



RISING FROM THE ASHES

TRAGIC EPISODE OF THE JAFFNA LIBRARY

Compiled by: N Selvarajah

027.
4
SEL

ST 370

RIISING FROM THE ASHES

TRAGIC EPISODE OF THE JAFFNA LIBRARY

Compiled by: N Selvarajah

Sponsored By:

Mr P. Navendren

Mr S. Srirajan (B.Eng)

Mr B. Rabindramohan

Trustee's Chairman

Sri Katpaga Vinayagar Kovil – Walthamstow

Mr T. Constantine (MBA, FBAHA, FABE, MHCIMA)

Group Financial Controller

Desilu of Group of Companies (UK & Cyprus)

தேசம் (THESAM) June 2003

Title : Rising From The Ashes:
Tragic Episode of the
Jaffna Library, Sri Lanka
Compiler : N.Selvarajah
Edition : 1st Edition, June 2003
Publishers: Thesam Publishers,
PO Box 35806, London, E11 3JX
Design : T Jeyabalan
Printers : Setline Data Ltd
Pages : 110

Contents :

Map of Sri Lanka	03
Introduction	06
History can't be wiped out by fire - N.Selvarajah	08
Aid pours in	10
Jaffna Library	11
Donation- The Colombo Municipal Council	12
Donation from Malaysian MP	12
Library's Baptism by fire - K.Nesiah	13
Statement- Citizens Committee for National Harmony	15
Appeal- Citizens Committee for National Harmony	16
What sort of animals are these?	18
Cultural Incineration (Letter) - H.A.I.Goonetilleke	19
Indictment against Sri Lanka	21
Jaffna Public Library: Restoration Project	25
Foundation laid for Library	28
The Jaffna Mayor Thanks - Rajah Viswanathan	29
Acknowledgements - C.V.K. Sivagnanam	32
Doubts about library funds(Letter) - T.Arumugam	35
Public library rises out of the ashes	36
Institutional services... - Mrs R.Nadarajah	37
Another library (Hartley College) up in flame	43
From India with Love	44
The library is for burning	45
Burning of the Jaffna Library - N.Satyendra	46
On the Jaffna Library Arson: 1981 - Prof. K.Mahadeva	48
The Jaffna Central Library - Puthumai Penn	51
Help rebuild the Jaffna Library - A.Kandappah	53
New Jaffna Library - E.Weerapperuma	55
Note on History of the Library - V.S.Thurairajah	57
Who will donate Ola Leaves? - N.Parameswaran	60
Burning of Jaffna Library remembered	62
Temporary Jaffna Library opened	63

Reluctant officials threatened by SLA	64
Library books for Sri Lanka	66
Letter to the American Ambassador - S.Sivanayagam	67
Two decades after the burning down - Vilani Peris	71
Culture in ashes - Celia W. Dugger	75
A bibliographer's Labour of Love - J.S.Tissainayagam	79
Gov - LTTE tussle over reopening - Kesara Abeywardena	84
President urges reopening of the Jaffna Library	86
France Donates 800 books to famed Library	87
Library reconstruction to hide? - S.Somithran	88
Famed Library not reopening soldiers guard complex	90
Open of the Jaffna Public Library	91
Opening of the Jaffna Library - Prof. K.Sivathamby	92
The Library: The best in the region - V Fernando	96
Remembering a cultural Rape	99
Proposed rehabilitation to the Library	103
Proposed rehabilitation project	104
Mezzanine floor plan & floor plan above Roof level	105
Furniture Layout (Ground floor)	106
Furniture Layout (First Floor)	107
Proposed Canteen block (Front/Side elevations)	108
Proposed Canteen block (Section)	109
Proposed Canteen block (Ground floor plan)	110

Introduction

The Jaffna Public Library was burnt down in 1981 by the Sri Lankan Police and Sinhala thugs on the eve of the District Development Council elections. The library, considered as one of the finest in South Asia containing a cultural heritage that comprised around 97000 priceless books and about 150 centuries' old irreplaceable Tamil manuscripts, lost its entire collection when the original two storeyed building was destroyed.

The destruction of the library had a particular resonance. Many Tamils came from the arid north, where they are in the majority and had risen to prominence in the professions and the civil service through a devotion to education. The attack on the library was seen as an assault on their aspirations.

Professor K.Sivathamby pointed out that, in the Tamil psyche the burning of the Jaffna public library in 1981 constituted a major symbol of what was aimed at them a total annihilation of all their intellectual resources. If one makes a careful study of the Sri Lankan Tamil literature during this period of resistance, one would find 1981 as a major dividing line. The burning of the library mobilized the entire population against the oppressive actions of the State.

A similar compilation was made in the year 2001, in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Burning of the Jaffna Library. It was a bi-lingual publication mostly aimed at Tamil reading public. It has been urged that a similar compilation must be made in order to bring home the historical facts of the Library to the international community.

Since 1981, it was a Municipal Library, serving a geographically defined public within the Municipal Council limit. Later, after the rebuilding in 1984, the scope of the servicing area expanded to the whole Jaffna District. Now the library has been politically rather than academically exposed much wider than ever thought.

At this point, the main aim of this compilation is to find means of helping the Jaffna Municipal Council in planning and developing the Library so as to serve the Tamil Society home and abroad. It should be noted that the Jaffna Public Library will never be the same as during the pre 1981 era, when it was serving as a "public" library to a limited membership. It will never be erased from our minds. It should be an archive of our society's intellectual wealth and a Centre for our Historical records without any bias.

This publication has been compiled with selected articles published through various media. I wish to thank to all those writers who have recorded their messages of facts and views on the Jaffna Public Library, through various newspapers, Journals and Websites. The Focal point of their thought is the Priceless library, its history, development, destruction and redevelopment.

This publication will give a broad information on the library, its development, destruction, renovation and various personal thoughts and views pertaining to the library. This is not a complete compilation. There are several publications which I could not be retrieved. I hope that they would be included in future editions.

I wish to thank all those publishers whose Newspapers, Journals and websites helped to carry these articles. The references appears along with the articles reproduced in this work.

It is hoped that this publication would help in the rebuilding of the library infrastructure.

N.Selvarajah
Compiler

HISTORY CAN'T BE WIPED OUT BY FIRE

————— N Selvarajah
Consultant, Jaffna Library

For a very long time authorities have been following the practice of destroying opponent's ideas and views by burning publications, libraries and also by eliminating those whose ideas they do not approve.

The authorities subjected the Alexandria library to arson. Manuscripts written on papyrus, palm leaf and slate were destroyed because those publications conveyed opinions and views contrary to those held by the opponents. This practice continues even in this age of the printing press.

In 213 BC emperor, Shih Huang-ti made himself the head of an establishment consisting of distinguished scholars. In fact, it was he who was mainly responsible for the building of the Great Wall of China. It was during his reign that he decided to commission the publication of the Great Chinese history. At the same time he instructed the destruction of all works that opposed astrology except works on Agriculture, and Science He ordered such works to be burnt.

It is believed that the magic circle surrounding him influenced him in this decision to destroy the literary works. He also proclaimed that any discussions pertaining to the contents of the proscribed books were subjected to capital punishment. Unfortunately he did not have the opportunity to rule for a long time. The Great Chinese history that he commissioned did not materialise. Works on psychology won world wide acclaim. In 206BC, those who succeeded him allowed ancient Chinese literature to flourish. Archives were created. Ancient history was carefully nurtured.

The Alexandria Library established 283 BC in Greece had thousands of archives. In Athens, hundreds of copies of drama were

there. The great collection of Aristotle were there too, Greek literature, and new scientific thoughts were flourishing. Even though all these works were destroyed, Aristotle's thoughts began to spread and did not disappear,

In Tamil Nadu, during the rule of the Cholas there are references to 'Saraswathi mendicants' there is references to libraries that had the charter from the Kings They were called Saraswathi Mahalayam. All these were destroyed during the wars and yet, Tamil literature and Hindu Vedas have since survived.

In Hitler's Germany in May 1933, we are reminded of similar atrocities meted out by the Emperor Shih Huang-ti, Nazis confiscated books, and put them in big piles and burnt them. Joseph Goebbels, Germany's minister of information during that time said that history was being re-written and that during the next 1000 years Germany will give birth to a new era. But what actually happened was, the burnt ashes finally covered the faces of those officials with black soot!

If we look at the contemporary times, those who decided to wipe out Tamil history burnt the Jaffna library. They also burnt the building of a newspaper. Finally, what did they realise? After nearly 21 years, a new library building is now taking shape. The burning of the library, indeed, was a catalyst to inform the whole world the problems faced by the Tamil nation. The struggle for independence by the Tamil people thus has been well publicised. This was the result of the arson committed by the government Caretakers with a matchstick!

In Bosnia, the library built in 1890 with 155,00 rare books and the University library with over one and a half million books were burnt down by the Serbs in August 1992. The fire raged for over 3 days. What was the result? It is now history; various organisations worldwide have been collecting books to replace the ones that were burnt. Like in Sri Lanka, this incident helped to present the Bosnian problem to the whole world.

In March 2000, the friends of Cuban libraries alleged that books donated by Spain to the Cuban University libraries, were either burnt, buried or hidden and never reached the recipients. It should be noted that most of the works related to human rights and others were mainly children's books.

There is the Fatwa proclaimed by the Ayatollah on Salman Rushdie for the publication of his book, 'Satanic Verses'. This was not a well read or known publication. This act of fatwa gave lot of publicity thus contributing to the eventual increase in sales of this publication.

There is also the J K Rowling's, Harry Potter - 'The sorcerer's Stone' that was made into a film. A group of Christians led by a priest Jack D Brock met with the congregation in USA. The book was burnt as it was supposed to highlight magical virtues, which were in antithesis to Christian teaching. What really happened finally was this incident gave publicity to the poor author who subsequently became a millionaires.

One can destroy literary works, only temporarily. How long are the authorities going to continue to follow this practice of arson? To remove pages from books that are contrary to their views can only be suppressed for a very short time. These are the very pages that would form the backbone for further publications and the spread of much wanted knowledge; can't the authorities learn from these lessons?

AID POURS IN

Tamil Times (London) October 1981, Vol.1 No.1

The Mayor of Jaffna and the Organising Committee in charge of the restoration work of the Jaffna Public Library have been inundated with aid and promises of aid from several sources.

In response to a call made by the Bishop of Colombo the Rt Rev Swithin Fernando, the 100 Anglican congregations within the Colombo Diocese contributed the special Sunday Collection at the Church Service on 5.7.81 for the restoration of the Jaffna Public Library which the Bishop said, though an institution in the North was "a national wealth".

The Library was re-opened for use on 2.7.1981 in the Jaffna Town Hall.

Part of the Jaffna Public Library which was burnt down will not be rebuilt, the Mayor said, but stand as a monument in remembrance of the incidents that took place in Jaffna between May31 and June 8 this year.

JAFFNA LIBRARY

A general meeting of the Jaffna Library took place on the evening of the 5th inst. at 7pm. Mr. W.C.Twynam, C.M.C. the patron of the institution was the Chairman, and the following members were present, Dr.Grenier, Rev. Mr.LeBracy, Messrs, F.Bowes, T.Changarapillai, S.T.Arnold, B.Santiagopulli, S.Olegasagaram, Alex Toussaint, S.P.Lawton, A.Kanagasabai, Chas. Strantenbergh and W. Woodhouse.

The secretary having read the report, which was satisfactory, the following resolutions were moved and seconded viz: 1st moved by Mr. Alex Toussaint and seconded by Mr. Lawton, that the report now read by the Secretary be adopted. 2nd moved by Dr. Grenier seconded by Rev. Mr. Labrooy, that a vote of thanks be accorded to the retiring office bearers and committee members for their valuable services rendered to this institution. C.Stratenberg, Secretary and Treasurer, Messrs Alex Toussaint, S.A. Allagakoen, S.Nagalingam, A.Kanagasabai, T.Changrapulli be elected the Secretary and Mr. Lawton the Treasurer, and that the following gentlemen be elected to a Committee for this year, and till the next annual general meeting of the subscribers, viz. Messrs, Bowes, Alex Toussaint, C.Strantenbergh, S.Olegasagaram, B.Santiagopulle, S.A.Allagakoen, S.Nagalingam, Kanagasabai, and Arnold.

Moved by A.Kanagasabai and seconded by C.Stratenberg, that a vote of Thanks be accorded to W.C.Twynam, Esq.CMC the Patron and Chairman for his kindness in presiding at this meeting. Proposed by Mr. Woodhouse that the subscription be raised to Rs.1.50 per month seconded by Mr. Strantenbergh. Amendment proposed by Mr. Kanagasabai that there be two classes of Subscribers, one of Rs. 1.50 and the other Rs.One, that those paying 1.50 may have the privilege of having the papers and periodicals sent home, seconded by Mr. Bowes.Amendment carried nemcon.

Mr. Alex Toussaint proposed and Mr. Santiagopulle seconded that the Committee should take steps to obtain an increase of grant from Government by Rs.50. Mr. Bowe proposed that the Committee take steps to see if the Inspector of School's building can be obtained for the Library. Seconded by Dr. Grenier. Carried. Proposed by Mr. Woodhouse and seconded by Dr. Grenier "That the Committee be instructed to write to Messrs Mudie & Bros with a view of obtaining books from them, carried. The president thanked the meeting for the welcome and the vote of thanks. Suggested by the president that all members who shall be over 3 months in arrears by 30th June 1894, shall cease to be members, Carried.

DONATION - THE COLOMBO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Tamil Times (London) October 1981, Vol.1 No.1

The Colombo Municipal Council at its meeting on Monday 27.7.81 has decided that members should volunteer contributions from their allowances to re-build the Jaffna Public Library. The motion was moved by Mr. D.W.Abeyakoon, an SLFP member of the Colombo Municipal Council.

DONATION FROM MALAYSIAN MP

Tamil Times (London) October 1981, Vol.1 No.1

A Generous Gift of Rs. 50,000 has been made by Mr. Ponniah, the Malaysian M.P., to the Mayor of Jaffna towards re-equipping the Jaffna Public Library.

LIBRARY'S BAPTISM BY FIRE

K.Nesiah

The last recorded destruction of a library in the sub-continent was towards the end of the 12th century when a Central Asian horde under Khilji annihilated Nalanda University, the famous Buddhist seat of learning in North India, with a three-block library, one nine storeys high.

It was then nearly 800 years after that, on the inglorious first of June 1981, the priceless collection of nearly 100,000 books in the Jaffna Public Library was consigned to the flames and a building which was the architectural pride of the North severely damaged.

It was in the early 40's that District Court Secretary Chellappah pioneered the movement which resulted over the decades in one of the finest libraries in the land. It is a heart-rending spectacle to those associated with the movement from the beginning.

The grimmer is the tragedy because the perpetrators of this dark deed were no other than those who were expected to be custodians of law and order and the moment chosen for their misguided action was the eve of the election of what was believed to be the conciliatory gesture of the District Development Council.

Would that we realised that the loss is not just to the North and to learning among the Tamils? It is a deep dent in the country's intellectual system and loss, too, to the International community of learning. So don't send to find for whom the bell tolls!

