

Volume VII

IRRECTIONS

FORGING A NEW PATH FOR TECHNICAL YOUTH

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DIRECTIONS

Directions accepts articles in both Tamil and English

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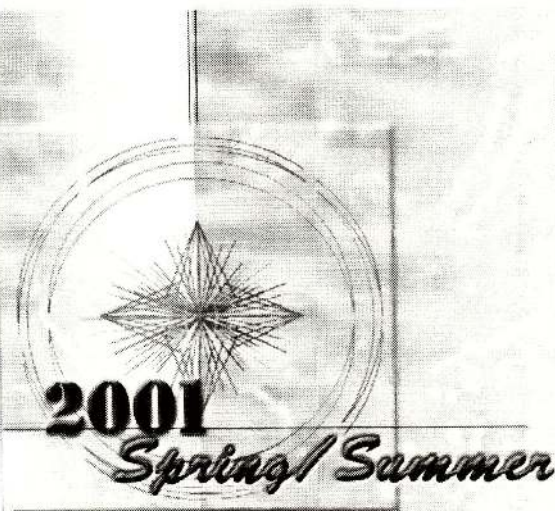
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The objective of **DIRECTIONS** is to encourage dialogue and debate on a variety of subjects. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the author and not of **DIRECTIONS** or **CanTYD**. Contributions may be edited according to space restrictions and to comply with **CanTYD** mandate.



DIRECTIONS is a quarterly magazine of the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD). It is a vehicle for dialogue and a networking tool for Tamil youth. The next issue is planned for September 2001.

DIRECTIONS CanTYD

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This magazine is available on the **CanTYD** homepage.

We would like to hear your opinions about this issue of **DIRECTIONS**. Please send your comments to directions@cantyd.org or to the above address.

DIRECTIONS is always on the lookout for articles, essays, columns, commentaries, poems, artwork, etc. Please consider writing for **DIRECTIONS**. Contribution limit is 1000 words. Send your contributions to the above contact addresses.

DIRECTIONS reserves the right to refuse to publish letters or articles which are judged to be libelous or discriminatory on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, class or (dis)ability.

Paintings courtesy of Jayalakshmi Satyendra and TamilNation.org

Editorial



One of the reasons that CanTYD came into being is to break stereotypes about our community. Recent events in Toronto have brought the media spotlight to one very important part of our lives - Tamil women. In the past months we've witnessed several incidents of violence directed towards women, the rape of two Tamil women in the GTA and a case of domestic violence - a woman getting pushed off her balcony. With that fatal fall issues resurfaced. Community values were being questioned. Culture and Domestic Violence were confused yet again.

It is clear to our community that together we need to send out a strong message. That message is that our community will not tolerate such acts of abuse and violence against any segment of our community, including and most especially women. As a community we stand by and support our women when they are in need. On the other hand, we as a community, have to deal with the very separate issue of community standards that Tamil women have to confront.

We reject the notion that our community values inherently subjugate women to play a secondary role in society. This is ridiculous. Tamil culture, in its purest sense, has been egalitarian dating back millennia. Many of our revered text and myths place men and women at an equal footing and enshrine the concept of equality among the sexes. Yet, over time, certain individuals have forgotten our true values and have interpreted the role of women in society as less valuable than that of their male counterpart. These "culturalists" often forget the nurturing role of women in our society - a role in which many Tamil women take particular pride. They also conveniently forget the immeasurable role women have played in society as the keeper of our culture, as the facilitator or in a more modern sense the role they balance as a mother, breadwinner or a freedom fighter.

The reality today is that girls are faced with many issues growing up: the teen years in which parents follow their every move, monitor phone calls, screen mail, pick them up from everywhere including the library - signs of overprotectiveness. Parents relax the strict guidelines somewhat during the post-secondary years because schedules were varied from day to day and thus it proved difficult to adhere to a strict regimen. So, these young women start convincing themselves that parents have finally realized that they are adults and were according them some well-deserved respect. After so many years of being told that going to the movies with your friends is a privilege and not a right, this new situation seemed

equivalent to emancipation. Many young women feel that they aren't being treated fairly by our community and this can be especially severe during the teen years. But actions can take on different meanings in different contexts. Parents maybe acting out of fear or have various reasons for their actions - we are not judging them. Essentially, these are issues; issues like harassment, maintenance of reputation, sexuality, etc. that young women face and have to come to terms with some way or other. Regardless of culture, this can be another coming of age story. A very important story every young girl goes through.

If the true essence of our culture is to be appreciated, then Tamil women's contribution to our society needs to be valued and brought out for the world to see. Tamil women do not need protection, as many would point out; rather they need the freedom and space to demonstrate their talents. Men need to understand that in order for Tamil women to have true independence, they need to take their responsibilities more seriously whether they are a husband, partner, brother or father - they have to take on many of the responsibilities in the home. Men are no longer the sole "breadwinner"; in most cases women share this role in addition to their expected roles in their homes. Yet, are men also extending their roles to include sharing domestic responsibility?"

Perhaps this dialogue about women can bring about change in our community that we so desperately need. As a result it might allow us to connect to the importance of women that our culture truly and historically displays.

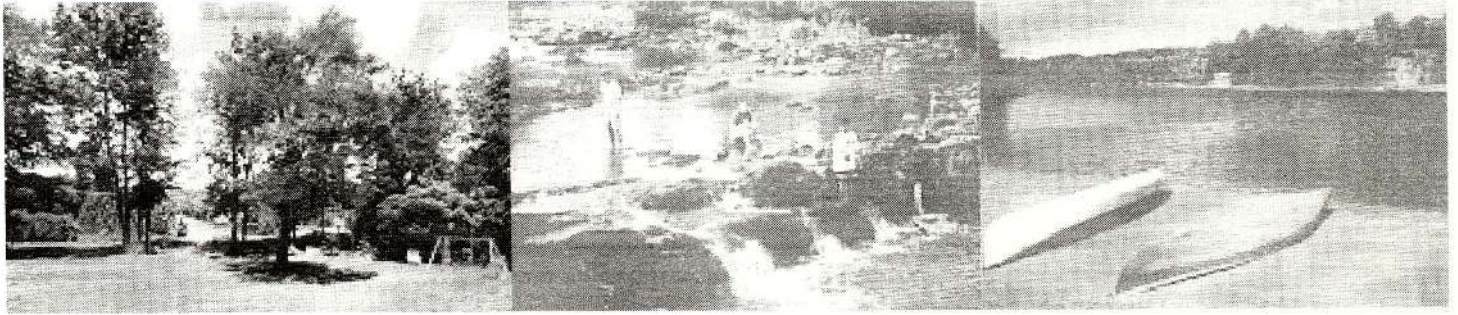
We've dedicated this issue of Directions to women to fulfill a two-fold mission. We want to provide a forum to encourage discussion of some key issues that young women experience and also send out the message that we as a community deplore domestic violence in any form.

It is with great pleasure that the Directions team in CanTYD presents to our readers this, our seventh volume of the magazine. It is only with the hard work of all the Directions team members who have spent countless hours of their valuable time and their dedicated effort that this magazine has attained the high caliber that it has presently. We'd like to present to you DIRECTIONS, dedicated to the strong, beautiful and intelligent women of our community.

Suki, Anne, Kumaran



Myers Cave Resort



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Myers Cave Resort is perfect for a romantic get-away. It is located on beautiful Marble Lake in the heart of Land O' Lakes district, an area renowned for its pristine lakes, natural beauty, clean air, abundance of wildlife and great fishing.

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What sort of freedom do girls need?

Why are you girls always talking about these kinds of restriction such as night clubs and going to late night shows? Do you think this the only freedom that girls need? Why don't you talk about how to seek a better future like other women who become well known doctors, politicians and astronauts? Every one should have some control or limit and those who can teach us this control/limit are our parents. So listen to your parents and ask them why they are taking the time to teach us. They will give you a good answer. Please don't think I am a parent. I'm just a single person.

Senkee
Canada

Grow bigger and better

You must be congratulated for undertaking such a good development project. I read your activities through Directions with great interest. Your contributions to the Tamil community in Canada as a whole is remarkable. Take every action to rectify the societal issues facing our youth. Be united and become an exemplary organisation dedicated to community development in Canada and elsewhere. Grow and grow, bigger and better.

Dr. K. Nava
Australia

Racism goes both ways

As a non-Sinhalese and a non-Tamil Sri Lankan, I can express without bias to any side that the Tamil community here in Toronto is a disgrace to all the decent Tamils and Sri Lankans living in Canada. If Tamils have political aspirations in Canada, first they have to clean up their own community and show the rest of the Canada that they truly care about all Canadians, not just Tamils. Racism goes both ways and it's about time Tamils should realize that if you need freedom you also have to respect and learn to live with other races as well.

Clint Walker
Canada

Good values are international

Freedom comes with responsibility. It is applicable to both girls and boys. Recently we had two very prominent speakers from US on saying no to sex before marriage (applies to both sexes) but you have to understand the vulnerability of females, and how to handle your teenagers. In the US, many are realising the mistakes they made during the liberal years of the past. Particularly the 50's and the 60s. There is no right and wrong in ethical issues and value systems. But we must know the consequences when we make certain life style choices. I think it is an important topic you have covered for our Tamil girls and their parents and the community. But please direct all of them properly to have better awareness and understanding. Good values are international. West industrialized first and moved fast. East was slow. But the conflicts can be well managed if we are prepared.

M. Thiru
Father of three

Think of the parents as well

I am a father of two girls and one is already married. These girls have been brought up outside Sri Lanka (only four years in Singapore, the rest of the period in western society) except two years, and now both are in their twenties. I agree to most of the points that you highlighted in your (Subha) article, but you must look at the parents side as well. The parents have (most of them) little exposure to the western society. Parents always wish their children to go on the right path and live well in their future. All those steps were taken in the interest of their children. Even if they make any mistakes, they are all sincere mistakes. If the children want to be rebellious, let them do so and the parents will accomodate that as well. It is a matter of time. The generation will not suffer so much. I guess that you are part of the second generation. The third and subsequent generations will not face these difficulties. This is the experience of Tamils living in Malaysia and England for generations.

Jeyaseelan
Singapore



Some factors to consider

As a parent, I admire and appreciate the issues raised by Subha related to gender inequality prevailing in our community. While agreeing to most, if not all, we have to take some factors into consideration. For the majority of our community, it's still an alien country and system. It will take some time for them to realize and understand the 'good' things that they could pick from this alien system. CanTYD should take the initiative of educating our community through the local media. The process would be slow but it will give a chance for the parents to see other positive ways to raise children without any bias. In essence the wider and more microspic ways in which parents could play a very important role for the overall health of our community, should be discussed in detail.

Nimal Veerasingham
Toronto

Who will bell the cat?

I refer to the article "Canadian Tamils and the Political Process" by Roshan Thirunavukarasu. I have observations on his good vision. Every one has a vision but in this case the hurdles are many. One of the main questions that needs to be answered is whether we can find a person who is educated, mature, knowledgeable, multilingual, far sighted and with a humble personality, who is prepared to work for the community. He should have no inclination towards self projection, bribery, and also must be capable of winning the love of other communities. I know that I am asking for too much from a person to be a politician in the modern world. What is the probability of finding such a person? Even if we assume that we could identify such a person, what percentage of the eligible Tamil voters will get together to support him? The selection has to meet the aspirations of leading Tamil associations and federations within their frame work of policies. If not, the question of unity comes up. We are famous talkers and love to criticize others but when it comes to action or support we take one step backward. Let us pray that our dream comes true one day. Who will bell the cat?

Pon Kulendiran
Canada

Email your comments to the
Editors at directions@cantyd.org

GET INVOLVED

RESEARCH

(RESEARCH@CANTYD.ORG)

Research issues relating to youth in our community. In July of 1999, CanTYD launched a year long in-depth research study funded by the National Crime prevention Center to explore the issues and concerns that face Tamil youth in the Greater Toronto Area. A survey of secondary school Tamil Students as well as interviews of front-line workers and the youth themselves was conducted and culminated in the publication of "Tamil Youth: The Realities," a summary of the all relevant stakeholders. The research was released to the mainstream media.

DIRECTIONS

(DIRECTIONS@CANTYD.ORG)

Directions is now a full-fledged magazine is a quarterly publication of CanTYD. Directions gives Tamil youth an outlet to express themselves and includes but is not limited to articles, essays, editorials, commentaries, columns, letters, poems, photographs and artwork.

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

(AWARDS@CANTYD.ORG)

CanTYD's signature event seeks to motivate and inspire secondary school Tamil youth to excel in various fields and provide positive role models. The achievements of students who have excelled in athletics, academia, community contribution, overall achievement and classical arts are recognized at our prestigious annual awards ceremony. Winners are determined by an independent panel of judges. Award winners who are continuing on to post secondary education receive a scholarship towards their higher learning. Showcasing the achievements of these outstanding youth provides a positive image of the contribution of the Tamil community. Awards of Excellence fulfils CanTYD's vision to propel all Tamil youth to achieve their full potential.

