprehensions of other political formations in the North-East and the South should be addressed and allayed through parallel negotiations aimed at making the process truly inclusive and durable. On its part, the LTTE should abandon its dubious claim to be the sole representative of the Tamil People and cease its attempts at establishing its hegemony over Tamil polity and society through the silencing and annihilation of dissent, and the denial of political diversity and pluralism through violence. Likewise, the security apparatus should stop fishing in troubled waters aimed at exacerbating internecine conflicts and rivalries within the Tamil movement.

But if all this can be achieved, then where is the problem? This is where Sathya is prone to the criticism that his advocacy is replete with idealism and bereft of real politic and pragmatism. It also raises an interesting debate on choice and free will, on the one hand, and fate and determinism, on the other.

The answer lies concealed in a discourse between a sage and his disciple on an inquiry into fate and free will that Sathya came across recently. To paraphrase the conclusion that the sage and his disciple reached through their dialectical conversation: "The problem of conflict will be solved only at the end of conflict. But at that time the problem will have ceased to have any practical significance. Not only so, it will cease to exist. In other words, before the conflict begins, the problem is incapable of solution and, after the conflict ends, it is no longer necessary to find solution."

Likewise, the debate as to whether the ISGA (not to be confused with interim-interim) or the Core Issues should come first is as fruitless as embarking on the inquiry as to the relative strength of fate and free will. Since, they are in fact one and the same.

Any takers for this Sathya riddle? □



George Town University - 1974

The 'Karuna Factor': A Challenge or Obstacle to the Peace Process?

By Sathya, June 28, 2004:

'Colonel' Karuna is once again in the news, after his retreat and demobilization following the 'Good Friday' (9th April) putsch by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership against the Karuna forces in the Batti-Amparai region.

The 'news' as revealed to the media by Karuna's woman comrade Nilavini, who surrendered to the Vanni-based LTTE last week, is that the military-intelligence establishment provided Karuna, his family and some of his comrades protection in Colombo, a few days after the Good Friday offensive. Further, Ali Zahir Moulana, a UNP National List Member of Parliament and a close confidante of Ranil Wickremesinghe, with equally close contacts with the Vanni-based LTTE leadership, revealed publicly that he had established contacts with Karuna at the request of LTTE Batti-Amparai leader Ramesh in order to escort Karuna and his comrades to Colombo as part of a deal aimed at offering Karuna an 'exit'. He explained that he had done so on humanitarian grounds.

Following these revelations Ali Zahir Moulana resigned his seat from parliament so as to save his leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and the UNP from any embarrassment. That the UPFA was going to seize the opportunity to embarrass the UNP was also evident in the press briefing by Media Minister Mangala Samarasinghe and the reportage in the State media institutions which went to town on the Ali Moulana-LTTE nexus (read UNP-LTTE nexus). The UNP (indirectly) and the LTTE (directly), on the other hand, accused the UPFA Government of duplicity and adventurism in extending support to Karuna and that its action could threaten the peace process and the ceasefire agreement. This allegation was denied by the UPFA Government, although the Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera did not rule out the possibility of individuals in the military-intelligence apparatus of establishing contacts with Karuna.

Meanwhile Douglas Devananda, leader of EPDP and cabinet minister, went public and declared that he had established contacts with Karuna after his retreat to extend political and morale support, but that he did not intend extending such support if Karuna resorted to armed action against the Vanni-based LTTE leadership.

It is clear from all these developments that the 'Karuna factor' is very much an issue that either needs to be 'factored' into the peace process or neutralised. It is not something that can be ignored or would fade away. It is for this reason that Sathya has posed the question as to whether the 'Karuna Factor' is a challenge or an obstacle to the peace process, which constitutes the theme of this week's column. The answer to this key question is possible only after having considered the following series of ancillary questions most of which are, in the typical Sathya style, leading questions!

Firstly, why should anyone, UPFA Government and opposition UNP included, be apologetic about giving protection to Karuna at a time when the

Vanni-based LTTE leadership deployed its fighting forces to quell an internal dissent through the force of arms and, in the process, violated many provisions in the ceasefire agreement? It must be noted that the incidents exposed by Nilaveni, the one time comrade of Karuna, refers to the period immediately following the 'Good Friday' military putsch by the Vanni-based leadership against the Karuna forces, which resulted in him demobilizing his main armed formation and abandoning or destroying some of the heavy weaponry. Further, Karuna had then clearly stated his position that his decision to withdraw was to avoid a bloodbath and that his intention was to work towards the upliftment of the People of the Eastern province.

So, why should any Government of the day have any qualms or inhibitions in having given Karuna and his comrades protection either on humanitarian or on political grounds? Further, the issue of protection also applies to a large number of child soldiers who were demobilized by Karuna before retreating and who found their way to their respective homes and families, only to be hounded and re-recruited by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership. So, why should not the Government, including UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies, give protection to these underage recruits who had voluntarily returned to their homes? And, if they do give protection, why be apologetic?

In this context, despite attempts by the Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera to discredit the UNP through the Ali Zahir Moulana-Karuna episode by using the State media institutions in an highly partisan and unethical manner, one must give him credit for making a principled position that the Government's offer to provide security to Karuna stands to date. Further one should welcome his mature statement, "We are duty bound to provide security to any citizen whose life is under threat. That offer stands, but the internal conflicts in the LTTE must be resolved within". (Cited in Daily Mirror, 25th June).

But, there is the proverbial "other side of the coin" as well, which can be best summed through another series of (leading) questions. Having enjoyed the protection of the State, should Karuna and his forces be allowed to abuse the protection extended on political or humanitarian grounds by engaging in hostile operations or a proxy war against the Vanni-based LTTE in the Eastern province and elsewhere, including the intimidation and killing of their civilian sympathizers, particularly when there is a peace process on? Should the Tamil Broadcasting Corporation, London (TBC), which has a daily one hour prime slot in the Tamil National Service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and whose Board members domiciled in Europe were subject to death threats from the LTTE for carrying news and analysis focusing on issues relating to human rights, pluralism and democracy in Tamil society and polity, now compromise itself by functioning as an 'organ' supportive of what the Karuna faction says and does (explicitly as well as implicitly) by carrying statements in a manner that is clearly propagandistic, provocative and inflammatory? This was already highlighted by Sathya in last week's column.

In fact, during the whole of last week, the TBC broadcast in the state-owned SLBC carried interviews and an "Appeal to the Tamil people" by one Maaran, identified as spokesperson Batti-Amparai LTTE (Karuna Wing), virtually declaring war on Pirabhakaran and the "Vanni LTTE" and promising to bring the Eastern province under its total control within three months. The tone and the voice modulation behind the broadcast of these statements were clearly unprofessional, biased and jingoistic. By abusing the prime time obtained in the State-owned SLBC to engage in propagandistic materials aimed at fueling an already inflammatory situation prevailing in the

Batti-Amparai region and in endorsing the armed propaganda strategy of the Karuna faction, has made some including Sathya wonder whether the TBC is deviating from its original commitment of instilling a culture of tolerance, democratic dissent, humanism, pluralism and democracy to a brutalized and a dehumanized Tamil society and polity. While the Karuna faction has every right to exercise its right to self-defence, it should not be allowed to take the form of a proxy war that could scuttle the cease-fire and lead to the collapse of the peace process.

At the same time, maximum pressure should be exerted on the LTTE by the international community, the Government and the human rights lobby to cease immediately the hounding and the targeting of members and civilian sympathizers of the Karuna faction, the re-recruitment and conscription of underage recruits and adults demobilized by Karuna and who chose to return to their homes to lead a normal life. The genesis of the on-going orgy of killings and the climate of fear in the Eastern province clearly lies in the use of force by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership to settle internal differences and its failure (or inability) to recognize the specificity of the Eastern province as well as the principle of pluralism.