But, did not A.N.Whitehead say that at the terminal period of the Greek and Roman contribution to European civilisation, the fate of that civilisation was saved by the fortunate eruptions of barbarians and the rise of two new religions, Christianity and Islam?

Learning did not cease in India with the dismantling of Asia's then best collection of manuscripts at Nalanda and the disbandment of the then world's finest assemblage of scholars.

Was it not in subsequent centuries that Indian scholars, writers and scientists made their great contributions in other Indian languages besides Sanskrit, Pali and Tamil, and in languages like English.

Or, to take an example from another field, was it not following the Great Fire of 1666, London emerged as a great city of brick, stone and concrete And in some ways the world's capital city, built on ashes of an erstwhile timber built town? It has often times happened that such deep tragic experiences in the history of a people have proved a turning point in their life where their turned a disaster into a triumph.

It is heartening therefore to note that, on the advise of the Library Committee the city fathers have decided to immediately reopen in an improvised place, the children's section and the periodical and newspapers rooms. It is fulfilling an obligation cast by the Human Rights Declaration in Article 26 and 19. In due course, even before the library in re-built, let us hope that the Library will resume its role as an agent of continuing education. And in the long term it could become the centre or a system of libraries in the region and partake, too, of some of the characteristic, of a national library for the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

Towards re-designing and rebuilding the Library in due time, the tax-payer apart, men of means and men with the architect's genius have an obligation. Towards re-stocking the library, there is an obligation on the part of those who have books or could get at books, regardless of geographical frontiers. But the immediate obligation is to citizens of the city.

Will every family contribute one book each and those who can, books by the tens and by the hundreds?

The purpose of a general public library is somewhat the same as that of education as conceived today. If education seeks to implant a sense of heritage and impart a vision of the future in the minds of the young and continue through life to stress that sense of heritage and enlarge that vision of things to be, so does a modern public library.

The library then is much more than a classified stock of books and audio-visual aids. It has to be in it's building design and mode of functioning an educational institution within its walls and without. Well may we say that a city's public library is the eye of the city by which the citizens are able to behold the greatness of their heritage and behold the still greater greatness of their future.

Statement-Citizens Committee for National Harmony (Extract)

"The burning of the Jaffna Public Library on the night of 1st June 1981 resulting in the destruction of every book including several rare historical collections is a great loss not only to the people of Jaffna but also to the entire nation. The sense of outrage which all humane persons feel at the destruction of this repository of knowledge, culture and historical records would, we feel, make them want to express their concern over this national calamity and demonstrate their solidarity with the people of Jaffna, and build up goodwill and desire to undo as far as possible the damage that has been done."

Extracts from a statement issued by the Citizens Committee for National Harmony.

High ranking members of the Buddhist and Christian clergy have joined other well-known Sri Lankans from all walks of life to support the appeal for funds to rebuild the Jaffna Library. Among these are:

Ven. Andrurupotha Gunaratne Mahanayake Thero, Ven Pandit W.Seelaratane Mahanayake Thero, Ven Pandit Moratuwe Sranaratune Anunayake Thero, Ven Madihe Pannaseeha Nayake Thero, Pandit Akuretiya Amarawansa Nayake Thero (Principal Vidyalankara Pirivena), Ven. Buddiyagama Chandraratne Thero, Ven Baddegama Samitha Thero, Archbishop Nicholas Marcus Fernando, Bishop Leo Nanayakkara OSB, Bishop B.Deogupillai, Bishop Marcus Fernando, Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, Dr. P.R. Anthonis, Dr. James T.Rutnam, LTP Manjusri, H.W.Jayawardene QC, Iranganie Serasinghe, Harry Pieris, Henry Jayasena, Fr Joe de Mel OMI.

Appeal - Citizens Committee for National Harmony

The Citizens Committee for National Harmony has launched an appeal to "persons of all walks of life to contribute towards a fund for the rebuilding of the Jaffna Public Library... *We think that the nation as a whole should expiate this crime by our forces of law and order*".

The signatories are:

Mr. Godfrey Goonetilleke, Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I.,
Prof.E.R.Sarathchandra, Bp. Leo Nanayakkara, O.S.B.,
Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekera, Dr. Carlo Fonseka, Mr. Norbert
Mawalage, Mr.G. Kurukulasuriya, Ms.Kusala Abhayawardhana, Mr.
Victor Gunawardena, Rev. Celestine Fernando, Sr. Helene
Marguerite H.F., Mr. S.Nadesan, Q.C., Mr. A.Samarajeeva, Mr. H.A.
Ian Goonetilleke, Mr. M.M.Mohideen, Ms.Bernadeen Silva,
Rev. Yohan Devananda, Mr. Hector Abhayawardhana,
Mr.K.Kandasamy, Sr. Rose Fernando, P.H., Dr. B.Kaneshalingam,
Mr. Rex Wanigaratne, Mr. Donovan Moldrich, Mr. Richard Dias,
Ms. Manel Fonseka and Al-Haj S.M.A.Raschid.

A statement by the Committee also notes: "We are distressed that persons, so far undetected, have had recourse to the killing of some political leaders and police officers - 19 of them since 1977".

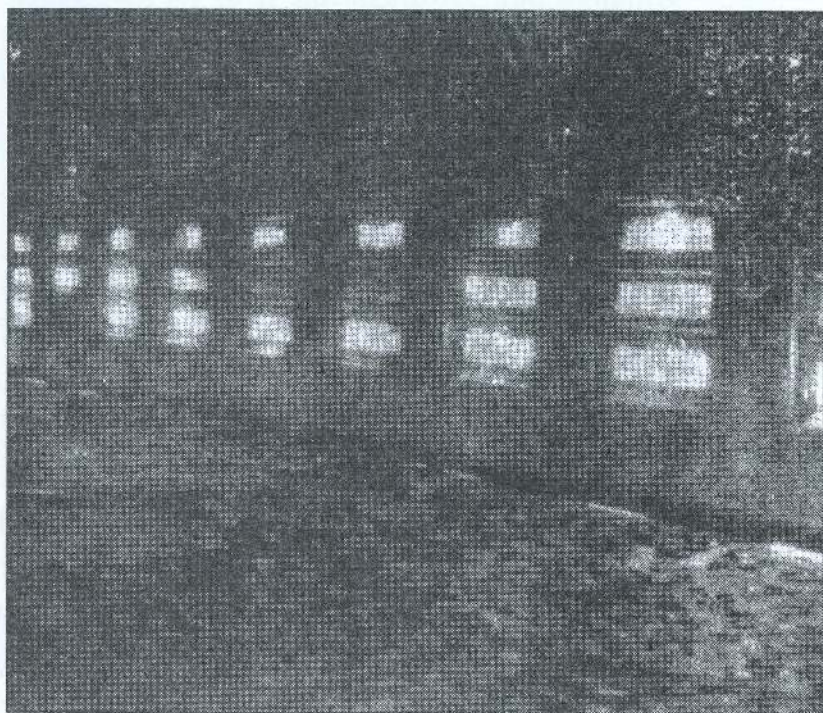
"It is even more sad and condemnable that the forces of law and order have also been the agents of killing and mass destruction particularly in this present instance.

"The Government itself must take its due share of the responsibility for this brutal assault by the agents of the State, even if "the police force in that area was on the verge of a virtual mutiny" as reported to Parliament by a Minister. No government may renounce responsibility for the actions of its agents. The country would appreciate a more responsible and sympathetic attitude from the members of the government than has been hitherto forthcoming.

"We urge the Government to extend the terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry that it intends to appoint to include the period up to the end of the recent Emergency and the acts of murder and destruction caused by all parties.

"We further recommend that the Commission to be appointed consist of at least three members who are judges of the Supreme Court or of the Court of Appeal or retired Judges of the Supreme Court.

BURNT DOWN LIBRARY BUILDINGS



“ What sort of animals are these?” President Speaks...

Tamil Times (London) October 1981. Vol.1, No.1, pp.4

“What sort of animals are these?” cried Sri Lanka President Mr. J.R.Jayawardene referring to the widespread violence to which the Tamils of Sri Lanka were subjected to during July-August.

Speaking at the All Ceylon Executive Committee of the United

National Party meeting held on September 4, the President said: “ I speak more in sorrow than in anger. Recent events throughout the Island North, Centre and South show that the religions we profess do not seem to influence for the good some of our people. I regret that some members of my party have spoken in Parliament and outside words that encourage violence and the murders, rapes and arson that have been committed.

“How many of our party leaders throughout the country have spoken against the recent acts of violence? What is the example we as leaders of the governing party are setting to our followers and to the rest of our countrymen? I must have reasons to be proud of the party of which I am leader.

“If I cannot, it is better for me to retire from the leadership of this party and let those who believe that the harming of innocent people and property that has happened recently is the way to solve the problems that face this multi-racial multi-religious and multi-caste society, take over the leadership of the party.”

CULTURAL INCINERATION

—Mr. H.A.I. Goonetilleke

**Sri Lankan Librarian and
Bibliographer**

**Text of a letter written by Mr. H.A.I. Goonetilleke to
Fr. Paul Caspersz, the President of the
Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality.**

17, Wijerama Lane,
Nawinna,
Maharagama.

4th July 1981

Fr. Paul Caspersz
President, Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, (MIRJE)
6 Aloe Avenue,
Colombo 3.

Dear Paul,

Knowing you as I do, I can well imagine how totally grieved and depressed you must be over the loathsome tragedy of a month ago, and I can see, from your reports of May and June 1981, the concerned and resolute determination with which you have pursued your unhappy investigations, and written of them with a clinical and cleansing passion and perception.

In the entire catalogue of carnage, arson, pillage and murder which you have so courageously documented, the complete destruction by an act of calculated and cold-blooded incendiaryism of the splendid Jaffna Public Library is the most wounding to the sensibility of our brethren. In the North, and must outrage the humane feelings of every person in the land, whatever his political, racial or religious persuasion.

Containing over 90,000 volumes, this notable library was the second largest public library in the island, and possessed a rich and diverse collection of valuable literary material, some of them irreplaceable. It was a distinct cultural landmark in the Peninsula, and served the purposes of an intellectual resource centre.

The wanton and senseless despoliation of a major repository of knowledge and learning is a national calamity and, perhaps, the most dastardly episode of vandalism in the modern history of Sri Lanka.

The gutted building is a grim testimonial to savage and bestial tendencies of communal hate, and even more saddening and shocking is the knowledge that the blindly chauvinist exponents of this cultural incineration were apparently operating under the sinister patronage of public sector terrorism. No level of official explanation (and, curiously enough, none has been forthcoming so far), or far-fetched apologies conjured up to suit each face-saving speculation can excuse this irrational atrocity.

State-sponsored fanaticism was let loose in the city of Jaffna between May 31st and June 4th 1981, and Mayhem and terror stalked the streets, but with an implacable resolution and unmatched courage the Jaffna voter, brushing the ashes off his stricken face, administered a fitting coup-de-grace to his faceless enemy. In the indomitable spirit of this unquenched ardour, the library will surely rise again to light the way and shine like a brighter beacon. May the restitution of this gap in the national heritage become a symbolic cornerstone of amity, concord and unity between the people of the South and the North.

MIRGE has a vital and valuable role to play as a catalyst and healing agent in the long - drawn-out process of recovery of faith, hope and trust, remembering all the while that the most significant ingredient in any prescription for communal harmony is understanding, enlivened by love and steeled by fortitude in the face of continuing adversity.

Yours sincerely,

H.A.I.Goonetilleke

DESTRUCTION OF JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY

INDICTMENT AGAINST SRI LANKA

"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advance and its benefits."

Article 27.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Virginia Leary: Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka
Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka on behalf of the
International Commission of Jurists, July/August 1981**

"... a large group of police (estimated variously from 100-200) went on rampage on the nights of May 31-June 1 (1981) and June 1-2 burning the market area of Jaffna, the office of the Tamil Newspaper, the home of the member of Parliament for Jaffna and the Jaffna Public Library... The widespread damage in Jaffna as a result of the actions of the police were evident during the visit of the ICJ observer in Jaffna in August..

The destruction of the Jaffna Public Library was the incident which appeared to cause the most distress to the people of Jaffna. The ICJ observer heard many comments from both Sinhalese and Tamils concerning the senseless destruction by arson of this most important cultural centre in the Tamil area.

The Movement for Inter-racial Justice and Equality sent a delegation to Jaffna to investigate the June occurrences. The delegation's report, in referring to the arson of the Public Library, stated, 'If the Delegation were asked which act of destruction had the greatest impact on the people of Jaffna, the answer would be the savage attack on this monument to the learning and culture and the desire for learning and culture of the people of Jaffna... There is no doubt that the destruction of the Library will leave bitter memories behind for many years .!...

The 95,000 volumes of the Public Library destroyed by the fire included numerous culturally important and irreplaceable manuscripts ... The government should lead a major national and international effort to rebuild and develop the Jaffna Public Library destroyed by arson by police in June 1981. Such an effort would evidence the respect the government for the cultural rights of the Tamils, help to remedy a serious injustice done to the Tamil community and contribute to restoring Tamil confidence in the government ...

A primary concern of the government should be the physical security of the minority Tamil population and the avoidance of future communal violence so frequently directed against Tamils in the past ... In this regard the government should pursue a vigorous policy of investigation and prosecution of police officers responsible for the burning of many areas in Jaffna in May/June 1981".

**Nancy Murray, the State against the Tamils in Sri Lanka
Racism and the Authoritarian State - Race & Class, Summer 1984**

"With several high ranking Sinhalese security officers and two cabinet ministers, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake (both self confessed Sinhala supremacists), present in the town (Jaffna), uniformed security men and plainclothes thugs carried out some well organised acts of destruction.

They burned to the ground certain chosen targets - including the Jaffna Public Library, with its 95,000 volumes and priceless manuscripts, a Hindu temple, the office and machinery of the independent Tamil daily newspaper Eelanadu. Four people were killed outright. No mention of this appeared in the national newspapers, not even the burning of the Library, the symbol of the Tamils' cultural identity. The government delayed bringing in emergency rule until 2 June, by which time key targets had been destroyed."

**Statement of Sri Lanka Opposition Parties, in June 1981 quoted
in Satchi Ponnambalam, Sri Lanka, the National Question and
the Tamil Liberation Struggle, Zed, 1983**

"More than 100 shops have been broken, burnt, looted; market squares in Jaffna and Chunnakam look as if they have been bombed in wartime; several houses have been looted and badly damaged; the house of the MP for Jaffna has been reduced to ruins;

several deaths have occurred at the hands of the state armed personnel; the headquarters of the Tamil United Liberation Front in the heart of Jaffna has been destroyed; the public library in Jaffna - the second largest library in the island with over 90,000 volumes - has been reduced to ashes.

Even more reprehensible are the facts that these outrages should have taken place when cabinet ministers and several leaders of the security services were personally present in Jaffna directing affairs, and that a section of the security services, which had been sent there to maintain law and order, had been directly involved."