PROJECT T.H.A.M.I.L - TAMILS HELPING TO MOTIVATE AND INSPIRE LEADERSHIP (THAMIL@CANTYD.ORG)

CanTYD's core program works with Tamil youth and their parents/guardians at the grassroots level to inspire leadership in students. To achieve this goal Project THAMIL currently runs five programs:

Transition: The transition program works with students in grade 8 and 9, helping to ease the transition to highschool. The program includes mentoring and workshops (peer pressure, self-esteem etc.).

School Outreach: CanTYD currently works closely with five secondary schools with a high density of Tamil students on a regular basis to foster strong relations with students, teachers, administration and parents. Students are given the opportunity to actively participate in interactive workshops such as assertiveness, relationships, parents (bridging the generation gap) and culture.

Parent Network: CanTYD seeks to create a parents support network to provide resources and support to Tamil parents. Workshops and decision groups will be conducted to increase awareness on issues such as the education system, careers, and communication.

Youth Projects: Currently, student teams are working on various projects including "Akka Thamizha" - a publication of artistic expressions by Tamil students, "Medai Konal" - which uses drama to highlight youth issues such as identity, violence, etc. and an "Events team" co-ordinating community and environmental service activities.

Drop-In Centers: The center serves to provide Tamil youth with a positive environment to pursue recreation activities of their interest. Although no permanent facility exists at the present time, CanTYD uses community facilities to hold these positive, constructive and recreational activities during the summer and school year. CanTYD has also started a drop-in for mothers/daughters on Thursday nights.

COMMUNITY WATCH (COMWATCH@CANTYD.ORG)

CanTYD works with other organizations to share resources and find creative and effective solution for issues that affect Tamil youth. In partnership with other Tamil community organization and the Toronto Police services, CanTYD facilitates the Community Watch program.

COUNSELLING

(COUNSELLING@CANTYD.ORG)

Provides peer counselling, options, information and referrals to Tamil youth. All information is kept confidential. The team is working with Operation SpringBoard to provide placement opportunities for youth offenders to perform community service. Peer counsellors provide access to resources and options in general and aid Tamil youth with any problems they might have. CanTYD counsellors are trained by the Toronto District School Board of Education in the areas of conflict resolution, anger management, peer mediation and other appropriate areas.

WEB TEAM

(WEBMASTER@CANTYD.ORG)

The web team connects CanTYD to the rest of the world. Our website www.cantyd.org has been visited by individuals from all over the globe, who have praised the achievements of CanTYD. The website serves to inform both members and non-members of CanTYD's various achievements and events.

MEDIA

(MEDIA@CANTYD.ORG)

The media committee strives to create a positive image of the Tamil community specifically youth by way of highlighting the development and positive aspects of the community. This vision is achieved by highlighting the development and success of CanTYD and it many programs. As the outreach stream of the organization, the media committee endeavors to work closely with print, audio and visual media.





INSIDE (AN)TYD



Ontario Trillium Foundation Funding

It is our pleasure to inform every one about the financial contribution made by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD). Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. With \$100 million in annual funding from the province's charitable gaming initiative, the foundation provides grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts, culture, sports, recreation, environment and social sectors.

CanTYD is committed to empowering and developing Tamil youth by utilizing the principles of advocacy, partnership, education, assistance and research. Tamil community in GTA is a fast growing community with 150,000 in population. CanTYD has developed many programs to empower and develop Tamil youth. Currently, we have committees working in Project THAMIL (Tamils Helping and Assisting to Motivate and Inspire Leadership), Crime Prevention, Awards of Excellence, Directions magazine and operational committees such as Finance, Web, Human Resources Communication and Special Events. Project THAMIL has 9 sub-committees working in School Outreach, Mentoring (Youth Transition), Drop in Centre, Parents Network, Girl Talk, Dragon Boat Team, Medai Konal (Drama team), Akkah Thamizha? (Art publication) and York Diversity Campaign.

The cheque was presented at Tamil Eelam Society's Cultural Show on Sunday May 27th, 2001 at Winston Churchill Collegiate. The dedicated members of the financial team of CanTYD, Sugumar and Anita received this cheque presented by Marilyn Mushinski (MPP) and Michael Lindsay (Member of grant review team, Ontario Trillium Foundation). We received the grant in the amount of \$145,000 over three years and it is allocated as follows:

- 1st Year \$55,000
- 2nd Year \$50,000
- 3rd Year \$40,000

CanTYD has been run by volunteers for last 3 1/2 years without a full-time coordinator. Now that we have grown to over 200 volunteers and 17 sub-committees, there is a tremendous need for a full-time coordinator for CanTYD. Therefore, significant portion of this grant will be spent towards a salary for a full-time coordinator to coordinate all 17 sub-committees and all the volunteers. The remainder of the grant will be used for operational costs of CanTYD.

Many thanks go out to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for recognizing the need and efforts of our youth. We congratulate and thank not only all the volunteers for their contribution to the community but also Jennifer Miller, Program Manager and the grant review team of Ontario Trillium Foundation. CanTYD gratefully acknowledges the much-appreciated gift.

It has been a great achievement for CanTYD and added much credibility to the organization. We will ensure, credible, long-term results. Also, we will strengthen our accountability regimes to ensure that results are measured and built-on.

ONCE AGAIN, THANK YOU TRILLIUM FOUNDATION FOR RECOGNIZING CANTYD AS A VALUABLE ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORTING US WITH THIS WONDERFUL GIFT!

Rama Selvarajah is and OAC student at Albert Campbell C.I.



THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
1000 KENNEDY ROAD, SUITE 100, MARKHAM, ONTARIO L3R 9W7

T.R.A.C. Kolam Event

On Saturday June 30, CanTYD's volunteers were hard at work participating in the TRAC KOLAM event. This world record breaking event was held at the International Business Centre in Etobicoke. Most volunteers stayed more than 8 hours and many stayed for the whole 12 hours. Everyone should be commended for their commitment and dedication. Not only was the event a huge success but it was also a lot of fun. The Toronto Star wrote an article on the event and it was also showcased on TV Ceylon, ATN and CFMT.



Hard working CanTYDers!

Appointment of the CanTYD Program Coordinator

CanTYD is proud to announce the appointment of Neethan Shanmugarajah as our Program Coordinator for the year 2001-2002. For many years Neethan has been actively taking part in the community by being a tutor and a counsellor at the Academy of Tamil Arts and Technology, a development worker at the Malvern Family Resource Center and an outreach worker in the Mother Teresa School. He has worked in developing empowerment programs for youth and has much experience with networking and forging partnerships with community organizations. A very energetic individual he has volunteered with the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Center and also been a member of South Asian Youth Consultative Committee of Metropolitan Toronto Police. CanTYD would like to extend it's warmest welcome to the newest addition to our team.

CanTYD@Dragon Boat Festival

CanTYD participated in this year's 13th Annual Toronto International Dragon Boat Festival at Centre Island on Saturday, June 23rd at 9:30AM and 11:30AM. The new project initiated under Project Tamil provides youth with an environment that encourages teamwork, leadership and self-confidence. There was a post-race picnic/barbecue at the Scarborough Bluffs at 3PM for CanTYD members. Everyone enjoyed congratulating the DB team whilst chomping away on burgers and macaroni salads.

Collage of the event is on the opposite page.



FROZEN



VALUES

Many of us who have grown up in the western world are shocked to see how liberal the society has evolved when we go back to visit South Asia. This evolution puzzles and confuses us. Naturally, we wonder why have we grown up with conservative eastern values in the western world? Why have our parents and the Western South Asian society nurtured certain conservative "cultural" values in us, which seems to be of no importance in current South Asia? This is due to a phenomenon called "Frozen Values."

Most of the eastern values that I carry are the ones I absorbed before leaving Sri Lanka. Since then I have absorbed very few eastern values in the western world. If you weren't born in Sri Lanka or didn't grow up in Sri Lanka, then most of the eastern values you absorbed were from your family and friends in the western world. No matter how you have absorbed these eastern values, most of these values are "frozen" in time. They are frozen because these values were captured at the point in time, as eastern "cultural" values, when you or your ancestors left Sri Lanka.

The reality is that some of these Eastern cultural values have changed and evolved over time. Society and culture do change and evolve over a period of time. This is a fact. Certain eastern values that we learned as kids (or teenagers) before leaving South Asia or values taught to us by our parents (which they absorbed before leaving South Asia) have either changed or are non-existent. Then we have to reexamine some of these frozen values, which we carry within ourselves.

Let's separate values into two categories: "core" cultural values, and "soft" cultural values. Core values are the values quoted in the ten commandments of the Bible; the same values that are the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita, the Quran, and many other religious texts. These values teach you about honesty, self-integrity, respect for elders, fear of god, and so on. No matter which part of the world you are from, you have been taught and have absorbed these values. The core values do not change over time whereas "soft" cultural values evolve and change over time.

So, what are the "soft" cultural values that we carry and have become "frozen" or will become frozen in the future? The most common one, that I can think of and the most common one I see others around me and myself struggle with, is pre-marital relationships (or "dating" as we know it in the western world). Pre-marital relationships are still scrutinized by our Western South Asian society even though it has become common and acceptable in the South Asian subcontinent. A woman of South Asian origin living in the western world is constrained and afraid of the consequences of a failed relationship with a man. If it were to become known in our society that she had "dated" one or two men, would she be of the right status when it comes to an arranged marriage? A man of South Asian origin living in the western world who wants to meet his (South Asian origin) wife through a "dating" process is torn by the constraints placed on the women.

Another "soft" cultural value would be the question of feminist values. What is the proper behavior and life-style of a single or married woman in our society? In the Western world, educated and successful South Asian origin women struggle to mold themselves into a "cultural" female role as defined by our elders. This is sad but true. Some of these "cultural" feminist values are of no importance in today's South Asia.

Each one of us can come up with several other "soft" cultural values which are frozen or will become frozen in the future compared to the evolving South Asian society. The importance here is to recognize our core cultural values and preserve them from generation to generation. But, on the other hand, we do have to recognize that some customs and values do evolve over time and some become unimportant. It is our responsibility to question these and evolve with them over time. If not, we will be behind in the cultural evolution and will be left holding onto antique values.

Sri Sundaralingam was born in Sri Lanka and migrated to Canada in 1988 with his family. He has a BSc degree in Computer Engineering from the University of Waterloo. He currently lives in San Jose, California and works for Cisco Systems

THE

Making & Break

bul

OF

Tamil Women

I ask you not to prejudge the content of this piece, let me just assure you that this is not yet another "radical feminist" article. The purpose of this article is not to prove that Tamil males are sexist neanderthals who are bent on enslaving the female population. Rather, I would like to discuss the difficulties that Tamil women face in integrating themselves into western society while maintaining their cultural identities. I speak openly, honestly and without inhibition—that is I speak as a Tamil woman.

What are the necessary attributes of a respected Tamil woman one may ask? Well most would reply, "modesty, innocence, domesticity, respectability, and let's not forget chastity; that is so inexperienced with dealing with the opposite sex, that the word "male" is equivalent to another species.

These characteristics may be a feasible reality in our homeland where society is structured significantly different, but those traits are all but impossible to preserve in Canada. In our homeland it is much easier to be a typical Tamil woman; shy, subservient to parental pressures, and dominated by the husband, the sole breadwinner. But, it is impractical and I would argue impossible to remain so in Canada.

"WOMEN
CANNOT BE
INDEPENDENT"

To begin with, more and more Tamil parents are demanding that their daughters earn university degrees and work in jobs that pay more money in order to sustain the economic stability of the family. Even if parents do not expect their daughters to contribute to daily living costs such as food and rent, many young women end up paying for their university education, a responsibility that parents or a brother traditionally shouldered. This transferring of responsibilities is understandable as tuition is high in this country and parents simply cannot afford it. However, although parents are more than willing to transfer family responsibility from son to daughter or from parent to child, they are unwilling to grant their daughters the degree of freedom that is allotted to sons.

Women cannot be independent. They are either dependent on their parents, their brother, their husbands or their children. Women are raised to doubt their own decisions. They are told not to ask questions, to be obedient, to behave like a girl and not draw attention to themselves. How then can you expect women to ask a question during lectures, to be aggressive in the workplace or to take an interest in their finances? One cannot succeed in life without initiative and confidence and these are things that are deconstructed the minute a Tamil girl hits puberty.

Women are also discouraged from socializing with their own peers. "Don't talk on the phone, be home before six, and never, ever go near Tamil boys." It doesn't matter if you are 16 or 26 the same rules apply until you are married. You may have a job, have listened to your parents every command whether you agreed with it or not, but still have to ask permission for something as trivial as having a cup of coffee with an old school mate. Trivial to you, "what will other people say" to them.