In conclusion, Sathya fully agrees with Jayadeva Uyangoda in his last weeks' column to the Daily Mirror, where following a recent visit to Batticaloa he observed, "The issues raised in the Vanni-Karuna dispute are essentially political ones and should be resolved through political means, and not by means of internecine war and violence. Actually, the present crisis in the Tamil nationalist movement is one that will test the capacity of the LTTE as well as its breakaway faction to bring about any degree of political emancipation to the Tamil nation. It is quite an irony that both factions of the LTTE on this

particular issue of the split have proved the critics of Tamil national struggle correct".

Of course, Jayadeva Uyangoda, as a Sinhalese will not face any danger to his life for having made the above observation. However, Sathya being a Tamil, and who had got used to looking behind only one shoulder, now will have to learn to look behind both shoulders! Of course, in the process he may forget to look at the danger lying in front of him!! Such has been the plight of Tamil intellectuals, political activists and social reformers whose lives were claimed by self-appointed sole representatives and sole protectors of all variants for trying to arrest the slide into nihilism of the just and (once) peaceful struggle of the Tamil people for their identity, self-respect and social progress within a unified Sri Lanka.

But, Sathya is not prepared to roll over and play dead, so that he may live, while others around him die. That would be the most degrading form of existence. □



Forgotten Children of War: Whose Responsibility?

By Sathya, 5 July 2004:

The treatment of the Karuna affair, if it may be called that, by the media (including last week's Sathya column) as well as by policymakers has largely focused on matters relating to security and impact on the peace process. In the process, a humanitarian problem of immense proportion has been by and large ignored. This is the plight of the under-age recruits who were demobilized by Karuna following the 'Good Friday' putsch against his forces by the Vanni-based leadership in April. This then constitutes the theme of this week's Sathya column which was prompted by two reports that he chanced to read last week.

The two reports in question are that of the Human Rights Watch and a document circulated by human rights activists under the name 'Collective for Batticaloa', both of which portray a bleak and a heart wrenching situation facing the demobilized children of war in the Batti-Amparai region. Incidentally Sathya prefers the term 'children of war' to child soldiers, since not all of the under-

age recruits were deployed in direct combat, though a considerable number were.

The Human Rights Watch report prepared by its South Asia researcher Tej Thapa highlighted the fact that over the last three weeks, the LTTE had commenced the forced "re-recruitment" of child combatants released by Karuna. In a stinging indictment, the report accused the LTTE of, "stealing children from their homes to put them on the firing line. Despite all their promises, they are demonstrating absolute disregard for the most vulnerable part of the population it claims to represent".

Although the above issue has been in the public domain for some time, Sathya also wishes to share with the readers a lengthy passage from a report issued by the 'Collective for Batticaloa', which refers to a humanitarian problem that remains etched in Sathya's psyche and has tormented him over the past week. To quote: "It has been estimated that approximately 60 percent of the returned children are young girls. Many of them are instantly recognizable because of their very short hair. While the hair may grow longer, issues of anxiety that these young women face may not disappear. Returning to school is not easy. Some have outgrown in age their level of school knowledge...Social ostracization and fear surrounding the returnee impedes easy integration. As one respondent said, the child has to walk alone to school. Nobody would walk along with her out of fear. Parents of the other children are scared that their own children might be recruited in a new wave of recruitment if they befriend these children...Schools too are worried about how returning children might either 'lure' other children into the fold of the LTTE or be a threat to the well being of their own children. They are marked people. They, the

children are 'shy', reticent and withdrawn for the most part....Girls with their closely cropped hair are highly visible and are marked. At many check points they are singled out for scrutiny, making all heads turn and look at them. Previously, before the release, the short hair, acted as a deterrent to their running away as they would have been easily discovered. At present they are targets for re-recruitment and social ostracization. It is a psychologically traumatic state of mind for the child".

Yes, it is psychologically traumatic not only to the child, but to all those who come face to face with these children of war or read reports that high light their plight. Those of us who are not traumatized, need to have our heads examined.

And, this brings Sathya to the issue relating to who is responsible and what is to be done? Certainly, one 'actor' (to use a hackneyed cliché) is of course the LTTE. But, it is futile appealing to that 'actor' since like all good actors the LTTE would deny responsibility. The other actor or actors who shoulder responsibility is the Government as well as the UNICEF. It is these actors who need to be told to stop acting and to fulfill their responsibilities, not only in addressing the cause of the problem (which may be beyond their control), but certainly in addressing the consequences of the problem. Reports from the ground indicate that the proverbial buck is being passed around. NGOs dealing with humanitarian and psycho-social trauma seem to think that the under-age recruits are the concern of the UNICEF which is mandated with an Action Plan for the rehabilitation of child soldiers. The UNICEF on the other hand while having a mandate to intervene, seem to think that their mandate is only the 'Action Plan' that involves the setting-up of Transit Centres for the rehabilitation of child combatants handed over by the LTTE directly to UNICEF.

But, herein lies the 'Catch 22'. The Action Plan that the UNICEF entered into with the LTTE through its humanitarian arm, the TRO, covers only the child combatants handed over by the LTTE to UNICEF. Notwithstanding that the LTTE continue to release children with one hand while recruiting with the other, the UNICEF's Action Plan does not cover the child combatants and under-age recruits who were demobilized by Karuna and who went directly to their homes and respective families. UNICEF must be credited for going public on these recruitments in recent times, despite its earlier stance of appeasement

of the LTTE and remaining mum. It is also commendable that UNICEF is going through the rituals of registering these children. But having registered them, the UN agency does not seem to have a clue as to what to do next. Further, it is ridiculous to expect the affected families of the children of war demobilized by Karuna to hand over their children to the UNICEF-TRO run Transit Centres in Kilinochchi, and with no guarantee that UNICEF will be able to take the children out of the LTTE-controlled areas in the event of outbreak of hostilities..

Likewise, the Government cannot wash their hands off this humanitarian catastrophe and treat the issue of demobilization of the children of war in the East as a matter that is internal to the LTTE. The Government would then be abdicating its responsibilities to its citizens. In Sathya's opinion, what is required is for the Government and UNICEF to formulate a separate Action Plan that involves the families of the demobilized children as well as the local community. For obvious reasons, this can be made operational only in Government-controlled areas, with the option of setting-up rehabilitation centres in areas outside the East, if the need arises. Care must be taken that these rehabilitation centres do not end up as another Bindunuwewa. In view of the forces of chauvinism and vigilantes lurking within State structures, the UNICEF and other international humanitarian NGOs

should be given the primary responsibility for the running of these camps as well as the rehabilitation and re-integration programmes for the affected children.

In this regards, Sathya also wishes to address a related issue. There have been reports of some families showing resistance against the LTTE's recruitment drive. There are some intellectuals who feel that ultimately this is the most effective deterrence to the LTTE's recruitment drive. Some of these intellectuals and activists seem to feel that the 'liberal' intervention that involves lobbying with the Government and the international community would come to naught and that what is required is the 'radical' intervention aimed at strengthening the resistance capacity of the families and local community against the LTTE.

The latter option suggested by arm chair radicals, in the opinion of Sathya, is more romantic than radical. Or, as Subramanya Bharathi, the Tamil poet penned, "brave only in words" (Vaaisolil Veerar). The resistance being shown by some families in the East to the LTTE is largely individual and based on a parental instinct to protect their children. It is yet to assume the form of collective resistance. In fact, recent reports indicate that the LTTE has already commenced a drive against the parents who are defying the LTTE that includes physical assault as well as death threats. Given the LTTE character, it will not be long before these death threats are executed, literally speaking.