**Francis Whelen, New Statesman and Nation, 17 July 1981,
visiting Jaffna soon after the destruction of the Library**

"Today its rooms are thickly carpeted with half burnt pages, fluttering in the breeze which comes through broken windows. Inspecting the charred remains, I met a heart broken lecturer from the local teacher training college. 'The Sinhalese were jealous of the library, he said. 'I used to come here every day to prepare lectures and tutorials. Now I shall have to go to Colombo and some of these books aren't available even there'."

**Orville H.Schell, Chairman of the Americas Watch Committee,
and Head of the Amnesty International 1982 fact finding mission
to Sri Lanka**

"It is regrettable that the government did not institute an independent investigation to establish responsibility for these killings (in May/June 1981) and take measures against those responsible. Instead, one police officer involved was promoted and emergency legislation was introduced facilitating further killings."

**Sri Lanka President Premadasa speaking at a Muslim College in
Puttalam in October 1991 in the aftermath of the impeachment
resolution against him sponsored by UNP dissidents led by
Mr.Lalith Athulathamudalai and Mr. Gamini Dissanayake.**

"During the District Development Council elections in 1981, some of our party members took many people from other parts of the country to the North, created havoc and disrupted the conduct of elections in the North. It is this same group of people who are causing

trouble now also. If you wish to find out who burnt the priceless collection of books at the Jaffna Library, you have only to look at the faces of those opposing us."

The Parliamentary Debate

"The TULF MPs took their battle into parliament. They moved a vote of no confidence in the government, on the grounds that the May-June 1981 violence in Jaffna had been state sponsored and carried out by Sinhalese Ministers and high ranking government officials present on the spot.

The government responded by going on the offensive. What followed was the most racially poisonous verbal vendetta in Sri Lanka's parliamentary history. In the debate that followed one Sinhalese MP called for the return of the traditional death penalty which 'tears the offender's body limb by limb'.

They sought to remove the (Tamil) Leader of the Opposition. To general amazement they brought in a motion of no confidence in him on the grounds that he did not 'enjoy the confidence of the Government'!. The Speaker overruled a point of order that the motion was not within the powers of the House." - *Satchi Ponnambalam, Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle, Zed 1983*

"If there is discrimination in this land which is not their (Tamil) homeland, then why try to stay here. Why not go back home (India) where there would be no discrimination. There are your kovils and Gods. There you have your culture, education, universities etc. There you are masters of your own fate ...

JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY RESTORATION PROJECT

(Published by Jaffna Municipal Council, in 1981 as a bi-lingual(Tamil &English) pamphlet in 15 pages. This publication contains the following Introduction followed by an Appeal by the Jaffna Mayor Mr. Rajah Visuvanathan. This pamphlet also contains detailed drawings of the proposed library building and some black and white photographs of the burnt down library building.)

GENERAL APPEAL BY THE JAFFNA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL :

It was the first of June, 1981, and the hours of the night, when the priceless collection of 97,000 books and some rare manuscripts in the Jaffna Public Library were turned to ashes and a building which was the architectural pride of the North burnt and severely damaged. Seven times since the fateful year of the Island's Independence (1948) have the Tamils of Ceylon suffered the humiliation of assault and arson, killing and loot, and the rape of their women, but the attempt to burn the repositories of their ancient culture hurts beyond measure. It hurts the more since the perpetrators of this dark deed were no other than the custodians of law and order maintained by the taxes of citizens, and the moment chosen for their misguided action the eve of the election of what was believed to be the conciliatory gesture of the District Development Council.

The movement for a free public library in the City came in the wake of Universal Franchise (1931) and the man behind was K.M.Chellappah. The year after Independence, Jaffna got municipal status and its first Mayor Sam A.Sabapathy secured the approval of the Municipal Council to construct a specially designed Library Building. The noted Indian Architect Narasimha Rao drew the plans for a building in Dravidian style, in consultation with Library Expert S.R.

Ranganathan, and the first stage of the new building was completed and occupied in 1959. A grateful people remember Father T.M.F.Long, The Asia Foundation and the Indian High Commission as among those who helped to make their dream a reality. During these two decades and more the Library has developed rapidly, its book stock including such collections as the Ananda K.Coomaraswamy Collection and the Isaac Thambiah Library collection. Many seminars and exhibitions have been held.

Would that be realized that the loss is not just to the North and to learning among the Tamils? Is it not a deep dent in the country's intellectual system and a loss too to the international community of learning? So don't send to find for whom the bell tolls.

But, it has often times happened that such deep tragic experiences in the history of a people have proved a turning point, where they turned disaster into a triumph. For example, was it not following the Great Fire of 1666 that London was rebuilt, worthy to be something like the World's Capital City, thanks to the genius of Sir Christopher Wren?

It is heartening therefore to note that on the advice of the Library Committee, the City Fathers have commissioned the well-known Architect V.S.Thuraiajah to plan for an enlarged and somewhat redesigned building to serve the functions of a Public Library in the context of today. The new edifice, normally the second stage of Narasimha Rao's original plan and still faithful to its architectural style, will be a three - storeyed block, with its entrance facing the West. The symbol of the harp, recalling Swami Vipulananda's epic writing on this theme, will adorn the central high tower over the new main entrance. Be it noted, the Architect's services are a labour of love.

When completed, the new Public Library should provide ample room for all the services of a modern Library conceived as an Educational Centre-Lending Library, Children's Library, Newspapers and Periodical Room, Reference Library, Conference Room, Exhibition area and Mobile Library Room, Special Collection Room, Audio Visual Library, Study Rooms, Auditorium, not least, provision of a specially designed access to the disabled in their wheeled chairs. It is hoped to have a system of Branch Libraries, with some of these facilities, in different parts of the City. And, in the long term, it could become the centre for a system of Libraries in the District and partake too of some of the characteristics of a National Library for the Tamil people of Ceylon.

It is for this noble cause that the Mayor of Jaffna, Raja Visuvanathan, has made his appeal to institutions and individuals in every continent to help rebuild the Library and expand its services.

THE JAFFNA MAYOR'S PUBLIC LIBRARY APPEAL :

The wanton destruction of the Jaffna Public Library - a magnificent building that contained a collection of 97,000 books and rare manuscripts is perhaps the most shamefully tragic event in the island's history. It is the more tragic in that it was deliberately done by the custodians of law and order who plunged the city in arson and assault during the first week of June.

Jaffna it is well known enjoys the reputation of being the intellectual and spiritual centre for the Tamils of Ceylon, thanks to an illustrious line of savants, statesmen and godmen. The names of Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Fr. Gnanapragasar, Sir Ponnambalam Brothers, Leaders of Tamil Nationalism, G.G. Ponnambalam and Thanthai S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, and last but not least Ven'ble Siva Yoga Swamigal stand out among a huge host of immortals.

The Jaffna Public Library on its 50 years of existence attained a stature worthy of this tradition. It is with reverence and gratitude that people remember stalwarts like K.M. Chellappa who mooted the idea effectively, the first Mayor of Jaffna Sam A. Sabapathy who ventured on the building project with the Council's approval. Fr. T.M.F. Long who sailed the high seas to collect funds, and institutions like the Asia Foundation and the Indian High Commission which contributed substantially to fulfil the project.

While we deplore with the civilised world this barbarous act of cultural assassination we feel, we should not lose time in restoring this symbol of our peerless heritage. We are therefore launching an appeal for funds from friends and well-wishers, and we are confident you are in sympathy with our efforts.

"Adversity sees miracles" in the words of Shakespeare; and we are emboldened to reconstruct modern library, with better amenities and more spacious accommodation while conforming to the original plan in its essentials.

We expect that you will want to contribute the maximum you could spare for a worthy cause like this that is estimated to cost approximately Fifteen Million Rupees.

The Jaffna Public Library Trust Fund Account No. 2893 has been opened in Bank of Ceylon, Jaffna and we shall be grateful if you can send your contribution direct to the Bank, with advise to us.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

R.Visuvanathan
Mayor, Jaffna

FOUNDATION LAID FOR LIBRARY

Tamil Times (London) February 1982, Vol.1 No.5

The foundation stone for the new building to house the Jaffna Public Library was laid on February 7 1982 by Mr R Visuvanathan, Mayor of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

To be built at a cost of Rupees Fifteen Million the new edifice, nominally the second stage of the noted Indian Architect Narasimha Rao's original plan and still faithful to its architectural style will be a three-storied block with its entrance facing the west. Architect V S Thurairajah who was commissioned to carry out the project has volunteered to do it as a labour of love.

The Jaffna Mayor has made a public appeal for funds. The Jaffna Public Library Trust Fund Account No. 2893 has been opened in the Bank of Ceylon, Jaffna. Contributions could be sent direct to the bank with advice to the Mayor.

THE JAFFNA MAYOR THANKS ALL THOSE WHO HAVE RESPONDED TO HIS PUBLIC LIBRARY APPEAL

**Reprinted from an eight page bi-lingual pamphlet titled
"The Jaffna Mayor expresses his gratitude"
published by the Jaffna Municipal Council and printed by
St. Joseph's Catholic Press, Jaffna on 18.04.1983.**

It was the 1st of June, 1981 and during the curfew hours of the night of the then prevalent emergency when the priceless collection of 97,000 books and some rare manuscripts in the Jaffna Public Library which was one of the largest in South East Asia were turned to ashes and a Dravidian style architectural building - the pride of the North - was burnt and severely damaged.

The civilised world has condemned it as a cultural genocide and a crime against humanity. But the attempt to burn the repositories of their ancient culture hurts the Tamils beyond measure since the perpetrators of this dark deed were no other than the custodians of law and order maintained by the tax-payers.

On the advice of the Library Committee, the City Fathers have commissioned the well known Architect Mr. V.S.Thuraiajah to plan for an enlarged and somewhat redesigned building to serve the functions of a Public Library in the context of today.

When completed, the newly restored Public Library shall provide ample room for all the services of a modern Library conceived as an educational centre-Lending Library, Children's Library, newspapers and periodicals section, Reference Library, Conference room, Exhibition area and a Mobile Library room, Special collections room, Audio Visual Library, Study room, an Auditorium etc. not least with the provision of a specially designed access to the disabled in their wheel chairs.

The new edifice, nominally the 3rd Stage of Mr. Narasiman's original plan and still faithful to the Dravidian Architectural style will be

a two-storeyed block with its entrance facing the west. The symbol of the harp recalling Swami Vipulananda's epic writing on this theme will adorn the central high tower over the new main entrance.

Hence, the restoration and reconstitution of the Jaffna Public Library is being taken up in two parts. The 3rd stage of the original plan will appear as an extension to the existing building at an estimated cost of Rs. 30,17,632 for which the work has already commenced and is in progress.

Whereas the restoration and reconstitution of the Northern Wing of the existing building has been completed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2,93,296. We are glad to inform you that we have resumed the basic services of the Jaffna Public Library in a nuclear format as from the last Human Rights Day (i.e. on 10th December, 1982) and with the books donated by supporters and well-wishers the Reference Library has already started functioning there. The newspapers and periodicals sections that were earlier housed for want of space in a portion of the Jaffna Town Hall too has now been shifted there. We are hoping to open the Children's Section and the Lending Library by the end of April, 1983.

The sum so far collected as at April 14th 1983 towards the restoration and reconstitution of the Jaffna Public Library is Rs. 44,54,907.72

Recently the American Embassy has donated books on two different occasions to the tune of about 4 lakhs and has promised further assistance in the future as well.

The World Council of Churches which has already donated in cash a sum of Rupees One and a half Lakhs to the Jaffna Public Library Trust Fund through the Jaffna Christian Union, has again donated a further sum of Rupees One Million to the same Organisation for the purchase of books to be donated to the Library in its name.

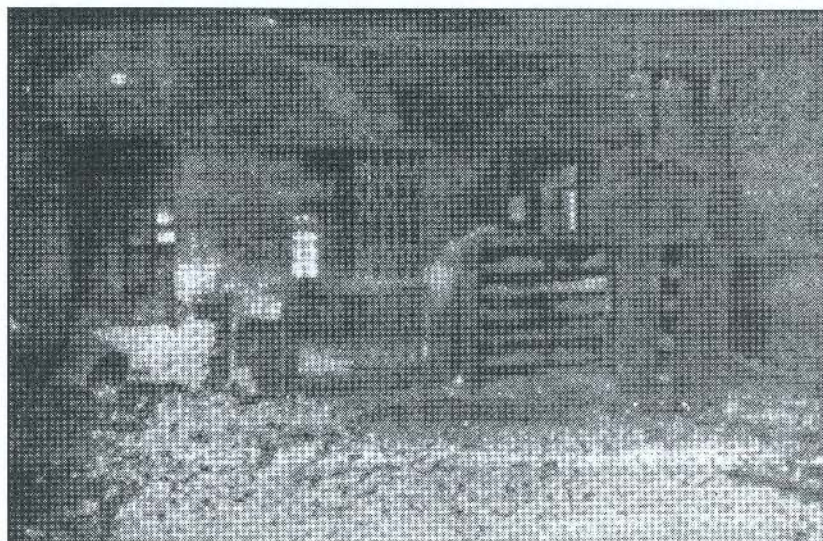
We have already received a consignment of forty four tea chests full of books from London from the Standing Committee on Tamils' affairs there and another consignment of eleven tea chests full of books from Melbourne Eelam Tamil Association. Although we would very much like to do so, in order to make this report brief, we beg to be excused for not mentioning all the individual contributions in detail.

While expressing my sincere thanks and appreciation to all those Institutions and individuals in every Continent for the help and assistance they have rendered to rebuild the Library and expand its services. I take this opportunity on the eve of relinquishing my post as Mayor of Jaffna, to request every one of you to remember to observe the forth-coming 2nd anniversary of the wanton destruction caused to the Jaffna Public Library in a fitting manner this year and continue to do so thereafter on the 1st of June every year.

Kindly circular this letter of mine so as to convey my thanks and gratitude to every single individual who has contributed for this noble cause.

R.Visuvanathan
Mayor of Jaffna
Town Hall
Jaffna
18.04.1983

BURNT DOWN LIBRARY BUILDING



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**C.V.K. Sivagnanam,
Municipal Commissioner, Jaffna**

**Extracted from the "Commemorative Souvenir:
Opening of the Rehabilitated Building of the
Jaffna Public Library" 04-06-1984**

Very many persons and Institutions were involved either directly or indirectly in the rehabilitation and re-construction of the Jaffna Public Library. Without in any way under-rating the services and contributions made by others, special mention has to be made of the following as an expression of gratitude for record purposes :-

1. His Excellency J.R.Jayewardene, President of the Republic of Sri Lanka for releasing Rs. 2 million out of the President's Fund and for future contributions to be made.
2. The Jaffna Municipal Council in Office up to 31st May, 1983 headed by Mr. Rajah Visuvanathan, Mayor, for the initiative and involvement in the project.
3. Mr. A.Amirthalingam, former M.P. for Kankesanthurai and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament for securing contributions, especially for having been responsible for obtaining compensation from the Government.
4. Mr. M.Sivasithambaram, former M.P. for Nallur, Mr. V.Yogeswaran, former M.P. for Jaffna and Mr. A.M.Alalasuntharam former M.P. for Kopay for their assistance in securing contribution.
5. Mr. V.S.Thurairajah, Architect, his Associates and staff for the architectural drawings and plans of the buildings and for making themselves available at all required times.
6. Rev. Fr. G.A.Francis Joseph, Rector, St. Patrick's College, Jaffna for having organised the Flag Day collections in the various schools which brought in more than Rs. 2 lakhs. Reference must be made to the Principals of Schools also for their co-operation along with the Director of Education for giving the required approval.

