POLITY

Vol. 4 No. 5 ISSN 1391-822X Jul+Aug-08 Rs. 50

SRI LANKA: A DISTANT DREAM

On the 25th anniversary of the anti-Tamil riots, peace and a just settlement seem a distant dream in Sri Lanka.

July 2008 marks the 25th anniversary of the anti-Tamil riots of 1983 in Sri Lanka. The riots marked a decisive alteration of the path of political change in the island. After July 1983, the story of Sri Lanka has been one of civil war, violence and human misery.Sri Lanka can be considered as a paradigmatic example of the failure of both development and democracy to manage an ethnic conflict which had remained for many years within a framework of parliamentary politics, electoral competition and coalition bargaining. That failure also occurred in a context where the post-independence state was captured by the political elite of the majority ethnic community. Sri Lanka evolved into a democratic state with a very weak concept of minority and with no particular commitment to ethnic pluralism. The ethnic and religious minorities felt they were treated as internal enemies and that they were subjected to continuing discrimination. When the "normal politics" could not constrain the increasing polarisation of majority-minority relations, violence began to replace competition and bargaining. Sri Lanka's descent into violence began in the 1970s ironically not in the sphere of majority-minority relations, but within the majority Sinhalese community itself. It was quite surprising that an exemplary welfare state suddenly found itself challenged by a youth rebellion in 1971. That to a large extent is a story of development failure.

Sri Lanka since then has gone through many cycles of civil war. The 1980s was the worst decade. It saw the beginning of the Tamil ethnic insurgency for secession, the second JVP insurgency for "revolution" and Indian military intervention for "peace restoration". While the Sinhalese youth insurgency has been crushed, the Tamil insurgency has survived for two and half decades. Several attempts at a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict have been made, with and without external assistance. None of them has succeeded in ending the civil war, bringing peace or reforming the existing political order.

One key problem in Sri Lanka's continuing conflict is the entrenched nature of ethnic politics. All communities, particularly their political and intellectual leaders, continue to see the world essentially through the politics of zero-sum political outcomes. It is quite unusual that the human, social and economic cost of 25 years of internal war has not been strong enough to dissuade them from the path of cultural, ethnic politics. The occasional intervention made by one or two enlightened political leaders, with the backing of the democratic civil society, has not been strong enough to institutionalise the politics of compromise, accommodation and moderation. The irony of it all is that in a country which prides itself on being the repository of a great religion of compassion and non-violence, the very word "peace" has become suspicious and unwelcome. While the advocacy of war has become an eminently respectable vocation, peace activists are compelled to run for cover.

The greater tragedy in Sri Lanka is perhaps the helplessness of its people, belonging to all ethnic communities, to chart a path of peace in defiance of their political and intellectual elites. Reports of public opinion surveys in Sri Lanka indicate the disturbing reality that the majority of the people continue to hope for a political solution marked by a military victory of the State.

The LTTE's rigidity in pursuing a project of minority rights through an essentially military campaign for secession is the other side of this story of continuing civil war in Sri Lanka. There have been significant changes in the Tamil nationalist politics in Sri Lanka during the past 25 years. Many of the ex-militant groups no longer subscribe to the project of secession or the politics of armed struggle. They are for accommodation through greater power-sharing in a federal framework.

However, altering the structures of the Sri Lankan state to accommodate even the moderate Tamil demands for greater regional autonomy seems to be difficult. Unitarism and centralization seem to be entrenched in the kind of democracy Sri Lanka evolved in its post-colonial years. The Indian leaders and officials who have attempted to persuade the Sri Lankan political leaders to think politically about the ethnic conflict may have learned this lesson well: a sense of continuing frustration.

India's own role in shaping the events in Sri Lanka in the direction of resolving the conflict seems to be quite limited. External involvement in an internal conflict can hardly force a solution. However, India's policy of quiet diplomacy does not seem to work either.

The better policy for India perhaps is to be more open, assertive and firm in proposing a vision of a negotiated political compromise. Such a vision should aim at reiterating the message to all parties to the conflict that they abandon unilateral military objectives, move towards a constitutional solution based on power-sharing and work towards creating a new political order that provides peace, democracy, justice and equality to all ethnic communities. That presupposes a hard, yet necessary, policy shift in New Delhi. ■

(Courtesy Economic & Political Weekly, July 19,2008)

POLITY

Vol. 4 No. 5
July-August 2008

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Annual subscriptions:

Sri Lanka	Rs.	600
By Airmail:		
South Asia/Middle East	US $	28
SE Asia/Far East	US $	28
Europe/Africa	US $	30
Americas/Pacific countries	US $	40

(Please note the revised subscription rates.
Cheques in favour of *Pravada* Publications)

SRI LANKA'S CONFLICT AT THE CROSSROADS

Jayadeva Uyangoda

What does Sri Lanka's continuing conflict suggest concerning the island nation's capacity to deal with a problem that has defined its existence for about three decades now? Has Sri Lanka lost its capacity to get out of the conflict, or is the country getting more and more entrapped in the conflict whatever way, political or military, through which it has attempted to find a way out? Or else, are the Sri Lankan people beginning to see the proverbial light at the end of a long tunnel? These are some key questions that arise in relation to Sri Lanka's current phase of the seemingly unending search for an end to its ethno-political civil war.

Responses to such questions in Sri Lanka can obviously be varied. Some may even be mutually hostile. The positions being thrashed out in the public debate at present in Sri Lanka on the nature and possible solutions to the conflict belong broadly to two approaches. The first approach views the conflict as a 'terrorist' threat to the sovereignty of the state. A terrorist problem, according to this perspective, can only be resolved through military means. Talking of a political solution to a non-existent ethnic problem is tantamount to encouraging terrorism and secession. The second approach accepts that there is an ethnic problem, coupled with a terrorist threat to the state. It believes that the two need to be separated and the two require different solutions: the terrorist problem a military solution and the ethnic question a political one. The 'war for peace' strategy followed by the Chandrika Kumaratunge regime from 1996 to 2000 and the 'peace with war' strategy of the present Mahinda Rajapakse administration are two variants of this second approach. Incidentally, the first approach is also forcefully represented in the present government. It has shaped the thinking of some leading politicians, the military, bureaucratic and media establishments.

There has been a third approach, but it has now been discredited and even abandoned by its own architects and backers. This is the approach adopted by the Ranil Wickramasinghe administration in 2001-2003 with the support of some leading members of the global state system. Its core idea was to enter into a negotiated political settlement with the LTTE through partial demilitarization of the conflict by means of a Cease-fire Agreement. In a context characterized by the political changes in Colombo resulting in the resurgence of the argument for a military solution, the LTTE's preference for re-escalation of violence and war and the growing frustration among the internationals about the commitment of all parties to the conflict to give the war one more chance, the negotiated political solution has become a project with no significant champions or backers.

The decision arrived at by both the present Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, for different reasons though, to give the war another chance has radically re-defined the political debate on the ethnic conflict and even the politics in general in Sri Lanka. The government has quite successfully made use of the 'war against terrorism' argument to acquire for its war strategy a certain degree of autonomy from the internationals as well as the domestic and international peace and human rights communities. The government leaders, ably supported by its new ideological gurus, have also succeeded in presenting the case of the war against the LTTE in a reasonably convincing manner at home as well as abroad. The LTTE, through its own preference for war, has contributed in no small measure to the government's political success in pursuing the war. The present Sri Lankan government seems to have presented its case in a fairly simple argument: what is the point in a democratic government talking to an entity that uses terrorism to pursue its unreasonable goal of secession? In the post-nine eleven world which has simplified many of the world's problems, such simple arguments do work.

The way in which the Rajapakse administration has re-defined the debate about a political solution is exceedingly interesting. In fact, President Rajapakse has altered the basic framework within which a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict has hitherto been conceptualized. He has changed three components of that framework and added a new element. The first of the three components of the political solution framework is about the basic strategic path to peace in Sri Lanka. The government does not seem to believe that a political solution without a military victory will provide a sustainable and durable peace in Sri Lanka. In the government's thinking, as articulated by the President and elaborated by the government's political theorists, a military solution, or a political solution paralleled with a military victory, is more likely to work. This differs from the argument held by governments some time ago that the LTTE needed to be militarily weakened in order to persuade its leadership to opt for a political settlement.

The second concerns the unit of regional autonomy. With the help of the JVP and through judicial intervention, the

government has achieved a goal which no other government would have dared: the de-merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces. Tamil nationalists for long held the belief that the merger of the two provinces was a non-negotiable principle in any political settlement. Acknowledging this Tamil nationalist claim, the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987 proposed the merger of the two provinces. They were temporarily merged a few months later. The de-merger occurred in 2006 when the Supreme Court, in a determination of a petition filed by the JVP, held that that temporary merger was illegal.

The third is about the position concerning the LTTE's role in a possible negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict. The government does not believe, neither does it hope for, any negotiations with the LTTE. The military defeat and the elimination of the LTTE from the politic-military equation seems to be the government's thinking, although there may be some who question the viability of this goal. Those who pursue the objective of peace without the LTTE treat the LTTE as the 'absolute enemy' of the Sri Lankan state. In this thinking, the LTTE is the main obstacle to peace in Sri Lanka, and that obstacle has to be removed and it has to be removed through military conquest.

The fourth component is derived from both the second and the third. It entails pragmatic political deals with the non-LTTE Tamil militant groups while the military thrust against the LTTE is proceeding. The first phase of this new strategy has been successfully implemented in the de-merged Eastern province, with the active participation of the group called *Thamil Makkal Vidudalai Puligal* (TMVP), which broke away from the LTTE a few years ago. One of the key military successes of the state against the LTTE in recent years has been the successful exploitation of the LTTE's internal split in order to oust the LTTE's military presence from the Eastern province. The government, on the heel of this military success in the Eastern province, seems to have swiftly moved in the direction of politically consolidating that gain, by holding provincial council elections to the province. The ruling party even entered into an electoral coalition with the TMVP. At the provincial elections held in last May, the government-LTTE coalition won a majority in the Council. President Rajapakse wasted no time to appoint Pillayan, the ex-LTTE leader of the TMVP, as the Chief Minister of the Province.

How can one assess the efficacy of this new policy of the Sri Lankan government? Obviously, it is too early to say anything with any certainty, because a major component of the government strategy still remains incomplete. That is about the role of the LTTE in the conflict as well as in any conflict resolution process. The government wants to neutralize the LTTE and remove it from the equation of the conflict. That obviously requires a long drawn out war. That war is going on in the North. It is quite clear that the LTTE is not interested in returning to negotiations, as much as the government does not want any talks as such with the LTTE. Can the Sri Lankan economy, faced with a new crisis precipitated by the rising petroleum prices and spiraling inflation, continue to fund another protracted phase of the war? The government seems to think it can, as long as there is no mass protest and oppositional mobilization on economic issues.

At present, the odds appear to be in favour of the government.

JVP SPLITS

Jayadeva Uyangoda

Among the significant political developments in Sri Lanka in recent weeks is the surprising split of the radical-Sinhalese nationalist JVP (*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*, People's Liberation Front). The media had earlier speculated about a possible rift within the JVP. But the story of an actual break up of the party became public on the day, on April 05, 2008 when the JVP was commemorating the 27th anniversary of the 1971 insurgency which the JVP led. In his Hero's Day address, the JVP leader, Somawansa Amerasinghe, announced that Wimal Weerawansa, the party's Propaganda Secretary, was suspended from all the positions in the party on disciplinary grounds. The next day, Weerawansa made an emotional speech in Parliament – Weerawansa was also the JVP's parliamentary group leader -- accusing the party leadership of shooting him from within. He walked away with ten out of 39 JVP MPs, indicating that he was ready to launch a new party. In subsequent charges and counter charges that the two factions have been exchanging, there are numerous conspiracy theories, attributed to some foreign and reactionary forces, to explain away each faction's behaviour.

In Sri Lanka, giant monoliths have shown that they are also quite vulnerable, to internal fissures, with tendencies to crack under pressure. The LTTE split in early 2004. The JVP splits in early 2008. The 2004 split cost the LTTE its military command in the Eastern province and eventually the control of the entire province. The leader of the LTTE's break away faction was Kuruna Amman, LTTE's military commander in the Eastern province and one of the most ruthless and skillful military commanders the LTTE had produced. The JVP's break away faction is led by the party's propaganda secretary, a brilliant public speaker and the charismatic young leader of the Sinhalese nationalists. While being a leading office holder of a party which still calls itself Leftist – the English media in Colombo continue to call the JVP 'reds' and 'Marxists' though these labels are quite dubious – Weerawansa in fact founded and led a Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalist movement called the Patriotic National Movement (PNM). Thus this split seems to reflect the mainstream JVP's unease with Weerawansa's Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalist project.

Although the two factions have openly traded many accusations and counter-accusations during the past two-to-three weeks, the real reasons for the split are not yet clear. It seems that there is a deep sense of bitterness built up over the years between the two groups, and reconciliation between them appears unlikely. The dissidents are even subjected to physical violence. The basic dispute that has generated so much inter-personal bitterness appears to be about the policy towards the present administration of President Mahinda Rajapakse. While the mainstream JVP tried to maintain a critical distance from the Rajapakse regime, Weerawansa and some of his parliamentary colleagues had argued for working closely with the regime. In that sense, it is a dispute about coalition strategies that has spilled to the domain of personal relations.

The JVP is one of the most remarkable political entities to have emerged in Sri Lanka. It has a history of nearly forty years. An off-shoot of the Maoist Communist Party of Ceylon, led by N. Shanmugathasan, the JVP first emerged as an underground radical movement. That was in 1967-68. Its founder leader, Rohana Wijeweera, began his political career as a youth activist in the Maoist CP in 1965. A dropout medical student from the Patrice Lumumba University of Moscow, Wijeweera was among the many young Leftists in Asia, Africa and Latin America at the time to take the revolution seriously as well as a serious political practice. Disillusioned with what was called at the time the 'reformist,' 'revisionist' and 'class collaborationist' politics of the 'old' Left – today these terms sound quite strange and archaic –, Wijeweera launched his own revolutionary project. Calling his effort 'a creative application of the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions of the semi-colonial, semi-capitalist Ceylon,' Wijeweera worked among the youth and the rural peasants in Sri Lanka's Sinhalese society. The radicalized and educated youth were attracted to this underground movement. That was the time when the romance of armed struggle and revolution, from Algeria to Zanzibar, Bolivia and Cuba, North Korea and to Vietnam, had swept South Asia as well. During this time, the Naxalite movement was also beginning to take shape in the Eastern India.

The defining feature of the JVP as a radical movement has been its serious and uncompromising commitment to

capturing state power. The JVP made two attempts to fulfill that objective, first in April 1971 and then in 1987-1989. Both ended not just in failure, but in the annihilation of large numbers of its leaders, members, sympathizers and even their family members. The 1971 attempt was a brief affair, spread over a few weeks. Many of the movement's leaders, including Wijeweera, survived death and prison sentences to re-launch the movement in the early 1980s.

The second JVP 'insurgency' of 1987-89 developed in a new political context. The civil war between the Sri Lankan state and the Tamil secessionist groups had erupted after the anti-Tamil riots of 1983. The Jayewardene regime proscribed the JVP in July 1983, alleging falsely though that the 'Left' parties were behind the anti-Tamil riots. The JVP, which had been engaged in parliamentary and electoral politics for a few years, went underground again. The Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, particularly through the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987, gave a new opportunity for the JVP to re-emerge. And re-emerge the JVP did with a bang. The day Rajiv Gandhi and Junius Jayewardene signed the Accord, on July 27, 1987, there were organized riots in Colombo. Gandhi himself escaped possible death at the ceremonial guard of honour when a naval rating attempted to hit Gandhi's head with the butt of his rifle. Those were the unmistakable signs of the second coming of the JVP's 'revolution.'