Given the magnitude of the humanitarian problem highlighted above and the nature of the LTTE which has scant regard for human rights and continue to feed children to their war machinery, the responsibility lies squarely with the Government and the international community, through the UNICEF and INGOs, to rehabilitate the demobilized children of war and to protect them from re-recruitment, at least in the Government-controlled areas. It is then that the local community can become empowered or at least feel empowered enough to collectively resist the inhumane practice of child recruitment. To romanticize individual resistance from families at this juncture and giving it exaggerated publicity will only do more harm than good to the children and their families. □



Colombo Suicide Blast: LTTE denies and Government ponders

By Sathya, 12 July 2004

Yet another female suicide bomber attained martyrdom and entered the famed gallery of Black Tigers by blowing herself up after having failed to get her target Douglas Devananda, the leader of EPDP and cabinet minister. The LTTE, promptly and predictably, denied responsibility, condemned the suicide attack and blamed it on "some elements who are working to disrupt peace efforts", aimed at confusing the "people who are hoping for peace and disrupt the prevailing environment". The LTTE in short said all the right things in public with the Canadian Foreign Minister giving the denial credibility by proclaiming that, "No person or group has claimed responsibility for this deplorable act. I urge all parties to refrain from casting blame while an investigation is under way". It was as though the Canadian Government's intelligence services never really knew that the LTTE never claims responsibility to suicide attacks and the martyrdom is bestowed and publicly proclaimed only after a period of time. But the targets are rarely mentioned in public.

The US Embassy, on the other hand, in its statement wagged its finger at the LTTE. which was carried in the Government-controlled Daily News with screaming headlines. Contrary to the feigned wisdom shown by the Canadian Government, the statement issued by the US Embassy, obviously with clearance from the US State Department, said that "although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, the incident bears the hallmarks of an LTTE attack".

So, what has our own Government got to say as to who is responsible and why? Before Sathya turns his antenna in that direction, suffice it to say, the LTTE certainly would have been bitterly disappointed if the Government actually believed its denial, since the suicide attack was in fact meant to be a message to the Government! The denial was of course for international consumption. Following the hit on LTTE members in Batticaloa on Black Tigers Day on July 5, a day venerated by the LTTE in recognition of its martyrs (and despised by those who only see such suicide attacks as acts

of cowardice), it was just a matter of time that LTTE leader Pirabhakaran would order a retaliation to what was clearly a case of extreme provocation, as well as send a message to the Government in the language that the LTTE speaks and unfortunately thinks is the only language that its enemies understand. In this instance, it was the language of the suicide blast in the vicinity of the Prime Minister's Office, the police station, three foreign missions and two ministries. The message was literally speaking loud and figuratively speaking clear. In short the message was that if the Government does not rein in Karuna's guerrilla units or cease what the LTTE perceives as a "proxy war" waged through Karuna or in the name of Karuna in Batti-Amparai region, then it will strike. And, such strikes would not be confined to the Eastern theatre, but will reach into the heart of the capital city. If Douglas was targeted, it was case of 'trying to kill two birds with one stone by removing another threat to its 'sole representative' status.

The Government clearly had no illusions about LTTE's involvement when it issued a statement that "the perpetrators of this act show callous disregard for hu

man lives and are reverting to violence as means of settling disputes". Yet, the Government could not get itself to even say that it had the hallmarks of an LTTE attack. Although the LTTE was not named, the reference to "reverting" to violence was an oblique reference to the LTTE. Douglas Devananda, the intended target and a cabinet minister, on the other hand, did not mince words when he accused the LTTE as the perpetrator. He however tempered his accusation by emphasizing that this need not stand in the way of advancing the peace process. But, unfortunately the Government lacked that maturity of being able to say the truth and yet be able to convince the people that this would not stand in the way of the peace process. Every government of the day have this uncanny way of demonizing the LTTE when a war is on and having to dress the LTTE up as an angel or as an enemy of someone else, if it wants to talk to the LTTE. Why on earth cannot one speak to the demon. Certainly, the LTTE does not come forward to negotiate with the Government of the day, because it sees it to be an angel? The pendulum swing from demonizing to evangelising the LTTE is what makes successive Governments suspect in the eyes of the Tamil people as well as the international community, not to mention its own people - the Sinhalese. Sathya regrets having to refer to the Government in relation to ethnicity. But, that is precisely what the Governments have done by washing its hands off internecine and fratricidal killings within the Tamil community and perhaps even rubbing their hands with absolute glee. This takes Sathya to two cases of black

humour which invariably accompanies tragedy.

In this case Sathya wishes to focus on two. The first is the wisdom displayed in sections of the Tamil media that since the suicide bomber wore a nylon suicide jacket, as opposed to the denim jackets normally worn by LTTE suicide bombers, that it could not have been the LTTE. And, another newspaper while carrying the caption that the LTTE denies responsibility, indicated in its second heading that the female accomplice of the suicide bomber and worked in the EPDP office in Jaffna. The implication was that the EPDP somehow had a hand in it. Somehow the Tamil journalists who either filed the story or gave those stories the loaded headings seem to think that the readers are so gullible to think that the LTTE is not capable of technological innovation by switching from a bulky denim jacket to a less conspicuous nylon jacket. Or, that LTTE does not know the art of infiltration.

The other case of humour was the statement issued by the UPFA General Secretary Susil Premjayanth that "it was revealed in the police investigations that the sole intention of the suicide bomber was to kill Douglas Devananda". So, the sole representative was after the sole alternative. That humour turned black when the Reuters quoted the former Government spokesman of saying "It is the LTTE going after a political opponent. It is that and absolutely nothing else. It is resorting to violence to kill an opponent; it is not reverting to hostilities". Clearly the SLFP was trying to neutralise the UNP campaign that peace was on the rocks and that suicide bombers were back in Colombo in view the UPFA's mishandling of peace process. Hence, the compulsion to announce that every thing was hunky dory. Pirabhakaran must indeed be grinding his teeth if he thought that the Government had not really got his message and well be tempted to repeat the message. But, this time around it may not be a Tamil political opponent.

But, coming back to the point, in the process the SLFP also revealed a lurking chauvinism that grips most southern politicians. This is manifest in the mindset that as long as Tamils kill Tamils, there is no problem. So, when the LTTE engaged in its orgy of political killings including the killing of Tamil intelligence officers during the UNP's lap around the peace track, the UNP and the Colombo establishment turned a blind eye. It was after all a case of Tamils killing Tamils. Now, it is the turn of the SLFP taking a similar position. Some things do not change. Chauvinism is not always crude. It can be very subtle indeed, akin to the commonly heard refrain "some of our best friends are Tamils" or "some of our best friends are Sinhalese". Sathya's antenna never fails to go up when such patronizing statements are made. In fact, with such friends who needs enemies! □

July 1983 Pogrom: An Historical Apology

By Sathya, 2 August, 2004

Twenty-One Years after one of the most meticulously planned and executed state-sponsored pogrom in world's contemporary history by the then President J.R. Jayawardene and his henchmen in the cabinet, the present Head of State President Chandrika Kumaratunga apologized to the Tamil people and the Nation. The occasion for this historic apology was a symbolic ceremony on Friday 23rd July at the Presidential Secretariat, where some of the victims of 'Black July' were awarded compensation, following the findings and recommendations of the Presidential Truth Commission. Although the setting-up of the Truth Commission under the PA Government a few years ago was dictated largely by partisan politics aimed at creating maximum embarrassment for the UNP and did not conform to the norms and practices of Truth Commissions elsewhere, the apology by the President was unconditional and was by no means partisan. The operative section in her address needs to be etched in our collective memory, so that the barbarism demonstrated by the State and by the mobs mobilized by it for the purpose of terrorising the Tamil people into submission is never repeated. Sathya likewise wishes to etch these words in his column.

To quote: "At least now I believe that I and we as a nation and especially the Sri Lankan State should come of age, look the truth in the face and make a national apology, first to all the victims of that day in Black July and then beyond them to the entire Nation. Perhaps it is the responsibility of the State and the Government to engage in that exercise first and foremost, and then all of us as the Nation, every citizen in this country should collectively accept the blame and make that apology to all of you here who are the representatives or the direct victims of that violence, and through you to all the other tens of thousands who suffered by these incidents. I would like to assign to myself the necessary task on behalf of the

State of Sri Lanka, the Government and on behalf of all of us, all the citizens of Sri Lanka to extend that apology. It is late but I think it is still not too late".