7. The Student's Council of the University of Jaffna for having collected contributions and donated books to the value of about Rs.2 lakhs.

8. The Jaffna Public Library Restoration Project Colombo Committee consisting of Messrs V.S.Thurairajah (Architect), V.R.Vadivetkarasan, K.Kandasamy (Attorney - at - Law), S.Thiruchelvam, I.T.Sambanthan, E.Shanmugam and S.P.Samy for organising the Library Week in Colombo and assisting in the collections. Mr. Vadivetkarasan deserves special mention for having organised the Dance recital of Tamil Nadu State Dancer Miss Swarnamuke in aid of the Fund. We are very thankful to Miss Swarnamuke also.

9. Mr. R.Paskaralingam, Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction for granting the necessary authority for the expenditures, engagement of staff and for the rendition of services by the Officers of the Building Department especially Dr. (Miss) P.Sivapragasapillai, Chief Structural Engineer and Mr. P.Naganathar, Senior Structural Engineer.

10. Dr. (Miss) P.Sivapragasapillai for having guided us in regard to the revised structural designs of the buildings.

11. Mr. P.Naganathar, Senior Structural Engineer of the Department of Buildings for providing continuous advice on the spot and for making available his services at all required times during the progress of the constructions.

12. The world Council of Churches for the generous contribution of Rs. 1.5 lakhs in cash the donation of books and 100 book-shelves through the Jaffna Christian Union.

13. The Lions Club and Redd Barna for contributions towards the rehabilitation of the Children's Section and NORAD for their generous contribution of Rs. 322,580.00

14. Members of the Library Committee - Mr. K.Nesiah, Rev.Fr. J.A.Francis Joseph, Messrs. E.Sabalingam, H.M.Shahul Hameed, S.Thiyagarajah, N.Mylvaganam, K.Murugaratnam, S.Murugavel, S.Ambikaipahan, Mrs. R. Ratna Navaratnam and Mr. N.Sabaratham for their involvement in the project.

15. The Librarian and the Staff for the classification, cataloguing and arrangement of books, and making them available to the public.

16. The Officers and Employees of the Jaffna Municipal Council for their effective involvement and contributions towards the project.

17. Mr. V.Satchithanathan, former Works Engineer for the initial involvement in the drawings, plans and specifications etc, Mr. E. Vaithialingam sometime Consulting Engineer and Mr. N.Nadesan for serving as Resident Engineer of the project with keen interest from October, 1983.

18. Mr. A. Jayarajah, Contractor, for having taken pains during the period of construction and for having completed the work with dedication and interest. His personnel too deserve special reference for the interest with which they worked on the project.

19. All those living beyond the shores of this country who had made contributions towards the project, Reference should be made to the Tamil Association of Alberta, Canada, Mauritius Tamil Temple Federation of Rose Hill, Mauritius, Tamil Association of Australia, Tamil Organisations of U.K. like Standing Committee of the Tamil Speaking Peoples, London, Thiruvalluvar Tamil School etc., France Tamils Organisation, Norway Tamil Association, and Tamils living in Germany, Zambia, Nigeria, Nairobi, Brunei, Norway, Botswana, U.S.A., Malaysia, Tamil Nadu and other countries who had made contributions.

20. The Tamil Nadu Government headed by Chief Minister, Hon. M.G.Ramachandran, Finance Minister Hon. V.R.Nedunchelian, Minister of Education Hon. V. Aranganayagam, The Director of Public Libraries, Tamil Nadu for donating books to the value of Indian Rs. 5 lakhs.

21. The Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka for taking up the responsibility for transporting the books from Madras to Jaffna.

22. The Canadian and British High Commissioners and the American Ambassador and the British Council for donating books.

23. All those who had made contributions in cash and donated books who may not have been specifically mentioned here or elsewhere.

DOUBTS ABOUT LIBRARY FUNDS (Letter)

The Editor,
Saturday Review.

With reference to your lead news in the last issue, about the Jaffna Public Library, there is a certain amount of doubt on the funds received.

We all know that there is a President's Fund, out of which monies are voted for charitable causes as well. If I remember right, Rs One million was transferred from the President's Fund to what is called the Jaffna Public Library Trust(or Reconstruction) Fund.

From this, Rs 9 Lakhs were given as relief to the Jaffna Public Library. A balance of Rs One Lakh was left in the President's Library Trust or Reconstruction Fund. Even members of the public were requested to contribute to this fund.

According to you, Rs two million was donated from the President's Fund. If that be so, was it from the President's Jaffna Public Library Trust (Reconstruction)Fund or the President's Fund? If it is the former, then it should have been contributions made by the public, because the public contributed to this fund.

The Lionel Fernando Committee appointed by the Government recommended Rs. 10.2 Million as compensation to the Jaffna Public Library. What has happened to this recommendation? Has it been shelved?

Will any of your readers or the authorities please clarify these doubts?

T.Arumugam
Puloly East.

PUBLIC LIBRARY RISES OUT OF THE ASHES

Saturday Review (Jaffna) 26.05.1984

The third stage in the reconstruction of the Jaffna Public Library which was destroyed by khaki-clad Goondas from the South on 1st June 1981, will be inaugurated on 4th June.

At noon on that day, A Amirthalingam, the Secretary General of the Tamil United Liberation Front will ceremonially open a wing constructed at a cost of nearly Rs. 3 million. In the first stage of reconstruction, the northern wing, the lobby and ground and first floors were repaired. The second stage centred on the restoration of the children's section. This work cost nearly Rs 240,000.

On the recommendation of the Lionel Fernando Committee, Rs 2 million was granted to the Library as compensation from the President's Fund. Another Rs 3.2 million was raised through public donations.

So far, about 45,000 books have been received by the Library as gifts from various individuals and organisations, both in Sri Lanka and abroad. About 35,000 of the books have now been catalogued.

At the time of the destruction, the Library housed nearly 100,000 books, some of which were not available elsewhere.

At the function on 4th June, a donation of books from South Indian Universities is expected to be handed over to the Library by Mr S J SChatwal, High Commissioner for India.

Arrangements for the function are in the hands of the Library committee headed by Mr. S Sivagnanam, Municipal Commissioner.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES OF THE JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY

————— Mrs. R. Nadarajah
Librarian

This article is reprinted from the Commemorative Souvenir published by the Jaffna Municipal Council on 04-06-1984 Opening of the Rehabilitated building of the Jaffna Public Library. Mrs. Rupawathy Nadarajah was the Chief Librarian of the Public Library during the period of Destruction in 1981 and its restoration in 1984.

Phoenix-like the Jaffna Public Library has risen from its own ashes of the burnt library as a symbol of immortality, the Jaffna man's cultural heritage. It is now a standing monument of the indestructibility of the vision that inspired our forbears.

Temples of knowledge and men of profound scholarship never perish. They pass on to the future generation all that is estimable and the library is one of those gifts. Our Jaffna Public Library is an excellent example of this fact, it has emerged with a new life and a new glory. The library with its original 13,000 Sq.ft. has spread itself all over the Public Library Square and now covers almost twice its former area. This expansion has facilitated the assembling of the under mentioned sections of an institution under a single roof.

CLOAK ROOM :

Bags, parcels, books files etc brought by readers are expected to be handed over here and a token obtained, and returned before collection if articles. This will not apply to readers proceeding upstairs to the study.

SECURITY DESK :

Every borrower removing books from the library should produce them at the exit security desk for checking.

EXHIBITION AREA :

The lobby will form a permanent exhibition area with the display of oil paintings of revered leaders, photocopies of ancient books, manuscripts, works of arts, handicrafts, etc., of indigenous items. Also an illuminated glass almirah will display latest additions of books in the library. Picture postcards of the Jaffna scenery will also be available for sale.

LENDING SECTION :

At present the lending section covering an area of 2,100 Sq.ft. is housed in the right wing of the ground floor. This section after the June, 1981 fire mishap was opened to the public on 14th of July, 1983. For lack of space, the children's section which is now housed in this area will, with the opening ceremony be shifted to the renovated building of the former children library that was burnt.

As the space allocated to the lending section has become inadequate, it is proposed to convert the entire ground floor into the lending section making a square area of twice 2,100Sq.ft. With over four hundred readers a day, and the additions of several thousands of books, this expansion has become imperative.

Lending section is open to all members of the Jaffna Public over 14 years of age with special conditions to residents outside Jaffna Municipal limits. It is open to members from 08.00 to 19.30 on all days excepting Mondays and Public Holidays.

The lending section is well stocked with books in English and Tamil to suit the tastes of the most a stute and discerning readers. Books in various subjects from up-to-the minute fiction to old historical novels, biographies, travel, literature, art, religion, science, economics, etc. are available.

The bookshelves have been arranged in accordance with the standard library practice to enable readers to have access to books without any delay. The entire section is well ventilated with natural light pouring in.

CHILDREN'S SECTION :

This section is housed in the connecting link between the main and new building covering an area of 1,600 Sq.ft. Special thanks are due to Lion's "International District 306B" and Reddbarna of Norway

who provided funds for the complete renovation, re-decoration, furniture, fittings and toilet facilities of this section.

It is open on all days excepting Mondays and Public Holidays. On week days (excluding Mondays) it is open from 11.30 to 18.00 and during week-ends and school vacations, it is open from 08.30 to 18.00. Books in all three languages, English, Tamil and Sinhala are well stocked in shelves easily accessible to children. Also, furniture is especially designed and executed in various colours to suit children from 07 to 14 years. Regular children's programmes such as handicraft hours, drawing hours, story telling hours, musical programmes are conducted. The story hours, singing, speech making, intelligent quiz etc. will be conducted in the miniature park just adjoining this section.

NEWSPAPER AND PERIODICAL SECTION :

Soon after the burning of the library on First of June 1981, this section and the children's section were the first to be re-opened to the public. Temporarily they were housed in the Town Hall building. After the renovation the former was shifted to the ground floor lobby. As this is the most widely patronised area of the library, it will be shifted again to a more spacious area of the new wing covering an extent of 2,100 Sq. ft. This section is open from 08.00 to 20.00 to all members of the Public on all days of the year.

Special features of this section is the lending of general periodicals to card holding members.

A wide range of popular periodicals for recreational reading and current information in local and foreign affairs is available.

English and Tamil news-papers, both local and foreign are available; and some Sinhala dailies are also available to cater to Sinhala reading public. There are also Government Publications.

AUDITORIUM :

This section is to be housed in the right wing of the ground floor of the new building covering an area of 2,100 Sq.ft. Auditorium walls will be specially constructed with wooden panels and floor tiered with special seats to accommodate 200 patrons.

This section will be used for seminars, lectures, conferences, exhibition, film shows, etc.

FOR THE HANDICAPPED :

The needs of the disabled and the handicapped are receiving our attention. Mention must be made of the fact that in the new-wing, steps are taken to construct a ramp to enable disabled persons to enter the library in their own wheel chairs. Also devices are being planned to provide easy access to such persons into the Newspapers and Periodicals Section, Children's Section, Lending library and to the Auditorium.

To those deprived of their eyesight the name of Helen Keller is an eternal inspiration. It's therefore, our desire and prime duty to go all out to offer even in a small way a "Braille" section to develop the potential of this category of the handicapped.

THE STACK AREA :

This is housed in the mezzanine floor of the inter-connecting link covering an area of 1,600 Sq.ft. Bound volumes of Government Publications, back numbers of special and general periodicals, news papers, pamphlets, and less used books are stored here.

REFERENCE SECTION :

At present this section is housed in the right wing of the main building covering an area of 2,100 Sq.ft. This section is open to all members of Jaffna Public. Books in every field of learning mostly in English received as donation from various sources are well stocked in open shelves according to Dewey Decimal Classification and are readily available with a knowledgeable librarian in charge.

Collections of ready reference books such as Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias, Year Books, Bibliographies, Hand Books, Atlases are shelved separately, learning in educational, historical, scientific and cultural areas.

Majority of books received as donations are mainly in English and very few in Tamil and Sinhala. The public need for Tamil reference books has not been fulfilled even to a small extent and the call for same is increasing daily. Therefore , it will be a great boom if this dearth is fulfilled by way of complimentary copies, from those who can kindly place them with the library. As many of these books are out of print and are not procurable this short-coming can only be met by the rare breed of avid collectors of such volumes who should willingly respond to this appeal. Invaluable Ola and Hand-written manuscripts and rare

special collections which are now on the ash heap can perhaps never be replaced, but we still hope that there are families and individuals who own such rarities. We also appeal to them to donate such collections to this library. Our special thanks are due to Embassies. The Asia Foundation, The British Council, American Center, The Canadian Organisation for Development Through Education, The Central British Fund for Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation, The Jaffna Christian Union, The Citizen Committee of Sri Lanka and National Library Services Board of Sri Lanka. The Jaffna University Students Council which has donated several latest editions of books of educational and cultural value deserves special mention. Also our thanks are due to Leo Club of St. John's College, Jaffna Central College, Jaffna and several individuals too numerous to thank individually who has unstintingly brought their entire collection to our very door.

Other than educational books, Government publications, Newspaper clippings, Pamphlets, TOEFL Cassettes are also available.

SPECIAL COLLECTION ROOM :

This section will be situated opposite the reference section. Books pertaining to Sri Lanka, Jaffna District will be kept here. Jaffna collection will consist of both books on Jaffna from ancients to the present day and books written by Sri Lankan Tamil Authors. Books and other materials will be stored in glass cupboards for this purpose. Ten glass cupboards have been bought and the collection work has started. Research books, rare books, books on Sri Lanka and Books written by foreign authors on Sri Lanka also will be collected.

A photocopying service will be made available to facilitate taking photo copies of relevant documents needed by students and researchers.

A Micro-Form Reader Unit has been donated by a well-wisher and it will be accommodated in this section. Micro photocopying services will commence soon after the completion of the building.

AUDIO-VISUAL SECTION :

This will house a Video-viewing equipment with cassettes of topical interest such as science, space travel, animal life and other allied subjects of an educational nature.

Facilities for listening to cassettes and records also will be provided.

STUDY ROOM :

This section is to be situated with individual seating accommodation for a Hundred in the left wing upper floor of the new building to enable students to use it for study with books and notes of their own or those borrowed from the Library.

ADMINISTRATION SECTION :

This section will be situated in the lobby of the upper floor of the main building covering an area of 900 Sq. ft. Donations are received and old editions, out-dated, multiple copies etc are disposed of at this point. Processes of work such as accessioning, classifying, cataloguing, binding are done here.

This section will be shifted to the right wing upper floor of the new building. In due course the Librarian's Office and the Office of the staff will also be shifted to this area.