Tamil men. What to do, what to say? Our parents can be understood for their judgmental views, for those views are the values and morals that have been the very fiber of their upbringing. But Tamil men cannot be as easily excused for they would like to have their cake and eat it too. The same Tamil men who would complain about the inapproachability of Tamil women are the same ones who would not hesitate to destroy a woman's reputation when her friendliness is suddenly branded as promiscuity. In Tamil culture, the cornerstone of a woman's self-worth is her reputation. Once that has been compromised, so is her honor, dignity and pride.

These are the same men that would date extensively but expect their wives never to have had a boyfriend. These men don't want a strong, independent woman but a second mother. An educated woman is seen as a showpiece. "It's nice that the girl has brains but she shouldn't use them." So women are either seen as morally loose or god like pure; they are never viewed on the same level as men. And so the cycle of servitude and submission begins for yet another generation of Tamil women.

Westernized Tamil women are not only influenced by parents, but also by the media, peers, and western philosophy. At some point in their lives Tamil women begin to think somewhat naively, but at the same time ideally that gender equality can be possible in this country at least. Eventually they all become sorely disappointed.

Tamil Parents and Tamil men we implore you to realize that women cannot remain encased in glass domes where life remains static. We do not need to be protected but encouraged. At times, we may fall but we should be allowed to stand back up, not cruelly pushed further down as so often occurs. Some of us survive as idealists, but most fail miserably and pay the consequences for the rest of our lives. So parents treat daughters like your sons, and husbands treat your wives like your friends. We are not disrespecting you, rather we are asking that you finally respect us.

Malathy Manoharan is a University of Toronto graduate who is presently working in the Social Service field.

குடும்பங்களை வலுப்படுத்தல்

ஆராதனன் விவேகானந்தன்

இலங்கைச் சிறுபான்மையின நலன்புரி அமைப்பினால் (சேக்கம்) குடும்பங்களை வலுப்படுத்தல் எனும் கருத்தரங்கு திரு. நாகராமலிங்கம் அவர்களின் தலைமையில் பங்குனி மாதம் 31ம் திகதி இல.50 டக்சிடோ கோட்டில் நடைபெற்றது.

சேக்கம் அமைப்பு பல கருத்தரங்குகளை அண்மைக்காலத்தில் நடத்தியுள்ள போதிலும் இ அண்மையில் ரொரோன்ரோ நகரத்தில் நடைபெற்ற பல அசம்பாவிதங்களின் காரணமாக, குடும்பங்களை வலுப்படுத்தல் எனும் கருத்தரங்கிற்கு முக்கியத்துவம் கொடுத்திருந்தது. இக் கருத்தரங்கில் உரையாற்றிய அருட்திரு. கலாநிதி சந்திரகாந்தன் தமது உரையில் குடும்பம்(family)இ குழுமம்(communitiy)இ சமூகம்(society) என்பவற்றிற்கிடையேயான தொடர்புகளை விளக்கினார். தமிழர் பண்பாடானது குடும்பங்களை மையமாக வைத்தே அமைந்தது. பிறப்பு, திருமணம்இ சுகையினம்இ இறப்பு யாவும் குடும்பங்களினூடாகஇ குழும ஈடுபாட்டுடன் அமைந்தது என்று அவர் தமது உரையில் கூறினார். திருமணமாகாத இருவர்இ திருமணம் செய்து புது வாழ்க்கையைத் தொடங்குவது போலஇ பிள்ளை பெற்றதும்இ தமது குடும்பம் எனும் வட்டத்தை உண்டாக்குகின்றார்கள். இக்குடும்பமானது குழந்தையினூடாக வளர்கின்றது. அதாவது அனுபவரீதியாகஇ தாய்இ தந்தை இருவரும் தமது அறிவை வளர்க்கின்றனர் என்று தொடர்ந்தார்.

மற்றும்இ குடும்பங்களிடையே சமய வெறி இருத்தல் கூடாது. ஆனால் சமய நாட்டம் இருத்தல் மிக அவசியம். இவ்விதமான மரபுகளின் மூலம் குடும்பங்கள் சிதைந்து போகாது இருத்தல் வேண்டும் என்றார். மேலும்இ பெற்றோர்இ பிள்ளைகளிற்கென நேரம் ஒதுக்குதல் வேண்டும் என்ற கருத்தை வலுப்படுத்தினார்.

தொடர்ந்து உரையாற்றிய திரு. அகஸ்டின் ஜெயநாதன் குடும்பங்களின் பெறுமதிகளை பல உதாரணங்கள் மூலம்இ னுளைமுடியட யவவவைரனந (பாராதீனம்) என்ற அடிப்படையில் விளக்கினார். அதாவதுஇ பிளாஸ்டிக் கோப்பைகளை நாம் பாவித்தவுடன் எறிவதையொத்த மனப்பான்மை மக்களிடையே பரவிவருகின்றது. அதிலும் கனடாவில்இ தளபாடங்கள்இ வீடுஇ உடைமைகளை விற்பது போலஇ விவாகரத்தும் இலகுவாக கருதப்படுகின்றது. இவ்வித மனப்பான்மை குடும்பங்களை வலுப்படுத்தலுக்குப் பதிலாகஇ குடும்பங்களை சிதைவுபடுத்துகின்றது இந்நிலை மாறவேண்டும் என அவர் வலியுறுத்தினார்.

தெற்காசிய பெண்கள் நிலைய தலைவர் திருமதி. மணி பத்மராஜா பேசுகையில்இ பிள்ளைகளின் முதல் பாடசாலை வீடுஇ வீட்டினூடாக பெற்றோர் மூலமாகத்தான் பிள்ளைகளிற்கு நல்ல பழக்கங்களை புகட்ட வேண்டும். உதாரணமாக: சில பெற்றோர்இ பிள்ளைகளுக்குப் பொய் சொல்லக்கூடாது

என்று கூறிவிட்டுஇ தொலைபேசி அழைத்தபோதுஇ பிள்ளைகளிடம் அப்பா இல்லையென்று கூறுஇ அல்லது தொலைபேசி எடுக்காதே என்று கூறுதல் போன்றன பிள்ளைகளின் மனதில் குழப்பத்தை ஏற்படுத்தி விடும். எனவே பெற்றோர், பிள்ளைகள் விடயத்தில் மிகவும் அவதானமாக இருத்தல் வேண்டும் என்றார்.

இக் கருத்தரங்கில் "இளைஞர் பார்வையில்" எனும் அடிப்படையில் என்னையும் பேசும்படி அழைத்திருந்தார்கள். என்னைப்பொறுத்தவரையில் பெற்றோர்இ இளைஞரிடையே உள்ள பேச்சுத்தொடர்பு மிகவும் முக்கியமானது. பெற்றோர்இ தாம் நினைப்பதுதான் சரியெனவும்இ பிள்ளைகள் தாம் செய்வது சரியெனவும் பிடிவாதமாக இருத்தல் கூடாது. இருசாராரும்இ ஒருவருக்கு ஒருவர் மதிப்பளித்துஇ புரிந்துநடந்துகொள்ளுதல் வேண்டும். "குடும்பம் ஒரு கோயில்"இ அதில் அங்கம் வகிப்போர் தனித்தனியே இயங்க முடியாது. பெற்றோரும்இ பிள்ளைகளும் சேர்ந்து தீர்மானங்களை எடுக்கும் போதுதான் குடும்பங்கள் வலுப்படும்.

பல சமூக நடவடிக்கைகளில் ஈடுபட்டு தமிழ் சமுதாயத்திற்குஇ குறிப்பாக பெண்களிற்கு, சேவை புரியும் திருமதி. அமலா அம்பலவாணர் மிக அரிய கருத்துக்களை எடுத்துரைத்தார். அவர்இ கோபம் என்னும் கொடிய ஆயுதந்தான் குடும்பங்கள் பிரிவதற்கு காரணம். எனவே கோபத்தை நல்ல முறையில் கையாள வேண்டும் என எடுத்துரைத்தார். கோபம் அடைவதில் பிழையில்லை. ஆனால்இ அதனால் வரும் ஆபத்துக்களை அறிந்திருத்தல் மிக அவசியம் என்று அவர் தொடர்கையில், பேச்சுத்தொடர்பு எவ்வளவு முக்கியம் என்பதை ஒரு சுவையான கதை மூலம் விளக்கினார். குடும்பம்பங்கள் தமக்கென நேரத்தை ஒதுக்குதல் வேண்டும். கனேடியர்கள் வேலை நேரம் வேறுஇ குடும்ப நேரம் வேறு என ஒதுக்கி உள்ளது போல் நாமும் கடைப்பிடிக்கப்பழகிக் கொள்ளவேண்டும் என்றார். இக்கருத்தரங்கு கலந்துரையாடல் ஒன்றுடன் முடிவுற்றது. ஆரோக்கியமான குடும்பம் வளர்வதற்கு ஒழுக்கம்இ மதிப்புஇ புரிந்துணர்வுஇ பேச்சுத்தொடர்பு என்பன இருத்தல் வேண்டும் என்பதுதான் இக்கருத்தரங்கின் மூலம் கற்ற பாடமாகும்.

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Fathers and Daughters

Gowry Selvaratnam

Everyone I know who also knew my father says that I resemble him in many ways. He died when I was almost six months old, says my mother. My favourite hobby has become, looking at my father's album. I flick through his album and savour every small detail of him for the zillionth time. His smile, his energy in the still photos, they all reflected his zest for life. Because he died at the age of thirty he had lived his life to the full. There were photos of him playing football, photos of him being with his friends laughing and living. I was born and brought up where my father was born and brought up. I still have access to his books, one of the rooms in our house contained his possessions. I go there and read his books and essays he wrote for school even though I didn't understand much. I would stare at his slanted handwriting and compare with mine. Perhaps if he knew that I intruded and invaded his privacy to this degree he would have threw me out and said 'Get a life!' I have developed these rituals since I was six and never got bored of them. His room became a shrine where the spirit of my father remained and I could feel his presence. I didn't think my mother was bothered about his things as much as I did, it's the not knowing that motivated me. She would get on with her life and still loved him. Even if I looked like him unless I am a boy it won't take his existence to the future. I am an ingredient that is not most important to the dish. It's like an English man speaking in Tamil. He can speak it fluently but it wouldn't sound authentic unless he was born to Tamil parents. I liked the fact that I looked like him. Whenever people complimented me I would smile shyly, a toothpaste smile at them. Compliments have a certain effect on me. My mother says I laugh like him as well.

In my dreams I longed to see him. I don't dream of him when I want to dream. It seems almost beyond my control. I dream of him when I actually don't think of him. He is not on the surface of my mind. He is not some trivial issue. He is deeply embedded beneath the surface of my subconscious so I don't have the switch to control that area. I always have silly dreams like me pulling my friend Angela's hair and shaking her by her shoulders until she is in tears and begs me to let her go. My friend Angela is a bit strange. I didn't like her name. I thought it had something to do with post. That was when I knew no English. She is a daddy's girl. He picks her up from school. She always pays me compliments and I have an obligation to return them. When she was wearing a dress that made her look like a clown, I told her that her dress was beautiful. She proudly said that her father had bought her the dress. I was completely jealous even though I thought it was an insult to fashion. The other time she was wearing a hair band, which made her hair look wavy. I didn't want to pay any compliment in case if she said that her father bought it. Then I couldn't afford to be jealous. It makes me feel mad. Her father and my father went to the same college and according to the local rumours, they were friends. I liked it when he smiled at me. Because he smiled at me with the same face who had shared a friendship with my father. So my father must have left something of him in his friends. So I could collect and relocate which are suppose to be the remains of him and rightfully mine. Eventually I could construct a full size father with all these bits and pieces of him. Like a jigsaw puzzle to some extend, but this image I construct would be beyond the reach of anyone else but me.

I consider myself an independent person in a way. I tend to do things authorities disapprove. Some people call me a rebel without a cause. Sometimes I do things to seek attention. I had been deprived of attention as far as I can remember at school. So I don't think I am a rebel without a cause. One day I climbed up on the desk in the class to check out some boy I didn't fancy at all. I just wanted everyone to know that I fancied him. The reason behind this was I wasn't a so-called 'clever clock' that Angela was. I thought he fancied Angela. It was all in my mind. Angela didn't take any notice of her fan club. But I did because I was always bored out of my mind. I sometimes understand my lessons but sometimes I end up in tears and fed up of being so dumb. When the teacher was busy with the blackboard, I was checking up a boy behind the partition with glasses. Somehow I have got it into my head that boys in glasses are intelligent. I don't consider myself intelligent so I go after people who have got that intellectual part of the brain, therefore I get what I lack. He didn't take any notice of me but his middle-aged lecturer did, blushed and looked away. I decided not to take this any further. When I jumped down with a bang, my teacher was asking me whether I was all right. I said to her that there was a bee on the desk so I had to kill it with my feet and that's why I was on the desk. She looked at me and smiled not fully convinced.

'Angela...', I whispered in Angela's ears.

All she said to me was 'Sush'. Sush isn't an answer. Besides she didn't have any right to shut me up.

'You know the boy with glasses in the next classroom, he is handsome, is he not?' I asked, fishing for her opinion in this matter.