The response on the part of the LTTE and their proxies in parliament was typical. For instance, S. Elilan, Trincomalee District political head of the LTTE at a public meeting in Trincomalee in memory of the victims of the Welikada prison massacre in July 1983, is reported by the TamilNet website as saying, "We regard Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga's public apology for the 1983 pogrom against the Tamils as a deceptive attempt, driven by political expediency rather than principles to placate the Tamils". The TNA parliamentarians present typically took the cue and in their speeches cast aspersions on the motives of Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Sathya, who left the professional and social mainstream to join the Tamil National Movement precisely because of July 1983 pogrom, accepts the apology of the President unconditionally and without inhibitions. It was indeed an act of courage

for Chandrika Kumaratunga to have articulated not only her sentiments, but the sentiments of the vast majority of the Sinhalese who were themselves horrified by the 1983 July pogrom. The burning of the Jaffna Library in 1981 and the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983 which were entirely State-sponsored stand as symbols of eternal shame to the UNP. Sathya recalls the anger he felt when President J.R.Jayawardene and his key UNP cabinet ministers paraded before the TV after maintaining a deafening sound of silence for four long and bloody days of sheer barbarism by hoodlums and security personnel under the patronage of prominent UNP politicians. They in their statements simply ignored the traumatized Tamil People and instead sought the apology of the Sinhalese people for the shortages and long queues that had formed to buy bread because of the riots. The Tamils who had survived the carnage, of course, were either in refugee camps or too terrified to join any queues. Ranil Wickremesinghe was then a cabinet minister. He must acknowledge this, assume individual and collective responsibility, and apologise to the Tamil People if he is serious about reconciliation.

Likewise, it would have been morally, politically and historically more correct had the President also referred to mistakes made by her Government as well as the party that she belongs to. The passage of the "Sinhala Only" Act of 1956, the

attack on Federal Party MPs by hoodlums in Galle Face Green as they were staging a satyagraha facing the Parliament, and the heckling of these Tamil MPS as they walked into parliament with blood-drenched shirts by Sinhalese parliamentarians, including Prime Minister S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike, the anti-Tamil riots of 1956 and 1958, the discriminatory education policy under the guise of 'standardization' in the early 70s, and the indiscriminate arrests and incarceration in prison of Tamil youth political activists all contributed to the erosion of self-respect of the Tamils and the eventual resort to armed resistance by Tamil youths as a means of re-establishing that self-respect that their parents had lost.

Sathya also recalls with regret the feudal ceremony that was conducted to celebrate the capture of Jaffna from the grip of the LTTE following Operation Riviresa in 1995. Although the Tamil People also abhorred the manner in which the LTTE engineered a forced exodus of civilians out of Jaffna during Operation Riviresa that led to immense deprivation and massive displacement of the people of Jaffna, it is clear that the public ceremony with Colonel Ratwatte walking up to President Kumaratunga to hand over the scroll announcing the capture of Jaffna was feudal, silly and pompous. It also hurt the sensitivities of the Tamil people, including those who bitterly resented the LTTE. Victories in battles are not something to be celebrated, since there are also defeats that may follow. That is the nature of War as the disastrous "War for Peace" campaign later revealed, when the State lost territory as well as manpower.

Be that as it may, this is supposed to be peace times. Although, we are not in a post-conflict situation, the time for reconciliation is NOW. It is neither too early nor too late. In this context, the time has also come for the LTTE as well as other Tamil ex-militant organizations which entered the democratic mainstream, to extend an apology to the Sinhala and Muslim Peoples for attacks against innocent civilians and ethnic cleansing that took place in the name of "liberation". The Anuradhapura massacre on Poya Day on May 14, 1985 when more than 150 pilgrims who had thronged the city were mowed down and the ethnic cleansing of the Muslims from the North, including massacres in mosques in the East, in the 90s although carried out by the LTTE are just two of numerous such atrocities that were carried out by the LTTE and other Tamil militant organizations. They, in the same manner that President Kumaratunga extended an apol

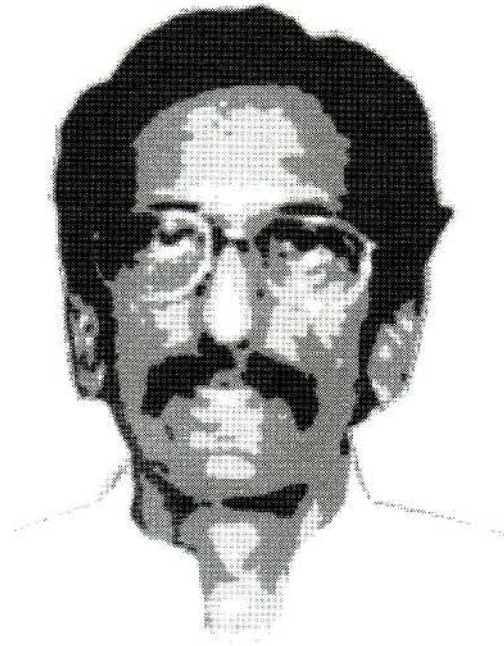
ogy on the part of the State as well as all Sri Lankans for the 1983 July pogrom, owe the Sinhala and Muslim Peoples an unconditional apology on behalf of the Tamil People in whose name these atrocities were committed. In any event, Sathya, a one time spokesperson and a member of the leadership of a Tamil politico-military organization which later joined the democratic mainstream only to soil its hands in that polluted stream, extends an apology to the Sinhalese and Muslim peoples. He expects his former comrades to do likewise.

The lessons that Sathya learnt about the seeds of violence in relation to the ethnic conflict can be summed as follows. Firstly, the peaceful and non-violent forms of struggle against institutionalised discrimination by the State may not have taken a violent form if not for the use of violence by the State to crush these non-violent and democratic forms of struggle. The ethnic conflict may well have become protracted and intractable. But, it was the violence unleashed by the State to crush all forms of dissent that led to the ethnic conflict itself becoming violent. Secondly, the victims of violence soon become the mirror image of the perpetrators of violence. That is what happened to Tamil militancy. It began to acquire the ugly face of the State that it was fighting against.

The lesson that Sathya learnt (or is in the process of learning) on the seeds of peace and reconciliation can be

summed as follows. While the past must be addressed in order to reach the future, the present is an all important key to reconciliation, since it is in the present that the past ends and the future begins. Let us acknowledge the past, but not get bogged down in it. Let us rectify ourselves in the present and envision a better future, since the future is always carved out in the present. To be overburdened by both the remorse of the past and the anxieties of the future only lead to a state of paralysis.

In sum, let us walk hand in hand in the collective endeavour of making this island of ours one country that belongs to all, while recognizing the full richness of our respective ethnic, religious and cultural diversities. It is not utopia. It is the only existential path to survival. □



The troubled peace process: Time for a reality check

By Sathya, 9 AUG 2004

The peace process is clearly stalled. There are no signs of the recommencement of direct negotiations which were suspended last year when the LTTE sent a letter to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe dated 21st April, 2003 that it had "decided to suspend its participation in the negotiations for the time being".

However, the LTTE stressed that it was still committed to a negotiated settlement and was not pulling out of the peace process, although its spokespersons on several occasions characterised the 6 rounds of talks from September 2002 to March 2003 in venues spanning Oslo to Hakone as a 'waste of time'.

While direct negotiations ("Track One" negotiations in conflict resolution jargon) remains suspended, the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) signed on February 22, 2002 by the then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabakaran with the stated objective of 'bringing an end to armed hostilities' and create 'a positive atmosphere in which further steps towards negotiations on a lasting solution can be taken' has so far prevented a large scale

outbreak of hostilities or war between the two parties.

However, the period since the signing of the ceasefire agreement also witnessed gross human rights violations that included child conscription, political killings, abductions and extortion from the very inception. The perpetrator was the LTTE.