ART GALLERY :

This section is situated on the second floor of the main building right under the dome. This dome has been specially designed with glazed windows for sufficient lighting. Also niches are provided to enable portraits and paintings to be hung conveniently. On both left and right of this gallery, the flat roof gives panoramic view of the entire Jaffna Town making it possible to view a few square miles of our scenic beauties.

SPECIAL APPEAL :

This resume of an invaluable social amenity would be incomplete if the readers- the co-partners in this enterprise were not taken into confidence, the Jaffna Public Library resurrected so marvellously and within a comparatively short time is the nerve-centre of Jaffna's intellectual system. The story of its rebirth is the story of the splendid response to our call for help. It is therefore, up to the users of this facility to make themselves worthy of it, by using the books and periodicals with care letting no room for vandalism of any sort, not even disfiguring or much less mutilating articles in their care. It has become necessary to make a special appeal. In the new set up the need for a new outlook on the part of us is particularly great and we are confident they will co-operate.

Another Library up in Flame

Saturday Review (Jaffna) 08.09.1984, Vol.3, No.30

Will the Government render any assistance in restoring and reconstructing the century-old Wesleyan Hartley College Library at Point Pedro destroyed by arson by the Sri Lankan Security Force on 2nd September?

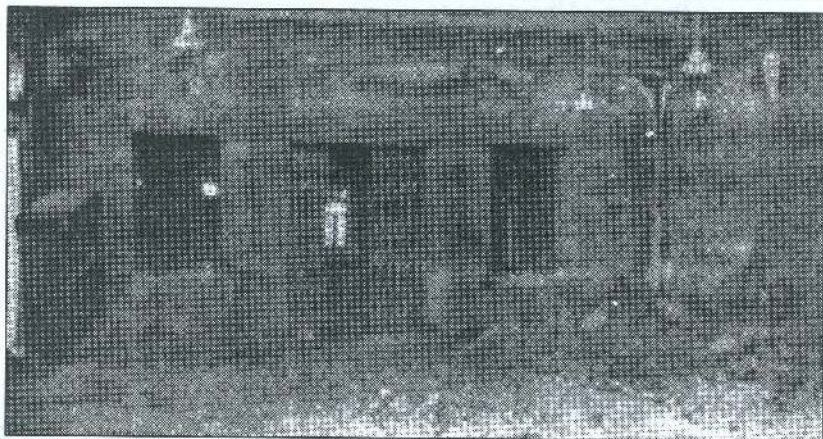
This is the obvious question agitating the minds of educationists and the student population of Jaffna.

They know too well that although the Lionel Fernando Commission recommended the payment of Rs 1 million as compensation for the destruction caused to the Jaffna Public Library in June 1981 the money was not paid.

Burning of libraries anywhere are acts of cultural genocide amounting to the crime against humanity. But when the acts are performed by the very forces maintained at the expense of the citizen to preserve law and order it is shocking.

The people of the North are watching for the response of the Government.

BURNT DOWN LIBRARY BUILDING



Tragic Episode Of The Jaffna Library, Sri Lanka

43

From India - with love

Saturday Review (Jaffna) 06.07.1985, Vol.4, No.16

Over 7,800 books on subjects ranging from Tamil classics, modern literature, culture, Indian Philosophy and music to economic history, social and physical sciences, management, agriculture and industry in Tamil and English languages were presented by the High Commissioner of India, Mr. J N Dixit to the Municipal Commissioner of Jaffna, Mr. C.V.K. Sivagnanam on 25th June at the Indian High Commission in Colombo. These books worth nearly Rs. 3 lakhs, have been gifted by the Tamil Nadu Government through the Government of India for the Jaffna Public Library, which was partially destroyed by fire in June 1981 and has not been renovated.

The books which were received in 1983, could not be presented earlier due to disturbed conditions in the area. This collection of books is the first installment for the Jaffna Public library out of the Rs. 1.125 million worth of books earmarked by the Tamil Nadu Government.

At the presentation ceremony, the High Commissioner identified the background against which the presentation of books to the Jaffna Public Library had been possible at this juncture. He said that the presentation symbolised the "new beginning" that had been made in the quest for peace in Sri Lanka as also return to normalcy which was the aim of the process.

He hoped that the process would continue and be successful. There was a cessation of hostile acts or cease fire - whatever name be given to it - and the fact remained that there has been a defusion of violence. The restoration and renovation of the Jaffna Public Library and the installation of those books there would, he hoped, enable young people whether Tamil, Sinhala, Muslim or Christian to read, think and act with understanding, good-will and harmony.

Mr. Sivagnanam in his reply expressed his deep gratitude on behalf of the Municipal Council and people of Jaffna, who, he said, was deeply indebted and thankful to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi

and the Government of India, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. M.G.Rama Chandran, and the Government of Tamil Nadu, as well as the Late Srimathi Indira Gandhi for the gifts of these books, which, he said, would assist in the restoration of normalcy which was underway in Jaffna.

The Library is for Burning

Saturday Review (Jaffna) 06.07.1985, Vol.4, No.16

We reproduce the report of S.Parthasarathy, which appeared in a recent edition of The Hindu:

The "Security forces" have to their credit a hatrick performance. First it was the Jaffna Public Library destroyed in 1981. Then came the burning of Hartley College library earlier this year followed by the burning of the collection of 500 odd books belonging to one Nagamani Vijayaratnam in Point Pedro.

He (Principal of Hartley College) wondered whether the Government would with a sense of remorse arrange for assistance to restore and reconstitute the hundred year old library burnt down by security forces on September 1.

This raises the question of what compensation the Government paid for the wanton destruction, again by security forces, of the Jaffna Public Library in 1981 on the eve of the election to the DDC.

The information showed that it had not heeded the recommendation of Lionel Fernando Committee that Rs 10 million be paid by the State for rebuilding the library and the President instead had just allocated just Rs 1 million from his relief fund for the purpose.

BURNING OF THE JAFFNA LIBRARY : A KONSTRADT FOR THOUSANDS OF TAMILS

————— Nadesan Satyendra

It was Louis Fischer who in the 1940s wrote about Konstradt. The draconian Soviet suppression of the sailor's revolt on the island of Konstradt near Petrograd during the revolution in 1917, served to turn many socialist Sympathisers away from the Soviet Union. Louis Fischer commented :

“What counts decisively is the ‘Konstradt’. Until its advent, one may waver emotionally or doubt intellectually or even reject the cause altogether in one’s mind and yet refuse to attack it. I had no ‘Konstradt’ for many years.”

The burning of the Jaffna Library by the Sinhala police on the night of the 1st of June 1981 served as a Konstradt for many thousands of Tamils who until then had wishfully thought that they would be able to live with dignity and self respect with the Sinhala people and that despite everything, answers to problems of discrimination would be found through the Parliamentary process.

It was not simply that these Tamils were unable to dismiss the attack on the library as the action of looters and arsonists who had gone out of control. It was not simply that they knew that looters and arsonists do not usually attack libraries. It was also that these Tamils knew that the attack was launched by large numbers of Sinhala policemen whilst senior Government Ministers were in Jaffna, on a special visit, together with a contingent of high ranking Sinhala security personnel.

Again, though on the previous night i.e. the 31st of May, the policemen had attacked the Jaffna Market buildings and the house of the Jaffna Member of Parliament, emergency was not declared. Curfew was not imposed. Strange actions indeed, if, as the Sinhala

Ministers sought to make out later, the Sinhala police had 'mutinied' and were 'out of control.' Emergency was not declared till after the Library was burnt on the following night. Furthermore, despite the protestations of the Sinhala Ministers that the police had gone on a frolic of their own, no inquiry was ever held into the events of the 31st May and the 1st of June. No effort was made to bring the guilty to justice.

And when the Tamil leader of the opposition sought to bring a motion of no confidence against the Sinhala Ministers who had been present in Jaffna on those fateful days, the ruling Sinhala political party pre-empted the move by bringing a motion of no confidence on the Leader of the Opposition! It was reportedly the first and only time that a motion of no confidence had been moved by a ruling party, on the leader of the opposition in any parliament, anywhere in the world. A point of order raised against the no confidence motion was overruled by the Speaker.

And, the debate on the motion was used to launch a well orchestrated campaign of vitriolic abuse and threats, intended to insult and intimidate the Tamil people, and subdue their reaction to the events of the nights of the 31st May and 1st June. If the burning of the Jaffna library was the pre-meditated injury that was inflicted on the Tamil people on the 1st of June, eleven years ago, then the parliamentary debate on the no confidence motion was the calculated insult that was added to the injury.

But that was not all. As Nancy Murray writes in 'The State against the Tamils in Sri Lanka - Racism and the Authoritarian State':

'While Sinhalese MPs discussed in parliament how to best kill (the Tamil parliamentary leaders), Tamil peasants were actually being murdered by organised gangs in the border areas of Batticaloa and Amparai. During July and August (1981), Tamils in the East and South, including the hill country plantation workers, were terrorised and made homeless. Women were raped and at least twenty five people perished. The attacks, many by well organised goon squads, were widely believed to be directed by members of the ruling UNP, among them close friends of the President.'

Thousands of Tamils, both young and old, had their 'Konstradt' in the burning of the Jaffna Public Library. They were compelled to face up to the political reality that the Sinhala government was bent on subjugating the Tamil people and bending them to its will. They were compelled to recognise that the Sri Lanka Parliament was no place for a Tamil with self respect.

A TWIN - POEM IN TRANSLATION

ON THE JAFFNA LIBRARY ARSON: 1981

Prof. Kopan Mahadeva

PhD, Hon. DLitt

Why did they plot this despicable act? The schemers, did they prefer to sever
Their noses and appear before us as ill omen to dampen our path to progress?
Why did the dastards commit this cowardly crime? What profits have the fools
Reaped, and what gain has anyone made by burning this, our ancestral wealth?

What ills did all those ancient books in English, some in certain Aryan tongues,
Most in our own sweet Tamil, and some even in Sinhalese, with their age-old,
Accumulated wisdom, which were of practical use in noble and friendly ways,
What harm did these works do to them to be set on fire and burnt all together?

Did they think they were setting a trap to slow the flow of the learning streams
In the domains of Goddess Tamil? Didn't they pound just empty mortars of wood?
Why did these mean folks attempt to beat the bright sun with part-burnt firewood?
Did they try to demolish our culture and us, by damaging this, our nation's gem?

Why did these halfwits empty their trash-bins of hate into the pure, refined pool
Of wisdom, to block the flood and flow of enlightening knowledge and truth?
Having failed to coax out dust, which shut their sights, with gentle wash-and-wipe,
These dolts decided to pierce their eyes with pins, thus forever becoming blind.

History is laughing at these misguided miscreants who, with their very hands
Have filled their eyes with grimy sand. Humanism is frowning at and lamenting
The survival yet, in its midst, of these ill-bred specimens who mar its grandeur.
Good Earth stares helpless at these twits who've smudged her face with excrement.

The whole world is laughing in derision at these laze-driven louts who have
Their lowliness of passion broadcast with tom-toms, pretty well by their own acts.
The entire world is sobbing with shyness at the foolishness of these fanatics
Who had really cut off their noses to treat themselves against common cold.

What use laughing at them now? What use crying day-and-night at our plight,
Now that our Goddesses of Learning and Wealth are all but dead? How many
Senses do these two-legged fire ants that ate our much-prized books possess?
Who, did these dog-brained persons think, will gain from their damaging act?

Why did these mean men strive so hard to maim for good this world's wisdom?
Like spitting in the huge wide sea to make it mean, like trying to mask the sweet
Fragrances of the Arabian Jasmine by throwing at it smelly sediments from drains,
Like trying to block out the moon with their bare hands, did these evil men try

To disgrace golden Mother Tamil, world's ancient and elegant lamp of learning?
Who has really lost by their sub-human action of garlanding the most holy statue
Of our temple with prickly thorns? Is it only ancestral Tamil Eelam where we're
Rooted deep, that lost? Is it just the Tamil language that has lost? No, not so!

But the world itself has lost by the arson committed on our Jaffna's Library.
All those learned, in the world, have lost thereby, That's why the whole world
Is thinking, with fingers on noses, how this slinging of mud could occur,
How such base-passions sprout, how such enmities are born between men!

Who are these offenders? Which dense jungles' hyenas and jackals are they?
Why did they think of such despicable acts? Never in the history of this world
Had anyone performed such a horrible crime; never before have human beings
Suffered such losses to their glorious civilizations. Nowhere in world's annals!

Even Hitler who authored atrocities, being soaked up in his fascist doctrines,
Never gave any such orders to his henchmen or troops. Even while allowing
The bombing of London in WW-2, he instructed them to spare the Museums.
Why? Because he knew that therein lay the seed of knowledge and wisdom.

Are these men mere fools? Or, are they rice-guzzling hollow balloon-bags,
To destroy our precious Library, popular as the best in all of South Asia then,
Without the brains to discern Lord Siva's Lingam stone from simple gneiss,
And to have lifted one leg and urinated without finding out on what or where?

Even when we choose to forget all these, our minds are not fully cooperating!
We find it hard to decide on the most fitting words from world's dictionaries
To describe their shameful and cowardly act, in having sacrificed our abode
Of learning to some devil they worship. Even long after we are dead and burnt,

The souls of Tamils who love their language and heritage will sob loud and curse
Those culprits. Having done what they did, those hypocrites soaked in falsehood,
Having wounded the heart of our Goddess of Learning seated on her white lotus
With tears of fire triggered by their act, they are applying puny drops of perfume

To her bleeding heart. Those who unhesitatingly destroyed our Tamil treasure
Are now pretending to form a movement to rebuild this monument. Will they
Do anything concrete? That mean clan which showed no regard for our centre
Of learning is pretending to collect bricks and books for building it back for us.

They are lifting their garments to their faces to shield their shame, and the world
Is laughing at their Folly. Even if we use our skills-with-words and vilify them
As we now do, even if we become storm and defeat these ignoramuses in warfare,
Still we should not forget that donkeys never learn of the fragrance of perfumes.

They do not respect education. Books are just paper for donkeys to bite and eat,
And they regurgitate knowledge only as eaten paper, and then they loudly bray.
Therefore, dear kinsmen, let us remove the pain inflicted by those whose nature
Is to do evil, and throw that pain far away. As an antidote for their poisoned act,

Let us dedicate ourselves to diligent learning and research, and rebuild our nation.
Let us collect rare and useful books from everywhere, in thousands, in each home
And keep them for our country being freed. Let us take cunning cues from trees
And blooms like bamboo, lilies and lotus, which start re-sprouting, and flowering
As soon as water returns, even after months, in dried and cracked up clayed soils.
We will rise again very soon from our ashes, like the phoenix. Of that we're sure!

THE JAFFNA CENTRAL LIBRARY

**Extracted from: Puthumai Penn:
Souvenir of the Photographic Exhibition, 1992
organised by International Federation of Tamils, London.**

In the late forties leading educationists felt that Jaffna needed a Library of significance. A library association was inaugurated and the Municipal Council was advised to administer the Trust Fund. A new building was to be built for the Jaffna Central Library and to equip it in such a manner so as to make it become a cultural centre in the truest and fullest sense.