India's political and military intervention in Sri Lanka in the mid-eighties seems to have re-defined the JVP's political agenda. To capitalize the public anger generated by what many Sri Lanka's thought at the time as the high-handed behaviour of the Indian government as well as the fears generated by the huge Indian military presence in the North-East of the Island, the JVP launched a 'patriotic war' against the 'Indian imperialist state' and its 'local agents,' the Jayewardene regime. That turned out to be a bloody campaign of violence, directed against the UNP regime, the armed forces and the police and even the Left parties who supported the Indo-Lanka Accord and the devolution of power to the Tamils. Nearly three years of intense violence forced the Sri Lankan government to send the IPKF back home, forge a new alliance with the LTTE and then launch in early March-April 1989 the bloodiest counter-insurgency war Sri Lanka has experienced in such short time span. It may have killed nearly 30, 000 JVPers just in a period of six months. It also resulted in rounding up and cold-blooded killing of the entire top JVP leadership, including Wijeweera, but except one Polit Bureau member. The man who was lucky to escape Sri Lanka and save his life is Somawansa Amerasinghe, the JVP's present leader. The legend has it that he hired a fishing boat off the coast of Negombo and escaped to the Kerala coast to later proceed to Italy. Eventually, he led a life of a political exile in England, until returning to Sri Lanka in 2001 to take up the new and powerful JVP's leadership.

The remarkable thing about the JVP is that even after the annihilation it suffered at the hand of the state in 1988-89, the movement re-emerged in the early 1990s as a parliamentary party. Amerasinghe and his colleagues, who were exiled in Europe and Japan, kept the red flag flying till a new generation of leaders emerged from among the survivors of the terror of 1988-89. Wimal Weerawansa, the leader of the new dissident group, is one among them. Most of the JVP's present top leaders are survivors of 1988-89. They also successfully steered the JVP away from the armed struggle and towards parliamentary and electoral politics.

The golden moment of the new JVP began in 2000 when President Chandrika Kumaratunga sought its support to form a parliamentary majority. Interestingly, the JVP did not accept cabinet positions, but supported the Kumaratunga regime from outside, calling the regime a 'probationary government.' Then the JVP entered a formal coalition with Kumaratunga's People's Alliance in 2004 to win 39 parliamentary seats and be in a position to dictate terms on the government. Amerasinghe, the exiled leader, had returned in 2000. Quite interestingly, it was the PA-JVP coalition, with its powerful appeal to the Sinhalese nationalist fears and anxieties that largely succeeded in politically undermining the UNP-LTTE peace attempt of 2002-2003. Out of power, and therefore in a self-critical mode, ex-President Kumaratunga now admits that she made two fatal mistakes by aligning with the JVP and then pushing out of power the Ranil Wickramasinghe administration, on the JVP's behest. That was in October-December, 2003.

The JVP's break up is probably the manifestation of a general crisis among political parties and movements in Sri Lanka. Interestingly, the JVP has remained for quite some time the only entity that did not suffer a major internal crisis in recent years. All the others – Sri Lanka Freedom Party, United National Party, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, the Ceylon Workers' Congress, LTTE, PLOTE, and EPRLF – have suffered splits, leading to declining of party fortunes, re-alignment of party loyalties, shifts in the party leadership and even re-configuration of politico-military balance in the country. The JVP's split seems to be of considerable political consequences too.

The split also indicates the crisis which the JVP encountered by trying to maintain two faces – Sinhalese nationalism and class politics. The JVP always had these two faces, but it was its radicalism and the politics of class struggle that gave it a niche in the political process. The JVP's shift to nationalism as a means to state power occurred in the 1980s in the context of the Tamil secessionist insurgency and the Indian intervention in the ethnic conflict. In its post-1989 regeneration, the new leadership has given the nationalist agenda greater emphasis. This mixture of Sinhalese nationalism and radicalism paid the JVP dividends for some time, enabling it to emerge as the third largest party in Sri Lanka's parliament in 2004. In the 1994 parliament, the JVP had only one MP who used to wear a red shirt over his white trousers. Subsequently, all the JVP MPs began to wear the politician's uniform in Sri Lanka, white or black trousers and white, long-sleeved shirts. That is how the parliament had domesticated the yesterday's rebels as respectable, 'national' and professional politicians.

It appears that the present split is an outcome of the collision of Sinhalese nationalist and class struggle lines within the JVP. The nationalists wanted the party to extend uncritical support to President Mahinda Rajapakse's war against the LTTE and be silent on economic and other issues. But the class politics line, based on trade union constituencies, had a different agenda, to confront the regime on economic and social issues. In the short-run the Rajapakse administration is the immediate beneficiary of the JVP's split. The JVP cannot now mobilize trade unions on the street to protest against the spiraling inflation, rising cost of living, impending food crisis and the transfer of the economic burden of the war on to the poor and the middle classes. ■

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POLLING FOR PEACE POLICIES

The Sri Lankan Case Study[1]

Pradeep Peiris

Introduction

A fundamental principle of democratic governance is that policy making should be a function of the opinion of the demos (Wleizen and Soroka: 2006)[2] But practice is never perfect and the realities of democracies are far from what is theoretically sound and ideal. The influence of public opinion on government raises normative as well as empirical questions about democracy. Theories on representative democracy assume that people have only enough wisdom to elect the correct leader; policy decisions thereafter rest solely in the hands of the 'chosen one.' Some theoreticians take this argument a step further by pointing out that the public is largely ignorant of political issues and thereby unable to deliberate and form discerning opinions on the same. Vincent L Hutchings[3] takes these differing streams and brings them together via the contention that while the public are not routinely vigilant, they become alert and informed when their interests come under threat.

So what then, is the place of a pollster? Is public opinion polling the watchword of democracy? Or, as Robert Weissberg[4] argues, are poll results too limited and lacking in authority to be considered as guidelines for creating policy and legislation? Is it a stimulator or a constrainer? Wleizen and Soroka, allow for public polling results to be the stimulus for policy formulation. Weissberg's argument, on the other hand, attacks polls as not having the second best choice; nor do they allow for a tradeoff and comments. Further that polls run the risk of testing issues amongst a public who suffer from a lack of required knowledge. However, if one were to analyze the issue through Hutchings' argument, one can strike a balance, where it is understood that even though polls may not direct what policy can be introduced, they can certainly provide strictures and limits for policy change and implementation.

The Sri Lankan case study provides ample fodder for such theories. Polling on public policy is comparatively new to Sri Lankan politics and has been much in demand largely due to the high degree of ethnic polarization, and the re-entry of the warring parties to a period of political negotiation. What this paper hopes to explore is the role of public opinion in the peace process as both policy stimulus as well as policy constrainer. The paper will look at polling initiatives on the peace process and their subsequent relevance on policy. Through the use of polling results from two continuous polls on the peace process, the Peace Confidence Index and the Knowledge Attitude and Practices Survey, the author hopes to understand the nexus between polling and policy. The paper will look at three aspects of the process, namely, the 'international community', 'political solution' and 'negotiations and will conclude by arguing that, while polling is not the sole influential factor in policy making, it cannot be denied that it is one amongst some important variables that shape public policies.

I. Sri Lanka's Ethnic conflict

Sri Lanka's total population is about 19 million and it is home to Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims who belongs to four main religious groups i.e. Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic and Christian. Like most of the neighboring South Asian countries Sri Lanka was also colonized. Since the late 1970s the power struggle of the minority community in the context of ethnic discrimination turned into violence. During the last three decades, Sri Lanka has suffered from bloody violence despite its uninterrupted record on democracy and its high standard of social indicators compared with its neighbours.

Many efforts have been made to resolve the conflict, the most successful of which was the now abrogated 2002 Ceasefire Agreement signed between the United National Party government led by Ranil Wickremasinghe and the LTTE. The agreement was brokered by the Norwegian government and monitored by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) – a consortium of Scandinavian peace monitors. What the CFA did introduce to the process, also, was the overwhelming force of the international community–the USA, the EU, Japan and Norway. India, however, continued to play a silent but vigilant role. While the Norwegians managed to make both parties agree to seek peace under a federal framework in 2003, the commitment and gravity that both parties

extended at the beginning of the CFA soon deteriorated into manipulation and political mud-slinging.

In April 2003 the LTTE announced that it would not be participating in any direct talks with the government and put forward a proposal for an Internal Self Governing Authority for the North and East. Instances where the pact was violated began to rise and the credibility of the peace monitors themselves began to crumble, creating a hot seat for both the incumbent government and the Norwegians. This situation was well manipulated by the Executive President Chandrika Kumaratunge – and the UNP regime was dissolved in just under two years. At the 2005, presidential election, Wickremasinghe was beaten – marginally – by the SLFP leader Mahinda Rajapakse. The government formed by the latter eventually dissolved the CFA in January 2008.

II. Identified polling on the conflict

Unlike many developed nations, Sri Lanka does not possess an entrenched tradition or a history of Opinion Polling[6]. Polling on the ethnic conflict began as late as 2001, even though actual peace negotiations were initiated in 1985. In early 2001, National Peace Council (NPC) – a Colombo based NGO – commissioned a poll on the ethnic conflict. The results – that a majority of the country wanted peaceful negotiations and an end to the war – were shared with the public by means of an islandwide poster campaign. Since then, the NPC has been a part of several polls on the ethnic conflict – either as the commissioners of the survey or as partners in a survey initiative. Their most recent foray into this was a deliberative poll on constitutional reform.[7] The underlying purpose of this poll was to enhance the government's endeavours at the formulation of a southern consensus for the drafting of a new constitution. In late 2001, ORG MARG SMART, a marketing Research Company also conducted a poll with some selected business institutes in Sri Lanka. In addition, they continually included some peace questions in most of their pre election polls in May 2001. Social Indicator (SI), initiated a polling series called the Peace Confidence Index (PCI)[8] to measure the changing trend of public opinion on the peace process. The PCI has been the longest uninterrupted poll conducted on the ethnic conflict. In addition to the PCI, SI has conducted a number of other detailed surveys including – the KAPS surveys series – on attitudes and perceptions on issues surrounding the ethnic conflict during the last eight years.

iii. Polling and public policies

The 2002 Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) began a heady new chapter in the history of peace negotiations in Sri Lanka. The pact itself gave birth to a new set of institutions and introduced a host of new players and processes. The resumption of peaceful negotiations was at the focus of the agreement, as well as the formulation of a political solution. And the role of the international community, subsequently, became increasingly paramount.

Negotiations

By the year 2000, the conflict had reached a state of bitter stalemate in the battlefield and the country's economy seemed on the verge of collapse. The prospect of peaceful negotiations was welcomed by most leaders as a more pragmatic and progressive option than war. However, as people – at least those hailing from the south – demonstrate a high degree of cynicism about the sincerity of the LTTE at the negotiating table – many felt that engaging the LTTE would not be an option that most of the public would look upon with favour.

Polls conducted in early and mid 2001 indicated the opposite. However, results show that the people were also in favour of the government engaging in peaceful negotiation with the LTTE. The poll conducted by NPC in early 2001 revealed that 76% of the sample surveyed supported peace talks. The PCI May 2001 wave also showed a greater support (82%) for negotiations. This confirmed that initiating peace negotiations with the LTTE was not only a pragmatic idea but also a timely one. Therefore, it explains why Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe who lost the election a year previously on the basis of peace negotiations, did not change his position on negotiations in the snap election held in 2001 and still managed to win that election. The incumbent regime too extended their willingness to negotiate with the LTTE on the eve of the election diverting from their policy of the previous, year. As promised, soon after the electoral victory, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe signed a ceasefire agreement with the LTTE and paved way for a negotiated settlement to the country's ethnic conflict. This shows the influence that public opinion polling had on policy makers' decisions at the commencement of the peace negotiations.

Negotiations between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE began on 16th September 2001 at Sattahip, Thailand. The State Secretary of the Norwegian Ministry of foreign

affairs, Vidar Helgesen in his opening speech used the results of the PCI to emphasise his point by saying:

> ... But standing behind them are some formidable forces for peace. Recent opinion polls indicate that more than 80% of the population shares the parties' desire to find a negotiated solution to the conflict...

Public support for negotiations also rose since the commencement of the same and this fact has been used by the Government media for its own credit. For example, the *Daily News*[9] of October 21st 2002, gave front page coverage to the PCI findings under the title of "Opinion Survey shows more people believe peace will come". The same newspaper devoted its editorial of 6th January 2003 to the PCI findings, emphasizing that the polls showed broad support for the government's strategy of bringing peace though peaceful means. In April 2003, the direct negotiation between the UNP Government and the LTTE collapsed as the latter decided to pull out from direct talks while extending its commitment to the 2002 CFA. This triggered some sporadic violence initially but later grew into a tit for tat killing spree. As CFA violations increased, the public's sentiment corresponded with the morbidity of the times as their faith in negotiations and the parties involved took a negative turn. The LTTE and the Norwegian facilitators were the especial recipients of this jaundiced view.

According to a poll conducted in the period immediately preceding the April 2004 elections, the people stated that they were most desirous of economic relief while sustaining the CFA.[10] Further, the poll reported that while a majority of the Sinhala community were disappointed with the incumbent regime a majority of all minority ethnic communities still favoured the UNP regime. A majority rated the economy as a top priority while only one fifth gave the same ranking to the recommencement of negotiations.

The election manifesto of the then opposition, United People Freedom Alliance (UPFA) – the SLFP led coalition – and its election rhetoric confirmed the influence of the polls. More importantly, policies of the UPFA government after the electoral victory show the influence of public opinion in their policies. For example, despite being severe critics of the 2002 CFA during their election campaign, the UPFA regime did not abrogate the CFA until January 2008.

The polls show that support of the Tamil community remained unchanged while the Sinhala community's faith in negotiations showed a gradual decline between 2004 and 2006 in response to growing hostilities between the LTTE and the security forces. When President Rajapakse assumed power in December 2005, he did not do much to revive the stalled peace talks except for two meetings held in Geneva and Oslo in 2006. In November 2006, 57% of the Sinhala community supported peace talks although this declined by 10 percentage points by February of 2007. The polls showed that limited military operations begun in February of '06 were well received by the Sinhala community. The February 2007 PCI showed that 48% of the Sinhala community was confident in the President's ability to wage a successful war. While the President and his government must have a number of reasons to go into battle, one can hardly dismiss the idea that the public's demonstration in favour of war in the face of a debilitating economic situation may have spurred on the decision to re-engage the LTTE on the battlefield. This conjecture is confirmed by a comment made by Dayan Jayatilaka, an adviser to the president and the permanent representative to the UN in Geneva.[11]

> We shall of course have to go North and then finally into the Wanni heartland. Prabhakaran (the leader of the LTTE) must surely be waiting the time we get caught in the classic manpower crunch: too few troops to capture and hold terrain; overstretch which permits him to concentrate his forces for a devastating breakthrough at an unexpected point in space and time. The way to avoid that would be to generate a surge in recruitment by tapping into the present patriotic mood: the most recent Peace Confidence Index/Social indicators of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) registers a figure of 54% support among the Sinhalese for a policy of ratcheting up the military response right up to all-out war.

Political Solution

Since 1994, every government has stressed the importance of a political solution to end the country's protracted conflict. However, polls show that despite a consensus with regard to the need for a peaceful solution, different ethnic communities and social and political groups begin to differ when it comes to the nitty-gritty[12]. Therefore every successive regime has to face a grave challenge in formulating and implementing a meaningful political solution for the ethnically polarized community. On one hand Sinhala nationalists advocate power-sharing within a unitary state while Tamil nationalists lobby for the creation of two separate states. Due to this, both governmental and non-governmental institutions have found polling to be an excellent supplement

to their search for a political solution.

Of those political proposals that have been most bandied about in public discourse, the federal idea, advocated primarily by Tamil political parties, must take centre stage. When Ms. Kumaratunge assumed power in 1994, she re-introduced the federal debate to the constitutional discussion. She not only supported the federal idea but also advocated it to the Sinhala community through various programmes. She maintained that 76% of the country was in favour of a federal system[11]. Actual poll results, however, differ. Polling results from 2001 reveal that only 19% of Sri Lankans demonstrated any level of awareness regarding the term federalism. This vindicates political analysis that debate on federalism has always been limited to a few academics and elitist groups.