The recent round of killings and child re-recruitment, particularly in the Eastern province, although a direct fallout of the internecine conflict within the LTTE has spilled over into the heart of Colombo city as well as, according to unconfirmed reports trickling in last week, into the LTTE's nerve centre in Vanni.

To further compound the deteriorating security situation, neither Colombo nor Kilinochchi seem to be clear about the agenda of talks, if and when they do start.

While the LTTE has been consistently insisting that 'institutionalizing' its Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) Proposal forwarded to the UNF Government in November, 2003 should form the sole basis for negotiations and should be de-linked from the process of seeking a final political solution, the present UPFA Government has been equally persistent that any interim arrangement should be part of a final political and constitutional settlement.

However, it now appears that President Chandrika Kumaratunga is willing to show some flexibility in commencing negotiation on an interim authority as indicated by the press release, following her meeting with Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgessen on July 27, where it was stated that her government was "willing and is keen to commence negotiations on an Interim Authority within the framework of a united state".

The hawks in her ranks, however, managed to insert a lead story in the Daily News of last Wednesday (August 4) with screaming headlines, "UPFA says 'no' to LTTE's

ISGA proposals". The story attributed this stance to President Kumaratunga and cited SLFP General Secretary Maitripala Sirisena as the source.

As a case of confusion confounded or as confusion clarified, the Daily News the following day carried the following clarification that "the Government emphasises that these media reports attributed to the statement said to have been made by the President at the Executive Committee Meeting of the Alliance Government at the President's House recently are totally misleading the public.

In fact, what was stated at the meeting by the President was that the Government's stance on the resumption of peace talks with the LTTE remains unchanged".

So, what exactly is the stance of the Government? This was clarified in the Government's official website which comes directly under the Presidential Secretariat, where it was stated that "The president maintains that the government of Sri Lanka is willing to discuss with the LTTE its proposals for an Interim Administration alongside the talks to reach a final solution acceptable to all communities".

But, the issue remains contentious since the LTTE has been insistent on its position that its ISGA proposal should constitute the sole basis for negotiations.

In other words, we may well be heading towards a unilinear and a single-issue agenda trajectory which is precisely what the LTTE has been propelling the peace process towards.

One may recall that at the 2nd Session of Talks at Rose Gardens, Thailand from 31 October to 3 November, 2002, a decision was taken by the Government and the LTTE to set up 3 Sub-committees.

These were the Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North-East (SIHRN), the Sub-Committee on De-escalation and Normalization and the Sub-Committee to commence work in connection with relevant political matters.

As regards SIHRN, great pains were taken to demonstrate that it was not an interim administration.

This was once again seen as a pragmatic and innovative measure to accommodate LTTE concerns that the formation of an interim administration within existing constitutional provisions would tantamount to it accepting the Sri Lankan constitution as it presently stands.

This is seen as an anathema by the LTTE. After several months of intense activities centred around SIHRN the LTTE in a letter addressed to the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister on May 21, 2003, requested him to inform Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe that the LTTE now wanted an "interim administrative structure" to be set-up with "adequate powers to undertake North-eastern reconstruction and development activities".

Several months earlier the LTTE had already withdrawn from the Sub-Committee on De-escalation and Normalization in view of issues relating to High Security Zones (HSZs) in Jaffna.

What is further revealing is that the Sub-Committee on political parties where it was decided that "the parties will jointly and separately address in depth, at the current stage of the peace process, relevant subjects such as other peace processes, political solutions to ethnic conflicts, models and systems of governments, issues of post-conflict transition, coordination of international assistance, and reconciliation processes" never even met.

As a matter of fact at the 6th Session of talks in Hakone Japan from 18-24 March, 2003 the Government and the LTTE decided to "expand some preliminary issues and a framework for political matters into a 'complete plan' at the 7th Session of talks.

This of course did not take place since a month later the LTTE

opted out of direct negotiations and Track One negotiations went into a state of limbo.

From the above it is evident that the LTTE set the agenda and shaped events where the agenda for talks finally became reduced to a single issue, namely the setting up of an interim administration for the North-East with full plenary powers of governance over the North-East under the hegemony of the LTTE, ideally through extra-constitutional means. This is clearly spelt out in the ISGA proposals of the LTTE which was unveiled with much fanfare in late October, 2004.

So, where does one proceed from here? Firstly, it is imperative that the UPFA Government should assume a clear and a consistent position as regards the agenda for negotiations.

The constituent members of the UPFA Government should understand that the term "Government" includes all its consistent members. In this, it is imperative that the SLFP and the JVP, should clarify their respective position on the agenda for talks.

Despite differences between the JVP and President Chandrika Kumaratunga on how to advance the peace process, which may have well prompted her to step down from the chair of the Executive Committee of the UPFA as a signal that she would proceed with her peace strategy with or without the JVP, the observation made by a high ranking member of the JVP and

Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Anura Kumara Dissanayake at the Cabinet briefing last Thursday is encouraging and should be a sufficient basis for the SLFP and the JVP to formulate a common negotiation strategy vis a vis the LTTE. The observation was that, "there should be an administrative structure for the North and East, during the transition period from the current situation to a final settlement. But our stand is that the Interim Authority must be part of the final solution".

It is for the UPFA Government and its "think tank" now to formulate a clear proposal that embodies the above and link the entire transitional process spanning the interim to the final.

Where appropriate the proposal should draw on the LTTE's ISGA proposal which in fact contains core political issues as perceived by the LTTE. The time has also come for civil society to take a more proactive role in formulating its own proposals which may be placed before the Government and the LTTE and all other stakeholders as a means of breaking the current impasse. Meanwhile all steps should be taken to ensure that the ceasefire holds and that the parties adhere to the ceasefire agreement.

Despite the deficiencies in the ceasefire agreement, the entire peace process at present hinges on the scrupulous adherence to the provisions in the ceasefire agreement.

Any tendency towards adventurism at this stage by the two parties could well signal the total collapse of the peace process and the renewal of war.

However, it is also imperative that adherence does not mean appeasement. The transition from an administrative mechanism to the interim to the final cannot be just a mechanical process that is devoid of human rights, including pluralism, democracy and the right to life.

Contrary to perceptions in sections of civil society as well as the international community that human rights, pluralism and democracy over-burden a fragile peace process, it is the recognition and observance of these principles that nourishes and sustains any peace process.

If today the peace process in Sri Lanka is fragile it is precisely due to the violation of human rights, and the principles of pluralism and democracy. This is something that we in civil society should understand, even if the Government and the LTTE fail to do so. □

How does one engage the LTTE without toppling the peace cart?

By Sathya, 23rd August, 2004

The question posed by Sathya as given in the title to this column has been foremost in the mind of those actors, international as well as local, who joined the queue leading to Kilinochchi and the LTTE's Peace Secretariat for the purpose of "engaging" the LTTE, following the signing of the ceasefire agreement and the commencement of official talks. While the LTTE made the maximum use of this routine pilgrimage to Kilinochchi by members of the international community as well as local civil society as part of its diplomatic offensive and legitimization exercise, neither the international community nor our own civil society seemed to know how to engage the LTTE. Their primary concern was in confidence building and not to rock the peace boat, to the extent of missing out on the opportunity to critically engaging the LTTE on issues relating to the need for transformation.

In this sense, the recent statement by the European Union following a meeting that its delegation comprising the Heads of Missions of Netherlands, Britain and the European Union appears to have introduced an element that was missing earlier. That is the element of calling a spade a spade. The operative section in that statement that the EU as well as the key actors in the international community and their local clientele need to remind themselves of constantly while engaging with the LTTE is as follows:

"The EU has throughout the conflict emphasized the importance of human rights. The killing of political opponents is a breach of fundamental human rights. There is no excuse for such violence, which can never resolve internal differences. Child recruitment by the LTTE, which is also regarded as a breach of fundamental human rights, is an issue of continued concern. The EU wishes to reiterate the points that Commissioner Patten raised in his discussion with the LTTE in November 2003 on good governance, pluralism, human rights and democracy. These are the cornerstones of a settlement for an everlasting peace in Sri Lanka. They are important too for the LTTE to obtain recognition as a political layer in

Sri Lanka".