'I don't think anything about any boy. If I climbed up on the desk to check out some boy my father would break my legs without a doubt,' she reasoned.

'With no appeal,' I added.

'If you don't like any boys then there must be something wrong with you,' I argued back as if this was a court case.

'Well, I don't let myself to fall in love with anyone,' She replied.

Looking down at her notebook. I could hear tears in her voice. I felt sorry for her for the first time.

'I am not necessarily in love with anyone actually but If I happen to fall in love then my father should have no right to break my legs. If all the fathers were like this in Indian cinema, then only a man can run around trees and the women would be running around the trees in wheel chairs,' she whimpered.

Not a pretty sight, I thought to myself. A wave of sadness swept over me. I dug into my jacket pocket for sweets. I peeled off the wrapper and stuffed myself one after the other. I liked eating sweets when I am sad. They somehow helped. I offered one to Angela but she shook her head. I take no for an answer only when it comes to sweets. We didn't even notice the class was over. Angela was openly crying now. I patted her on her knees. I've never done this sort of business before.

'What's bothering you Angela? Would you like to talk about it?' I asked. I picked up that line from the countless soap operas I regularly watch although it never occurred to me that watching rubbish like this on television would actually become useful one day.

'Its my dad! he is always eavesdropping on my conversations with my friends and he doesn't let me go out anywhere at all and even if he does, he is always watching me. At parties, he always keeps an eye on me. Whenever I look, I see him looking at me and it make me feel I am in some kind of a prison and my life is a kind of a prison,' she cried.

She stopped talking and crying at the same time, a skill I never managed to master. 'How about your father...does he treat you like a robot too. I bet he can't beat my father,' she contended.

'Yeah, he does but he is working aboard, so he can't be keeping an eye on me as much as he wishes,' I lied. I cooked up the whole lie in almost a second and I was impressed with myself. It surprised me that she didn't know that my father was dead.

'Does she talk to anyone at all except for her precious books,' I wondered. I didn't want to make her jealous by telling her that my father is dead.

'Where is he working then?' she asked.

'Oh abroad... some far away place. I can't remember the name of the place but he is working in a toothpaste company, filling tooth paste in its tubes. He can't take leave as often he likes, you know which works out fine for me,' I said.

I burst out with laughter at the irony. Angela thought I was laughing at my luck.

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Youth Advising Youth

Dear YAY:

I recently learned that my 14 year old cousin, let's call her Lisa, is on the verge of anorexia. She's been bullied and teased for the last several years by her female classmates, and even by the people she thought were her friends. They continuously throw hurtful remarks at her like "fat" and "ugly". She's taken these comments very seriously and seems to believe that she really is fat and ugly. She's now severely underweight and I fear she's going to get worse. Her parents work two jobs each, and don't have the time to watch her eating habits. I've tried to talk to her and encourage her to do activities to increase her self-esteem; however she breaks down in tears at the mention of her appearance. She can't even look at herself in the mirror. It breaks my heart to see her like this, and to know that there are thousands of other young girls who feel this way about themselves. I'm writing this for two reasons... to bring up the topic of self-worth in teens and get any suggestions as to how or what I should do to help my cousin.

I commend your youth organization for its active role in motivating and guiding members and readers alike. Keep it up!

Sharon, Scarborough

Dear Sharon:

I praise you for your efforts in trying to help out your cousin. I am glad that you wrote to me about this problem as you have touched on a very relevant and troubling issue that plagues women in our society today.

Our society values women for their appearance and less so for their intelligence. Young girls become aware of this painful fact when they hit puberty or even earlier than that. Fashion magazines and television preach that if you are thin and beautiful then you will be happy. Unfortunately, a lot of people subscribe to this belief, consciously or unconsciously. When your own friends, relatives and even parents practice this belief, it can wreak havoc on a young girl's self-image and self-esteem. People fail to recognize that the images of the women portrayed in these magazines and on fashion runways are unrealistic. Models often have to starve themselves and/or take drugs in order to cope with the demands made on their physical appearance. If you follow their lives, you will see that thin does not equal happy!

It is therefore no wonder that Lisa is going through such turmoil at this stage in her life. Her problem is of course exacerbated by the fact that she has other girls mocking her appearance. These girls are probably in the same boat as her. They most likely feel badly about their own appearance as they fall short of achieving this ideal of a thin, beautiful woman themselves and somehow feel better when they put other people down. People who are content with their lives do not go around mocking and taunting others' appearances.

As long as our society is hung up on materialism and external appearances, these problems are not going to go away.

There are several things that you can do to improve Lisa's situation. Firstly, she is hanging around the wrong crowd! She needs to meet more enlightened people whom she can call her friends. You were right in encouraging her to participate in activities to improve her self-esteem, like sports, clubs, or volunteer work. Volunteer work, especially, is a great way to meet new people who are not self-absorbed and self-centred. However, I get the impression that she lacks the motivation and/or the courage to take this first step. Perhaps, initially you can invite Lisa to come out and participate in activities that you are involved in. With time she will build enough courage to venture out on her own. You can also introduce her to your other female friends who have been through similar experiences in their lives and have overcome it successfully.

If these measures are not successful and Lisa's condition continues to deteriorate, then she will need to seek professional help for the sake of her health.

In the meantime you can encourage Lisa to read books on this issue. I recommend the book by Mary Pipher, a clinical psychologist, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. It is important that Lisa understand that she isn't alone.

Lisa will have to learn to be assertive if she is ever going to survive the external forces that will continually try to beat her down throughout her life. Instead of seeing herself as an object of other people's lives, she will have to start seeing herself as the subject of her own life. She is lucky to have a caring cousin like you Sharon. I wish both of you the best of luck.

.....

Dear YAY:

I started hanging out with some new friends this year. They are extremely fun and crazy to hang out with. But they do drugs. I'm confused and don't know how to handle it. I don't want to be "uncool". What should I do?

Dayalan, Scarborough

Dear Dayalan:

If you find these new friends of yours fun and exciting to be around, that's great. Just because they do drugs, does not necessarily make them bad people. However, even though you do not come out and say it, I get the sense that you may be feeling some pressure to join them and take drugs so that you do not seem "uncool". If you feel pressured into doing something that you do not want to do, then these people are not your true friends! Real friends should respect your decision in this matter even if they do not agree with you.

My advice is to stay away from drugs. Drugs are not benign. They are chemicals that exert physiological changes in your body and some of these changes can have permanent and undesirable effects.

If you want to make new friends why don't you join a club or volunteer organization or participate in an athletic activity of your choice. It's a great way to meet people with similar interests as you. Also, it's good to have different groups of friends. You'll get to expose yourself to different ways of thinking and learn new things.

Dayalan, we all want to feel belonged. This need is especially great during the teenage years. Just be careful not to sacrifice your own principles and morals in order to be "cool". It's not worth it in the long run!

On April 1st, 2001, Women Aiding Tamils Together (WATT), a newly formed organization to assist Tamil women with the complex issues that face them on Canadian soil, held a forum on the issue of domestic violence within the Canadian Tamil community. The forum was organized in light of the recent incidences of violence against women within our community; the forum was a means to bring together community members in order to raise awareness about this issue and to brainstorm ideas on ways to combat this problem.

It was quite heartening to see the presence of both sexes including younger and older members of the community.

The forum started off with a speech from Ms. Parvathi

not offered the same sort of security and support as they would be back home. In addition, these women face many obstacles such as language barriers, educational barriers and other economical hurdles that bar them from gaining access to any government programs. Even if some of these women manage to get to a shelter, their problems only compound when they have to deal with impediments such as racism. Furthermore, in a culture that is centred on the family unit, the act of leaving the household even if to escape an abusive relationship is frowned upon. All these forces work together in a systematic manner to discourage a woman from seeking help and she therefore remains trapped in an abusive

Women Aiding Tamils Together's

(WATT)

Forum on Violence Against Women

BY: SUBHA INDRARAJAH
INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING TEAM

Kandasamy, a counsellor within the community. She highlighted some of the unique issues facing Tamil women especially those who are recent immigrants to Canada. The hardships of these women, particularly those that come over as refugees, start before they reach this country. The moment they leave Sri Lanka, these women are no longer under the protection of their families, but instead are prey to the evil forces of the outside world. Some of these women have endured sexual assaults, unwanted pregnancies and some have even committed suicide as a result. Those women who arrive in Canada after suffering these atrocities face a society here that is reluctant to address their experiences. The lack of acknowledgement of these issues further serves to victimize the victim whereby the victim enters this vicious cycle of self-blame and self-hatred. Without an outlet to vent their suffering, these women get caught in a web of psychological havoc, which eventually leads to mental disease.

Women who arrive in Canada and lack support systems, i.e. they do not have other family members here, are completely dependent on their husbands, economically and socially. As a result, when issues like domestic violence surfaces within the family these women have nowhere to turn. Ms. Kandasamy pointed out that even if these women had relatives here, they are

relationship.

These situations are tolerated by the community and people have a tendency to turn a blind eye to the plight of these women as it is an ingrained belief within the community that no matter the circumstances, the family unit has to remain intact. Ms. Kandasamy pointed out that this complacency is further exacerbated by negative portrayals of women in community dramas, etc. The creation and perpetuation of negative stereotypes can have a detrimental impact on the attitudes of not only adults, but more importantly children, both male and female.

In addition to the issue of domestic violence, Ms. Kandasamy also expressed regret in the fact that the Tamil community is reluctant to acknowledge the issue of sexual abuse of children. She concluded her talk by stating that in order to raise our young girls in a healthy environment, it is important to acknowledge and have open discussions about all of the above issues.

The second speaker at the forum was Mr. Imparajah who is a lawyer within the community. He addressed the issue of domestic violence from a legal point of view. The majority of those affected by domestic violence are women and children. In May 2000, the Ontario government announced \$10 million to enhance support for victims of domestic violence and their

Continued on next page...

Women Aiding Tamils Together's (WATT)

Forum on Violence Against Women

children. This enhancement in support will mean more translators/interpreters, more emergency shelters and more affordable housing for women and children escaping abusive households. Mr.

Imparajah touched on some of the recent reforms to Ontario's Domestic Violence Protection Act, which were implemented in Dec. 2000. Ontario is now adopting an "intervention order" system to replace the existing restraining order system. Under the new system, anyone over the ages of 16 or 18 may apply for an intervention order, whereas the restraining order system was geared more towards spouses. In addition, a provincial judge will be available 24 hours a day to grant an intervention order, and the presence of a lawyer is not necessary. Furthermore, with the new system, measures have been taken to put in place more specific restrictions when granting an intervention order so as to close existing loopholes that previously allowed abusers to circumvent the law and gain access to their victims.

In the lively discussion that followed Mr. Imparajah's talk, great concern was raised as to how Tamil women would even know of these services as many of them are oblivious to their existence due to language and educational barriers. It was suggested that steps be taken to publicize these services to the Tamil community through the Tamil media especially the Tamil radio and television shows. In addition, it was suggested that a counselling group be established to help male abusers adjust to Canadian society in a culturally sensitive manner especially with respect to the domestic violence laws of this country.

The last set of talks was delivered by two young ladies, Ms. Gaithree Nagendra and Ms. Malathi Manoharan, who focused on the lives and experiences of young Tamil women growing up in Canada. Ms. Nagendra stressed that it was important that the Canadian Tamil community adopt certain "Canadian" values such as allowing young women the independence and freedom to make their own decisions in various life matters. Ms. Manoharan pointed out several hypocrisies within the Tamil community when it came to raising their daughters. For example, young women are expected to be aggressive in the public domain, i.e. they have to excel in school, earn university degrees and maintain a high-paying job; however, when it

comes to the private domain, they have to be passive and undergo arranged marriages and be obedient to their in-laws and husbands. In addition, young women within our community are raised to stay away from young men. We are told to ignore their advances lest we acquire a certain "reputation". Ms. Manoharan pointed out that in the event a young woman decides to go out with a young man, she is then stuck with him for the rest of her life as it is inappropriate for a woman to date around. Unfortunately, this also means that if this relationship is abusive, she is obligated to stay in it. Ms. Nagendra and Ms. Manoharan concluded their talks with the statement that young women should be given the same rights as that of young men if we wish to resolve any of the issues raised during the course of this forum.

Due to the gender inequality within our community, women are put in precarious situations that leave them vulnerable to abuse from boyfriends, husbands and other male relatives. In order to address and combat the issue of domestic violence, WATT shall be taking measures to disseminate information to women especially to those who are unaware of the assistance available to them due to language, educational and other barriers. This entails translating government pamphlets from English to Tamil, distribution of these pamphlets to Tamil households and advertisements via the Tamil media to raise awareness about domestic violence and the services available to victims. In addition, other pamphlets, or educational leaflets will have to be written in order to educate the Tamil community at large about the various other issues that were raised during the course of this Forum. In all, the Forum was enlightening and all the speakers were instrumental in helping to bring to the surface several important issues that affect the Canadian Tamil community.