In 2001, the federal idea gained new momentum and also a few non-traditional advocates. This time around the UNP government proposed a federal framework during a round of negotiations held in Nokkon, Japan. At this point, the LTTE used the PCI findings to attack the government's proposal. The LTTE's chief negotiator, Anton Balasingham asked the government delegates to educate the southern Sinhalese first as results of a poll showed that only 19% of the south knew anything about federalism[12].

Civil society has also involved itself en masse in the exploration of political solution. "One-text"[13] is one amongst such civil society initiatives. They invited the author many times to learn about public opinion on matters related to the negotiations. In these meetings the major political parties were present. Not only did they deliberate on the poll results but they also asked that the PCI poll include some of the questions that they felt were interesting and useful for their initiative. Though there is little or no documented evidence which demonstrates the extent to which polls are being used in formulating a political solution, the use of poll results by such groups – proxies to the Government, the opposition and the LTTE – indicate that there is effective channeling of the poll data to key policy makers.

Sinhala nationalist political parties oppose the federal concept primarily on three cardinal principles i.e. 1. Federalism will lead to secession, 2. It will unfairly affect the Sinhala majority, 3. It will be detrimental to the status of Buddhism. However, poll results showed that a significant majority (64%) of the Sinhala community were not able to decide whether federalism would result in any of the three. Only 20.8% of them believed that federalism would lead to secession[14]. The results of the KAP[15] survey that was conducted in 2004 revealed that the support for federalism increased and more people would accept it if it was advocated by one's political party leadership or one's religious leader.

The overwhelming ignorance of the federal idea that the polls indicated was best used by the nationalist political parties and the SLFP to shape their election campaign strategies and overthrow the UNP regime which openly advocated federalism. For example the main accusation of the nationalist parties was that the UNPers were traitors simply due to their strong advocacy for a federal system. This may be an example of an instance where a poll has been more an instrument in underpinning electoral strategies than for public good.

In 2006, President Rajapakse – who was elected through the votes of nationalists – set up an all party representative committee (APRC) to form a southern political consensus. It was believed that this decision was largely due to the influence of foreign governments instead of public demand. Two years of futile deliberations at the APRC have proved the difficulty of building consensus amongst the parties on any political solution. Later, Prof. Vithanana, the head of APRC, has indicated his desire to seek the assistance of polling[16] in order to persuade its members to build consensus on a political solution. This exemplifies the direct use of polling in policy making on vital and difficult issues in peace building. The head of the APRC further extended his assistance in formulating the questionnaires with pertinent questions that could be instrumental in his policy dialogues. However, the role of peace polling in the APRC process is yet to be seen.

International community

The international community has been a powerful force and has had direct or indirect influence since colonial times. Due to the internationalization of the Sri Lankan peace process, the international community has found a large and prominent role in the policies related to the ethnic conflict. Various financial pledges and many other techniques have been used by the international community to push both the Government and the LTTE to stick to the much strained peace negotiations. For example, at the Tokyo Donor Conference in July 2003, donor countries pledged financial assistance to Sri Lanka over the course of a four year period so long as there was "substantial and parallel progress in the peace process" (Uyangoda: 2006). In that same year, the total amount of aid coming into the country was at Rs.61.2 billion (Central Bank Report: 2003).

Since its inception, PCI the poll series has been funded by various individual donors and of present it is being financed by a coalition of donor agencies[19]. They believed that the perceptions and attitudes toward peace negotiations revealed by this poll is vital in the decision making of the donors in order to influence the government and the LTTE. In 2003 and 2004, USAID funded a KAP survey on the peace process through Academy for Educational Development (AED) an American NGO. In Washington and in Colombo the survey team engaged in briefing the survey results to the US Mission, members of the Government and the Government Peace Secretariat.

Polls not only help them to influence the government policies directly or indirectly but also to review their own – the international community – policies with regard to the Sri Lanka's peace process. The credibility of Norway started diminishing in the backdrop of growing CFA violations and protracted hurting stalemate condition. Sinhalese did not reject the idea of third party facilitation but refused to accept Norway as an impartial and effective mediator. Therefore, unlike the UNP which was in government from 2002 to 2004, the UPFA regime that formed a government in 2004, and President Rajapakse distanced themselves from Norway because of their policies on the ethnic conflict.

Polls showed that the Sinhalese increasingly extended their preference to India, while Tamils continued to prefer Norway as the best country to mediate the peace negotiations[20]. However, a substantial percentage of minority communities extended their support to an Indian involvement. In this context, some Sinhala nationalist political parties of the current government stated that they wanted a more active role of India in Sri Lanka's peace process. Capitalizing on this Indian friendly public mood, President Rajapakse invited India to play an active role in the Sri Lankan peace process and expressed his desire to use the Indian power sharing arrangement as a model for Sri Lanka. Further, a group of parliamentarians from the APRC was sent to India to study the Indian '*panchayat raj*'[21] in 2006. Not only that, in January 2008, President announced that his government wanted to find a solution to the ethnic conflict though implementing the 13th amendment to the Constitution which his party had criticized for decades. This amendment to the constitution was introduced by the late President J.R. Jayawardene under the influence of the Indian government. Meantime, since 2006, India too has expressed a desire to play an active role in Sri Lanka again. They denounced the LTTE aim of a separate state but emphasized that a solution to the ethnic conflict should preserve the dignity of the Tamil community[22].

Conclusion

Polling is by no means the traditionally accepted means of information that politicians and governments have used since time immemorial. Editorials, media commentary, informants, constituency mail and the like have preceded polling as the public's thermometer. Nevertheless, polling provides an instant snapshot, if you will, of any political climate. The casual effect of public opinion polling maps out three distinct possibilities; that public opinion can constrain policy, exert strong influence upon it or be entirely ignored in a government's policy making process. The Sri Lankan context, as discussed above, exhibits the occurrence of all three.

The present government's policy toward the Ceasefire Agreement is an excellent example for an instance where public opinion polling has functioned as a policy constraint. Although there were many violations of the pact and endless criticism of the peace process, polls did show that the people still wanted the CFA to be sustained. Thereby, it took until January 2008 for the government to find the correct moment to abrogate the CFA. Rajapakse's approach to foreign policy shows the direct and indirect influence of public opinion polling. The government has neither embraced nor rejected Norway. It has instead extended a warm welcome to India and Indian models of governance and constitution making. This shows a positive correlation with the current public opinion trend.

It is from the UNP regime that we see an instance where public opinion was completely dismissed. During the 2002 to 2004 period there was a growing sense of public disappointment over the way the peace process and the economy were handled. Wickremasinghe's easy embrace of the World Bank and the IMF in these matters was not well received by the public, a fact that he ignored on the grounds of public ignorance. Page and Shapiro contend that even in the face of individual ignorance, aggregate preferences will reflect real world trends. Thus Ranil Wickremasinghe lost after only a two year stint.

Certainly, the role of public opinion polling in the Sri Lanka peace process only provides a limited overview of the nexus between polls and policies. However, it shows the substantial contribution that polling can make in the intricate and

sensitive exercise of solving an ethnic conflict. Polling may not be the magic wand that brings peace and happy endings to Sri Lanka, but it will certainly fortify the endeavor to find a democratic and sustainable resolution.

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Notes

1 This paper was presented at the annual general conference of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) which was held in New Orleans, USA from 12th to 15th May 2008.

2 Wlezien, Christopher & Soroka, Stuart N: *The Relation between Public Opinion and Policy*, 2006.

3 Hutchings Vincent.; *Public Opinion and Democratic Accountability. How Citizens learn about Politics*, Princeton University Press, 2003.

4 Weissberg, Robert, *Why Policy Makers should Ignore Public Opinion Polls*. 2001.

5 Peiris, Pradeep and Thavaraja, Joseph; *History of Public Opinion Research in Sri Lanka*. Paper presented at the regional WAPOR conference held in Hong Kong in December 2006.

6 This poll was conducted in collaboration with the MARGA institute one of the oldest Colombo-base NGOs.

7 ORG MARG SMART was the Indian Sri Lankan Marketing Research Company that was later bought over by AC Nielson.

8 Peace Confidence Index (PCI) is the only repetitive and uninterrupted polling exercise on the peace process in Sri Lanka that has been conducted since 2001. The idea of PCI was inspired by survey program in Israel and Palestine.

9 *The Daily News* is Sri Lanka's most widely circulated English daily and is published by the Government owned Associated Newspapers of Ceylon.

10 Social Indicator, 2004 pre-election poll, *Daily Mirror* 18th March 2004.

11 Jayatilaka; Dayan, http://www.dailynews.lk/2007/01/29/fea01.asp

12 Social Indicator, KAPS 2003.

13 Peiris, Pradeep; "Federalism" – "Some Debates Never Die", *Daily Mirror*.

14 *Sunday Leader* 8th December 2002, "Can the LTTE settle for federalism?"

15 One-Text was set up by a South African journalist with the support of international donors in order to bring all the political parties and players together to produce a political solution that is acceptable to a majority of the country.

16 *Social Indicator*, PCI, November 2006.

17 *Social Indicator*, KAPS 2004: Potential for Peace, pp.62

18 Social Indicator and Dr Colin Irwin briefed Prof. Tissa Vitharana on its peace polls and received his assistance.

19 Currently PCI series is funded by a donor working group in Sri Lanka that comprise of the development agencies of various countries and multilateral agencies like IMF and World Bank.

20 Social Indicator, PCI September 2006.

21 A village level power sharing system.

22 *Daily Mirror*, 28th March 2008, "India warns Lanka against deals with Pakistan".

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ANTHROPOLOGIZING HISTORY AND HISTORIZING ANTHROPOLOGY

Premakumara de Silva

Within anthropology the turn to history appears to have received legitimacy and gathered momentum in recent years. Between the 1920s and 1970s, the discipline was largely dominated by two overarching 'ahistorical' theoretical discourses, Functionalism and Structuralism. The emphasis on the central methodology of participant observation in 'the field' may also have contributed to the neglect of history in anthropology. Under this methodological approach, anthropologists had been encouraged to concentrate on what Roger Sanjek calls "the ethnographic present" (1991) so the appearance of history in the conventional ethnography was limited. However, in his 1961 lecture "Anthropology and History", Evans-Pritchard appealed for an integration of functionalist and historical interpretation in anthropology. His stress on the need for greater historical understanding in anthropology echoed Levi-Strauss, albeit from a different perspective. For Levi-Strauss had earlier argued, 'a little history - since such, unfortunately, is the lot of the anthropologists - is better than no history at all' (1968: 12; cf. Nissan 1985: 345).

But anthropology did not turn towards history until the early 1980's. However, it is important to note here, by early 1960s historical analysis is quite evident in anthropology of India and Sri Lanka through the works of Marriortt (1955), Srinivas (1976), Ralph Pieris (1956); Edmund Leach (1961), Gananath Obeyesekere (1964, 1984) and others. Their village studies did offer a model of collaboration between history and anthropology that has renewed relevance in the contemporary context[1]. Nevertheless, broadly speaking by 1980s the importance of history in anthropology was revived, particularly after the works of well-known anthropologists such as Michael Taussig (1980), Bernard Cohn (1980, 1981), Marshall Sahlins (1981, 1985), and also the writings of historians like Ranajit Guha (1982) and his group of subalternists[2]. Bernard Cohn's call for anthropology to collaborate with history in his land mark essay "An Anthropologist Among the Historians" first published in 1962, represented an early attempt by anthropologists to take the question of history seriously. Indeed, today, both anthropologists and historians probe into the dynamic interrelationship between culture and history, to understand 'culture mediated by history and history mediated by culture' (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 5). This is because many critical historians have realised the need to move from the archive to the field, in order to 'explode the concept of history through the anthropological experience of culture' (Sahlins 1985: 72).This 'historicization' of anthropology and 'anthropologization' of history has come about as the result of several important processes[3]. One is the decolonisation of the 'third world' nations from the late 1940s through to the 1960s which served to produce questions about the traditional binaries (e.g., 'modern' and 'primitive', 'dynamic' and 'static') of anthropological enquiry. The perceptions and assumptions of European colonisers about the colonised, and the methods by which they categorised the subject populations, came in for radical criticism. Under these conditions anthropologists began to study 'native' intellectual traditions and historical schools, and elaborated upon indigenous renderings of history (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 3). This move led to dissatisfaction with conventional anthropological theories and marked the beginning of a new mode of anthropological enquiry.

Many of the more recent critiques of anthropology and ethnography have been elaborated from within the discipline.[4] Discomfort with anthropological definitions of the 'other' has prompted an interrogation of the process by which this 'other' is created. The 'other', in the practice of early anthropology, was represented as existing 'there and then', far from the 'here and now' of the anthropologist. Hence, the writing of anthropology came to be seen as an essentially political act (Clifford, J. and G. Marcus 1986). This questioning of the assumptions and premises of anthropology has been complemented by an interrogation of its method. It has been pointed out that the concentration on the 'local', and the great dependence on 'fieldwork' do not necessarily make ethnographic accounts authentic and authoritative representations of other societies. The privileging of knowledge derived from experience in the 'field' serves to foreground face-to-face relations of community, neglecting or disregarding other, less localised relations (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 15). The nature of fieldwork in anthropology conceals the way in which the

'field' is constituted, the imperatives and assumptions that underlie the configuration of 'place' and 'culture' in anthropology.[3] Indeed, the immediacy of fieldwork reduces writing to method, thereby concealing 'the constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts' (Clifford 1986: 2). Thus ethnography is caught in an 'historical predicament' where it often invents rather than represents cultures. So, for James Clifford ethnographic truths are 'inherently partial---committed and incomplete' (ibid. 7).

However, this provocative critique of anthropology from the perspective of an experimental ethnography has not been received without reservation. There has been criticism made of its tendency to seize upon texts as 'formal objects' totally disregarding their context and the conditions of their production, and also for ignoring the relationship between institutional structures and styles of writings and for overlooking the linkages between anthropological work and anthropological writing. The most dangerous aspect of this exclusive concern with anthropologists themselves, according to Jonathan Spencer, is that it encourages a trend away from doing anthropology, and towards ever more 'barren criticism' and 'meta-criticism' (Spencer 1989: 145-164). In order to avoid such criticism, he argues for a more open style of ethnographic writing in the sense that 'both writer and reader should be paid explicit attention to the specific historic and social sources of anthropological representations' (ibid. 161). Similarly, there have been other assertions about the usefulness of fieldwork, which acknowledge its limits, yet attempt to rethink and revitalise the practice (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). After all, anthropology does not speak *for* others, but *about* them. Ethnography is not merely an ineffective attempt at literal translation, rather it is an endeavour to decode the various signs and symbols of culture that 'disguise themselves as universal and natural' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 9-10). In the same way, ethnographers do not depend entirely on the observations of fieldwork. 'Along the way, ethnographers also read diverse sorts of texts books, bodies, buildings, sometimes even cities' (ibid. 11). My effort at outlining some of the ongoing debates and discussions in ethnography is directed toward indicating the mood of questioning and introspection that encompasses the discipline. This questioning has led ethnographers to acknowledge not only their own 'subjectivity' but also the larger limitations of fieldwork. One of the ways to overcome such limitations has been the ethnographers' effort to relate their experiences in the field with the reading of texts and archives. These moves have been part of larger attempts to locate peoples within processes and cultures in time, to theorise the relationships of the local to the global, and to question the notion that the 'visible' and the 'double' are the only legitimate objects of anthropological study (Des Chene 1997: 66-85). As I have mentioned before, such ethnographers have already created meaningful collaborations of anthropology with history. On the one hand, it has been seen that documents 'alter the circumstances of fieldwork' by making the 'fieldworkers aware of the deep roots of their case studies' (Fernandez 1990: 119). On the other hand, it has been recognised that documents, by virtue of the fact that they can never all be consulted, and are generally subject to variable interpretation, 'recast fieldwork from a descriptive and conditional into a reflective and subjunctive mode' (ibid.). Thus, anthropology in a historical mode has moved away 'from the objectification of social life to a study of its constitution and construction' (Cohn 1980: 217).