The problem however is that recognition is precisely what the international community and their local clientele parading as "civil society" has given the LTTE in the name of "engagement", since the commencement of the peace process, despite gross human rights abuses by the LTTE. For instance, a civil society grouping which went to Kilinochchi recently for a meeting with the LTTE, returned to Colombo and held a press briefing. The briefing was nothing short of parroting of LTTE's position. Curiously, while the demands of the LTTE for the disarming of "paramilitaries" in accordance with the ceasefire agreement was given prominence in the press conference, there was no reference to what the LTTE told them in relation to the killings of members and sympathizers of alternative Tamil political parties, including independent thinking intellectuals. Perhaps it never occurred to that particular civil society group to pose that question to the LTTE, in their mighty hurry to faithfully and uncritically project LTTE's perspectives to the south.

Sathya who has been focusing on this issue is simply too fatigued to recycle what he has been say

ing and writing about for some time now. Sathya has therefore decided to seek cover behind an excellent article by Dr Alan Keenan, an eminent academic and human rights activist, entitled "Critical Engagement or Constructive Engagement?: Sri Lankan Civil Society at the Crossroads of Politics and Principle" which in essence was a critical review of the document "The Sri Lankan Peace Process at Crossroads: Lessons Opportunities and Ideas for Principled Negotiations and Conflict Transformation," authored by Tyrol Ferdinands, Kumar Rupesinghe, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Jayadeva Uyangoda, and Norbert Ropers. The rest of Sathya's column comprise of excerpts from Dr Keenan's reflections on the vexed issue of constructive engagement vs. constructive criticism by civil society and the international community.

To quote: "We can see a similar set of problems in the 'Crossroads' approach to 'civil society.' On the one hand, the document argues strongly that actors and organizations within civil society must play - and be invited to play - a much larger and more vigorous role in support of a negotiated settlement.... Who exactly is doing the mobilizing, however, is left unclear..... Rather than being called on to mobilize itself in pursuit of its own democratic pluralist vision of a more just and equitable post-war Sri Lanka, civil society is primarily imagined as a useful adjunct to a professionalized and ethicized conflict transformation process. It is more often presented as an object,

rather than a subject, of mobilization - as a resource that the negotiating parties and their sponsors might better exploit through a more effective 'communications strategy' and efforts at 'mobilization.' Instead of adopting and promoting the perspective of a politically active and demanding civil society, with its own independent agenda of democracy and anti-militarism, 'The Sri Lankan Peace Process at Crossroads' is written from a basic identification with the position (and, by implication, with the "enlightened" interests) of the negotiating parties... It also helps explain the document's disturbing claim that human rights issues must not be articulated in ways that challenge the power of the LTTE..... "

Dr Alan Keenan concludes his review by posing the following key question. "The question now is whether those same political actors - international donors and their allies in Sri Lanka's professional civil society organizations - who have so far supported the peace process as defined and controlled by the two most powerful stakeholders can learn also to support those local forces that could challenge those same stakeholders in genuinely democratic ways. The fact that donor support for local human rights activities has fallen dramatically since the ceasefire is not a hopeful sign in this regard. But the first step should be for high profile and professionalized civil society groups at least to recognize publicly the urgent need to develop forms of truly critical - and thus truly constructive - engagement "from below."

The arguments extended by Alan Keenan is a timely reminder not only to "civil society", but also to the "international community" to de-mystify the notion of constructive engagement and to truly engage themselves in constructive criticisms when the situation so demands. In this context, the recent statement of the European Union is timely and needs to be sustained till such time as the LTTE demonstrates its commitment to principled negotiations as well as human rights in word and deed. Needless to say, the same needs to be done when the State engages in acts of duplicity in negotiations, adventurism through "proxies" or gross human rights abuses.

If the peace cart topples it is not because of constructive criticism, but because of continuing violation of the principles of pluralism, democracy and human rights - not to mention the right to life. Therefore, if the peace process is to be saved, all of the above principles need to be observed in word and deed. Transformation, in short, is not merely an end, but also the means. □

After tsunami: Linking peace building with reconstruction

By Sathya, 4 January 2005

Tsunami, which washed away lives and wrecked havoc on properties and sources of livelihood regardless of religion and ethnicity, has undoubtedly contributed to the bonding of human relations across the ethnic divide.

As President Chandrika Kumaratunga reflected in her address to the nation, "the tsunami has devastated our land with relentless indifference to regions, provinces, ethnicities and religions and all other man-made frontiers".

Reports of Sinhalese volunteers, from districts adjoining the North-East and elsewhere, streaming into the affected areas to give relief and succour to their Tamil and Muslim brethren is reflective of the sentiments in the south.

There were also reports of security personnel in the North contributing 300 pints of blood to the Vavunia base hospital. Further, the statements issued by the Presidential Secretariat and the Peace Secretariat calling on the LTTE to join hands with the Government in a concerted and coordinated effort at overcoming the calamity were timely.

These sentiments were also reciprocated by the head of the LTTE's political wing, S.P.Thamilselvan following his meeting with the Norwegian Ambassador. He is reported to have said that "this new tragic situation has laid the foundation for both parties to come together and work towards closing the division between the two parties.

The LTTE is very happy and encouraged by the government's offer and this would help break the rift between the two parties". But there have been other reports which are deeply disturbing. Reports of the LTTE preventing relief operations in areas under their control, the seizure of relief items from relief convoys elsewhere and the stage-managed protest against the visiting Government delegation headed by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse in

Jaffna and Valvettithurai once again reveals the innate hegemonic trait of the LTTE that nothing can move in the North-East without passing through it.

Further, the puerile and infantile attitude of the TNA Members of Parliament in boycotting the national efforts initiated by the Government has only served to bring disrepute to the Tamil people who are only too willing to share their grief and succour with their Muslim and Sinhala brethren.

Likewise, the Government should ensure that politico-military strategy and agenda is not introduced into relief efforts in the North-East and that the sole driving force should be its responsibility as a government to its citizens irrespective of class, caste and ethnicity - not to mention politics.

There are similarly shocking reports of vultures in the south swooping on the relief items being sent to the North-East. In particular there seems to be an organized move by certain Sinhala extremists' forces in Trincomalee to prevent supplies

sent by TRO from reaching the besieged and the suffering people of the North-East.

Although it is known that TRO is an arm of the LTTE that is no reason for preventing it from engaging in relief and humanitarian work. That these vultures are also swooping down on their own people in the south by stealing jewellery items and other valuables from the deceased victims of Tsunami is another matter.

In all this gloom and agony left behind by Tsunami, perhaps there is a silver-lining as is the case with most disasters.

The Tsunami waves may have in fact rolled back the war clouds by venting its fury on the naval infrastructure of the security forces and the LTTE in Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Trincomalee.

Yet another factor that would make both the LTTE and the GoSL think twice, if not ten times, before embarking on or provoking hostilities is the combined might of national and international opinion following the Tsunami horror.

As far as national opinion is concerned, the sheer weight of the tragedy, the immediate priority relating to relief efforts and the magnitude of the future task of reconstruction will surely make the people, irrespective of their ethnicity, rise up against any military adventurism by their sole or democratic representatives. As far as international opinion is concerned, any move by the two parties to resort to war mongering and sabre rat-

ting will lead to both the Government and the LTTE being reduced to a pariah status.

The LTTE in particular which prior to the tsunami had intensified its conscription drive and appear to be continuing after tsunami by exploiting the vulnerability of the survivors and the displaced should take note.

But this alone is not sufficient if one is to ensure that the task of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war-ravaged areas that stalled because of the stalemate in the peace process, as well as the challenge of relief and reconstruction of the areas ravaged by Tsunami is to proceed without threats of war breaking out.