The forum concluded on an artistic note with an excellent performance from CanTYD's Medai Konal.

Subha Indrarajah completed a Hon. B.Sc. in Toxicology and a M.Sc. in Pharmacology at the University of Toronto and is presently employed as a Research Technician in the area of Pharmacogenomics at the Hospital For Sick Children.

:: SPORTS ::

SOWTM Sports Tournament

On March 10th and 17th 2001, the Students' Organization of the World Tamil Movement (SOWTM) held a well-organized indoor sports tournament at Centennial College. The tournament is held annually to encourage and involve young Tamils in athletic activities and promote sportsmanship. The crowd turnout was huge, and people had a good time either participating in the events or as spectators cheering on their favourite teams.

CanTYD volunteers participated in the tournament as well. CanTYD's female 3 on 3 basketball team did an amazing job and played hard to secure first place. The participants were Darshika Selvasivam, Gayathri Sivakumar, Sakthi Sivakumar and Anitta Satkunarajah (substitute). Sakthi was, without a doubt, the MVP for the tournament with her amazing basketball skills which surprised many in the audience.

The girls also participated in the volleyball event. Calling themselves, "The Violatorz", Darshika, Gayathri, Sakthi, Anitta and Abirami Thiruchelvam played aggressively and finished first in this event as well. Overall, CanTYD girls represented CanTYD with great honour at the SOWTM sports meet.

The CanTYD male volleyball team also participated in the tournament. The players included Preman Sri Tharan, Gobi Kathirgamanathan, Sanj Selvarajah, Easan Srivamadevan, Roshan Thirunavukarasu, Siva Arunathanathan and Nanthan Thurairetnam. The team's hardwork and its ability to overcome adversity were crucial in placing them third against professional leaguers. "We hope to play better next year", said Sanj.

Great job guys and gals!

Anitta Satkunarajah is a 1st year student at the University of Waterloo



Name: Russel Premakumaran Arnold

Profession: Cricket Player

Birth Date: October 25, 1973

Birth Place: Colombo, Sri Lanka

Plays: Left Hand Bat, Right Arm Off Break

Major Teams: Sri Lanka and Nondescripts Cricket Club



Russel Arnold, a strong Christian and keen fan of rugby, has only recently secured a permanent place in the Sri Lankan team, despite scoring prolific runs in domestic cricket for a number of years. He started his career as an opening left handed batsman and made his Test debut against Pakistan at Premadasa International Stadium in 1996/7. Since then he has dropped down the order and is considered an ideal number six because of his cool temperament and ability to adjust to different match situations. Although capable of playing shots all round the wicket, he has concentrated on limiting his range of shots and playing the percentages. He is particularly strong off his legs and quick to drive. To the spinners he is an avowed and unrepentant sweep-a-holic. He plays his domestic cricket for Nondescripts Cricket Club and has developed into a useful off spin bowler, who is being increasingly used by Sanath Jayasuriya. Despite a penchant for strange haircuts he is considered a potential captain in waiting, should he be able to maintain his place in the side.

- Courtesy of CricInfo

Russel Arnold - Any captain's dream player

Russel Premakumaran Arnold has such qualities in abundance not only at the batting crease, but also within himself. The recently concluded tour of Zimbabwe brought out the refined qualities of Arnold who got his first proper series at both levels - Test and one-day internationals since he broke into the international scene two years ago.

The 26-year-old elegant and orthodox left-hander did not let this excellent opportunity to pass him by, but came out in all and splendour to average 58.33 in the Test and 69.25 in the one-day series and secure for himself a permanent place in the Sri Lanka batting line-up, which had been denied him over the past couple of years.

"I gained a lot of confidence in my batting on this tour. I have been labelled a dodgy starter, but the Zimbabwe tour enabled me to overcome that," said Arnold.

"Mentally I was strong and I concentrated on the next ball rather than worry on what's gone before," he said.

With a little bit of help from coach Dav Whatmore, Arnold was muddling the ball and getting his team out of trouble on many occasions.

Two of his best knocks on the tour were his feat in carrying out his bat for 104 in the third Test at Harare and lifting Sri Lanka from the depths of despair at 103 for 7 to a match-winning total of 213 in the second one-day match at Bulawayo with his maiden one-day century (103).

"What is so unique about Russel is that he is so unruffled at the crease," said Arnold's former coach at St. Peter's College, Darrel Wimalaratne.

"When I first saw him in the under 13 side there was a distinct difference between him and the other boys. From his very early days Russel had an advantage over others of his age because he had immense concentration, better understanding of the game and he was able to read game situations well," said Wimalaratne under whose coaching St. Peter's went onto win the R. Premadasa trophy school's one-day final defeating St. Sebastian's in 1992-93 with Arnold, the captain, playing the stellar role with a superb knock of 70.

"He had natural talent and temperament. He is a player who will not fail when given the task to perform and he is prepared to take advice from anybody. He is an intelligent cricketer. These are some of the good qualities that has brought him to this level. He is more than an all-rounder and has the potential for captaincy," said Wimalaratne.

Rumesh Ratnayake, the former Sri Lankan spearhead who is coach of NCC, the club which Arnold represents in the Premier division 1 tournament said: "Russel has worked hard at enlarging the natural ability he possesses. He is not an exciting player to watch, but he is any captain's dream. He is dedicated, unruffled and very natural. He has the greatness to attain higher things".

That Arnold had to wait this long to cement his place in the team was through no fault of his. He did more than what any other player in the national team had done to retain his place, but the rewards were slow in coming.

Arnold's first great breakthrough came at home in 1995-96 when he made 1475 runs at an average of 70.23 to break Aravinda de Silva's record for a domestic season. He was rewarded with his Test debut against Pakistan in 1996-97 and that too came because regular opener Roshan Mahanama injured his toe. Arnold made an impressive start sharing partnerships of 61, 95 and 157 (only two short of Sri Lanka's first wicket record) with Sanath Jayasuriya.

Since then he has been on virtually every Sri Lankan tour, but played in only seven further Tests in the next two years and that too only if any of the regular batsmen were injured.

In one of the seven Tests, opening the batting in the absence of Jayasuriya (who was recovering from a broken hand) Arnold made his maiden Test century - 123 against Pakistan at Lahore in the Asian Test championships early this year.

Arnold is so flexible that batting at any position doesn't tend to upset his game. He has opened the batting as well as batted in the middle-order and produced the same results. Apart from his batting ability, Arnold is also a useful off-break bowler and a fine fielder in any position.

Sa'adi Thawfeeq (The Daily News - Dec 28, 1999)

Entertainment

>> Music Corner | Platinum by DJ Mathu & DJ Linges



DJs Mathu and Linges are the new talented kids on the block with their first Tamil remix CD, Platinum, to show for it. In keeping with the traditions of the local Tamil remix scene, there is a heavy Hip Hop influence on all the songs. The 15 tracks in the CD are all culled from some of the most recent and popular songs in both Tamil and Rap music. Memorable numbers include Megam karukkuthu minnal sirikkithu, a fast-paced Vaseegara en nenjinikka, Unnai paartha kangal, Yenge en punnagai, and Mookkuthi mutthazhagu among many others. The CD, priced at \$10, are available at local Tamil music outlets now, so grab 'em while they last and help nourish local talent! The duo are already at work on their next few albums including Platinum II and Isaipuyal Forever.

>> A Walk Down Memory Lane | Part 3 - Movies talk Tamil

The first talking picture in Tamil was Kalidas made in 1931 in Bombay. Produced by the Indian Film pioneer Ardeshir Irani and directed by H.M. Reddi, this film had T.P. Rajalakshmi as heroine. Even though this film is considered as the first Tamil talkie, it is not a hundred percent Tamil film, Rajalakshmi spoke and sang in Tamil, while the hero did in Telugu. Some others in Hindi. Kalidas is therefore the first Indian multi-lingual film!

While Kalidas was far from perfect technically, it was a box office success. People came to see it with a sense of awe and wonder. The mere fact that sound came out of the screen fascinated them. Some even thought it was some kind of black magic indulged by the white man!

The first hundred percent Tamil talkie was Galavarishi made in Bombay in 1932. It was directed by Badami and T.C. Vadivelu Naicker. G. Ramanathan, the popular Tamil film music director entered cinema with this film.

In 1933, the famous Prabath Film Company made Seethakalyanam in Kolhapur. S. Rajam played Lord Rama while Jayalakshmi, the real life sister of the hero, enacted Seetha! The six-year-old son of the lawyer acted in a small role. Later he rose to be a famous actor, producer, director, music composer and also a classical Carnatic musician as Veena Player. His name was S. Balachandar.

A classic Carnatic musician made his entry into cinema in this film as music composer. Many of his Tamil film songs are super hits and have found a place in the list of all-time favourites. He was a traditional conservative scholarly musician Papanasam Sivan.

Valli Thirumanam (1933), a mythological film produced in Calcutta by Samikannu Vincent and directed by P.V. Rao was the first box office success of Tamil Cinema. T.P. Rajalakshmi played the lead role.

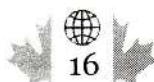
Drowpathi Vastrapaharanam (1934) produced by A. Narayanan was technically a fine film. R. Prakash, the cinematographer of the film took a stunningly brilliant shot in this film. Lord Krishna was seen in five different places simultaneously, all in a single frame. This trick shot done in the camera is most difficult to achieve. Considering that there were no facilities like, optical printers, special effects generators and others of the modern day, this work reveals the brilliance of the veteran Prakash.

Bhama Vijayam (1934) made in Calcutta and directed by Mani Lal Tandon and starring Maharajapuram Krishnamurthy and the famous stars of the stage P.S. Ratha Bai - P.S. Sardaswathi Bai was a big grosser. Produced at a cost of Rs. 80,000, the film collected one million rupees. A staggering fortune in the 1930's.

M.L. Tandon, the director was one of the early popular filmmakers of South India studied film technique at the famous University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and also worked as consultant of Indian Culture for a Hollywood production company.

Narayanan, an innovator brought in his wife Meenakshi Narayanan to work in his studio as Sound Recordist. She was the first lady technician of South Indian Cinema. Her knowledge of Carnatic Music encouraged her to take up audiography.

- Courtesy of Intamm



Entertainment

>> Important Figures from Tamil Cinema History | Sridevi



Sridevi started her film career as a child artiste at the age of three and she went on to become one of the most popular heroines Tamil film industry has ever seen, acting in over 200 movies. In her initial stages of her career she was acting in Tamil films and other South Indian films. While she was concentrating in South Indian films she was the undisputed No.1 heroine. Then she started acting in Hindi films and continued her winning streak in the North as well and became the No.1 heroine in the North as well. She dominated the Indian Film Industry for nearly two decades. She is an actress of great calibre and she has won numerous awards. She has acted with almost all the popular heroes and directors of her time. Her impressive list of hits include Moonram Pirai, 16 Vayathinile, Sikappu Rojakkal, Meendum Kokila, Johnny, Priya, Varumayin Niram Sivappu. She has now stopped acting in movies but will be forever remembered by her fans.

>> Aalavandhaan

Starring: Kamal Hassan, Raveena Tandon, Manisha Koirala, Sharath Babu, and others.

Direction: Suresh Krishna

Music: Shankar Mahadevan

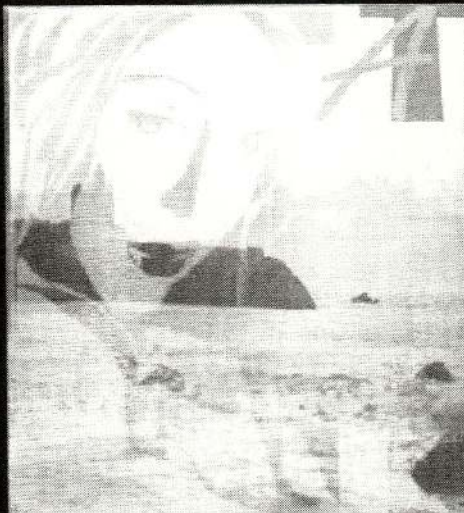
Kamal Haasan has launched his new film, Aalavandhan, a bilingual to be shot in Tamil and Hindi. The story is about twin brothers who get separated when they are young. Later when they grow up, one of them becomes a good guy, while the other turns out to be a psychologically disturbed killer. Incidentally, Kamal who plays both these roles, had to tonsure his head completely to play the part of the psychopath. Besides, the contrast between the two roles is significantly enhanced with the help of advanced graphical special effects, with Hey Ram fame Thiru being in charge of cinematography. Bollywood glamour queens Raveena Tandon and Manisha Koirala are the lead girls. Popular playback singer Shankar Mahadevan becomes a music director with this film for the first time in Tamil.



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SHOW YOUR STUFF!