The close scrutiny and consequent critique of the ways in which colonial states generated knowledge of the people they colonised has also directly influenced the dialogue between history and anthropology. This critique became centrally visible after the groundbreaking work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* appeared in 1978. Said argued that European knowledge about the Orient enabled Europe to define, classify, dominate, and restructure - to thus have authority over - the Orient (1978: 3). This enduring discourse placed a 'tremendous burden' upon the spatial distinction between East and West, and endowed and eternalised these totalities with 'truth' (Thomas 1994: 23). From its beginning, Orientalism was nurtured by scholars and intellectuals, and it continues to live on academically (Said 1978: 2). While it is true that Said's *Orientalism* frequently relapses into 'essentializing modes' (Clifford 1988: 271), particularly by over-emphasising the negative dimensions of Orientalism and imputing varied discourses of cultural difference with 'hostility and aggression' (Thomas 1994: 26), it also succeeds in questioning a number of important anthropological categories, and challenging the progressive and liberal idea that former stereotypes have been superseded by a more objective way of seeing (Clifford 1988: 271; Thomas 1994: 25; Scott 1999: 1-10).

The immense challenge posed by Said's arguments has prompted scholars to reflect on their assumptions, sources, and methods. Historians and Anthropologists working on South Asia have sought to extend Said's analysis (e.g., Inden 1990; Breckenridge & van der Veer 1993; Scott 1994) by penetrating scholarship on others, a scholarship that viewed the Orientalist in a relation of intellectual dominance over

the Orientals whom they studied and represented (Inden 1990: 38). This 'other', carefully constructed by bestowing upon it an unchanging essence, and carefully setting it apart from the 'self' of the Orientalist, had two simultaneous consequences: it served to deprive the 'other' of all agency; and it endowed the Orientalist with the authority to present the Oriental, 'not only to Europeans and Americans but also to the Orientals themselves' (ibid.). All these interventions have prompted historians and ethnographers to abandon the search for the 'real' or the 'essential', and replace it instead with a sense of the production of culture (e.g., Dirks 1992, Hagberman 1994).

The conjunction of history and anthropology is not just 'another new speciality', a means for the writing of hyphenated histories and anthropologies (Cohn 1980: 216). 'Ethnographic history' and 'historical anthropology' are hybrid labels that strive to bring about a meaningful collaboration between the two disciplines so that the subject matter common to both may be reasserted, and the limits of each transcended.

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Notes

1 Saloni Mathur argues that the importance of history in the anthropological study of South Asia can be traced at least to the 1950s, when American anthropology consolidated itself through an ethnographic interest in the Indian village (2000: 91).

2 Veena Das has suggested that many of anthropology's prevailing conceptions of tribe, caste, and social structure have been positively challenged by the project of subaltern history and even "restored to their historical being" but others fear that such Foucauldian turn has shifted the focus away from anthropology and closer to the concerns of literary criticism (1989: 314).

3 Also for a fruitful discussion on South Asia particularly India (see Mathur 2000), and Sri Lanka (see Roberts 1997: 9-26; Kapferer 1990: 280-302).

4 For an excellent summary of these criticism and counter criticism, see Spencer (1989).

5 For a critical and insightful analysis of the idea of the 'field', see Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 1-25).

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POET AS WITNESS: ETHNICITY AND THE DISCOURSE OF THE NATION

E.V. Ramakrishnan

South Asian countries have gone through similar phases of historical experiences such as those of colonialism, nationalist movements, state formation and efforts at decolonization. The politics of South Asia still bears the marks of colonial legacy. The boundaries which were politically drawn often contradicted the cultural boundaries that took shape over centuries. The nation building in these countries have been influenced by collective memories but the same logic did not inform the state formation. The minorities came into being through political processes of exclusion which were oftent he result of the policies prescribed by the state. Electoral politics made them increasingly self-conscious about their distance from centres of power. They were forced to defend their cultural identity against the aggressive assimilationist policies of the state. Their cultural identity took on aspects of political identity. They were caught in a conflict between atavistic sentiments and the compulsions of civil politics. The cultural givers that constitute the ethnic identities can mobilize people in times of crisis. Both Kashmiri Muslims and Sri Lankan Tamils can be described as ethnic communities since they are objectively different from other communities in customs, rituals and beliefs and they subjectively accept these differences as the basis of their distinctive identity. The prolonged civil strife in Sri Lanka and Kashmir has its roots in the conflict between ethnicity and nation state. Here we will study the poetry of Jean Arasanayagam, a Sri Lankan poet and that of Agha Shahid Ali, an Indian poet, both writing in English, to see how they respond to the crisis in their respective community.

Let us examine the case of Sri Lanka. When Sri Lanka secured independence in 1948, it was the Sinhalese Buddhist elite which constituted the ruling class. Here it is worth mentioning that of the 26 per cent of Sri Lankan population that belongs to minority communities, 18.5 per cent are Tamils and 7.4 are Muslims. The divisive politics followed by the Sri Lankan state in the 1950s progressively alienated the Tamil minorities who are largely concentrated in the North and North East parts of the country. The dialectic of the monolothic, unitary state and its deliberate suppression of differences, linguistic and religious, led to the demand for a separate nation by the ethnic group. It should be remembered that the Budddhists have no special claim to Sri Lankan territory. There are strong cultural and racial similarities between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, the linguistic and religious differences notwithstanding. It is impossible to differentiate the Sinhalese and the Tamils from their physical appearance. Most of the Tamil speakers arrived in Sri Lanka centuries before and have contributed substantially towards the country's economic and cultural wealth.

After the formation of independent Sri Lankan state, the Tamils were systematically marginalized by the state apparatus. The Sri Lankan national flag shows a Sinhalese lion. The secular national discourse of the state became increasingly irrelevant as Buddhist culture and Sinhalese language became markers of Sri Lankan nation state. In 1956 Sinhalese was made the official language of the nation. The rhetoric of cultural nationalism ('Sinhala Only' was their slogan) was used by Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party to mobilize the majoritarian forces into a formidable political formation. Tamils who were a highly educated minority gradually lost their access to opportunities in higher education and representation in government jobs and the oppression of Tamils united them across religions. Gradually, as the relation between Tamil ethnicity and Hindu religion got severed and "Tamil ethnicity replaces Hinduism as the focal point of nationalist pride among Tamils. As a result, some of the most active participants in the Tamil Separatists movement have been Christians, even Christian clergy." (Juergensmeyer 1993: 102). It is to be noted that the resistance movement of the Tamils has primarily targeted the Sri Lankan state.

The poetry of Jean Arasanayagam gives us an inside view of the Sri Lankan ethnic strife. By birth she is a Dutch Burgher. The Dutch came to Sri Lanka in the 17th century and the Burghers constitute a microscopic minority of Sri Lanka. During the colonial period they were a privileged group and this had alienated them from the mainstream. Jean Arasanayagam's marriage to a Sri Lankan Tamil, despite the

disapproval of her family, meant embracing another minority identity. 1983 was a turning point in the history of Sri Lankan Tamils. In response to the killing of 13 Sri Lankan soldiers on 23 July that year, riots erupted all over the country in which more than 2000 Tamils were killed. President Jayawardene did not condemn the rioters. This was the beginning of the long drawn out civil war which is nowhere near a peaceful settlement. Arasanayagam's volume of poems, *Apocalypse 83* records her trauma as a refugee because, being married to a Tamil, she was also a victim of the political violence. In the poem titled "1958... '71... '77... '81... '83" she traces the recurring history of ethnic strife in the country and concludes:

It's all happened before and will happen again
and we the onlookers
but now I'm in it
it's happened to me
at last history has meaning
when you're the victim
when you're the defeated
the bridges bombed
and you can't cross over. (Arasanayagam 2003: 26)

Some of her major poems from this period deal with the trauma of dislocation and displacement of the Tamil community in the context of ethnic strife. Several poems such as "Innocent Victim – Trincomalee," and "Eye Witness – Nawalapitiya" give first person accounts of the inhuman violence perpetrated on innocent people who had no inkling of the magnitude of the tragedy that was to befall them. The poem "In the Month of July" describes the scene of a man being chased by a mob and brutally killed. "It's got to End" speaks of the need to speak out against violence. Several of the poems in the volume deal with the plight of refugees who are unable to come to terms with the sudden collapse of the familiar world they lived in. In the poem "I Watch My Own Death" – Refugee Camp 1983" she writes:

It is easier now to die than live,
One waits for the burning to be over
One waits for the final conflagration
To end, seeing death and murder face to face
In the eyes of enemies, stranger, predators,
The degradation of the fugitive, the hunted
Fleeing from the burning mazes, threats and death. (Ibid: 67)

In the poem "The Dalada Bombing" she shows how violence is routinized in the civil war-torn Sri Lanka. She says:

Who were the first to die?
A family come to give their early offering
Of milk, caught in the crossfire
A woman on fire runs demented along the street
The flames surging out of a singed glass
Body-globe. (Arasanayagam 2003:46)

The Nallur poems are a poignant record of the temple town's slide into violence and chaos. Nallur houses a famous Murugan temple around which a minority culture of devotion and worship had grown. In "Nallur," she says that the 'thirtham' which tasted like nectar is now bitter and at the entrance of the town "the silent guns are trained upon a faceless terror" (p 3). Smoking ruins, blackened stones, empty roads and trails of blood mark the landscape outside. The pilgrim town now has turned into a ghost town:

The land is empty now
the pitted limestone
invaded by the sea
drowns, vanishes,
waves of rust swell and billow
beating into hollow caves and burial urns
filled with the ash of bodies
cremated by the fire of bullets. (Ibid:107)

In "Remembering Nallur – 1984," she recalls the annual festival of Nallur temple which used to attract lakhs of people. Now "the conch blast echoes/over the veedhi of Nallur/ summoning the penitents/to sacrifice, no one comes." (Ibid:109). She also remembers the wandering singers who once traveled through the villages and bound them in their enchanting devotional music:

Where have they vanished,
The Bhakti singers in their trance,
Bodies bent backwards leaning against
Wind, borne by its surge
Across the empty plain singing thevarams,
Clashing cymbals, ringing their death knells
As they dance and sing traveling
From distant villages for miles and miles
Seeing only the gods behind the blind eyes
Of the world. (Ibid: 109)

The memories of devotion and communion which form a counter-narrative to the dominant one of arson, murder and dispossession constitute a site which assumes significance in her subsequent poetry. "Remembering Nallur 1984" ends with the lines:

This time the poojas are not made
With laden trays of flowers, tulsi, camphor,
Fruit, kumkum and thirtham
The poojas are made with their bodies,
As they come thousands and thousands
Traveling from distant villages.
Nallur is now a battlefield
and the hands upraised
storming heaven
all bear arms,
all bear weapons. (Ibid: 115)

The context of ethnic violence forces Jean Arasanayagam to review the content of her minority identities. She offers a critique of the nationalistic discourse by producing self-critical narratives of her Burgher and Tamil identities. In *A Colonial Inheritance and Other Poems* she recovers her past and in the process, takes stock of the colonial past. This, by no means, is an easy task because now she has to recognize that her ancestors have left her a dubious legacy of violence and shame:

In the garden of museum
a cannon rests. Within glass cases
artefacts of time. Minted coins abraded
silver larins, golden guilders, stuivers,
ancient swords stained with rust
and blood. Firearms antique,
and in my face --- a semblance. (Arasanayagam 1985: 5)

The minted coins are stained with blood. This is a moment of epiphany. The present violence was inherent in the colonial conquest of the natives and their brutal subjugation. To own up to this dubious legacy is to be self-critical about her community:

We were once invaders
--- --- --- --- ---- ---- ----
On our brows eating into skull
We bear branded the mark of Cain. (Arasanayagam 1991: 85)

In a long poem called "Exiled Childhood" in the volume, *Shooting the Floricans* Arasanayagam confesses to her privileged status in the colony as a Burgher (Arasanayagam 1993: 9-10). To situate her own legacy is to accept that her relation with the mainstream is historically determined. The critical distancing she achieves in her narration of the past is a pointer to her awareness of the complications of history informing the present. In the middle of the poem she compares herself to a migrant bird which has overstayed its summer and has chosen to stay behind to cohabit with the native kind and has now grown "into a rare genus" (Ibid., p.113) Here she achieves a statis of sort without any final resolution of her problem of belonging. The nationalist discourse, by its very nature, demands assimilation and the critical distance she acquires through her examination of her own location within Sri Lankan history, enables her to realize the inherent vulnerability of minority identities. In an article, Elaine Ho and Harshana Rambukwella have argued that Arasanayagam's writing is heavily invested in the idea of 'national belonging'. They suggest:

> It is from within the Sri Lankan nation and as an individual who desires to belong that Arasanayagam writes, but she is also acutely aware that in this national space, she is persistently marked as alien. The desire to belong co-exists with an equally urgent process of rewriting her own alien-ness, and to reinvent alienation as critical irony and poetic agency. (Ho and Rambukwella 2006: 66-67).

I would like to argue that this is not borne out by her poems. She questions narrow notions of belonging. She has come to recognize that each discourse of belonging creates its others. She understands that choices are made by one's birth and one's location in a community which are historically determined. Today it is recognized that a nation-state may contain more than one nation. Anthony D. Smith says in his study, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations:* "Quite simply many individuals today belong simultaneously to two 'nations' --- - Catalan and Spanish, Breton and French, Croat and Yugoslav, Scots and British, even Yoruba and Nigerian, perhaps." (Anthony D. Smith 1986: 167). The nationalistic discourse, as it has been defined by the Sri Lankan state, has no space to accommodate minority identities like hers. The nation-state bestows equality whereas it is the nation which endows one with identity. She is caught between the state-seeking Tamil nationalism and the state-sponsored Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. (See T.K. Ommen's article 'New Nationalisms and Collective Rights' in Stephen May et al 2004 : 132-140 for details regarding the post-colonial nationalisms of South Asia.) It is not easy for her to endorse either of the two as it involves making painful choices. The metaphor of the migratory bird overstaying its summer and choosing to cohabit with the native kind and eventually evolving into a 'rare genus' does underline the fact that she will remain alien and different. Can she find her own space within the nation without getting assimilated? She will remain a vulnerable member of a minority community ever marked

and singled out for differences. This burden of self-consciousness also will prevent her from being part of a dominant imagined community.

Arasanayagam is trying to find an alternative to the colonizing model of nation-building that characterizes the colonial and post-colonial nation states. This becomes apparent in the manner in which she negotiates differences with her Tamil identity. The insular nature of her mother-in-law's Tamil Hindu (Vellala) culture denies her entry into it. The culture and customs that constitute Tamil identity can also make it hegemonic in its own way when it excludes other identities from its day-to-day life. In the long narrative poem "The Woman Goddesses and Their Mythologies" the narrator describes how she is allowed to enter the pooja room of the matriarch only to be made aware of an intractable symbolic logic of the Tamil cosmology that excludes her and constructs her differently. Here we are made to feel the matriarch's centrality in Tamil culture. As a daughter-in-law from another minority culture she feels both unwanted and threatened. She has to subscribe to the codes of this new culture to gain entry here. As she says:

Yet I entered, treading uncertain and wavering with
Naked sole, my feet, now unpolluted, washed and bathed
In tumeric, first having shaken off the dust of many
Journeys on roads and streets I trod ... (Arasanayagam 1991: 30)

The dialectic of purity and pollution that is at the root of this narrative of the sacred clearly speaks of the essentializing tendency at work in the Tamil culture. The writer feels the need to resist this hegemonic element because it is the very same factor that is at work in the construction of the majoritarian discourse of the nation state. In her poem "Mother-in-law" she points to the hollowness of all claims to purity:

"Aachi you have Sinhala blood,
You drank milk of a Sinhala woman"
"who told you that? A Sinhala nona
gave me milk. They all were
respectable Sinhala nonas." (Wijesinha, Rajiva 1998:41)

Nona means 'an honourable woman'. She wants to preserve the purity of her 'blood'. But we are all 'polluted' in one way or other. The ironic comment in the above lines points to an inclusive vision of the idea of identity and the need to resist fictions of purity. In a plural society one has to be wary of essentialist claims to insular spaces of identities.