Firstly, the LTTE or its proxies the TNA should immediately join the Special Disaster Management Task Force set up by the President in the national effort at providing immediate relief to the people affected, salvaging the destruction caused by Tsunami and taking forward the task of reconstruction.

Such a move in addition to benefiting the besieged and suffering people in the North-East would contribute to confidence-building measures and allay any distrust and suspicion in the South as regards LTTE's motives and intentions.

The Government should reciprocate by giving priority to the establishment of an interim authority for the North-East with due pride of place to the LTTE, while guaranteeing pluralism.

The LTTE, similarly, should take the initiative in bringing to an end the bloody internecine killings, which should be reciprocated by the coalition formed by Karuna following the split within LTTE.

Other Tamil political parties like the EPDP, EPRLF and PLOTE should be allowed to engage in relief and reconstruction activities in the North-East without hindrance by the LTTE in a spirit of cooperation and fraternity.

Secondly the Government and the LTTE should jointly amend the ceasefire agreement (CFA) to remove the clause which allows the parties to withdraw from the CFA after giving two weeks notice and replace it with a moratorium against all forms of offensive military operations for a period of 4 years.

In addition, the districts of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi, which were excluded from the CFA in a misplaced exercise in creative ambiguity, should be brought within the ambit of the CFA. During this 4-year period all attempts

should be made to go beyond the establishment of an Interim Authority for the North-East with pride of place to the LTTE, to the forging of a final constitutional and political settlement to the Ethnic Question that guarantees democracy, pluralism and power sharing based on self rule and shared rule.

Simultaneously and parallel, all parties in the South should declare a moratorium against all forms of narrow partisan politics and strive to form an Interim National Government of Reconciliation and Reconstruction.

An Interim Constitution may be considered for the purpose of institutionalising an Interim Authority for the North-East with pride of place to the LTTE, the abolition or reform of the Executive Presidential System and power sharing between the ruling coalition and the opposition during this period.

A final and a comprehensive constitution that addresses all other areas relating to governance, including an equitable and a durable solution to the vital Ethnic Question, should be finalized before the completion of the 4-year period. A framework on Fundamental and Human Rights should inform the process from the outset.

Thirdly the international donor community, based on the above commitments by the relevant actors and forces within Sri Lanka, should release the aid commitment totalling US\$ 4.5 billion made at the Tokyo donor conference of last year without any delay.

In order to ensure that the commitments by the Government and the LTTE are adhered to and funds distributed equitably, a group of countries representing the donor community as well as India may consider sending a Multi-National Peacekeeping and Reconstruction Force which would monitor and enforce the ceasefire agreement as well as assist in the task of reconstruction.

Norway could concentrate on its role as the facilitator and not be burdened with the monitoring of the CFA which has proven to be ineffective and contentious in any case.

What Sathya has spelt out above may sound out of the world. But so was tsunami till it hit us. Peace-building and Reconstruction, with international support and monitoring, need to go hand in hand.

Further it needs no elaboration that Peace and Reconstruction are indivisible and cannot be confined to just one part of the country. What we need at this moment is imagination, creativity and singularity of purpose. Perhaps then we may still stand a chance. If not we are all doomed.

Disasters, natural or man-made, can well lead to a new era of opportunities and equality for all peoples of Sri Lanka, if we so will collectively and act in unison. May we all face up to the challenge in the year 2005 and years to come with unity and purity in thought, word and action.



JM, P-TOMS, TRC or “WHATEVER”: The fear of the unknown

By Sathya, 21 June 2005:

The last time that Sathya woke from his deep slumber was when tsunami wrecked havoc with the lives and livelihood of peoples of Sri Lanka, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or any other identity for which we are prepared to lay down our lives as well as consume the lives of others.

In that column, Sathya made a passionate case for imagination and courage in converting the tragedy into an opportunity of linking tsunami recovery and rebuilding with a redesigned peace process. To recall, “What we need at this moment is imagination, creativity and singularity of purpose.

Perhaps, then we may still stand a chance. If not we are all doomed. Disasters, natural or man-made, can well lead to a new era of opportunities and equality for all peoples of Sri Lanka, if we so will collectively and act in unison. (See Daily Mirror, January 4, 2005).

With those wise words Sathya went into hibernation till he was rudely woken by the thunder and lighting associated with the proposed Tsunami Joint Mechanism (JM), which later metamorphosed into P-TOMS (Post-tsunami Operations Management Structure) and the Tsunami Relief Council (TRC). The term “mechanism” apparently when translated into

Sinhala had a terrifying impact on the Sinhala psyche. However, it was not so terrifying on the Tamil psyche which when translated into Tamil (podhu kattamaippu) means a “common structure” and comes closer to the reality that a “joint mechanism”.

But then I guess Sinhala opinion is what matters and therefore the term “joint mechanism” which the President said was a creation of the media in any case, was replaced with the term “Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure” and subsequently with the more populist and less technical “Tsunami Refugee Council”. In a fit of extreme exasperation Sathya will in this column use the term “WHATEVER”, till the name is settled one way or the other.

The most convincing argument in favour of “WHATEVER” is that this the first time since the militarization of the ethnic conflict and after several interludes of peace processes that the LTTE would be part of a structured institution of the Sri Lankan State. This would be by way of representation of the Government, the LTTE and the Muslim polity in the apex, regional and district-level institutions which would work closely with the State’s existing bureaucratic structures.

This however should not be confused as a case of democratization of the LTTE, since bureaucratic control is not sufficient to ensure the democratization process, just as much as the capacity building of the LTTE does not necessarily lead to transformation. On the contrary, the empowerment of the LTTE without transformation, can only lead to the reinforcement of what is.

The second argument advanced in support of the “WHATEVER” is that the rights of the Sinhalese and Muslims in the North-East would be both represented and guaranteed. That is certainly reassuring, but it implies that the LTTE would look after the Tamil interests (i.e. LTTE=Tamils), while the Government and the Muslim polity would look after the Sinhalese and Muslim interests, respectively.

The recent media blitz by the National Peace Council (NPC) in advocating a case for the “WHATEVER”, for instance, observed with absolute sanctity that the ‘WHATEVER’

would bring together the Government, Muslim community and the LTTE in a common endeavour.

But, how about bringing together the "Peoples" (in the plural). Why did the NPC forget the Peoples? And, what of the rights of the Tamils living in the North-East who live under the diktat of the LTTE and have to contribute cash to the LTTEs coffers and children to its fighting forces and all the other rights that we cherish like the right to dissent and the right to life? Are we therefore saying that it is a matter between the LTTE and the Tamil people to sort out as some Sinhalese democrats with a Sinhala guilt seem to argue and who feel that the North-East is not ready for democracy? But then can it be otherwise? These are questions that arise not from Sinhala chauvinists, but by Tamil democrats. In this context, the absence of a human rights clause in the WHATEVER document is indeed worrying.

The third argument advanced in support of the "WHAT-EVER" is the classic "what then is the alternative argument". It is premised that the existing "No War, No Peace" scenario could be threatened by not conceding to the LTTE its fetishism of being the "sole representative" and the "sole arbiter" of Tamil interests hinged on the notion that nothing shall reach the Tamil people till it reaches the LTTE first.

It is argued that any move to check this fetishism would lead to the LTTE raising its clarion call of "War or Peace". But then, for how long can one allow the peace process to be held hostage to the repeated and constant threats of war? And, can one have a peaceful environment in a "No War, No Peace" situation where children continue to be conscripted, dissidents on both sides continue to be killed, and dissent is silenced by terror? For that matter, can the prevailing "No War, No Peace" situation be sustained in the absence of peace negotiations aimed at a durable, just and a permanent solution? But then, can it be otherwise?