Career Discrimination Doesn't Exist

Anne Gnanapragasam

Let me start with a hypothetical situation. You are in a management position within a well-established firm. Your superiors as well as the employees you manage respect and like you, and you have the final say in any decisions made within or regarding your department. Now you have decided to get an addition to your department. You have gone through the recruitment process and interviewed your selection. Among these candidates there is one person who is a very good fit to your requirements. He has the right personality, the amount of experience and the level of education that you are looking for. This person also happens to be from a different ethnic group. As an unbiased person would you offer this candidate the position? Or would you deny him the opportunity to prove himself because you happened to read an article, on the paper the previous week, portraying a handful of individuals from his community in a negative light?

"Employment barriers are formal or informal policies or practices that restrict or exclude persons in the designated groups from employment opportunities."

However if you, in the above scenario, were depicted as an individual who believes that your community is heads above the rest, then the newspaper article would probably have had an adverse effect. In fact, you probably wouldn't have even interviewed too many candidates who didn't fit your personal preferences. So what is the underlying factor that affects hiring practices in a multicultural county like Canada? Is it the articles that appear in the local newspapers? Or is it peoples preconceived notions about different communities?

When open-minded Employers are looking to fill positions within their organizations, they go through a recruitment process. Some of the recruitment methods they might use include newspaper advertisements, college and university postings, outsourcing for recruiters, employment agencies (use of head-hunters), job fairs, and the use of the Internet. Once they have narrowed it down to the number of individuals they would like to interview they conduct the interviews and select the individual who best suits their needs. Through this whole process their focus is on their need. When they conduct the interviews they won't be contemplating the article they read the previous week but rather considering the qualities of the person in front of them. When they make a decision it would be based on the individual's performance, not on the community's.

By the same token, if your potential employer is biased, your chances are slim to nonexistent to begin with. Whether there was an article or not they have already made up their mind about you. Of course the newspapers don't make it easy on them. They, also like these employers, have their partialities. The media tends to crucify those they don't like and downplay the wrongdoings of others. And for these employers it just confirms what they think they already knew.

I agree that there is no evidence to prove that negative media doesn't affect employment opportunities or otherwise. But that is just it. There is no statistical evidence. On the report "Employment Systems Review" published jointly by the Public Service Commission of Canada and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Employment Barrier is defined as follows.

"Employment barriers are formal or informal policies or practices that restrict or exclude persons in the designated groups from employment opportunities."

This report goes on to list a number of these barriers. Nowhere in this report is negative media mentioned! Negative Media, by itself, does not have an effect on deciding the professional success of our community. That depends on individual performance and the mentality of the people conducting the interview.

Standing up for your right does not reflect negatively on you.

I have also heard demonstrations and protest marches categorized as negative publicity. By what standard? Standing up for your right does not reflect negatively on you. Rather it shows your strength and courage as a community and as a person. It shows your assertive self. Which, when comes to employment, is a positive trait and not otherwise.

Like these employers and media, you have already made up your mind about this issue. If your views reflect mine my piece here might strengthen your beliefs. If your views are contrary to mine this will probably have no effect on you. In other words, it will have little or no effect on making or breaking your firm beliefs.

Anne Gnanapragasam is a University of Waterloo graduate.



<Impact of Negative Tamil Media>

Point

Counter Point

Tread Carefully Round the Media

Subajini Mahalingam

I remember when the story of Kapilan Balachander, the young University of Waterloo student, shot in a drive-by, took the papers by storm. The headlines spoke of "Tamil gangsters", shootings and violence. I remember an Indian friend of mine telling me, "Your people are making us brown people look bad!"

When CanTYD was formed, the founding members had a two-fold vision for the organization: while on the one hand they sought to provide opportunities for youth to empower themselves, they also recognized the importance of creating a positive image of the community for future generations.

I remember an Indian friend of mine telling me, "Your people are making us brown people look bad!"

Indrakumar Pathmanathan spoke often about stereotyping as something that happened to all new immigrant communities. Each new wave of immigrants (whether it be the Irish, Italians, Chinese or Indians) has suffered stereotyping and each has been assigned a certain image and position in society. Indran reiterated the importance of countering these stereotypes; for once set, they remained with the community.

Media can manipulate a story skillfully to present the sensationalism it wants. It knows how to play into people's fears, stereotypes, and passions; by choosing and placing stories, words and images. Repeated references to a community, in association with certain characteristics or labels, perpetuate the stereotype. This was something I learnt when I joined CanTYD. Before that it didn't make any sense to me why Tamil guys were more violent, supposedly, than others! If someone from the community can wonder about the violent nature of the youth, there is no question of the effect on others. And they don't even know sweet Tamil guys to balance their opinion!

Such stereotyping impacts the lives of immigrants - how people perceive them, interact with them, and respect them. The recent example of the young boy, who died of meningitis, highlights the real life consequences of stereotyping. He was denied ambulance aid and workers ridiculed them.

How does this negative image affect the Tamil labour force? Sure, we say if the newspapers write about some guys fighting

somewhere, what the heck does that mean to me? Will it affect you when you walk into that interview room, will it affect your work environment, and will it affect how your co-workers interact with you?

I think the answer to this question is very complex. Anyone who takes the time to know you will probably discover that you're a wonderful individual regardless of your ethnicity. The problem though, is that in the work world, how many employers have the time to get to know you? And if they are prejudiced to start off with, will they give you the time you need to prove yourself?

...does this negative image affect the Tamil labour force? Sure...

Even if you get the job, what of your on job experience? Many have told me how sometimes when they go to work, co-workers tell them, "Your people are in the papers again today." That's great if we were in the papers for Awards of Excellences but not for the latest detail on a kidnapping supposed to be Tamil.

And what of many Tamil workers who work in factories, restaurants and entry level jobs. Many of these young men and women, as new immigrants, do not as yet have the English to fight for themselves. With language barriers, misunderstanding and miscommunication, it is not hard for employers to build on what they have read in the papers. They write off their employees as the no-good immigrants the papers speak of - very likely untrustworthy; the papers do report a high criminal element. And thus the vicious cycle continues - one leads to another and it reinforces the original assumption.

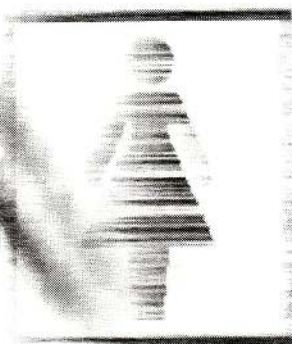
...the answer to this question is very complex...

Discrimination in the work force is a much-studied area; perhaps our community should invest some energy in documenting discrimination targeted at Tamil Canadians. It would also be interesting and important to see how exactly it connects with media portrayals of the community. These are very important first steps in working to counter such discrimination.

Suba Mahalingam is a University of Toronto Student completing a degree in Human Biology and South Asian Studies

Women's Day: Not for a Tamil?!

BY SATHIYA SIVAHURUNATHAN
DIRECTIONS INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING TEAM



March 10 was a refreshingly crisp day. As I sat inside of U of T hearing the stories of many women, I became teary. A woman from Afghanistan told a story that was so sad, it affected me deeply. She talked about how a woman's life can be destroyed by simple beliefs.

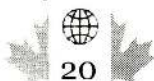
A female born in Afghanistan is forced to stop their education at age 10 and she's expected to stay indoors and do as said; a rule that is being set by the military regime of Afghanistan, the Taliban. She's not allowed to have her own ideas, her own thoughts, and she's denied freedom in all possible ways. A woman who wishes to follow her heart will either end up on the streets raped and dead, or sent to jails. As horrifying as it is to believe, the military regime use their power to sexually assault women in jails, attack them, and rape them before these women are released or killed because this regime believes that virgins go to heaven. Sitting there listening to this story and many others, I realized how truly lucky I am to be a Canadian, however, I was very disappointed in being a Tamil Canadian due to lack of participation of Tamils on this day.

Around 12:30 that afternoon, people of many colours, backgrounds, and beliefs were marching towards city hall chanting slogans that best represent them. Among the many people, I marched also. I marched proudly with my head held high to represent all the Tamils, not just the Tamil women who are being repressed. However, to my

bitter disappointment, there were only twenty-two of us, Tamils and out of that, only about eighteen came out in real support of Women's Day; the other four were just media personnel, who had come to cover the event. I realized that we were not receiving a lot of support from the people that we were marching for. Maybe Tamil people don't care too much about their rights or the way they are being maltreated. Maybe they don't care the about the sad past and bleak demeaning future that awaits many other Tamils.

But you have to think, is this the future you really want? Do you want to be mistreated, misunderstood, and not be fully represented for the rest of your life and many other generations yet to come? The purpose of the march is not just to fight for women's rights, but for everybody's rights. The march represents hope. It represents peace, equality, and democracy. So, when we march, we're not just marching for women, we are marching for people. We are marching for the Tamil people. And as we march, we march for hope, peace, equality, and democracy to all Tamil people. So, the question now is, will you be there to represent yourself as Tamil and other Tamil people of your community next year or will you be passive and hide from what's being denied to you as a Tamil?

Sathiya Sivahurunathan is a Grade 11 student at Jarvis Collegiate Institute.



CAREER profile

GAITHREE NAGENDRA

As young people choosing a career or a profession can be a difficult challenge. So for those who are still undecided about about what to do with your life, reading this article in all probability should open your mind to on the various types of professions that exist today and in which you can excel in. I had a great opportunity to interview two Young Tamil women who have accomplished a lot in their careers and lives. The first person that I interviewed is Caroline Jeba, who is journalist for South Asian Newsweek on CFMT television station. She was born in Kenya her parents are from Vesavalai in Jaffna. She lived in Africa for most of her life, she went to highschool in Lesotho and went to university in Zimbabwe called Natal University and completed the rest of her post secondary education at the University Of Toronto getting a degree in Arts. She has been living in Canada for more than 10 years. When I asked what other career aspirations she'd had, she said she had wanted to become a teacher because her parents were teachers and she seemed to like it. But she had more of a passion for journalism

after she started volunteering for Rogers and CFMT, she has been a journalist for five years, and that's she got started in her career with volunteer work. The interesting aspects of this career she commented are that you have to be very nosy, very persistent, aggressive, can't take no for an answer and very humble. You get to meet different kinds of people and help give them a voice. When I asked her if she could see herself in an another career she said no. She told me that her parents were supportive in her career decision they always told her do the best in whatever you do. Have good work ethics, and enjoy what you do. She told me that Oprah Winfrey is her inspiration because she overcame a lot. When I asked her where do you see yourself in five years, she told me she wanted to be happy in her career and family life. What would be her advice for young Tamil people who are thinking about journalism as career? "Go for it, whatever is your passion, always remember your goal work hard and enjoy what you do."

Caroline Jeba



Sutha Balasingham

"Why were you going so fast?" asks the police officer. Why do I have to go to sleep?" asks the little boy at bedtime. The answers to these questions often lie in our emotions and motivation: psychological mechanisms that prompt us to move in one direction or another. Sutha Balasingham is a young woman interested in finding out the answers to these questions. After having grown up in Vaddukkodai, she made the journey to Canada, with her family in 1989. As a young girl Sutha had thought of becoming a doctor, but soon realized that it was an empty dream, which would not make herself or her parents truly happy. Ms. Balasingham was doing a specialist degree at University of Toronto in Neuroscience, when she took some psychology courses. Fascinated by the behavioural aspect of the brain she wanted to know why people acted the way they did. Psychology is, at once, both a science and a practice. Some psychologists are fascinated by the nature of human behavior, thought, and emotion, whereas others seek to help people overcome their psychological problems or move towards goals they have set for themselves. "Passion for positive change and the thirst for knowledge are the two forces that decided my career," says Sutha. "It is very gratifying when you have helped someone make a positive change in his/her life." Sutha's career is only



beginning. She conducted a research study on the Tamil youth community and published "Toronto Tamil Youth: The Realities". She is also in the process of developing a "Youth Transition Program" for Gr.8 Tamil students with the CanTYD. Sutha has also expanded her field to work with Tamil women in a project called "Women Aiding Women". As a Tamil woman in Canada, Sutha says she would like to contribute to the community by empowering women. Her days are never alike: facilitating workshops, conducting informal counseling, making referrals, attending case conferences, networking with other organizations or developing programs/proposals. As a relatively new community in Canada, Tamils face problems starting from culture shock to integration. "This is where the work of psychology comes into play. Our community is in dire need of social workers or psychology professionals who can empathize and help them through this period of transition. It's a challenge, but worth it. If you think you might be interested in social work or psychology, start by volunteering for an organization that is doing what you would like to do in the future. There are lots of different interesting jobs that fall into this field." says Sutha. "Everyday has been a learning experience for me. Everyday is different. At this point in my life, I am enjoying the experience."

women

"Nice women don't want to vote!" It's hard to imagine that phrases like these were commonly heard little less than one hundred years ago in democracies such as Canada. It's even harder to imagine that in such an industrially advanced country like Canada, women only received the status of personhood in 1929.

Today, women are actively involved in all areas of politics and leading the country. In the last century women have come progressively far in domestic politics (though there is still a long way to go in many nations including Canada), yet the arena of world politics is still dominated by men.