The poetry of Jean Arasanayagam compels us to reconsider the 'modernity' of modern nations. In his study, *The Ethnic Origins of Modern Nations*, mentioned earlier, Anthony D. Smith argues that the core of ethnicity resides in the quartet of "myths, memories, values and symbols and in "the characteristic forms or styles or genres of certain historical configurations of populations" (Smith A.D. 1986: 15). Ethnic communities carry the potential to emerge into nations as shown by the struggles of several such communities during the twentieth century. Citing the example of East European nations, A.D. Smith says that such transformations meant a triple movement: "from isolation to activism, from quietism to mobilization and from culture to politics" (Ibid:154). We have seen above how Sri Lankan situation forced the Tamil community to stake claim for a separate nationhood. The Kashmir context is equally complex. Duringits history, confluence of cultures. The political crisis of Modern Kashmir is, however, traceable to confluence of cultures. The political crisis of modern Kashmir is, however, traceable to the partition of the sub-continent and the emergence of two nation-states namely, Pakistan and India. It is also linked to the strong sense of *kashmiriyat*, the Kashmir identity deeply implicated in the history and culture of Kashmir. This cultural ethos got politicized during the 80s due to the interference of the Indian nation-state in the affairs of the state. The government in Delhi was deeply suspicious of Kashmir people's loyalty which created mutual antagonism (Ajit Bhattacharya 1994; Madhumita Srivastava 2001).

Agha Shahid Ali spent his childhood in Srinagar but moved Delhi and then settled in the United States. He became more acutely aware of his ethnic roots once he became an exile. His poetry is not concerned as much with the routinised violence of Kashmir as its politico-cultural identity which he invokes through myths, metaphors and memories. While Arasanayagam documents the trauma of ethnic violence, Agha Shahid Ali embodies the trauma of Kashmir in the embittered elegiac poetic discourse he went on to perfect with chiseled precision.

Both Arasanayagam and Agha Shahid Ali know that there are larger ethical questions behind ethnic conflicts. Their poetry is an attempt to negotiate the homelessness inherent in their contexts. While Arasanayagam distances the tragedy with ironic examination of the very processes of exclusion in the construction of alidentities, Agha Shahid is more concerned with memories as a source of cultural identity. T.K. Oommen's formulation of 'ethnic' may be applied to both of them. He observes:

In order to get rid of the prevailing confusion, we need to conceptualize ethnicity as an interactional, as against, an attributional notion. We must view ethnicity as a product of conquest, colonization and immigrationand the consequent disengagement between culture and territory. It is the transformation of the "outs" into "ins" that leads to the process of ethnies becoming nations. (Stephen May et al: 131).

In the case of Sri Lankan Tamils and Kashmiris the question of internal colonization is relevant. Both Arasanayagam and Agha Shahid have experienced the disjunction between 'culture and territory' Oommen speaks of. As an exile, Agha Shahid's alienation from land is more acute and this is reflected in his recollections full of anguish.

In his Half-inch Himalayas (1987) Agha Shahid shows how the Ksahmir of his childhood is now untraceable. As a homeless exile, he is condemned to his memories which unspool from the hallucinatory images of violence in the valley: "This is home. And this is the closest/ I will ever come to home. When I return,/ the colours will not be so brilliant/the Jhelum's waters so clean,/ so ultramarine. My love/ so overexposed" (Agha Shahid Ali 1987: 1). The Kashmir of his childhood has shrunken to the size of a postage-stamp. The over-exposed memory turns his memory into 'a giant negative, black and white, still underdeveloped' (Ibid). He turns to the mythical images of the snowman to capture that elusive identity which is a haunting absence. In the poem "Snowmen" he says how his ancestors came from Samarkhand with a bag of whale bones. He still travels with generations of snow men on his back: "They tap every year on my window./ Their voices hushed to ice" (Ibid. p.8) In this surreal vision Agha Shahid recognizes his own otherness and homelessness. To recover his voice he has to speak from within the marginal space of an exile. It is by going back to the cadences of Urdu that he retraces the collective memories of his community. "In memory of Begum Akthar" uses memory as a source and resource to map a layered view of Kashmir:

Ghazal, the death-sustaining widow,
sobs in dingy archives, hooked to you.
she wears her grief, a moon-soaked white,
corners the sky into disbelief.

You've finally polished catastrophe,
The note you seasoned with decades
Of Ghalib, Mir, Faiz:
I innovate on a noteless raga. (Agha Shahid Ali 1987: 28)

It is significant that his memory is mediated by the aesthetic form of ghazal and its classical heritage. In "Homage to Faiz Ahmed Faiz", he again invokes the ghazal as the form that speaks the language of exile:

Your lines were measured
So carefully to become in our veins

The blood of prisoners. In the free verse
Of another language I imprisoned

Each line --- but I touched my own exile. (Ibid. p.32)

In poem after poem, the figure of the stranger appears in various forms: the previous occupant of the apartment, the riverside jogger, the 'someone' who lives in the house. The interiors of the poems become haunted as the poet feels unable to relate to a living community.

The crisis in Kashmir was precipitated by the insensitivity of the nation-state which abdicated its responsibility of ensuring the people's right to dignity and identity. When the nation-state delegitimates the demand for identity, the collective identity takes on an aggressive political role. T.K. Oommen in his article mentioned earlier on new nationalisms and collective rights, observes:

> But in the case of the new multicultural polities of Africa and Asia, there is a shift of emphasis from sequentiality to simultaneity. That is, the nations, ethnicities and minorities in the federal polities of these continents are increasingly insisting on equality and identity simultaneously (Stephen May et al 2004: 131).

For 'ethnies,' region and nation are contiguous. The 'disengagement between culture and territory" (Ibid: 13) Oommen talks about render both Jean Arasanayagam and Agha Shahid Ali as 'public poets' speaking as members of ethnic communities who voice concerns of a larger collectivity. It will not make sense to read their poetry in a strictly personal, individual context. The displacement they have suffered cannot be accounted for in individual terms. Agha Shahid reclaims a fragment of the inward-looking Kashmiri society through his scattered memories which range from those of Begum Aktar to saffron farmers.

The poems in Aha Shahid's *The Country Without a Post-Office* employ the metaphors of mourning to come to terms

with the trauma of displacement and loss in the wake of Kashmir violence. The post-colonial state in India has become highly unitary and in the process, the marginal cultures have become increasingly invisible. Ali documents Kashmir, its geography, myths and rituals from the fragments of his memories. This 'region' he constructs is a site of resistance to the monolithic, unitary nation-state. The nation-state as a centre of power operates through codes that strictly define the boundaries of allegiance politically. Words like 'domicile', 'citizen', 'immigrant' or 'foreigner' are creations of these codes. Our liberal nationalistic discourse failed to recognize the ethnic, linguistic and regional identities as legitimate categories in themselves as it has become highly exclusivist and essentialist.

Ali constitutes his ethnic identity as a site of loss, hurt, injury and denial. It feeds on memories of embittered exiles and apocalyptic epiphanies. The discourse of mourning becomes the dominant way of dealing with life and its experiences. We have seen how poems about the snowman and the gypsy invoke the other. Here we may also recall that one of his early poems, "Eurydice" from *A Nostalgist's Map of America* (1991) which retells the myth of Orpheus from the perspective of Eurydice. It is set in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany where a crippled Eurydice limps past 'howl-choked dogs' to disappear 'in a sudden tunnel of mustard twilight'. There is a suggestion of homelessness in these portraits. In his epigraph to the poem "A footnote to History" he writes: "Gypsies ... coming originally from India to Europe a thousand years ago ..." (Agha Shahid Ali 2000: 43). In his references to Begum Aktar and the classical tradition she stood for, we have another clue to the separate cultural identity of Kashmir. In the concluding lines of the poem, "I Dream I Am the Only Passenger on Flight 493 to Srinagar," we can see a deep sense of hurt that is at the core of the Kashmir crisis:

He holds my hand speechless to tell me if

Those smashed golds flying past those petrified
reds are autumn's last crimsoned spillage

rushing with wings down the mountainside
or flames clinging to a torched village. (Ibid: 20)

Rooms Are Never Finished (2004) uses Hussain's sacrifice at Karbala and its commemoration in Muharram as a central metaphor. Memorializing is the poetic mode which Agha Shahid perfects in his final collections. Memory and mourning become inseparable here. In working martyrdom and memory into the musical structure of English ghazal he explores the possibility of community as an exile who cannot return to his homeland. Karbala becomes Kashmir and Palestine. Mother becomes both Zainab and Kashmir. The pain becomes physical and its overwhelming burden can be captured only in gestures. He uses translation as a verbal gesture of containing and communicating pain. One of the poems here is a translation from Ghalib who says: "Grief crushed me so / again and again it became the pain that pain erases." (Ibid.46). Translation is a mode that his poetry internalizes right from the beginning. We have seen his references to Begum Aktar, Ghalib and Faiz Ahmed Faiz in his earlier poems. It is important to know that his use of ghazal form also involves translation. Rajeev Patke has argued that there is a homology between translation and migration in his poetry. He says:

The unavailability of communion (with God) or connection (with parent, community, friend, home or country) is like the impossibility of full translation. Reversed, it becomes a denial of univocity, and thus a sanction for plurality of speech as dialects, of poetry as translation, of exile as migration, and guilt as restitution. (Patke 2006: 234).

The need to translate and the impossibility to achieve it go together. While translating Faiz Ahmed Faiz he touches 'his own exile' as the free verse of English turns his hand 'to stone'. (Ali 1987: 32). His efforts to transplant ghazal into English has to be seen in this context. The free verse of English was not free enough to embody the larger pain of his private context. Ali says that 'suffering is seldom, perhaps, never, private.' (Ali1987: 32). It is this aspect of suffering which is public and private at the same time that he is able to articulate through his English ghazals.

Agha Shahid moved closer to the metropolitan poetic discourse in the later part of his career. But this is also the time he experiments with the ghazal form in English. Here I would like to emphasize the fact this use of ghazal form creates a dialogic space in his quest for identity as a displaced exile. Traditionally ghazal has spoken about love and desire. In their essay on the English ghazal, Chandrani Chatterjee and Milind Malshe show how the traditional male gaze inherent in the traditional ghazalis redefined in the ghazals of the American poetess, Phyllis Webb. (Ramakrishnan E.V. and Subha Dasgupta 2006: 197). In English ghazals of Agha Shahid Ali, he subverts the form from within by investing the tone with a collective voice. His use of ghazal in the context of the metropolitan tradition of American poetry is both an act of resistance and affirmation. It involves a border-

crossing that questions the assumptions behind such boundaries. He was opting out of the normative strategies adopted by hegemonic discourses and majoritarian languages. The ghazal as he reinvents it in English comes closer to the idea of 'minor' literature as defined by Deleuze and Guattari in their book *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986). Minor literature contests the norms that constitute the normative codes of the literary. It renders the world and the word provisional.

What mattered in ghazal for Agha Shahid was its paradoxical nature as reflected in its restraint and freedom, rigor and release and reticence and eloquence. It could be both personal and political at the same time. It could talk of the divine and the earthly love simultaneously. As he says in a small note on the ghazal form, the second line of each couplet 'delivers on the suspense by amplifying, dramatizing, imploding, exploding." (Agha Shahid Ali 2004: 19). Ghazal gets deterriotarialized as it moves out of its context. In its English version, it embodies the voice of an exile who cannot identify with any of the given identities constructed by hegemonic structures of power. Writing of Kafka's use of Prague German, Deleuze and Guattari comments:

> He will tear out of Prague German all the qualities of underdevelopment that it has tried to hide ... ... He will turn syntax into a cry that will embrace the rigid syntax of this dried up German. He will push it toward a deterritorialization that will no longer be saved by culture or myth, that will be an absolute deterritorialization, even if it is slow, sticky coagulated. To bring language slowly and progressively to the desert. To use syntax in order to cry, to give a syntax to the cry. (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 26).

This corresponds to what Agha Shahid Ali does in his English ghazals. He is able to find the syntax of a cry. His ghazals are 'in-formed' by his lamentations for the loss of his mother, his home, community and Kashmir. Ghazal allows him to find a midway home, an in-between space between the shadowlines created by nation-states and his own present location. It renders the borders porous making it easy for the exile to be in and out, to be at home in his homelessness. He creates a 'minor' language within the majoritarian language of Eglish by eschewing its affiliations and normalative cosmologies. This also enables him to release the bodies that are mapped into objects by the nation-state. We may remember here that English is the associate national language of India. It is the nation-state's privilege to interpellate an individual as citizen, refugee or outsider. The 'minor' language neutralizes this power by transforming itself through the deterritorialized collective voice which is detached from a unified subject or body. Thus, the English ghazal becomes the speech of a person who has lost his speech. In "Arabic" Agha Shahid Ali says: "The only language of loss left in the world is Arabic." (Ibid.24). In another couplet in the same poem he addresses Amichai and says: "I too Amichai saw the dresses of beautiful women./ And everything else, just like you, in Death, Hebrew and Arabic." (Ibid. 25). The poem ends with the lines: "They ask me to tell them what Shahid means---/ Listen: it means "The Beloved" in Persian, "witness" in Arabic." (Ibid 25). This is the paradox of which the ghazal becomes emblematic of: of belonging and not belonging, of defying prescribed affiliations and loyalties. He says this with clarity in the ghazal, "Land": "If home is found on both sides of the globe,/ home is of course here --- and of course a missed land." (Ibid. 50). It is the geography of this missed land that his ghazals map with great verbal precision.

To conclude, both Jean Arasanayagam and Agha Shahid Ali refuse to endorse the terms and conditions set out by the nation-state to secure a sense of belonging. Arasanayagam has lived in Sri Lanka, but as a witness to the tragic divisions that has extracted a heavy human cost, she documents the violence inherent in all discourses of identity. Both remain exiles, acutely aware of the traumatic consequences of essentializing one's sense of identity. They take their ethnicity as a matter of fact and refuse to celebrate it. As they stand witness to the tragic divisions in their societies in their separate ways, their poetry questions and affirms, even as it contests and consoles.

Notes

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THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008 – Part 2

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This article is the second in a series that began in the last issue of *Polity* (March-April 2008). The first article mainly focused on the primaries held up to and including the one in Wyoming on 8 March; with John McCain already the Republican Party (RP) nominee, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were neck-and-neck in the race to win nomination as the Democratic Party (DP) candidate. The remaining primaries, up until 3 June, will be dealt with first, with in addition a brief look at three special elections held to fill vacant seats in the US House of Representatives, and at a significant example of political hardball – the RP role in the resignation of New York State Governor Eliot Spitzer. By early March it was clear that neither Obama nor Clinton would obtain the number of delegates required to win nomination by early June; rather, the choice of DP superdelegates would be crucial. A look at the superdelegate system may clear up a few common questions. With Clinton facing a challenge her campaign did not expect, more details will then be given on the (smear) tactics used in the attempt to stop Obama, and on more general views regarding her campaign. Some of the reactions in the feminist movement are included. Following this is a run-down of the key politico and/or superdelegate endorsements and/or switches that led to Obama's win on 7 June. Finally, a brief look at the McCain campaign will be given.

The Primaries

After Obama's win in the Wyoming primary, the candidates' estimated delegate counts showed (with 2,026 needed for nomination): Obama 1,368; Clinton 1,226. Of the 796 DP superdelegates, about 450 had declared their choice: Obama 210; Clinton 242.[1]

Mississippi (11 March): with blacks constituting half of voters, and many whites voting Republican, a heavy black turnout could mean a DP win in November. Obama (61%), Clinton (37%); Obama won 90% of blacks, Clinton 72% of whites.[2] See below for events in the six primary-free weeks before Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania (22 April): most delegates among remaining states (188) and an expected Clinton win; significant populations (blacks 10.7%,Hispanics 4%, in household of union member 15%); many lower-income, white areas; big urban areas (Philadelphia, Harrisburg); Clinton (55%), Obama (45%). Clinton strong with union, lower income, without college, seniors, white women, Catholics; Obama in cities, independents, youth.[3]

Guam (3 May): Of 4,521 voters, Obama won 7 more than Clinton.