The Library was meant to reflect Tamil culture within and Dravidian architecture without. The chief architect of Madras Mr. V.M.Narasimhan drew up plans for the building.

After discussions with heads of local bodies, educational institutions, teachers, school inspectors, doctors, lawyers and governmental officials, Dr. S.R.Ranganathan, Professor of Librarianship at the University of Delhi came to the conclusion, that the Central Library should be sited in Jaffna Town. The second step was to establish branch libraries in each of the wards in the Jaffna Municipal area. The third stage was to expand the scheme by establishing similar branch libraries in each of the adjoining local body's areas until the entire Jaffna district was embraced by this scheme. The next step was to affiliate and manage the libraries of the various schools and colleges in the Jaffna district as branch libraries and the final step was to provide a mobile service.

This library was to be a model for East Asia in the matter of library facilities.

The Central Government and the various local bodies and educational institutions were to contribute money to finance this scheme. The public were also asked to donate generously and to

create endowments for the benefit of the movement. For the Central Library alone half a million rupees were needed.

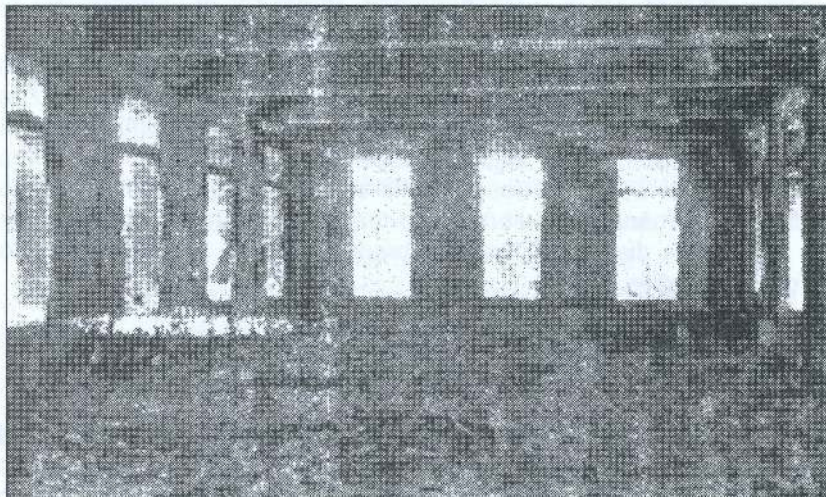
Rev Father T.M.F.Long who was one of the prime movers of this library scheme travelled to America and was able to get a very generous response for this appeal. With help from various quarters and several individuals the library was begun and completed within the set period.

This excellent building housed some of the most treasured and priceless volumes of Tamil language, literature, culture, religion, history and tradition. By 1981 this library housed several thousands of ancient rare publications and "Olai" - leaf scroll manuscripts.

But the Sinhala chauvinist government, could not bear to see this treasure trove in Jaffna and in 1981, the Armed forces burnt it down completely in two attempts. This act of arson was committed ironically when a Minister of state was in Jaffna.

What a wanton destruction! What an irreparable loss!

BURNT DOWN LIBRARY BUILDING



HELP REBUILD THE JAFFNA LIBRARY

—A. Kandappah

It is reported that the Government is taking active steps to reconstruct the Jaffna Public Library, destroyed in 1982 by deliberate conspiracy hatched by powerful men from the South in authority then and carried out physically by bus-loads of armed men transported from Colombo to the horror of the people of Jaffna.

The fact that these thugs were enthusiastically helped by some misguided men of the forces then stationed in Jaffna was also an indication that the rapidly thinning link uniting the Tamil and the Sinhalese in one motherland is being rudely snapped. One, therefore, sees the proposed action now is in many ways an act of collective atonement aimed at healing the deep wounds inflicted on the Tamil psyche by the pre-planned destruction of Tamil culture—a sanctified place of learning. This bestial act of coercion and armed thuggery on the unarmed people of Jaffna became, quite rightly, an object of international condemnation and marred the fair name of the majority community in this country—most of whom not merely were innocent of this despicable crime but even today condemn it in the most unequivocal terms. The price the country has paid since then when Northern youth, not merely refused to yield to this intimidation; but also decided on armed resistance as the final recourse through extra-parliamentary means to assert what they considered as their legitimate and inalienable rights.

It is reported that the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs under the Chairmanship of an influential Cabinet Minister will head this Committee, that will be formed of distinguished citizens in the country drawn from the major communities. The Government's action is to be applauded, because what was destroyed was not merely a structure and some books but the sentiments and susceptibilities of an ancient and cultured people. The act was aimed at bringing to its knees a proud people with a very strong cultural ethos to maintain which they will be prepared, as we can see now, to go to great lengths. The

process of restoration and the restoration itself should not merely attempt to capture repairing the structure alone. The Committee should show the country and the world that what was destroyed belonged to ALL SRI LANKANS. And, the restoration is in fact the restoration of one of Sri Lanka's greatest and proudest cultural heritages and as many Sri Lankans as possible from all communities-in whatever humble sum, must be asked to contribute to this important effort at national integration. No doubt many a friendly country will come forward to re-do the damage done and this indeed must be welcome, because it is a tribute to the esteem with which this much-maligned land is held by the world community. However, nothing will match the spontaneous gesture of our people helping in cash and kind to redo a national outrage so that we can all come out of this collective shame.

I am reminded of the restoration of the Coventry Cathedral in England after the 2nd World War, brought down by the firepower of the German Luftwaffe. When plans for restoration were known many German Pilots, who took part in the air raids came along from Germany, some of them carrying symbolic bricks and other material and helped re-build the Cathedral. The Architects of the Cathedral cordoned off and have marked for preservation the destroyed part of the Cathedral so that posterity will know that at some point of man's irrational anger and behaviour he acted no different to a beast. The very same men who were part of the process of destruction of the Coventry Cathedral, in this act of atonement when tempers calmed – helped rebuild what they destroyed. Today, carcasses of the destroyed Cathedral and the serene and beautiful new Coventry Cathedral are there for everyone to see. This is indeed one of the finest examples of the humaneness of man that came out of the debris of the Second World War. I hope our own team that goes to restore the Library also will set aside a part of the destroyed building to show generations to come the good and the bad this country went through in her recent bloody history so that this shall never, ever be repeated.

The time to forgive and forget in Sri Lanka has come. If we drool on the wounds of the past we will lose both the present and the future. The people of this generation have suffered enough. We have a duty to provide a safe, secure and harmonious land to our children, as did our fathers to us and their fathers to them. The government's effort to re-build the Jaffna Public Library to its past glory and the nation's effort at trying to unite in a spirit of fraternity and peace must be fully supported by each and everyone in this land.

NEW JAFFNA LIBRARY DOUBLE SIZE OF OLD COMPLEX

— E. Weerapperuma

The new Jaffna Public Library will be more than double its original size but the new building complex will retain the same classical architectural style, the *Sunday Observer* learns.

The National Integration Ministry in collaboration with the "SUDU NELUM" Movement is overseeing the estimated Rs. 300 million to build the new Library. The Jaffna Public Library was burnt down by rampaging gangs in 1981, and has remained in ruins to date.

The Urban Development Authority has estimated that the reconstruction work on the existing building alone would cost about Rs. 90 million. There will be two new blocks added at a cost of Rs. 195 million while the estimated cost of furniture and fittings is around Rs. 20 million.

The Government has appointed a Committee of experts to advise on the reconstruction to suit the needs and aspirations of the people, Committee sources said.

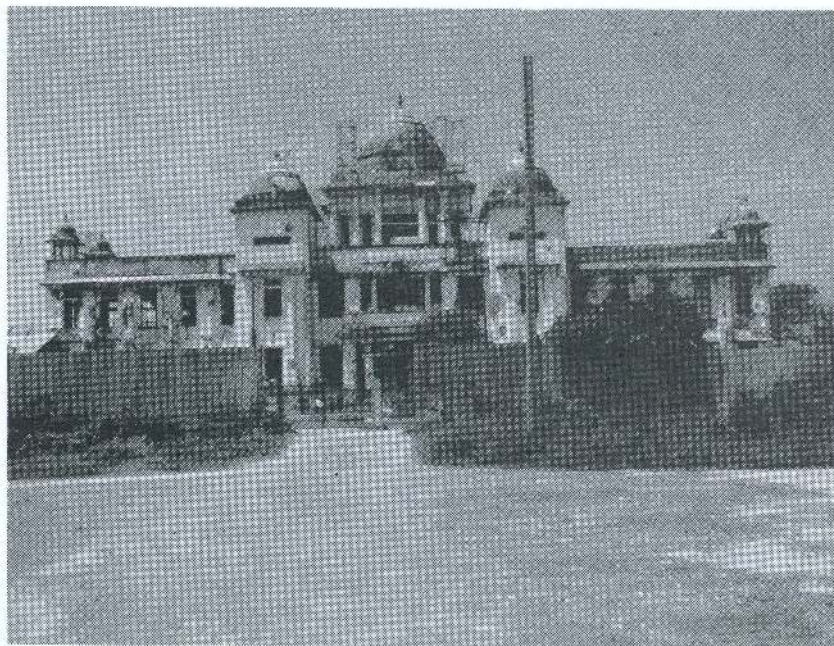
The Committee considering the fact that Jaffna being the main city in the North and one of the major urban centres in the country has suggested that the new library should be comprehensively equipped with reference section, special collection section, children's section, research room, study room, lending section, newspaper, periodical and audio visual sections and facilities for handicapped (disabled) readers. There will be a computer system.

Apart from the principal committee, five sub committees have been appointed to look into various aspects of the reconstruction of the Library. The destroyed library building consisted of a land area of 27,880 square feet. The proposed new complex will cover a land area of 93144.50 square feet according to the plans drawn up.

Two reports on the Library have been handed over to the Library Committee for their perusal by former Assistant Director of the National Library Service and presently the Librarian at the Islamic Centre, S.M.Kamaldeen and former Librarian at the Peradeniya University H.A.I.Gunatileke.

The Committee is very optimistic that they will have a large number of book donations coming into the library. According to Committee sources a number of libraries in the world possess important material relevant to Tamil Culture and Civilisation and the committee hopes to canvass their support to have these records as microfilm copies to the Jaffna Public Library.

Library Awaiting Attention 1997



NOTE ON HISTORY OF JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY

— V.S.Thurairajah
Architect

**From a letter from V.S.Thurairajah, Architect,
to the Sri Lanka Government controlled
Ceylon Daily News, 17 July 1996.**

It was on the night of June 1, 1981 that the Jaffna Public Library with its priceless collection of books and some rare manuscripts was turned to ashes. Half a century of toil and dedication by several individuals and institutions that built up the reservoir of knowledge, was to be the target of some vandals. Would it be realised that the loss is not just to the North of Sri Lanka, but to the whole of Sri Lanka and the international community of learning?.....

....At this time, it is relevant to study the history of this world renowned library. In 1933, a well-wisher named K. M. Chellappah, out of his desire to share knowledge with others was conducting a free library in his house. Appreciating the idea of Mr. Chellappah, some lovers of learning got together and formed a committee and met on June 9, 1934 to establish a Library. Issac Thambiah, who was the High Court judge of Jaffna at that time, was elected chairman and K. M. Chellappah was elected secretary.

Due to the effort of this committee, on August 1, 1934, a library was opened in a small rented room on Hospital Road, Jaffna, in front of the electrical station. At inception, this library had only 844 books and about 30 newspapers and magazines, yet it was patronised by all citizens, young and old, with yearning for knowledge.

The library grew a large number of books and more space was needed. In January 1935, it was shifted to a rented building on Main Street, Jaffna. In 1936, the present municipal building and Town

Hall was built (it was razed to the ground). This library was shifted to a building near the Town Hall.

At that time the membership fee was only Rs. 3/-. With this subscription, lending of books started. The popularity of the library was such that there was a demand for a permanent building with all modern facilities.

A conference was held under the chairmanship of the first Mayor of Jaffna Sam Sabapathy, to find ways and means of collecting funds to build a new library. It was decided to conduct a carnival, music and dance recitals by Indian artistes, sale of lottery tickets etc., Large sums beyond the expectation of the organisers, was collected. A library committee was formed in 1953, Rev. Fr. Long, who was the rector of St. Patrick's College at that time, was also a member in this committee (it should be noted here that Fr. Long died of a heart attack when he heard of the burning of the library).

The contribution made by Fr. Long was so great that his statue was erected in front of the library by the public. The library committee invited a leading specialist in library science, Prof. S. R. Ranganathan from Delhi, to advise on the formation of the library to international standard. It also invited K. S. Narasimman, who was at that time the architect to the Madras government, an authority in Dravidian architecture.

A master plan was drawn and the front wing was to be built as stage one and the rear wing to be built later as stage two. The foundation was laid for stage on March 29 1953, in the presence of several educationists and well-wishers, not only from Jaffna, but from all over the island and from India.

The first stage of the building was completed and on October 11, 1959, the building was ceremonially opened by the then Mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiappah. A children's section was opened on November 03, 1967. Asia Foundation donated books worth Rs. 9,500/-. At that time this amount was a large sum.

An auditorium was opened in the first floor in 1971 for the purpose of holding lectures, seminars, literary and cultural performances. Valuable books and centuries - old ola manuscripts were collected from the time of Mr. Chellappah in 1933.

There were about 97,000 valuable books, old newspapers and magazines up to the torching of the library on June 01, 1981. Alas! all these rare collections were set on fire by some insane human beings. The burnt building remained without repair as a monument to the vandalism of man.

In 1981, the Municipality of Jaffna, under the leadership of the then Mayor, Rasa Viswa-nathan, obtained the advice of engineers to ascertain whether the building was structurally sound to renovate it. The engineers advised against the renovation as they were doubtful about the strength of the building. Then the Municipality decided to build stage two of the master plan. The same year, I was appointed architect to design stage two of the building.

It was decided to keep the same details of Dravidian architecture found in stage one. The estimated cost of the building at that time was about 11 million rupees. The Jaffna Municipal Council decided to start a fund-raising and book collection campaign in Colombo. The Mayor appointed a committee with myself as its chairman.

The Colombo committee decided to organise a "Jaffna Public Library Week" from May 15 - 21, 1982 and a flag day on May 21, 1982. The press in Sri Lanka gave tremendous publicity to these events. On the first day, within an hour, a sum of Rs. 90,000/- was collected. Several businessmen, social service organisations, religious organisations and members of the public came in the hundreds and donated cash and books.

It was like a week of solemn devotion and dedication that people of all walks of life disregarding differences of caste, creed, community or religion converged on Saraswathy Hall, as in a pilgrimage to hand over their gifts for the restoration of the house of knowledge. Thousands of books were collected and sent to Jaffna.

With the funds collected the construction work on stage two commenced in June 1982. The building was nearing completion by June 1983, when the second calamity took place. The war broke out and this building received a severe beating by bullets, shells and bombs. What remains today is a structure with shell and bullet holes and blackened walls with the smoke of burnt books. can anyone bring back the valuable ola manuscripts and books which have turned into ashes?