Now, this is not to say that women are absent from the scene of international relations. That could not be further from the truth. Women play an important role in world governance. Many women are leaders of nations, play important roles in international intuitions such as the United Nations and the International Court of Justice and are active lobbyist of many non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

Clearly, women are not simply passive observers of international politics. Women have contributed heavily in the field of global politics and the advancements made in the areas of international relations, diplomacy, conflict resolution and international law.

Let us not forget that it was Chief Justice Madam Louise Arbour, a Canadian woman, who was instrumental in the creation of the War Crime Tribunals for Rwanda and Bosnia. And world leaders like Indira Gandhi and have made significant contributions to the improvement of their nations development.

However, these are roles that are often overlooked and underemphasized. The contributions that woman make on the political front are either over shadowed by the fact that they are women or ignored altogether. Despite the significant role that women playing the global world, international relations is also an area that is seriously lacking gender representation.

More disturbingly, it is sometimes felt that women should not play a prominent role in international relations. International relation is a game of power and hard-core politics. The role of women in politics is more suited to be limited to the domestic arena of healthcare, education and managing the local social affairs of the country. Leave international politics to the big boys, is the common mindset and attitude.

Harini Sivalingam

Or, for those women that do play a prominent role in international affairs are often seen as unfeminine. For example, Margaret Thatcher is a strong female presence in the international political front who made a lasting impression in British history. But the imagine that was portrayed of Ms. Thatcher was one of an "iron lady". Why is it that women in the field of international politics have such negative connotations attached to being aggressive and forceful? Why can't women be women and great leaders at the same time?

It's quite ironic that developing countries were more willing and accepting to elect a female leader than western liberal countries. The world's first woman prime minister was elected in Sri Lanka. More of the developing nations today have women leaders compared to the all boys club of the G7/8 industrialized countries. The US has yet to elect a woman president, and Canada only elected a woman to lead the nation in 1993, the Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell for a mere 6 months.

Women's global issues are also important concerns that need to be addressed on the international agenda. Labour and sexual exploitation, the harsh conditions of women in war-torn countries, and children's rights are pressing issues that need to be dealt with.

Woman have come a long way in attaining equal status as persons, but there is still much more work to be accomplished to ensure that this equality is spread across the globe. The contributions that woman have made in the field of international relations and global governance must be celebrated and acknowledged.

"We reject a world order based on domination, exploitation, patriarchy, racism and sexism. We demand a new order based on justice and the equitable distribution of the world's resources." (Women's International Peace Conference, Halifax 1985)

Harini Sivalingam is a Political Science student at the University of Toronto and is an active member of the Canadian University Tamil Students' Union (CUTSU)

Women in politics:



Kim Campbell



Margaret Thatcher

This is the introductory chapter of a series of articles that relate to Eelam Tamil youth in the context of their circumstances in Canada. The chapters will not go into every little detail, but will only refer to several easily recognizable factors. In this introduction I will start with family as the context to other daily realities.

It is important to look at youth in the context of family. The values of older members of the family clearly have an impact on youth. If family values are not of a high standard, one cannot expect the youth's values to be of a high standard. Two recent experiences are worth repeating. One was a debate organized by the Vaddukodai YMHA at their Pongal Vizha. The subject matter of the debate was whether parents had an absolute right to determine the future of their children. The debaters looked at this in the context of life in Eelam and in Canada, with particular reference to youth about to embark on academic advancement or other professional training or schooling. One group relied on the way such decisions were made back in Eelam. Namely, the parent telling the youth, "you are going to study to be a doctor/ lawyer/ engineer/ accountant etc." with the expectation that that is in fact the course the youth would then follow. This was based on the premise that "we know what is best for you." Probably reinforced with several examples of successful persons they knew in that particular field. The other group, looked at the context of life in Canada. It argued that there are other fields in which youth can be successful. It claimed that parents have to take into consideration all of the information that is relevant to making decisions about the future of youths. They emphasized that many parents, recently arrived from Eelam, would not be familiar with these new fields and may not recognize them as fields in which youth can be successful. It was noted that in Canada, the youth themselves have access to information that is relevant to making such decisions as choosing a career. They argued that decisions about the youth's future ought to be made by both parents and the youth by considering all relevant information.

It was argued that even in the Eelam context better decisions would have been made together. It was common ground that the success of a person is decided by their ability to apply good values to relevant information in making the right decision. The important elements that emerged from this debate were: parental responsibility, instilling good values, considering the best information, looking beyond traditional professions, good parent-youth communication and making choices together. Making the right career choice and working hard towards it does not mean youth problems have ended. Having instilled good values in youth, the 'family' environment in which one or a combination of lying, cheating the system, thieving, beatings, other forms of physical and emotional abuse, disrespect for one another, gender discrimination, unequal division of household chores etc., debilitate youth from trying to follow good values. We have now to look at the world outside the family - outside the home. Youth spend anything from 7 to 12 hours or more in any given day outside their home. In those several hours they experience all sorts of pressures and influences, and often make decisions in a variety of circumstances. Such decisions, good or bad, are entirely dependent on how well the youth is equipped to make the right choice.

It is important to give some examples of pressures and influences that youth face in the world outside their home. Youth are bound to observe the behaviour of those older than themselves. When they see older Tamils doing the very things that they have been told are wrong, the pressure to do the same becomes quite unbearable. To these youth, those breaking the rules seem to be living 'the good life'. 'The good life' referred to here, is the display of wealth through the possession of expensive cars, clothes, jewelry, a seemingly limitless sources of money - either cash or

order cards, electronic gadgets, posh homes, frequent international travel etc. Youth do not have the time or resources to know that such a life style is often maintained on perpetual indebtedness, lying and cheating. This problem is further fuelled by systems like 'cheetu'. A system that often leads to fights, quarrels, family estrangement etc.

When elders run organizations and associations in a manner outside of their constitutions or in an undemocratic way, youth lose faith in structured institutions within the community. When community organizations repeatedly favour 'kith and kin' or friends in the giving of an award or recognition, youth lose faith because of the lack of opportunity and fairness.

By far, the biggest problems for Eelam youth in Canada are the social and cultural practices that conflict with the social practices of other youth outside the community. The vast majority of Eelam youth, both male and female, are students in the public school system. A major problem that faces youth is male-female relationships and being outside the home after school. The most common complaint from both males and females is that any friendship is usually interpreted to be an unhealthy one and assumed by elders as sexual or as inevitably leading to sexual intimacy.

Another complaint is that on this issue elders apply a double standard, namely, that male youth breaking such taboos are treated more leniently and that male youth who transgress this taboo and enter into sexual relationships are not seen as having forfeited their prospect of marriage. By contrast, any Eelam Tamil female youth who befriends a boy is regarded as unchaste, as 'damaged goods', with NO future or prospects of marriage, even when in fact they are chaste and have never been in any intimate sexual relationship. Discussions, information, support, understanding, providing a safe environment for healthy male-female relationships go a long way in helping youth to earn and give respect to their elders. Good communication is the most important ingredient in helping youth to avoid problems.

Another major problem that young Eelam Tamil females face, is the lesser degree to which elders support them in their efforts to acquire a profession and thus be able to be independent. It should be acknowledged that this problem is less in Canada than it was in Eelam, but it still prevails here. Many examples of bright Eelam Tamil females having their academic or professional endeavors being curtailed by marriage are known in the community. A real solution to this problem is for the new bridegroom and his elders, to be encouraging and committed for the bride to successfully complete her endeavors.

Another problem that faces Eelam Tamil youth, both sexes, is peer pressure to keep up with fashion by way of designer names, clothing, jewelry, and even imitation of mannerisms, down to the way they walk and talk. Acceding to such pressures, when money is required, puts an enormous strain on the meager resources of most Eelam Tamil elders. Even in this matter, a common complaint is that Eelam Tamil elders accede more to male youth than to female youth. A more serious problem that faces Tamil youth is the pressure on them to smoke cigarettes, consume alcohol, experiment with addictive and mind altering drugs due to the many accompanying pitfalls. This is an explosive, sensitive and painful set of issues to be detailed in another chapter.

Sri-Guggan Sri Skandarajah is an active member of the Tamil community and the former facilitator of CanTYD.



R A C I S M

STOP IT!

Racism is the belief that one ethnic group, race or religion is superior to another and that they are not worthy of due respect or recognition. As a result, individuals become the targets of racially aggressive acts based solely on the color of their skin and/or their cultural background.

Racial discrimination can enter into all aspects of our lives. It can be both subtle and obvious, ranging from unfair reporting in the media to jokes, name-calling, discrimination in the work force, and hate crimes.

Tamil Anti-Racism committee (TARC) had a public forum on Awareness on Racism and Hate Crime at the Scarborough Civic Center on March the 24th 2001. The program began with the Canadian National and Tamil National Anthems followed by a minute of silence. After the welcoming speech, the introductory speech was given by Mr. Sitta Sittampalam and following that, there were greetings from the councillors.

Anita Dhawan's speech on education was followed by Reema Khawja's look at Human Rights. Afterwards Moy Tam spoke about the Race Relations foundation's recent report on the unequal access to jobs within various communities. He was followed by Rick Sin who spoke on the Chinese Experience.

Maurice Brenner pointed out the fact that we all have been affected by acts of racism somehow. He claimed that 43% of hate is based on the hate against race and the racial background. He said that the saddest and disturbing part of it all was the name-calling of children and continued on how victims are being affected at the community level, street level and even in the education level.

Next on the agenda was Dr. Kanagasooriyer's speech on his experiences in Canada. He told the audience a very revealing story, excerpts of which is quoted here:

"At the time of my teaching I went to a class, which contained about 35 students. In that 35, four of them were Tamil. As I went to the first class I introduced myself. I went out for break and as I returned to class, there was a writing on the board which said "Panangodai." I assumed that it was done by one of the four Tamil students and I ignored it & went on with my teaching. On the second day of the class as I entered the room, the same thing was written on the board, "Panangodai." This time I knew for sure the message on the board was directed to me. On the third day, the same thing was written on the board, so what I did was write "for these four students they are going to get a "panangodai" as their final mark" in Tamil. As I came into class from my break, the markings on the board were erased and the four students were sitting in different places. From that day onwards those four students behaved considerably well and achieved excellent marks. Why I am saying this is that we are racist among ourselves. Our race has to respect us. We need to be proud of ourselves when someone from our own race is in a high position, not jealous."

Dr. Kanagasooriyer ended his speech by saying we should bring anti-racism & multiculturalism as an issue to be taught for students in as early as grade 10.

The last thing on the agenda was the discussion period. One of the questions was asked by Mathanaruby Rajendra (a CanTYD member and answered by Mr. Anita Dhawan. (Instruction Leader Equity Dept, TDSB).

Continued on next page...



RACISM

Question: "If someone from a different race gives you an attitude (a tone of voice) because of your particular race, what should you do?"

Answer: "If someone is told 'you're stupid, you're stupid' over and over again. Psychologically no matter how strong the person is, it is going to affect them and the person is going to assume that they are stupid. Lets say if someone is discriminated against a white person. The person is hurt & out of hurt he/she is angry, fearful & frustrated. The first reaction that comes out of it would be to hurt someone else who is more vulnerable than he/she. According to me the only way is to educate. If you want to remain ignorant you'd likely say, 'ignore them' but it isn't as easy as it seems. If I wasn't harassed or discriminated, I wouldn't be doing this today. I think this is the only way to end this kind of a situation."

The forum was ended by Vote of thanks by Mr. Sitta Sittampalam.

Each and every individual has the right to stand for themselves and their race and racism is one major issue that we should put a stop to. Therefore let us change our anger and attitudes to bring forth a change in our lives.

Rama Selvarajah is a highschool student and a dedicated member of IRT, Directions, CanTYD.

"I salute you for your continuing campaign to eliminate racism wherever it exists. May your efforts continue to enrich humanity."

- Nelson Mandela



The FORUM

Dedicated to Sharmini A.

Sharmini is one of many disappeared tamil girls, not from the Vanni or Batti, this time from Don Mills, Ontario.

henry ford's sons came for these,
blood, cinnamon, rubber, gems.
henry ford's son came all over my
great grandmother's thighs setting in
motion my herstory in rubber tires
and opium dens,

my conception was an act of
rebellious love not military rape the
teacher's tamil son ran away with the
baker's sinhalese daughter, two lovers
taboos away, he found a saucy
woman with diamond ambition, she
lost all the family she had.

i'm supposed to be that peace
making, sooth saying, pouring oil on
bloody waters kind of combustible sri
lankan but ever since I took my first
breath outside my mom
i've had a finger on the trigger for
years to come.

in between, interloper, neither nor
unidentifiable not distinctive
to other sri lankans, restless and
always suspect an island guessing
game fiji, trinidad, guyana but
definitely not indian to whitey just
another paki restless and always
suspect.