Indiana, North Carolina (6 May): polls showing heavy Clinton win in Indiana and closing fast in North Carolina were wrong. Indiana: 80% of voters white, economy by far the #1 issue; Clinton (50.5%), Obama (49.5%). North Carolina: 1/3 of voters black, many whites for RP; Obama (56%), Clinton (41%).[4]

West Virginia (13 May): 95% non-Hispanic white, lower average income and education levels, no big urban area: Clinton (67%), Obama (26%).[5]

Kentucky, Oregon (20 May): expected results. Kentucky: 7.5% black, 2/3 without college; Clinton (66%), Obama (30%). Oregon: more liberal, + college grads, higher income; Obama (58%), Clinton (41%).[6]

Puerto Rico (1 June): Clinton (68%), Obama (32%).

Montana, South Dakota (3 June): both about 8% Native American. Montana: Obama (56%), Clinton (41%). South Dakota: Clinton (55%), Obama (45%). White vote: Obama won men in Montana, split it in South Dakota; Clinton won women in South Dakota, split in Montana.[7]

Special House Elections

With the DP controlling the House, the special elections in Illinois, Louisiana and Mississippi – to fill formerly RP-held seats – were widely seen as important indicators of RP appeal; all three seats are up for election again in November. On 8

March voters in the Illinois 14th District elected Democrat Bill Foster (52-48%). The district had been held by former House Speaker Dennis Hastert (resigned in November 2007), and Bush won it with 55% in 2004. Big issues were the Iraq war and the economy. Obama endorsed Foster; opponent Jim Oberweis portrayed Foster as an Obama supporter in favour of higher taxes. Foster won in Hastert's own county (61% for Bush in 2004). On 3 May Democrat Don Cazayoux beat Woody Jenkins for a Louisiana seat held by Republicans since 1974 (49-46%). The RP again stressed the Obama connection, with the DP as pro-big government and higher taxes. Finally, on 13 May Mississippi held an election to fill the seat of Roger Wilker (RP, now in Senate, filling seat of Trent Lott who resigned in December 2007). Wilker had won the House seat in 2006 with 66%; conservative DP candidate Travis Childers won 54-46%. The balance in the US House: Democrats 236-199.[9]

The Fall of Eliot Spitzer

In early March New York Governor and former state attorney general Eliot Spitzer was forced to resign when news of his ties to a VIP prostitution ring came to light. Apparently Spitzer had paid for such services by wire transfer, with the federal government then investigating. It was soon discovered that in 2006 Wayne Berman (a lobbyist and McCain campaign national finance co-chair) had authorized a $2.2 million investigation, paid for by a group that included targets of Spitzer when he was attorney general. Republican operative Roger Stone passed the information on to the FBI. Stone and Berman are former partners in the consulting firm Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly, among whose clients were Ferdinand Marcos, Jonas Savimbi, US Sugar, Phillip Morris and Donald Trump.[10]

Why Superdelegates?

As mentioned in the previous article, the DP superdelegates, who are free to vote for any candidate, are elected officials at national and state levels, members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and certain party high-ups such as former presidents, etc. The reader should turn to thegreenpapers.com for detailed information on many aspects of state and national electoral systems.[11] It may be hard to believe, but forty years ago most states did not hold party primaries, and convention delegates were chosen by state influentials within each party. The 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago is famous for the accompanying street demonstrations and police confrontations, especially around the issue of the Vietnam War. Inside the convention hall, it was clear that many state delegations did not reflect public opinion, nor racial breakdowns – especially blacks in the South. The DP passed rules to work for a more participatory system, leading to the McGovern-Fraser reforms in 1972. These reforms introduced proportional representation and more primaries; by 1976, 30 states held primaries. In 1980 the DP added as delegates local party leaders and elected officials, if they would commit to a candidate during the primary season. That year, the process worked to renominate Jimmy Carter, even though the party platform reflected the much more liberal views of the Ted Kennedy faction. For 1984, the DP added governors, senators, congressmen, DNC members and party leaders, as free agents, making up about 20% of delegates. At that year's convention, the superdelegates turned the nomination to Walter Mondale, over Gary Hart, even though Hart had won more primaries. In the next election years, one candidate had enough of a lead to win without superdelegates (1988 Dukakis, 1992/96 Clinton, 2000 Gore, 2004 Kerry). As noted by one commentator, the superdelegate issue is complex, with individuals operating for a variety of reasons: what is good for the delegate, or for the state, for a congressional district, for the DP, for a November win, etc.[11] One thing for sure, in 2008 the superdelegates were in a tough position in the choice between Clinton and Obama, and their connections and actions were monitored as never before: anonymity disappeared, and, in the face of Obama's many wins, a vote for party favourite Clinton could have drastic consequences (see below). It would be necessary for Clinton to somehow show decisively why she deserved the nomination, and try she did.

The Fight Against Obama

In an article worth reading, Ari Berman gives some background on the campaigns to smear Barack Obama.[12] Obama's images as being a Muslim, Arab loving, Israel hating, radical, not patriotic, and a tool of Louis Farrakhan developed over a period of time, sometimes originating on the far right and then being picked up by more mainstream media and the Clinton campaign. The Muslim label, for example, was started in 2006 by a conservative blogger, and was picked up by the *Washington Times* and the Christian right. The anti-Israel image was promoted by Ed Lasky at americanthinker.com, was picked up by the Jewish press, and then circulated by Clinton campaign members, and then made it to National Public Radio and *The New York Times*. The characterization of the church

Obama attended as 'black supremacist' made its way from the right-wing WorldNetDaily to Fox TV. Bill Clinton added his word regarding Obama's patriotism, commenting in March that a Clinton/McCain contest would be between two people who loved their country.[13] The Clinton campaign's distribution of far-right materials says more about her than anyone else; and, indeed, of interest during this campaign has been the support for Clinton by such people as Patrick Buchanan (of the *National Review* and *Boston Herald*) and Richard Mellon Scaife (Pittsburgh *Tribune-Review*, who also gives to the (Bill) Clinton Global Initiative).[14]

As Obama added up primary wins in early 2008, attackers then tried to tarnish him twice via guilt by association, and once via a charge of being uppity. In March all the news was of the pastor at Obama's Chicago church, Jeremiah Wright. Wright was on tape as criticizing the US for treatment of its minorities, and for saying after 9.11 that the 'chickens had come home to roost.' Wright, in the Congregational Church tradition, and in the tradition of black liberation theology, was forced to resign as an advisor to the Obama campaign. A few days later Obama delivered a long speech in Philadelphia on race.[15] Obama was also tied to the illegal '60s group, the Weather Underground. Former group members Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dorn, now Chicago activists, for a time served on the board of the Woods Fund in Chicago, as did Obama.[16] Finally, in April Obama made a comment that the working class in the US was bitter because of economic circumstances, and thus clung to guns and religion, and could be anti-immigrant. Clinton jumped on the comment to label Obama as elitist and divisive,[17] unfortunately a characterization that was also true of herself. All these issues were the main topic of the televised Clinton/Obama debate six days before the Pennsylvania primary, for which network ABC was much criticized.[18]

As seen in the previous article, early in the year the Clinton campaign also played the race card continually. Another example of this occurred in mid-March, when Geraldine Ferraro (former House member from New York, 1984 vice-presidential candidate, and on Clinton's finance committee) stated that if Obama were white or a woman, he would not be in his dominant position. Ferraro was forced to resign, and Clinton repudiated her remarks and apologized to blacks. Ferraro then said she had been attacked because she was white, that she was a victim. In a good article by Gary Younge, it is noted that the label of Obama as privileged belies his primary wins in white states. Younge calls Ferraro's remarks racist, in the same vein as attacks on affirmative action – the insinuation that blacks succeed only because they are black. He finally notes that Ferraro said the same thing about Jesse Jackson during his campaign run in 1988, just before the New York primary: 'if Jackson was not black he wouldn't be in the race.'[19] In another article, Phil Gasper notes some of the history of use of words and issues that connote racist attacks: law and order (by Nixon); campaigns against Martin Luther King day and for the display of the confederate flag; criticism of welfare programmes and forced bussing; Bill Clinton's criticism of Sister Souljah in 1992 (vs. Jesse Jackson), and in 1996 against welfare programmes. Finally, Gasper describes the double standards facing blacks: activism by whites is positive, but negative if by blacks; whites are assertive, but blacks aggressive; they are resolute while blacks are arrogant, uppity or pushy; candid while blacks are abrasive; and independent while blacks are not team players.[20]

As the Clinton campaign lost its edge over Obama, it increasingly turned to a claim that Clinton had a better chance to beat McCain – the electability issue – until that was really the only issue left to it.[21] Obama being part black was an aspect of this, with his also being too liberal and weak on national security. Obama supposedly had a problem with the working class (the 'Reagan Democrats'), who, it was claimed, would vote for McCain against Obama. As noted by Jonathan Allen, while this may be true regarding some voters, the claim is actually a smear on low income people, and there are many districts that will turn Democratic if the black turnout is high.[22] Bob Herbert wrote that when Clinton said she was favoured by 'hard-working' Americans, she meant white Americans – an insult to both blacks and whites.[23] It was also claimed that Obama would have a problem with Jewish voters. As noted by Ari Berman, however, the supposed black/Jewish 'divide' is the 'wrong' story: Jews are liberal (2-1), although many of their big organizations are not; polls show some 60% as being against McCain; they are 4-1 Democrat; 2/3 think it was wrong to invade Iraq; about 60% oppose action against Iran; and a majority are for a Palestinian state.[24]

In the end, Clinton as candidate may have been mirrored in the type of campaign she ran. Coming in as the DP favourite, her campaign was over-confident; as Bob Benenson puts it, it aimed to "shock-and-awe" by winning early and taking big-delegate states; the race was hers to lose, and she did.[25] Her campaign machine was marked by infighting and resignations – in April of campaign strategist Mark Penn (after meeting with Colombian government officials in connection with his PR firm's work in support of their seeking a free trade agreement with the US); and of an advisor on China affairs, Richard Baum of UCLA, who criticized

Clinton's harsh rhetoric regarding human rights in China and its strong currency, and for punitive trade sanctions.[26] In addition, the campaign gained a reputation for putting off paying its bills.[27] Finally, Clinton's campaign has been contrasted to Obama's, which one commentator has said mastered the nomination process using careful planning and great research of congressional districts.[28] And, Obama won the nomination without Clinton's negatives being rehashed much at all: her possible perjury in an Arkansas savings and loan case (Whitewater); her history of lying, for example regarding her trip to Bosnia; and her affiliation with a conservative and elitist Washington religious fellowship.[29]

In mid-May, as the primary season neared its end, Clinton first raised the issue of the sexism she'd encountered during the campaign. Some women supporters denounced chauvinistic DP leaders and the media. A study of media treatment will surely show appalling references to Clinton. It is a stretch, however, to claim, as does Geraldine Ferraro, that Obama waged a sexist campaign; and a huge fallacy to claim, as is being done, that sexism is worse than racism; Ferraro has even stated that she may vote for McCain. An opposing voice is that of Harvard law professor, Lani Guinier, who thinks Clinton was never just a victim of gender, and, indeed, has benefited by being the wife of Bill Clinton. Another dissenter is Barbara Ehrenreich, who wrote that Clinton has "smashed the myth of innate female moral superiority in the worst way possible – by demonstrating female moral inferiority."[30] In the end, the sense of entitlement – to the presidency itself – demonstrated by Clinton and some 'inside-the-beltway' (Washington) leaders of women's organizations has been on full display, raising doubts about actual objectives.

Superdelegate Politics

The scramble of the superdelegates has been something to see, illustrating some of the power blocks in the DP. The concerns were real: how would blacks and youth react if the contest was tilted to Clinton – would fewer vote in November? Would the long contest within the DP, even possibly continuing until the convention in August, work to the advantage of McCain? The consequences could cut both ways; if Clinton destroyed the image of Obama, McCain could benefit; on the other hand, Obama now has on-the-ground organizations in every state, ready for the battle with McCain. In March the possibility of an Obama/Clinton ticket was raised, by former three-term New York State Governor Mario Cuomo, and, ironically, by Bill Clinton, too (Obama as the vice-presidential nominee): one could only wonder what qualified Obama to be vice-president but not president. At any rate, Obama has gotten the nod, and here's how it happened, in rough chronological order.

March: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (the DP convention chair) said the party would be damaged if the popular vote for Obama was overturned. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson (former candidate) said that Clinton should drop out if she trailed in the popular and delegate vote. Pennsylvania Rep. Murtha endorsed Clinton. Senator Casey (Pennsylvania) endorsed Obama; Senator Leahy (Vermont) said Clinton should withdraw. Senator Klobuchar (Minnesota) endorsed Obama, but said Clinton should continue. At the end of the month such party leaders as Leahy, Dean (DNC chair), and Senate Majority Leader Reid (Nevada) were discussing how to resolve the race early. Twenty DP financiers who supported Clinton criticized Pelosi, saying that superdelegates could change their minds at the convention. Moveon.org started a petition calling on the superdelegates to follow the popular vote. The open-source superdelegate Transparency Project tracked each delegate on line.

April: Jimmy Carter said that his whole family supports Obama. Jane Fonda for Obama. The governor of Montana and a former Montana senator for Obama. Gore and Carter said to be conferring on how to end the Clinton run. Obama gained a Montana state legislator. At a concert in New York, Elton John endorsed Clinton. A California representative for Clinton. Bruce Springstein endorsed Obama. An Indiana rep and two North Carolina reps for Obama. A DC councilman for Obama. Robert Reich (secretary of labor under Bill Clinton) for Obama. Former Senators Sam Nunn (Georgia, chair of Armed Services Committee 1987-95) and David Boren (Oklahoma, longest chair of Select Committee on Intelligence) for Obama. That brought the battle up to the Pennsylvania primary on 22 April. After this: Rep. Clyburn (South Carolina, #3 Democrat in House) criticized Bill Clinton. Oklahoma Governor Henry and a Nebraska DNC member for Obama. Rep. Wu (Oregon) for Obama. Two Ohio reps and one from Tennessee for Clinton. North Carolina Governor Easley for Clinton. New Mexico Senator Bingaman for Obama. An Arizona DP official for Obama, and one from New Hampshire for Clinton. Rep. Brady (Pennsylvania) for Obama. Three reps (Indiana, Iowa, California) for Obama. Clinton gained Pennsylvania AFL-CIO official, and DP vice-chair of Puerto Rico.

May: Former DNC chair and Al Gore ally Andrew switched to Obama. Missouri Rep. Skelton for Clinton. After the Indiana and North Carolina primaries, George McGovern endorsed Obama and called on Clinton to withdraw. Rep.s Miller (North Carolina) and Larsen (Washington) for Obama. Obama to Capitol Hill; of the 260+ undecided superdelegates, + were in Congress. Obama gained nine, including: Rep.s Payne (New Jersey), DeFazio (Oregon), Hirono (Hawaii), two California DNC members, a South Carolina DP official, and one each from New Mexico and Virginia. Clinton gained Rep. Carney (Pennsylvania). American Federation of Government Employees for Obama. John Edwards said he voted for Obama in North Carolina. Obama gained one each from Utah and Ohio, two from the Virgin Islands, and Rep. Mitchell (Arizona). Obama passed Clinton in superdelegate tally. Former DNC chair Romer for Obama. Six Edwards' delegates for Obama. Rep.s McDermott (Washington), Waxman and Berman (California), and Communications Workers of America president for Obama. United Steelworkers Union switched from Edwards to Obama. In a *Washington Post* op-ed, former DNC chair Robert Strauss endorsed Obama and called on Clinton to concede.[31] Senator Byrd (West Virginia, longest-serving senator) for Obama. After the Kentucky and Oregon primaries, tally at: Obama 1,961; Clinton 1,779. Rep. Cardoza (California) for Obama. Hawaii DP chair and former Alaska governor Knowles for Obama. Clinton referenced the 1968 assassination of Robert Kennedy with regard to her decision to stay in the race; amid an uproar she apologized. Clinton wrote letter to all superdelegates, pointing to West Virginia and Kentucky wins, and saying she is the best prepared and ahead in states key to a November win.[32] Obama gained Rep. Mollohan (West Virginia) and Texas DP chair Richie. On 31 May the DP Rules and Bylaws Committee agreed to seat + of Michigan and Florida delegates (states earlier disqualified for breaking DP rules); total delegates required increased to 2,118; Obama 2,052, Clinton 1,877.5. Clinton advisor and Rules Committee member Harold Ickes said Clinton can take issue to Credentials Committee at the DP convention.[33]

June: The press publicized support for Obama by John F. Kennedy speech writer Ted Sorenson. After the 3 June primaries, Obama reached required total; Clinton refused to concede. Jimmy Carter endorsed Obama. Rep. Clyburn (most senior black in House) for Obama. Sixty superdelegates to Obama; Clinton lost three. Tally: Obama 2,156.5; Clinton 1,933. Nancy Pelosi said Obama has won. Clinton supporter Rep. Rangle (New York) signaled Clinton to withdraw; the next day the whole New York House delegation for Obama. DP leaders set a 6 June deadline for undecideds. Rep. Emanuel (Illinois) switched to Obama. Eight senators switched to Obama in a group: Boxer (California), Cardin (Maryland), Harkin (Iowa), one each from Delaware, Louisiana, New Jersey, Colorado and Oregon. On 7 June Clinton conceded.[34] Three hundred of her superdelegates endorsed Obama. On 16 June Al Gore appeared with Obama.