These are some questions that is haunting Sathya. But, on the other hand, as Sathya the rational thinker as opposed to Sathya the conscience keeper keeps reminding, should we confine ourselves to the strait jacket of looking at the future, only through the past. Does it matter to the victims of tsunami what lies ahead, when their concerns are located in the here and the now? And, cannot today's terrorist become a pacifist democrat tomorrow? (Of course, a peacenik may go further and pose the question cannot the Tiger change its stripes?!) Has Sathya forgotten his passionate appeal soon after tsunami to seize the opportunity and to link post-tsunami recovery and reconstruction to advance the peace process? Should not the President who, when compared to her predecessors and contemporaries amongst Sinhala political leaders in Sri Lanka, clearly has the vision and the determi-

nation to address the unresolved Tamil Question but is impeded by Sinhala extremism and obscurantism, be given another chance of restarting the stalled peace negotiations and the peace process through the evolving WHAT-EVER?

These are also questions that Sathya cannot simply dismiss.

Hence, Sathya has taken the decision to support the "WHAT-EVER" as well as the bold and courageous initiative taken by the President as a necessity based on humanitarian and practical considerations, but not as a principled position since there are many principles that will be violated in the name of peace, just as many lives were consumed and human rights violated during the cease-fire period in the name of peace.

As to whether the JVPs concern that the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty would also be violated, although remote given the safeguards built into the "WHATEVER", cannot be ignored given LTTE's singularity of purpose in seizing every opportunity in its march towards "Thamil Eelam" and the donor community's vacillation.

The concerns of the JHU and religious extremists, on the other hand, stems more from Sinhala racism rather than from the teachings of Lord Buddha and will ironically only pave the way for LTTE's 'Thamil Eelam' and its perceived manifest destiny.

With that Sathya returns to his deep slumber till the next time he is woken up. Hopefully, then it would be the sound of the peace tolls and not the death knell. □

After the Presidential Elections: A wake-up call to all!

By Sathya, 22 November 2005

The outcome of the Presidential Election with all the excitement and disappointments of a one-day match is in the opinion of Sathya a wake up call to all, including Sathya whose hibernation was once again rudely disturbed.

Firstly, it was a wake up to the Tamil People. It was indeed a cruel irony that their self-proclaimed "sole representative" was bent on defeating Ranil Wickreme singhe, the Presidential candidate that the vast majority of the Tamil people wanted to see emerge as the victor! Of course, it was not the love for Ranil, but the fear of the Sinhala hardliners arrayed behind Mahinda Rajapakse that propelled the Tamil voters in Ranil's direction.

Ultimately, the Tamil people living in areas under the direct military-intelligence and propaganda control of the LTTE were disenfranchised by the LTTE. It was not a boycott by the Tamil people. It was instead a boycott call by the LTTE backed by coercion, intimidation and force. So how come that the Tamil people behaved in a manner that was diametrically opposed to that of their "sole representative", as evidenced by their preference when they came out in their numbers and voted for Ranil in areas where the Tigers could not directly and physically enforce their control? Well, that is the question that the

LTTE will have to ponder over.

Meanwhile, the decision of the LTTE to disenfranchise the Tamil voter at this Presidential Election (in contrast to the creation of phantom voters at the last General Elections!) could well be the third historical blunder of the LTTE - the other two historical blunders being the expulsion of the Muslim people from the "traditional Tamil homeland" compelling the Muslim people to distance themselves from the Tamil national struggle and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi which compelled India to list the LTTE supremo and his intelligence chief as the most wanted criminals in India.

If the LTTE reckoned that the International Community would empathise with it if Mahinda Rajapakse is elected with the support of Sinhala hardliners, they are in for another rude shock which is bound to follow the earlier shock treatment meted out by the European Union by imposing a travel ban on LTTE delegations.

If Anton Balasingham, Thamilselvan or LTTE's international lobbyists were to complain to the West about the "hardliners" in Colombo, they are bound to be admonished for not allowing the people that they claim to "solely" represent to vote and ensure a victory for Ranil Wickreme singhe, their favoured candidate.

The writing is already on the wall with the comment by John Cushnahan, EUs Head of the Election Monitoring Mission at the media briefing following the elections that he would take up LTTE "discriminatory" and "unacceptable" behaviour with the Council of the European Union.

The second wake up call is to Ranil Wickremesinghe. His policy of appeasement of the LTTE is not winning him any votes amongst broad sections of the Sinhala people as well as the Muslim people - not to mention the remnants as well as the fledgling Tamil democratic alternatives to the LTTE. Further, the emphasis on negative peace (i.e. the mere absence of war) with a so-called international security net to bail him out if things go wrong, and the notion of an agreement only with the LTTE, with the SLFP being made a fait accompli is not exactly firing the imagination of the people in the South.

Ranil would also have realised that this is not the first time that the Tiger bit the hand that fed it. It is imperative that Ranil should now put into practice his campaign preachings about removing the peace process from partisan politics and to extend support to Mahinda Rajapakse's fresh approach to the peace process based on inclusivity and human rights that goes beyond a mere "deal" between the Government of the day and the LTTE.

The third wake up call is to Mahinda Rajapakse. He must put into practice and in deed his stirring words following the taking of oaths that he no longer represents his voters and allies, but all sections of the Sri Lanka society. He can neither pursue the peace process, manage a mixed economy aimed at equitable growth or for that matter govern the country if he allows himself to be held hostage to the forces of ethnic and religious extremism and obscurantism in the south.

He has to put into practice and deed his words following the taking of oaths ceremony that he stands for an honourable peace for all the Peoples of Sri Lanka. While inclusivity in the peace process was sorely lacking in the manner in which it was being managed by Norway, LTTE and the Government of the day since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, Mahinda Rajapakse should recognize that once the process of consultations aimed at a broad consensus is advanced, there will come a time when the principle of "sufficient" consensus may have to be put into place based on the principles of democracy, secularism, pluralism. It is a consensus based on these principles that would ensure sustainability and equality.

The fourth wake up call is to the JVP. The JVP must realize that democracy, devolution and development are inseparably linked and that one cannot be advanced without the other. In fact power-sharing and resource-sharing could well be the key link between democracy and development and is imperative particularly in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country like Sri Lanka. Diversity and differentiation rather than uniformity and homogeneity is the essence of Marxist ideology and philosophy. It is incumbent on the JVP, if it is truly a vanguard of the working people and the oppressed masses as it perceives itself to be, to take forward the cry of devolution rather than dismiss it as being archaic and obsolete.

In this regard, statements by the JVP during the election campaign that if the LTTE were to give up its demand for a separate state then the South would be prepared to go beyond a unitary State is welcome and could well be the basis

for future negotiations. The responsibility now lies with the JVP as the vanguard of the working people to go before the people with that message rather than wait for a referendum and then call on the people to vote against devolution.

The role of a vanguard Marxist party (as the JVP perceives itself to be) is to raise the level of mass consciousness, rather than to get bogged down in false consciousness.

The fifth wake up call is to the religious organizations which are bent on playing politics. Every religion has its essentials and non-essentials. While the essentials of all religions are the same, it is the non-essentials like rites, rituals, and the institutionalization of religion with their personality cults that divide Peoples along religious lines.

State patronage to one religion in a multi-religious society leads to the alienation of other religions, just as much as the proselytizing based on global financial networks is the worst form of intolerance and threat to religious freedom and harmony between religions. The despicable manner in which religious organizations and personalities dabbled in politics during the election campaign is a wake up call to the people who espouse those religions to be vigilant against self-proclaimed messengers and servants of God.

The final wake up call is of course to Sathya to stop throwing brickbats at others and to start looking inwards into the chasm that governs word and deed of Colombo-based "civil" society to which he belongs! More on this at an "appropriate" time! □

“Sathya, as the name indicates, will strive to abide by Sathyam or Truth. Truth of course is a relative term, although it has its innate universal elements. Sathya will speak and write the “Truth” till such time as he is convinced that what he has been uttering and writing is wrong. At which point he will truthfully admit his mistakes and rectify. Till then he will voice and write the Truth as it appears to him. Of course, Sathya is fully aware that there are other means by which dissent can be and is “silenced”. Till such time, Sathya has no intentions of turning over and playing dead!”

- Sathya (Kethesh), 16 February 2004