WHO WILL DONATE THE VALUABLE OLA LEAVES ?

N. Parameswaran

Library Assistant, Public Library, Jaffna

While Sri Lanka is celebrating its 50th Golden year of "Independence", the Jaffna Municipal Public Library celebrates its 150th year of origin without any pomp and pleasure, very silently.

The Jaffna Public Library was originated 100 years ahead of the Independence of Sri Lanka. This Public Library was originated in 1848 by the Assistant Government Agent, Sir William Twynam.

The reading Room, which was started by the Secretary of the Courts, Jaffna Mr. F. C. Grainier in 1842, was later developed as Public Library by Sir Twynam in 1848. When Sir Twynam took up his duties as Government Agent, Jaffna, on 3.6.1894, he convened a meeting for the development of Jaffna Public Library.

In this meeting, it was decided to get Rs.50 only as donation from the Government to purchase books from Muddi and Brothers. Mr. Chellappah of Atchuveli, printed hand bills about the development of Jaffna Public Library, on 11.12.1933 and also advertised about this Public Library in newspapers and collected funds for this Library.

A decision was taken on 9.6.1936 in a meeting held at Jaffna Central College, that Ola Leaves to be bought and preserved.

This Jaffna Public Library started functioning in a shop at Hospital Road, Jaffna, from 1.8.1934. The Jaffna Town development Board had taken charge of this Library from 1.1.1935.

The Jaffna Public Library started functioning in a house by the side of the Jaffna Rest House, no sooner the Jaffna Town Development Board, had taken charge the Library. With the idea of developing the service of this Library further, Mr. Sam A. Sabapathy

and Father Long had a meeting on June 6, 1952. It was decided at this meeting, to hold a carnival and sell raffle tickets. In order to materialise this decision, Father Long went to England and had meetings with the Library Experts to put up the best Library in South East Asia.

On the advices of these Experts, Father Long came down to Tanjavur and met Mr. S.R.Ranganathan who was considered as the Father of Librarianship.

On the request made by Father Long, Architect Expert Mr. Narasimman, made a visit to Jaffna North. Mr. S.R.Ranganathan selected a suitable place, close to the Jaffna Muniyappar Temple, to build the Public Library. They also prepared the Plan of the Public Library on 16.10.1953.

On 29.3.1954, a foundation stone was laid, according to Hindu rites. At this laying of the Foundation stone, the British High Commissioner Sir Cyril Ice, American High Commissioner Mr. Philip Grove and the First Secretary of the Indian High Commission were present.

There were four carnivals held in 1952, 1954, 1959 and in 1963. Funds, more than expected were collected, by selling raffle tickets and flags. The first phase of this building was declared open on 11.10.1959. On 3.11.67 the children's Section and in 1971 an Auditorium, was also opened and the second phase was also completed.

The Jaffna Public Library which was built by Mr. Twynam and Dr. S.R.Ranganathan has a good historical background to his credit, and such a famous Jaffna Public Library was set ablaze allegedly by some thugs in uniform. The Jaffna Public Library was not famous for its building or for the number of books, it had within it. It was famous for its collection.

When this library was set on fire, it had 97,000 books, 10,000 Manuscripts in its possession. Apart from this, in the section where Ola Leaves and Ola books had been kept, there were valuable Ola leaves. Out of these old valuable Books, Catholic religious books (including some Spanish Books) that were released in 1586. The History book written by Robert Knox in 1660 when he was in Kandy Prison. History

Book written by Phillips Baldias about the Ceylon History, during Dutch period were some remarkable and noteworthy books.

Apart from this, so many Ola Leaves in Sanskrit about Religion and Ayurvedic Medicine, too were burnt to ashes.

The present Government of Mrs Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaranatunga, has said that, the burnt Jaffna Public Library would be renovated, and donations were received from many foreign countries.

She can if necessary provide a Library with computer facilities, but she cannot provide, the valuable Books and Ola Leaves that had been burnt to ashes.

Burning of Jaffna Library Remembered

Tamil Net 01.06.1998, (<http://www.tamilnet.com/reports/>)

People in Jaffna will wear black ribbon today to mark the burning of the Jaffna Public Library 17 years ago, said PLOTE and EPRLF sources in Jaffna. The library, burnt to the ground on the 1st of June 1981 by Sri Lankan Police, contained the largest collection of Tamil Literature in Asia, a collection that included many irreplaceable manuscripts.

Widely regarded by the Tamil community as an act of cultural vandalism, the destruction of the library by the predominantly Sinhalese police has long been a point of resentment.

Temporary Jaffna library opened

Tamil Net 14.01.1998 (<http://www.tamilnet.com/reports/>)

The temporary Jaffna Public Library was opened this noon by Sri Lanka's media minister Mr. Mangala Samaraweera under very heavy security. Persons invited for the function were checked at several points.

PLOTE's Mayoral candidate for the Jaffna Municipality Manikkam Daasan, who is also the group's military wing leader, who was one of the people officially invited by the army for the function turned back at the entrance in protest over the checking procedure.

He objected to being searched at the second check point at the entrance of the venue and turned back.

Sources said that army check points were set up at every 25 yards on the way to the venue of the Library opening.

Minister for Education and Higher education Richard Pathirana and deputy minister for social services B.Premalal Dissanayaka appointed the Media minister to Jaffna today.

The education minister took part in a function to distribute free school books to children in the town.

The original Jaffna library was torched by Sri Lankan police in 1981. At the time it held the best collection of Tamil literature in Asia, including many irreplaceable manuscripts.

Widely regarded by the Tamil community as an act of cultural vandalism, the destruction of the library by the predominantly Sinhalese police has long been a point of resentment.

The PA government is attempting to win Jaffna residents' hearts and minds by rebuilding the library. However, it is the loss of the literature within the building that is felt most here.

Reluctant officials threatened by SLA

Tamil Net 13.01.1998 (<http://www.tamilnet.com/reports/>)

A top local government administrator of the Jaffna Municipal Council was threatened with arrest yesterday for refusing to cooperate with the Sri Lankan Army in connection with a major state function to be held tomorrow in the Jaffna town, said sources in the peninsula.

SLA soldiers in uniform visited this officer, who did not wish to be named, about 6.00 p.m. last evening and told him that he would be arrested as a member of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam(LTTE) for not extending his support to the military and the Sri Lanka Government.

This Tamil official told the military authorities that the Jaffna Library, scheduled to be opened tomorrow morning by Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera, a close confidant of the Sri Lankan President would give the wrong signals in an atmosphere charged with political rivalry as parties campaign for the forthcoming local government elections in Jaffna.

The flag hoisting ceremony by the minister at the official opening of the Jaffna is scheduled for 9.00 am tomorrow.

The Peoples' Alliance (PA) Government is using the reconstruction of the Jaffna Library as a symbol of the restoration of peace to the war torn North and a gesture to win the hearts and minds of the Jaffna people.

However critics say that at a time when large parts of the Peninsula lie devastated, symbolic acts such as this are meaningless.

Mangala Samaraweera, has been associated with the library rebuilding project through the Sudu Nelum movement (White Lotus), The Sudu Nelum movement is a propaganda arm of the SLFP, A handful of members of the Sudu Nelum Movement in the peninsula are contesting the local polls under the banner of the

Eelam Peoples' Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) for the Jaffna Municipal Council.

Meanwhile free text books were distributed to school children at Vembadi Girls School in Jaffna town by media Minister Mangala Samaraweera this morning, said sources in Jaffna.

With him were Sri Lanka Army's Jaffna Town commander Susantha Mendis and Director of Education, Jaffna District, R.Ratnarajah.

This gesture by the Sri Lanka Government on the eve of the municipal council elections is seen as a move muster support for the Sudu Nelum activists who are contesting the Jaffna municipal elections.

Library Under Construction, 1st Nov 2002



Tragic Episode Of The Jaffna Library, Sri Lanka

65

Library books for Sri Lanka

The Vine: Northampton Diocesan News April 2002 No.148 p.2

Now back home in Aylesbury, but with his heart still firmly focused on Sri Lanka, is St Joseph's parishioner Joe Pilendiram.

In August 2000 *The Vine* reported Joe's return to his native land and his horror at the ravages caused by the 18 year old ongoing civil war between Government forces and the Tamil Tigers. "Innocent parties like the Church and ordinary civilians are the victims," Joe told *The Vine*.

While in Sri Lanka Joe was working for Bishop Thomas Savundaranayagam of Jaffna and through *The Vine* Joe appealed to the people of Northampton Diocese for help for the large number of war orphans being cared for by the Church.

"There was a very generous response from many people in the Diocese," said Joe. "Bishop Thomas said he will cherish the memories of all those benefactors and I myself will treasure the support of the people of Northampton."

During Joe's time in Sri Lanka the Jaffna Seminary was moved to a new site in a refugee camp, safe from the fighting and bombing. And work began to rebuild and replenish the library, bombed time and time again by the opposing forces.

Since leaving Jaffna Joe has spent his time begging for books for the library on behalf of Bishop Savundaranayagam. He has traveled to the USA and Australia and is now continuing his appeal in England.

"I am directing most of my efforts to collecting books suitable for the final five years of study for the priesthood," he said. "So far the response from bishops, priests and lay people has been overwhelming."

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN SRI LANKA

S. Sivanayagam
Former Editor - Saturday Review,
Tamil Nation and Hot Spring

Dear Ambassador Ashley Wills,

I have a copy of the official text in English of a speech you have reportedly made at the Jaffna Public Library on Wednesday, 7th March. I do not know from which "Jaffna Public Library" you made your address, but as far as the Tamil people are concerned their Jaffna Public Library, consisting of ninety odd thousand volumes was burned down nearly twenty years ago, on the night of 1st June 1981. Since in your speech you speak of terrorism and violence, let us start talking of burning of libraries. You will concede Sir that nowhere else in this "globalising world" that you are referring to, are libraries put to the fire. I presume you are sufficiently informed as to who did the burning? Would you consider that as an act of violence? If terrorism is too strong a word for it? Or would you wave it aside as a simple non-violent act of incendiarism because the criminals who perpetrated that act were Sinhalese goons, inspired by the presence in Jaffna of two Sinhalese cabinet ministers of the Sri Lanka government? Surely you can't?

Mr. Ambassador, you say you have lived in Sri Lanka for six months. I have lived in that country for 53 years, born and bred there along with my Tamil forefathers for several centuries; long before America was discovered. So I should know that country better. Today, I am 70 years old, having spent 17 years in the evening of my life searching for some country in "this globalizing world" to take me in. You say you have lived in Romania, South Africa, the West Indies, Yugoslavia, Belgium, India; in good comfort I believe. I have been to as many countries as you have – even more – but as a refugee, a wanderer, cut off from my family, looking for safety. That was because

that country which in my naivety I thought was my own made me a "wanted man". Not because I was a terrorist Sir, not even by the American yardstick. All I did was to edit a badly printed weekly paper from Jaffna – the SATURDAY REVIEW. In your own country you are familiar with the power of the Press, where newspapermen could even bring down Presidents like that unlamented Richard Nixon. What happened to those newspapermen? Nothing. They only write books about their achievement. They make money. They prosper and flourish, thanks to what they did.

In my case I did not attempt to unmake Presidents. I wrote condemning, yes, condemning the anti-democratic, anti-Tamil military actions of President Junius Richard Jayawardene, who you might have heard of, was a great friend of your country and was nicknamed "Yankee Dick" by his own Sinhalese people. The price I paid for that was – the paper was banned, the editorial office was sealed, and the police began hunting for me. I had to flee to India by a midnight country boat to save my life. Thank God for small mercies they did not burn down the office as they did to the Tamil newspaper – the EELANADU in Jaffna in 1981; yes, by the same arsonists who burned down the Jaffna Library. Burning of libraries and newspaper offices and bookshops belonging to Tamils (not to mention burning of Tamil humans in the Sinhala riots of 1958) has been an interesting pastime in that country Sir, where fortunately you have lived only for six months. (Incidentally, I have some news for you. One of your predecessors in Colombo, Ambassador John Reed did extend the great courtesy of calling on us at the SATURDAY REVIEW office on a weekend visit to Jaffna in 1982. That I think was a small American tribute to what was after all an anti-Establishment paper)

History Sir is a great teacher. One cannot judge the present with any sense of fairness unless one gets to know the past. Let me take you back to an experience that happened to me 45 years ago ! Whatever happened to me has been happening to thousands of my fellow Tamils over the years. So let me only offer my own experience as a sample. On the morning of June 6, 1956, I was nearly pushed out of a moving train near Colombo by a gang of thugs. But for some hand of Providence that saved me, I should not be living today to write to you this. I would have been another nameless statistics among other nameless Tamils manhandled, robbed, humiliated and killed by marauding mobs over the years. Why did they want to kill me? Simple. Because they saw in me a Tamil.

Today, in the year of the Lord 2001 you make a nice, erudite speech, and of all places in government-ravaged Jaffna, and believe me Sir, I get a funny feeling in my solar plexus reading your good advice. You are after all addressing the Tamil people in Jaffna, (although there is one Sinhalese soldier there today to every ten Tamil, man, woman and child), a Tamil people who have gone through violence from mobs and terrorism from the State for 45 years now. Can you see that? You are of course asking these wretched Tigers to give up terrorism and violence. What you are asking Sir is not exactly that. No Sir. What you are really asking them is to stop overrunning Sri Lankan army camps! Let us be honest about it. This talk of terrorism is only a neat cover to hide the endless failures on the war front.

The Tigers are not born-violent, born killers from Mars or some outer space. Believe it or not Sir, they are also Tamils, a new generation of Tamils who are sensitised to the endless sufferings of their people, and who are ready to give up their lives so that succeeding generations of Tamils could live in peace in what was once their homeland. They have watched their past leaders making brave speeches in parliament, seen them crying hoarse about the Tamil plight from public platforms, they have even seen their democratically elected leaders led by that gentle Christian Chelvanayakam sitting in silent Gandhian protest against the Sinhala Only Bill at Galle Face Green on June 5 1956, only to be mauled by a violent mob in the presence of the country's guardians of the law, the policemen. They have heard of their kith and kin slaughtered by the hundreds in the anti-Tamil riots of 1958, even poured petrol on their persons and burned alive! Would you be interested to know that the Tiger leader Prabhakaran was a 3-year old child when all that happened.

One cannot start reading history from a halfway point. If one wants to read American history, or what little of it is there, one has to begin with George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and come down the line. One does not start the story by talking of the American chemical assault on the Vietnamese people. Nor does one start writing American history with that best known act of international terrorism – the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima which killed well over one hundred thousand human beings. The armed struggle of the Tamil Tigers Sir is a late arrival in Sri Lankan history, a logical consequence of a quarter century of Sinhala violence and the sorry failure of peaceful non-violent Tamil protest over the same period. It was one of your

Presidents, the late assassinated John F. Kennedy who said: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable". That Sir is where our Sinhalese brothers who have been ruling the country for 53 years made their mistake.