McCain on the Trail

Having clinched the RP nomination early, McCain had a potential head start in the next stage of the presidential campaign – to consolidate support among RP factions, get the RP machine fully running (including funding), and set in place the critique of Obama. In March he tried to demonstrate his international credentials with a trip to Iraq, Israel, France and the UK. He was endorsed by Nancy Reagan and gave an initial view of his economic plan.

As the months passed criticism of his campaign grew. It has been described as 'unorthodox,' with a decentralized command structure of ten regional managers who control scheduling and use of media. In an attempt to lessen expenditures, McCain relies heavily on personnel from the Republican National Committee, and makes great use of free media via town meetings. There have been critiques that McCain has been slow to organize on the ground level, that his campaign is in disorder, that he wasted his early time advantage, and that his personnel too heavily come from the lobbying sector. Two aides had to quit when it came to light that their PR firm (the DCI Group) had represented Myanmar.[35]

McCain, like Hillary Clinton, has sought to shape his image via a contrast with Obama. McCain argues that he is the one for change – meaning practicing bipartisanship, while Obama is a DP operative and a cog in the Chicago DP machine; that he is a maverick vis-à-vis the RP of George Bush; that Obama is too inexperienced to be the commander-in-chief – Obama is young, weak on national security and a conventional liberal. Another theme is that Obama is 'un-American' with regard to his religious views, patriotism and even 'citizenship' (i.e., relatives from other countries). On top of these, Obama is said to be supported by Hamas, Fidel Castro and Amedinajad.[36]

So far, many of the McCain 'negatives' have been kept out of sight, by Obama and the mainstream media, but a word on some of what is out there is worthwhile. McCain has done a lot over the years to try to portray himself as uninfluenced by lobbyists. This was especially necessary after he was one

of five senators in the 1980s to be reprimanded by the Senate Ethics Committee for taking contributions from Charles Keating, a savings and loan bank executive who sought favours from regulators when that industry went bust.[37] More recently, McCain accepted money from the CEO of Paxson Communications, and wrote letters of support to that industry's regulator, the Federal Communications Commission.[38] McCain, as Obama and Clinton, has his own 'pastor problem.' Rev. Rod Parsley, whom McCain has called a "spiritual guide," runs a megachurch in Ohio and is heavily involved in politics; he has said that the US has a mission to destroy Islam, and he is vitriolic against Muslims in the US.[39] In May McCain had to reject the endorsement of Rev. John Hagee of Texas. The anti-Muslim Hagee has said that Hitler was doing God's work with regard to the holocaust (as the Jews then had to set up Israel); that the Catholic Church is a whore; and that the US should wage nuclear war against Iran.[40] Other issues include McCain's shoddy treatment of his first wife, and his reputation for losing his temper in a big way.[41]

McCain's biggest problem, however, reflects the larger problems of the RP and his relationship with it. With George Bush so out of favour, to the extent that he cannot campaign with RP candidates, and his economic and foreign policies under such attack, McCain's maverick status is quickly waning. McCain holds similar views on Iraq, the economy, subprime mortgage scandal, and qualifications for Supreme Court nominees. He has backed off of earlier maverick positions on the Bush tax cuts and immigration. With a coterie of neo-con advisors, McCain advocates the formation of new international institutions, to bypass the UN: he is for a new League of Democracies and an expanded NATO; the 'rollback' of 'rogue' states by covert means; and is very anti-Russia. His economic view of 'let the market handle it' is epitomized by the appointment of former Texas Senator Phil Gramm as campaign co-chair; Gramm and McCain were instrumental in the passage of legislation in 1999 to 'deregulate' the banking industry, i.e., overturn the New Deal-era separation of banks and brokerage firms – witnessed today by bank exposure to the subprime and general credit crisis.[42] An additional problem for the RP comes with the shift among younger evangelicals/Christian right from a focus on social issues to economic ones.[43] In an article in *The Nation*, Eyal Press has described the RP dilemma: after eight years of RP 'pro-family' and 'anti-government' (except in some sectors) policies, the results are apparent: Iraq, housing crisis, crony capitalism, fiscal recklessness, incompetence (Hurricane Katrina), all-time high inequality. RP practice has shown the need for government involvement in dealing with some problems. The rhetoric of stability and traditional values is in contradiction with the results of unfettered capitalism the RP is out of touch with its own base.[44]

All in all, the next four months should prove very interesting. Up next are the party conventions: DP 25-28 August, RP 1-4 September. Those will show the party platforms, and the vice-presidential nominees. Then the heavy campaigning begins. It would seem that this year it is the Democrats' race to lose – and the party is not incapable of repeating the Clinton performance. As Obama seems to be calmly proceeding to the 'centre' (or right, depending on definition), McCain seems to be walking a tightrope. One thing is clear, an Obama win in November will keep space open for progressives and the Left; if McCain wins, things could get even more scary. In this regard, the next article will look at the Obama and McCain advisors. It will also start to look at the situation regarding congressional and state races – given the current US recession, and trends in housing, credit, and oil and other commodity prices, the outcomes there will be crucial.

Notes

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Judy Waters Pasqualge is the author of International McCarthyism: The Case of Rhoda Miller de Silva

This is the text of the presentation made by Senake Bandaranayake at the launch of his book, ***Rock and Wall Paintings of Sri Lanka***

ROCK AND WALL PAINTINGS

Senake Bandaranayake

A book like this is always a collective effort and I have duly acknowledged all the inputs to the original publication, as well as to the new 'Afterword'. But this is an occasion to remember once again the team that helped to put the book together in the 1980s. Thanks are due to Victor Walatara, my former teacher, who was the originator of the project and the moving spirit behind the book, determined to make it a quality production; Gamini Jayasinghe, whose photographs formed the basis that made such a book possible; Prof. Albert Dharmasiri, who spent nearly three months or more with me over long evenings, designing each and every page, ably assisted by Mr. Gamini Jayantha Mendis; Manel Fonseka, whose research and editorial contribution was of such an order that I offered her co-authorship, duly refused; Mrs Nalini Wickremasinghe and Mr E. F. C. Abeysekara, from the publisher's Board of Directors, who were amongst the initiators of the idea and who were patient advocates of the tolerance of the author's failure to meet deadlines; and the Lever Cultural ConservationTrust, who commissioned Gamini Jayasinghe's photo-documentation of the murals.(Of course there were many others, a long list, who are duly acknowledged in the book.)

The Beginnings of Art Historical Studies in Sri Lanka

This is also an opportunity to recall those pioneers who began art historical studies of Sri Lankan painting. In 1895 H C P Bell wrote what is probably the first piece of modern art historical writing on Sri Lankan painting – his detailed description of the Sigiriya apsaras. About twelve years later Ananda Coomaraswamy published his chapter on painting in *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, bringing into focus the Late Period murals.

These and other writings of Bell and Coomaraswamy are almost the only work on the subject we have from the first half of the 20th century. There a few other things: an article by the famous Austrian art historian, Stella Kramrisch, on the Kelaniya murals in 1925; Senarat Paranavitana's note on the Dimbulagala 'frescoes' in 1933; a few colour plates and observations by Benjamin Rowland in his 1938 album *The Wall Paintings of India, Central Asia and Ceylon*; photographs by Lionel Wendt; a short article or two in the *Observer* and *Times of Ceylon* annuals, initiated by Wendt – for half a century, very little else!

1950's and 60s

The 1950s and 60s mark the real beginnings of more focussed art historical research and writing – dominated – illuminated I should say – by three persons: Senarat Paranavitana, L T P Manjusri and Siri Gunasinghe. Paranavitana wrote his first article on the Sigiriya paintings in 1947 – the beginnings of a new interpretation of Sigiriya itself. In the same year Nandadeva Wijesekera completed his Ph.D on *Early Sinhalese Painting* at the Calcutta University (ultimately published in 1959). In 1950 Paranavitana published *Sigiri-Ahovak of a Coal King* based on his interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the paintings. Paranavitana and Wijesekara confined themselves to early painting.

1957 saw D B Dhanapala's small popular guide *The Story of Sinhalese Painting* and also the big UNESCO album edited by Paranavitana and Archer, *Ceylon, Paintings from Temple Shrine and Rock*. The second edition of Coomaraswamy's *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* was published in 1956 making a rare book readily available, while a Sinhala translation appeared in 1962.

Manjusri, who has started his studies and copies of the murals in the 1930s and 40s, wrote a series of articles on the Late Period paintings in the *Irida Lankadipa* and the *Silumina* through the 1950s. In 1956 Siri Gunasinghe wrote a key article on 'Kandyan painting' in Ralph Pieris's *Aspects of Sinhalese Culture*, followed in the 1960s by a series of articles in the *Kala Sangarava*. Siri Gunasinghe's work in the 1960s culminated in the publication (many years later) of his important article in *Spolia Zeylonica* in 1978, 'Buddhist Paintings – an art of enduring simplicity,' and the museum publication of his *An Album of Paintings* in 1980.

Two foreign scholars also contributed their views: W G Archer (from the Victoria and Albert Museum) who with Paranavitana edited the big UNESCO album, and Philip Rawson (from the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford), who made penetrating observations on the Sigiriya paintings in his book *Indian Painting* in 1961. In 1962 Raja de Silva completed his doctoral dissertation at Oxford: *The Evolution of the Technique of Sinhalese Wall Painting; a Study Employing Museum Laboratory Techniques*.

A list of publications in the 1950s dramatically illustrates the extraordinary surge of activity in research and publications on paintings during that decade:

1950 - Paranavitana: Sigiri-Abode of a God-king
1950s - Manjusri articles in *Irida Lankadipa* and *Silumina*
1956 - Second edition of Coomaraswamy's *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*
1956 - Siri Gunasnghe: 'Kandyan Art'
1957 - D.B. Dhanapala: *The Story of Sinhalese Painting*
1957 - UNESCO volume edited by Paranavitana and Archer
1959 - Nandadeva Wijesekera: *Early Sinhalese Painting*

The Third Period

After a break of about ten years the third period in the study of the paintings began, I like to think, in 1975 with a new and ambitious documentation and research effort under the aegis of the Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka. This period saw an expansion and systematisation of the work that had gone before. 1975 also marked the beginnings my own structured study of the paintings. In that year we formed a study group of the Archaeological Society, 'invented' the wall plan recording technique, formulated a survey data sheet, and began to study narrative sequence, which we called *siddhi bedim,* and patronage. There are many people in this room and three of the four speakers on this occasion, who were part of that project. We met in the Faculty Club of Colombo University, and intensely studied temples such as Kelaniya and Kataluva.

A special project was the survey of Karagampitiya temple murals with architectural students from Katubadde – many of whom are now senior architects – but in the end the Archaeological Society project fizzled out, produced no direct results. But it played a key role in putting the Late Period murals once more on the agenda of art historical research.

One indirect result of the Archaeological Society's work was the trilingual publication of Manjusri's *Design Elements from Sri Lankan Temple Paintings* (edited by a committee from the Archaeological Society); another was the Lever Cultural Conservation Trust's photo-documentation project with Gamini Jayasinghe, which ultimately formed much of the illustrational material for *Rock and Wall Paintings*. This Lever Trust program also anticipated Roland Silva's grand Central Cultural Fund project of large format photo-albums of 30 selected temples and sites, published in the 1990s – authored by Nandana Chutiwongs, P. L. Prematilleke and Roland Silva.

The last three decades – the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s have seen a great deal of studying, documentation, writing and publishing on the paintings of all periods – much of which has been listed in the additional bibliography in the 'Afterword' of this new reprint.

The Fourth Phase ?

The questions that arise are: when does the fourth phase in the study of the paintings begin? Has it already begun?

I can think of four issues that the new generation research should address:

1. Regional and atelier variations in style and the *sittara parampara*, the artists' lines of pupillary succession;
2. The sociology and semiotics, the social and symbolic significance underlying the paintings, and the nature of patronage;
3. The narrative sequences – how they operate and their sources and structure;
4. The relationship between our late period murals and those of South and, especially, Southeast Asia.

I hope that on-going and future research will address questions such as these. But one must also say that while research is essential, the documentation and conservation of the greatly endangered cultural treasure of the 'one thousand' painted temples must not be forgotten. Research and publication must serve as one of the major motivators of that historic national task. ■

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BOOK REVIEWS

WORKING WOMEN IN SRI LANKA

Kanchana N. Ruwanpura

Sandya Hewamanne, 2007. ***Stitching Identities in a Free Trade Zone: Gender and Politics in Sri Lanka*** Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 274 pp + index £39.00 ISBN: 978-0-8122-4045-0

Caitrin Lynch. 2007. ***Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry***. Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2007). 288 pp $55.00/£29.50 (Hardcover) ISBN: 978-0-8014-4556-9; xxi – 281 pp $19.95/£9.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 978-0-8014-7362-3

Sri Lanka was a forerunner in implementing neo-liberal economic policies in 1977, which led to the setting up a FTZ as early as 1978. Subsequently a country-wide garment industry programme was set-up to extend the "developmental benefits" of the global garment industry into rural communities of Sri Lanka. Yet the ways in which the global garment industry production facilities were adopted and promoted was not merely a response to economic imperatives. There were also political and cultural processes at play, with are brought to our attention through the insightful books by Sandya Hewamanne and Caitrin Lynch. These authors show how the activities of the global garment industry have to be scrutinized for the ways in which they shape and influence the social, gender and cultural politics.

The neo-liberal and open market policies adopted by the Sri Lankan government from 1977 onwards also inadvertently ushered in an era of political turmoil, youth insurrection, violence and an ethnic war. Lynch points out how the political response to this state of affairs was to focus on how modernity could be reconciled with cultural integrity, i.e. "modernity with the cultural turn." Since women are frequently deployed as symbols of the nation. Lynch shows how the Garment Factory Programme (GFP) was promoted as means through which the moral and physical discipline of capitalism could be transmitted to the villages while protecting the good name of working women. This, as the author shows, was crucial for local subjects to make sense of global processes. Hewamanne shows similar processes at play. She underlines how the quest for Sri Lanka's development and modernity is expressed through moral and cultural tropes of Sinhala-Buddhism even within the FTZs. Many of her respondents, which involved factory managers, parents, factory nurses, government officials, NGO activists, and women workers, hoped for a "development and modernity with moral reins in tact" (Hewamanne 2007, p. 13). Because both authors zone in upon these cultural discourses, they show how they 1) affect the shaping of women's sense of self, and 2) shape the spaces within which their quest for autonomous agency and negotiation of alternative identities in their everyday lives are sometimes circumscribed by these discourses.