"i'll never trust a sinhalese after what
they've done to us"
"those tamil demons must spill their
blood"
sinhala lions, tamil tigers, burghers,
muslims, malays...oh my
the ark is sinking under the weight of
so much lead, labour, and loans
this nationalist bloodlust is so much
bullshit
'cos no one in lanka has pure blood

i'm crying tears of lanka, broken
promises boiling like tea.
what deception and greed has sent
me here
to become a settler on stolen land?

i will shine for you like a sapphire
stretch across the oceans like rubber

over on this side of the ocean,
the empty spaces inside us resemble
tear drop pearls.
with the help of henry ford's seed, our
self-loathing and greed have created
this empty girl child.
fill my spaces with lagoons, singing
fish, mangroves
and tilting coconut palms

a heart unsuccessful at keeping walls
of north and south
from collapsing inwards
so i find myself in tamil catholic
kitchens
sitting under that no-halo-for-judas
picture of the last supper
defending to my aunties my choice to
remain unmarried
assumed "single",
then "lonely".
no thali on my neck's horizon
gesturing with sugary pittued hands
at my sweet scarred aunties,
whose husbands got all the voice

i will shine for you like sapphire
stretch across the ocean like rubber
wearing my queer skin like cinnamon
bark.

*Gitanjali is a Tamil/Sinhalese poet,
performer, and media advocate for
immigrants and refugees.*



நினைவுக்கீறல்கள்

கனவுகள் இங்கே காகிதத்தில்
நினைவுகள் இங்கே நீலமையில்
தவிப்புக்கள் இங்கே தமிழ் எழுத்தில்
கருத்துக்கள் இங்கே கவியுருவில்

சொந்த மண்ணைத்தான்
காதலித்தேன் ஆனால்
இந்த மண்ணை மணம்முடித்தேன்.
இருந்தும் என் கண்ணில் நீங்கா
கோலங்கள்
தாய் மண்ணில் நான் வாழ்ந்த
காலங்கள்

தென்னை மட்டை கொண்டு
கிரிக்கெட் அடித்த நாட்கள்
என்னை மறந்து கொண்டு எதிர்வீட்டு
பெண்ணை நினைத்த நாட்கள்
மாங்காய் திருடி வசமாய்
மாட்டிக்கொண்ட நாட்கள்
வீம்பாய் அவளை துரத்தி பைக்கால்
விழுந்துகொண்ட நாட்கள்
கோட்டை விழுந்தபோது குதூகலித்த
நாட்கள்
ரோட்டை கூறுபோட்டு கிளிக்கோட்டில்
கடந்த நாட்கள்
ஒடியல் கூழைக்குடித்து ஒருமை
கொண்ட நாட்கள்
பொடியன் வீரம் நினைத்து பெருமை
கொண்ட நாட்கள்.

நினைவுகள் மட்டும் முச்சை
அடைக்கின்றன!
உணர்வுகள் ஏனோ தூங்கிக்
கிடக்கின்றன?
வீணாக நான் வாழ்வதா? வீணர்கள்
எமை ஆழ்வதா?
காலத்தை மறந்தவனாய் கனவுலகில்
நான் வீழ்வதா?
ஏனெனக்கு இந்த வாழ்க்கை?
எழுந்திடில் நானும் வேங்கை
தாயினை மிதிப்பவனை
தடுத்திடவேண்டும் என்கை
ஏனெனில் நிச்சயம் ஒரு நாள்இ
ஆண்ட பரம்பரை மீண்டும் ஒருமுறை
ஆளப்போகுதா!
மாண்ட எம்வீரரின் நீண்ட நாள் கனா
கூடப்போகுதா!!!

-காசிதாசன்

Voicing for the Voiceless

Karihalini

Genuinely defining the rainy season, the morning's cool breeze travels through the chink of the shelled-windows and unlocked doors of that old mid-sized partly-shelled house. Biruntha, wrapping her hair into a bun, rushes to close the windows, being unable to tolerate the coldness of the wind spattering on her weak body wrapped in an aged and threaded saree. Biruntha, holding the window bars for moments, glances through the windows to see the gloomy expression on her husband's face who is heading towards home after another fruitless day trying to sell bread in the neighbourhood due to the shell attacks again on the area. Biruntha, understanding the situation and blaming that day's fate for being unable to feed her three children, whom she put to sleep to avoid their cries of hunger, runs to the kitchen to see any leftovers from previous days. She finds a half loaf of bread tied in a bag which she had hid two days expecting miserable days like this but Biruntha is not disappointed. She looks beyond her hungry children and her husband's depressed face...

Yesterday's 18-year-old Kirushanthi, after continuous rapes by numerous government soldiers, dies, after begging for a drop of water. Surely, she's not to be blamed for being unable to voice the horrors she encountered. However, instances of atrocities against Tamil women committed by the government of Sri Lanka is not limited to this horror. The case of a pregnant mother of three children who was gang-raped by army soldiers in her home is yet another instance of terror unleashed on defenceless civilians. Because of the overwhelming evidence of an assault, the soldiers destroy the evidence by exploding a hand grenade on the expectant mother's bleeding genitals. This too should neither be ignored nor forgotten.

The cases of rape and murder are nothing new to our mothers and sisters back home since they live in a country where rape is a weapon of war used by the government of Sri Lanka to subjugate the Tamil people. The innocent people are wide awake to such hundreds of grotesque realities happening all around them, many of which have gone unreported and has never crossed the village's bridge. For thousands of people, there is no choice but to face the reality of being being terrorized in their own homes.

Rape, torture, burning, murder, mutilation, harassment and beatings are everyday occurrences for Tamil women. Can we name a few for the sake of it? Kirushanthi Kumarasamy, an 18-year-old student was continuously raped and murdered by numerous government soldiers. Krishnapillai Sivasothy, a 31-year old was gang raped near her home by three special task personnel. It should be noted that Sivasothy, who was so distraught after the rape,

tried to commit suicide by taking poison. Murugesapillai Koneswary, a 35-year-old mother of three children was gang raped and murdered and a grenade was thrown into her genitals to cover up any medical evidence of rape. Another woman, Vijayakumari, was burned to death by members of the Sri Lankan Army. S.Pushpamalar, a 12-year-old, was raped by soldiers while returning from school. Lately, Vijikala and Thavamani were also raped by Army men.

Surely, these innocent women, who have been forcibly snatched of their rights, privileges, and dignity, are not to be blamed for becoming voiceless since they live at the hands of horror and brutality. Note that the tragedies our Tamil women have encountered and have been encountering are not limited to these. How many rapes have our women endured? How many killings have our women been subject to? How many reports and records of losses and disasters have our women encountered in our recent history alone? Until now, we, without any sorrow, easily blamed it on the victims' fate and unjustly carried on with our self-centred lives. We are distanced from these atrocities, but can we ignore the fact that these are the "realities" which our sisters continue to live in back home?


How many more shores do we land on to escape our "tragedies and misfortunes" and continue to live a voiceless life, being ignorant of the need to be united and collectively act upon such injustices?

After facing with her own eyes the many brutalities of rapes and massacres of her Tamil mothers, daughters and sisters in the country, Biruntha is also not to be blamed for almost becoming as defenceless at her family's poverty. Has she too started accepting it as her fate and become voiceless towards those unbearable realities?

To be forthright, our voices should ring loud on behalf of those voiceless mothers and sisters. It is time we remember the past and present and shed light on the atrocities being committed in the the dark. Let us unite to voice for the voiceless!

Coming back to one of the thousands and thousands of those rendered voiceless, Biruntha struggling to lead a meaningful life, is not to be left alone either. She waits and will wait with the others to invite that one bright bow rising from the deeper side of the sky and wonders if the helping hands of her sisters in far off lands will ever reach her...

power of words



Woman is not born: she is made. In the making, her humanity is destroyed. She becomes symbol of this, symbol of that: mother of the earth, slut of the universe; but she never becomes herself because it is forbidden for her to do so.

- *Andrea Dworkin*

I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.

- *Anne Frank*

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

- *Eleanor Roosevelt*

For my part I distrust all generalizations about women, favorable and unfavorable, masculine and feminine, ancient and modern; all alike, I should say, result from paucity of experience.

- *Bertrand Russel*

Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer.

- *Ed Cunningham*

The future depends on what we do in the present.

- *Mahatma Gandhi*

The strength of women comes from the fact that psychology cannot explain us. Men can be analyzed, women merely adored.

- *Oscar Wilde*

Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too.

- *Voltaire*

Society, while willing to make room for women, is not willing to make changes for them.

- *Shirley Williams*

It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.

- *Albert Einstein*

The most wasted of all days is one without laughter.

- *E. E. Cummings*

They talk about a woman's sphere, as though it had a limit. There's not a place in earth or heaven. There's not a task to mankind given... without a woman in it.

- *Kate Field*

The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it.

- *Moliere*

La perfection est atteinte non quand il ne reste rien à ajouter, mais quand **il ne reste rien à enlever.**

You know you've achieved perfection in design, not when you have nothing more to add, but when you have nothing more to take away.

- *Antoine de Saint Exupery*

We think in generalities, but we live in detail.

- *Alfred North Whitehead*

As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.

- *Virginia Woolf*

Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

- *Colin Powell*

We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains.

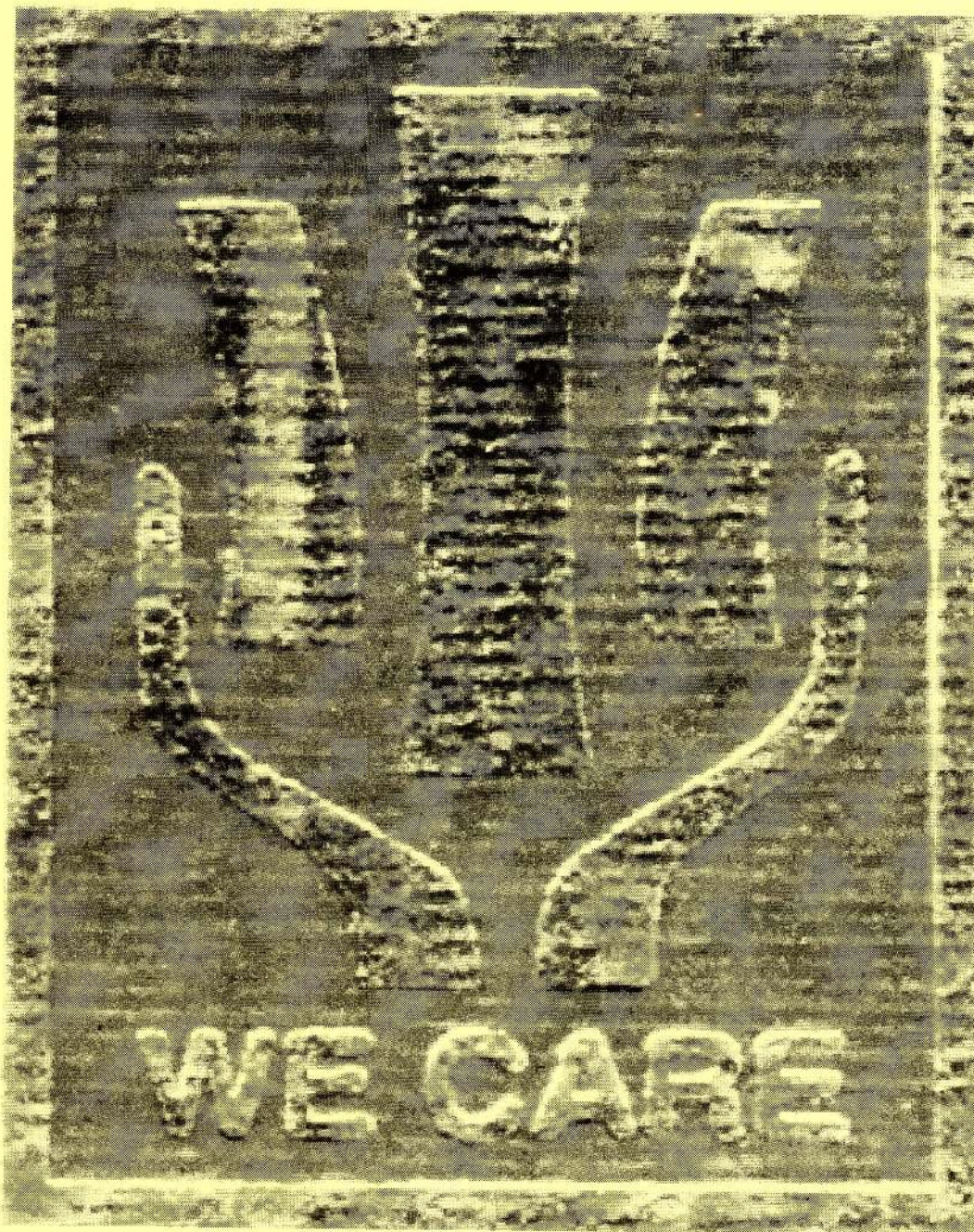
- *Ursula K. Le Guin*

I have a brain and a uterus, and I use both.

- *Patricia Schroeder*



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