Hewamanne and Lynch hone in on multi-scalar sites for their fieldwork, which was carried out for extensive periods of time where both authors were fortunate to access established garment factories during their fieldwork period. For Hewamanne, the shop floor, boarding houses, formal parties, informal social outings, and village homes are the spaces for critical interventions. Lynch similarly zones in on the ways in which production is localized by engaging with the national politics of the GFP, paternalist politics of the workplace and most crucially an understanding the panoptic qualities of village communities as sites of surveillance and control. Consequently, both books are ethnographically rich with many illuminative illustrations showing how women workers creatively twist and subvert their (sometimes) exploitative, sexually fraught and socially stigmatized jobs and living environments.

Through the numerous examples used by these feminist authors, we are shown how women are frequently deployed as symbols of the nation. Lynch shows how the GFP was promoted as means through which the moral and physical discipline of capitalism could be transmitted to the villages while protecting the "good name" of working women. Even as FTZ workers are stigmatized as "loose women", Hewamanne show how they too ironically express loyalty to dominant cultural discourses. Therefore, even though she records the many acts and moments of disruption to middle-class notions of "respectability" and underline how they gain

an oppositional consciousness, they are largely rendered meaningless when in their village spaces. Hence pointing to moments of "ambivalent empowerment" in their working and everyday lives.

The larger point which both authors point to through their research is that by depicting (largely Sinhala-Buddhist culture) as authentically located and morally pure, the class and gender divisions which exist within the country tend to be obscured. The social dynamics which emerge from discourses of purity and authenticity mattered within the factory floor because gendered concerns regarding respectable working girls and norms of femininity get invoked to discipline and instil managerial paternalism, which in turn deploy gendered social hierarchies. Both these thoughtful contributions hence uncover how the stigma of factory women workers needs to be understood for its complexities. By using the prism of cross-cutting social, cultural, economic, and political contexts, both authors shows how the attempt "to make economic globalization consistent with Sri Lankan cultural practices" (Lynch 2007, p. 241-242) ended-up being a crucial attribute of Sri Lanka's economic modernization process. Yet the working and daily lives of factory working women also highlight how their identities evolve and are discursively constructed into creative subject positions where ambivalences over nation, modernity and globalization get played. As such we are made to understand the complex and uneven ways in which factory working women's experiences are neither "nimble fingers" nor "powered to choose" – i.e. they are neither passive victims nor necessarily empowered in sustained ways (Elson and Pearson 1981, Kabeer 2000, respectively). Their studies, therefore, raise important and interesting questions about how we understand the geographies of labour and control.

My only quibble with these thorough and engaging texts was the omission of a historical analysis of Sri Lanka's labour movement and how this is likely to have borne upon the very issues which that both authors underscores. Jayawardena's (1972) analysis shows how the country's labour history was enmeshed in the (cultural) politics of gender, (ethno-) nation and modernity, which is likely to have a bearing many decades later upon the construction of factory working women's subjectivities, too. Historically situated analysis would of course have implications for general social science debates. Paying more attention to the historico-geographical context may have nuanced these already thorough and illuminating studies even further.

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* This review is an amended and shorter version of individual book reviews done for *Progress in Human Geography* and *Political Geography* respectively.

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Dr. Ruwanpura's article in *Polity* Vol. 4, No. 4 "Shifting Theories: Partial Perspectives on the Household" is a shorter amended version of a paper which appeared in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 2007, 31(4), pages 525-538.

ECONOMY, CULTURE, AND CIVIL WAR

Laksiri Jayasuriya

Deborah Winslow and Michael Woost (eds) (2004) *Economy, Culture, and Civil War in Sri Lanka*, Bloomingham: Indiana University Press, ISBN 0-253-21691-5

This volume, though originating from a Workshop held in 2000 at the University New Hampshire, USA, is more than the normal run of a collection of essays. It is located within the growing body of scholarly writings devoted to an understanding of the ongoing ethnic conflict, especially the political violence, over the last two decades in Sri Lanka. The structure of the volume consists of an introductory essay by the Editors, which is followed by several essays arranged in three Parts to demonstrate the articulation of national economy, class, and ethnicity in ethnic conflict and political violence.

The contributors, drawn mainly from related but distinct strands of discourse in sociology and anthropology, focus on different facets of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka bearing on the dominant theme of the volume, viz., the complex linkages between the economy and the ethnic conflict. Part One ('Articulation of National Economic Policy and Ethnic Conflict') focuses on the national economy—its policies, practices, and outcomes in the period 1977-2000 – and serves as an informed preamble to Part Two ('Articulation of Class, Ethnicity, and Violence') which draws pointed attention to the critical role of economic forces in unraveling the manifestations of the ethic conflicts between the Tamil and Sinhalese in the 1980s. The essays in Part Three ('Articulations of Civil War in Everyday Life') seek to translate national economic policies into the lived reality of the 'local' by documenting how political violence impacts on the social life of different groups, and importantly, how these persons, often the innocent victims 'of abstract policies and practices view the changing world'. The volume concludes with a post script by the editors on the 'peace process' which emerged in 2000-2003 and still continues.

What makes this study noteworthy is that it is specifically focused on examining the 'economic terrain of Sri Lanka life' (p.8) which has been severely affected by the 'war' and in particular, the 'war economy', tied up with the politics of ethnicity as well as the politics of profit. The editors of this volume – two leading anthropologists, one from economic anthropology and the other from development studies – set the tone of the volume and demarcate the scholarly boundaries within which the several essays are located with an introductory essay entitled 'Articulation of Economy and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka'.

The theoretical framework presented in the Introduction revolves round the key notion of 'articulation', and is influenced by the work of the marxist social theorist, Stuart Hall. According to this formulation, the construction of social order at any given point of time is contingent on the arrangement of complex social linkages and articulations. The notion of articulation serves as 'a valuable starting point of social analysis of political violence and is seen as an evolving process devoid of 'fixed identities'. Hence, the need they argue 'to think of articulation as multiple layered, engaging, transforming and never final'. This is particularly so in the Sri Lankan context which is a society divided by location, gender, class and ethnicity. It is therefore a work very much in the tradition of British radical critical social theory not only of Stuart Hall but also of Raymond Williams, E.P. Thomson and others. Clearly the editors see this tradition as providing an alternative to some recent theories of post colonialism though a more direct engagement with these competing traditions would have been useful.

The introductory essay stands on its own and presents a theoretical point of view utilizing many different strands of contemporary social theory, and is clearly intended to structure and underpin the crux of the argument developed through the several articles in this volume. As the editors express it individually and collectively, these essays hopefully mirror the theoretical framework provided in the introductory essay. In any event, the expectation of the editors is that this will help to provide a new 'understanding of how Sri Lanka's tragic civil war has become embedded in the social formation of wartime Sri Lanka' (p. 23). This theme is developed mainly through the theoretical exposition provided by one of the key essays (Chapter 4) of this volume. This is from the leading marxist Sri Lankan social theorist—the late Newton Gunasinghe, who in a pathfinding essay entitled, 'The Open Economy and its Impact on Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka', went against the orthodoxy of Sri Lankan anthropological discourse, one steeped in historical and/or essentialist modes

of cultural anthropological theorizing. This lead essay of Newton Gunasinghe, hitherto available only in Sri Lanka, is made accessible to a wider audience by its inclusion here.

This volume, in many ways rates as a long overdue scholarly tribute to Newton Gunasinghe whose untimely death in 1988 was a loss not only for Sri Lankan social sciences, but also for the wider scholarly community. In their generous tribute to Gunasinghe, the editors observe that he eschewed 'a simple "straightline" approach ... [and looked at] how in a multiethnic society, changes in the structure of the national economy produced effects that built on historically specific social formation but always in ways that were differentiated by class, ethnicity, and other factors' (p.19). Using this conceptual framework Gunasinghe was able to show the linkages that existed between different strands of the new economy – all generated by the neo liberalism of the post 1977 era. These articulations drastically altered the economic structure and political architecture of Sri Lankan society. In many ways Gunasinghe's work remains a sharp rejoinder to other Sri Lankan scholars preoccupied with a language of discourse framed in terms of a historicity and distorted logic of post modernist cultural explanation of ethnic politics and violence, which gives causal primacy to religion and 'culture'.

No doubt, influenced by Gunasinghe's work, the editors have, with some degree of success, sought to frame the several essays to highlight the dialectical relationship between social forces and ideology. Another Sri Lankan scholar included in this volume, who extending this line of scholarship is a leading Sri Lankan sociologist, Siri Hettige of the 'Colombo School of Sociology'. In an informative and well documented, more empirical piece than that of Gunasinghe, Hettige in Chapter 5 ('Economic Policy, Changing Opportunities for Youth and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka') highlights the complex way in which identity articulates through factors of class and interest. These linkages serve to fashion 'the opportunity structure' of Tamil and Sinhala youth in the post 1977 era of neo liberal politics and economic theorizing. What this work neatly demonstrates is the way in which people in significant groupings such as class fractions (e.g., lower class youth, Tamil youths, etc.) are affected by shifts in economic policies.

An overview of the economic policy context referred to by Gunasinghe and Hettige is provided in Part One by Richardson (Chapter 2) and Shastri (Chapter 3). These two essays which concentrate on the interconnection between national economic policy and politics provide a useful descriptive account, along with a succinct critique of the social and economic policies of the open economy policy regime of the post 1977 era. Richardson (Chapter 3 entitled 'Violent Conflict and the First Half Decade of Open Economy Policies in Sri Lanka: A Revisionist View') with his 'revisionist' account of neo liberal economic policies draws pointed attention to the social and human consequences of the policies pursued between 1977 ad 1982 — the early years of the open economy. It was more than a matter of coincidence that these most significant economic changes in Sri Lankan post colonial history set the scene for intense and violent ethnic conflicts amongst the Sinhalese and also between the Sinhalese and Tamils.

Shastri's contribution (Chapter 3 entitled 'An Open Economy in a Time of Intense Civil War: Sri Lanka, 1994-2000'), on the other hand, concentrates on the period 1994-2000 and demonstrates how the protracted civil war, generated a war economy, creating the illusion of 'war with growth'. To use the language of the editors, it would have added greatly to these two essays if they were accompanied by articulating the underlying political and institutional fabric of the post colonial discourse of the post 1977 period characteristic of the neo liberal economic policy regime. The crucial point here is the shift from the politics of welfarism which defined the post-independence period to the new politics of warfare. If there is one major shortcoming, it is the failure to address the complex political dimensions of the ethnic conflict, especially the role of the state and constitutionalism. This volume could well have benefited by the inclusion of the work of a political anthropologist.

The concluding essays in Part Three consist of three empirical studies by a sociologist and two anthropologists (Bremner, and Gamburd, and Lynch respectively). These essays describe how 3 local groups—a lower class community in Colombo, rural lower class villagers and the *juki* girls working in garment factories—have engaged with the new social formation created by the war and the economy. These contributions underline a more distinctly human dimension by considering the transformative effects on people involved in the war by documenting what motivates action, construct interests, articulate the local with the national and move people in and out of the war.

By focusing on the 'lived dimensions', the editors seek to avoid an economism – a sort of materialist/economic reductionism which extols a national aggregate macro-economic perspective revealed clearly in the 'greed or grievance' debates about the cause of ethnic conflicts or civil wars. Or, in the development dogma built around the notion

of social capital, widely promoted by the World Bank and other international development agencies. According to this development philosophy, 'social capital constitutes an essential ingredient for organized efficiency and successful development' (p.13). This critique of economism, and implicitly of an instrumental view of social forces presented in terms of national aggregate and/or structural features alerts the reader to the need to insert the factor of human agency for a deeper understanding of social and political conflict.

Having concentrated on understanding the genesis of the ethnic conflict and violence as well as its persistence, the editors in the Post Script, feel obliged to reflect on how the foregoing analysis relates to the 'peace process', first initiated in 1994, but formalized between 1000 and 2003. One of their main contentions in this regard is the 'peace is not simply a cessation of hostilities' but a new scenario which relates to 'new articulations of cultural economic and political hegemony on global, national, and local levels' (p.197). They introduce a word of caution about the hidden assumption implicit in the internationalization of peace efforts that 'peace and development' go hand in hand.

What stands out as the single most important contribution of these essays to the extensive literature in this area is the logic of the argument being advanced in these essays, viz., that there are 'many complex linkages and articulations to consider in war and peace' extends to a wider social critique and analysis of contemporary Sri Lankan society. By their use of the notion of 'social formations', the editors argue pointedly that Sri Lankan society is 'not a fixed entity'. Rather it needs to seen as characterized by a complex array of practices which evolved through different periods of its history but may or may not resonate with each other. It is the dynamic of this social and political transformation which is illumined by these essays.

This volume rates as compulsory reading for any student of not just of ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka, but more generally for those engaged in the study of social change in post colonial societies.

From *The Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 36 (1) 2006

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IN MEMORIAM

TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER

Rohini Hensman

My father, C.R. ('Dick') Hensman, died peacefully in London on 9 July 2008. Among the many people sending in tributes to him, several refer to the enormous influence he had on them, and I suppose I belong to that category too. He introduced me to revolutionary politics as well as liberation theology at an early age, and his vision of global justice has inspired me all my life.

Much of his earlier work, and especially his books *China: Yellow Peril? Red Hope?* (SCM Press, 1968), *From Gandhi to Guevara: The Polemics of Revolt* (Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969), *Sun Yat-sen* (SCM Press 1971), and *Rich against Poor: The Reality of Aid* (Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1971) had a strong anti-imperialist focus. He identified whole-heartedly with the struggles of Third World peoples against both old-style European colonialism and the more recent US imperialism, and had a wide knowledge of liberation movements in all their diversity. Yet, unlike latter-day apologists for authoritarian regimes in the Third World, who represent their atrocities as resistance to pressure from imperialist countries on human rights issues, his critique of political leaders in developing countries who robbed and oppressed their own people was equally trenchant.

His books on Sri Lanka, written under the pseudonym L. Piyadasa, exemplify his passionate opposition to injustice and oppression within his own country. After the 1983 anti-Tamil pogroms, he wrote *Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After* (Marram Books, 1984), which documented and analysed the events not only of that fateful day but also of the periods preceding and following it. This was one of the first publications to expose the horrifying evidence of government sponsorship of the violence, and involvement of people at the highest levels of power in what would today be classified as crimes against humanity.

The analysis was continued in a sequel, *Sri Lanka: The Unfinished Quest for Peace,* (Marram Books, 1987), published following the Indo-Lanka Accord. What was striking was that he attributed the violence not to widespread inter-ethnic hatred but to the drifting of the Sri Lankan state towards fascism. It was made very clear in both books that the solution was *not* a separate Tamil Eelam, which would inevitably suffer from the same authoritarian and exclusivist politics as the proposed Sinhala Buddhist state, but a Sri Lanka where people from all ethnic and religious communities could live in any part of the island in security, dignity and peace.

In later life, his aversion to all forms of injustice and cruelty made him a natural ally of all those battling against the exclusion and oppression of women, children and gay people. His concern for social justice as well as his interest in environmental issues found expression in his more philosophical and theological works, *Agenda for the Poor: Claiming their Inheritance*, (Centre for Society and Religion, 1990), *New Beginnings: the Ordering and Designing of the Realm of Freedom,* (Third World Perspectives, 1992) and *The Remaking of Humanity,* (Christhava Sahithya Samithi, 2000).

His personal relationships embodied the same principles. My mother supported him in all his endeavours, accompanying him back and forth across thousands of miles, and taking on the role of the steady breadwinner so that he could have the opportunity to freelance. All too many men take that kind of devotion from their spouses for granted, and never dream of reciprocating in any way, but not my father. For some years past, as my mother's health deteriorated, he spent more and more of his declining strength caring for her, and he continued right to the very end. His devotion to her, and love for his other close relations and friends, mean that he will be sorely missed by all of us.

In the last few weeks of his life, he said more than once that he considered my work to be a continuation of his own, and it makes me feel very proud indeed to think that some part of him lives on in me.

Printed by Karunaratne & Sons (Pvt) Ltd.,