Mr. Ambassador, do I detect the tone of a world policeman when you say: "...we reject the idea of an independent Tamil state carved out of Sri Lankan territory; we regard the LTTE as a terrorist organization and do not believe it is the sole representative of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka... With all respect to you Sir, your syllogism is flawed. While your government is certainly entitled to whatever views you hold about the LTTE, the question of REJECTING or accepting the idea of an independent Tamil state is surely a matter between the Sinhalese and the Tamil peoples. Suppose at some point of time in history the Sinhalese people come round to accepting the idea of an independent Tamil state, would your government still reject it?

You refer to the fact how some people fit facts to the theory as in the story of the Procrustean bed. In quoting Salman Rushdie where you say: "...cultures collide constantly in the modern world, crisscrossing at high velocity; one moment we are in a village with a charming sense of remoteness; in the next, we turn on TV and are connected instantly to a global village.." you are merely stating the theory. May I tell you why the facts do not fit the theory when it comes to the Tamil people? Have you ever seen on the American TV, the CNN, the war that the Sri Lankan government has been waging in the northeast of the island? CNN has shown the bombing of the Central Bank in Colombo, yes, but have you seen on your TV the bombing of the Navaly Church in Jaffna? Or the bombing of the Nagerkoil School in Jaffna? Are you saying, by fitting facts to your theory that Jaffna is OUTSIDE that global village of yours?

One of the unfortunate facts in life Sir, is that peacemakers generally give good advice to the victims, not to the villains. It was a well-thought out speech that you made in Jaffna, as speeches go, but how one wishes you would also make similar addresses in Colombo – at the Bandaranaike Memorial Centre for example.

S.Sivanayagam
Paris
France

TWO DECADES AFTER THE BURNING DOWN OF THE JAFFNA LIBRARY IN SRILANKA

— Vilani Peris

When the Taliban regime in Afghanistan announced and then carried out the destruction of the massive stone Buddha statues at Bamiyan, the action justifiably provoked outrage around the world. In Sri Lanka, however, the reaction in ruling circles and among the Buddhist hierarchy was mixed with a good deal of rank hypocrisy.

For decades the political establishment in Colombo has promoted the chauvinist view that Sri Lanka is a Buddhist and Sinhalese country in which Tamils and other minorities must take second place. The deliberate stirring up of communal sentiment by successive governments led to the imposition of discriminatory measures against Tamils, anti-Tamil pogroms and in 1983 to the ongoing war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

When the Taliban destroyed the Bamiyan statues, political figures competed with each other to express their disgust at what was taking place. The Buddhist clergy took to the streets in protest and promised to build replicas in Sri Lanka. P M Ratnasiri Wickramanayake, known for his Sinhala chauvinist views and links to the clergy, rapidly headed for Pakistan to see what could be done to save the statues.

There was a complete silence in the Colombo media, however, over the parallels in Sri Lanka to the Taliban's cultural vandalism notably to the destruction of the Jaffna Library in 1981. It is only now, two decades after the library was burnt to the ground, that a replacement building is finally being built in the centre of Jaffna town, 400km north of Colombo. Construction has begun and, according to the engineers in charge, the building should be completed by December.

Nothing, however, can be done about the thousands of priceless Tamil books, manuscripts and ola [dried palm] leaf documents that went up in flames in 1981. Jaffna has been an important Tamil cultural centre for centuries. Some books such as *Yalpana Vaipavamalai* a history of Jaffna were literally irreplaceable, as the library contained the only existing copy.

The library, which was inaugurated in 1841 and then moved to a more majestic building in 1950, had one of the finest collections in South Asia and was known throughout the world. I was popular among intellectuals, teachers and students both Sinhalese and Tamil and was used extensively by ordinary working people. Its destruction, two years before the outbreak of the country's civil war, was an outrage aimed against the cultural heritage of the country's Tamil minority and deliberately calculated to inflame communal sentiment.

A group of racist thugs, instigated by the United National Party (UNP) government, carried out the arson. Eyewitnesses at the time reported that uniformed police accompanied by the gang, brought from the south of the island. They arrived by truck in the dead of the night of May 31, 1981 and set fire to the library buildings.

The fire provoked widespread anger in Jaffna setting off three days of mayhem. Four Tamils were taken from their homes by police and killed. Sinhalese thugs also set fire to the head office of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in Jaffna and then looted about 100 Tamil-owned houses and shops before setting them ablaze as well.

The house belonging to TULF parliamentarian, V. Yogeswaran was destroyed. The offices and press of the Tamil language news paper, *Ealanadu*, were burnt to the ground. Thugs also defaced or demolished a number of statues of Tamil cultural and religious figures erected at road junctions in the town. The rampage only came to a halt after elections for the District Development Council (DDC) was completed on June 4.

The immediate pretext for the destruction of the library was the killing of two police constables at a TULF election meeting in Jaffna on May 31. No one ever claimed responsibility for the deaths, which took place in a climate of provocation and intimidation whipped up by pro-UNP gangs sent to Jaffna for the election. Police and thugs

attacked TULF supporters at the meeting and later that night burnt the library.

A campaign of thuggery :

The campaign of harassment and thuggery that followed was aimed at intimidating voters and providing a cover for the systematic stuffing of the ballot box to ensure the election of at least some UNP candidates. The UNP established the system of District Development Councils in 1980 in an attempt to placate the demands of Tamils for democratic rights. While the TULF leaders supported the DDC, younger Tamils opposed the charade. As hostility began to grow, the UNP government resorted to more ruthless methods to ensure the outcome of the vote.

Throughout the lead up to the election, the government maintained a media blackout on the crimes being perpetrated in Jaffna by its thugs. On June 3, the presidential office issued a statement insisting that even through Jaffna was under emergency rule, the election would go ahead. In an effort to make the Tamil minority the scapegoat for its own thuggery, PM R. Premadasa announced in parliament that a commission would be appointed to probe the deaths of the policemen and a UNP candidate. No official inquiry was held into the destruction of the library.

On the same day, two senior UNP ministers Gamini Dissanayaka, a close political associate of President J.R. Jayawardena, and Cyril Mathew arrived in Jaffna with more thugs to direct operations. They were widely accused of ballot rigging to such an extent that in some areas there were more ballots than voters. Their arrival coincided with the arrest of TULF leader A. Amirthalingam. On election day police detained three more leaders Navaratnam, Dharmaratnam and Sivasithambaram. Despite these actions the UNP could muster only 23,302 votes while the TULF received 263,269 votes winning all DDC seats.

The UNP government, like the previous Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led coalition, relied on stirring up Sinhala chauvinism to shore up its own base amid growing discontent caused by a deteriorating economy and its own turn to open market reforms. Its ability to do so depended above all on the betrayal of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, which in 1964 had abandoned the perspective of socialist internationalism and joined the SLFP government of Sirimo Bandara

naike. In 1972, as part of the SLFP coalition, LSSP minister Colvin R. de Silva was responsible for entrenching Buddhism as the state religion and a Sinhala-only language policy in the constitution. When the UNP won office in a landslide in 1977 as a result of widespread opposition to the coalition's policies, it further inflamed communal sentiment.

Cyril Mathew, one of the two ministers dispatched to Jaffna immediately after the burning of the library, was notorious for his anti-Tamil racism. He was the author of a book entitled *Sinhalese! Rise to Protect Buddhism* and a series of his inflammatory speeches made in 1979 were collected together in a pamphlet *Who is the Tiger*, which was passed from hand to hand.

Other writings indicate the character of the political climate being created by Colombo politicians and the media. A vicious pamphlet entitled *The Diabolical Conspiracy* published in 1980 accused Tamil teachers of giving high marks to Tamil students thus allowing them to enter university in preference to Sinhalese students. This is "a burning question ... exploding within the hearts of Sinhala students, parents and teachers," it stated. Another document denounced Tamil plantation workers warning "we see that Sinhala culture, Buddhism and the up-country villagers will all vanish." It went on to attack Tamil traders, declaring that "the wholesale and retail trade ... is now completely in the hands of Indian nationals."

It was in this atmosphere that the UNP, with the backing of sections of the Buddhist clergy, unleashed groups of Sinhala thugs to physically attack Tamils, their homes and shops not only in the north and east of the island but also in the plantation districts in the central hills. The burning of the Jaffna Library marked a turning point in the process that led to the eruption of war.

The present Peoples Alliance government belatedly announced the decision to rebuild the library in 1998 amid growing demands from the major powers and sections of big business in Sri Lanka for a negotiated end to the war. At a meeting held to establish a temporary library, then PA Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera said: "The present government considers the destruction of the former library by forces of chauvinism and misguided politics as an evil act."

Effort to Rebuild Tamil Library Becomes a Symbol of Sri Lanka's Struggle

CULTURE IN ASHES : THE PATH TO CIVIL WAR

Celia W. Dugger
New York Times Service

Neither then nor now, however, did the PA government seek to identify either the "forces of chauvinism" or the character of their "misguided politics". To do so would raise too many questions about the role of the SLFP and its other allies in the Peoples Alliance in promoting the chauvinist politics that lay behind the burning of the Jaffna library and other outrages against the Tamil minority that led to the outbreak of war.

Jaffna, Sri Lanka- On a fateful night 20 years ago, Sinhalese police officers rampaged through this town's public library, one of the great repositories of the Tamil people's history and culture, and committed an act of ethnic vandalism that helped set this country on a path to civil war.

They stormed into the grand public rooms of one of South Asia's finest libraries and set 97,000 volumes ablaze.

Rare old manuscripts written on palm leaves and stored in fragrant sandalwood boxes, miniature editions of the Ramayana epic from the children's section, yellowing collections of extinct Tamil Language Newspapers — all were consumed in a blaze that convinced many Tamils that the Sinhalese were out to annihilate their very identity.

"Still I feel like crying after 20 years," said Nadarajah Raviraj, now the Mayor of Jaffna, who recalled staring into the flames as a college student. "It is in my memory."

Until recently, the library stood as a gutted monument to the wrongs done to the Tamils, who are mostly Hindu, by the Sinhalese, who are mainly Buddhist and make up three-quarters of the population in this island nation.

Now the library is being rebuilt here in the Tamils' cultural capital. It is a hive of activity, with workers laying bricks and plastering over the bullet holes. But it has not become the symbol of national reconciliation that President Chandrika Kumaratunga had hoped to create, at least not yet.

In 1996, she appointed a commission to restore the building. But the renovation has taken years to get under way. Government officials say the killing of two mayors of Jaffna by Tamil rebels in 1998, as well as severe war-related disruptions of travel and shipping, has caused the delays.

But many Tamils say these are excuses. Whatever the reasons, the trust the President had hoped to build among Tamils for the Sinhalese dominated central government has curdled. In that, the tardy library project is a metaphor for the government's peace initiatives.

Everything has taken too long. The constitution that she said would give Tamils greater autonomy to rule themselves in the north and east is unrealised. Peace talks with the Tamil rebels have yet to begin. And some Tamil leaders who were with her at first have drifted away.

"All these Sinhalese majority governments have shown step motherly treatment of Tamils," said the mayor, Mr. Raviraj, who belongs to a Tamil political party that had helped the president draft s constitution. "The Tamils are not treated equally and that is why the ethnic war is still going on."

The burning of the library on June 1, 1981, and deadly anti-Tamil riots two years later were the pivots that radicalized young people and turned a largely peaceful movement for Tamil rights into a civil war waged by separatist rebels, students of the conflict say. The war has claimed more than 62,000 lives in a nation of 19 million people.

The destruction of the library had a particular resonance. Many Tamils come from the arid north, where they are in the majority

and had risen to prominence in the professions and the civil service through devotion to education. The attack on the library was seen as an assault on their aspirations.

"The terms on which the Sinhalese and Tamils accepted each other, the value system that kept us together as a country and a civilisation, were broken by these two events," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, director of the International Center for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, who is herself from a family of Jaffna Tamils.

The initial destruction of the library was already part of a cycle of vengeance. The police are believed to have burned it- with the tacit acceptance or outright connivance of cabinet ministers in Jaffna that night- to retaliate for the killing of two police officers.

But in the year since, the library has been caught in the crossfire of the war. It was restored in part and reopened in 1984.

Sunlight again streamed into its towering windows by day, while lamps inside cast a glow on the town at night. The periodical room echoed with the crackling sound of newspaper pages being turned.

But in spring of 1985, Tamil Tiger rebels attacked the police station near the library. The army was stationed nearby, in the Jaffna Fort.

One afternoon, said Sulochana Ragunathan, a librarian, she heard militants from one of the many separatist groups-not Tigers, she thinks firing from near the library toward the fort.

Ms. Ragunathan said she phoned the army to ask for safe passage out for the people in the library. In the conversation she found herself denying that the militants had been allowed to wage their fight from inside the library itself.

As the staff and students in the library filed out later that day, Ms. Ragunathan said, she glanced back and saw soldiers swiftly going in.

That night, hours after curfew had emptied the green, she heard the blasts of bombs she assumed were planted by the army in the lending room. Tens of thousands of books on the newly stocked shelves were shredded, she said.

She said she believes the army did the deed, but the militants must share the blame.

"They didn't care about human life or consequences," she said. "They only thought about what they wanted. They shouldn't have used the library for their fight. Who are the losers? We the public."

The library has been empty of books and readers ever since. In the late 1980's, the stately green, with its dignified public buildings, turned into a battlefield and the libraries empty shell grew ever more pocked and scarred.

In 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam took control of the town. Five years later, the government took it back. But the Tigers still desperately want to reclaim it.

In 1998, in quick succession, they killed two mayors of Jaffna, both from a Tamil party that favours a peaceful settlement. For the following three years, Jaffna was without a mayor.

Mr. Raviraj, who was deputy mayor in 1998, did not become mayor until this January, when he finally dropped the word "acting" from his title. His law practice is in Colombo, the capital, but he comes to Jaffna every month. When people in the town thought a contractor picked by the central government was doing a bad job on the library renovation, Mr. Raviraj yelled about it at public meetings. The contract was terminated. Now the town itself and local Tamil workers are doing the work.

Mr. Raviraj regularly stops by to check in. One recent morning, as he conferred with building supervisors on the roof, sweaty Tamil labourers-many of whose homes were destroyed in the fighting-planned the wood and heaved the cement to raise this library from the ashes for the second, though perhaps not the last time.

A BIBLIOGRAPHER'S LABOUR OF LOVE

J. S. Tissainayagam

Editor, Northeastern Herald

The Ceasefire Agreement has not only brought a halt to murder and mayhem, but also afforded opportunities to many Sri Lankans – especially Tamils – of immense ability, learning and skill, to visit the country of their birth without fear.

Tamils living overseas whose achievements have earned them a reputation and name, have been visiting the northeast over the past eight months since the Agreement was negotiated and given of their knowledge – be it on agriculture and crop management, computer software development, or the rehabilitation of reservoirs and irrigation canals.

One such visitor is a bibliographer and librarian, who lived the last several years in Britain. He is here to lend his expertise and knowledge for the redevelopment of the Jaffna library and similar institutions. What is engaging about the man however is that he already has a remarkable output, produced through sustained but silent labour, which goes to show the commitment he has to his work.

"It took me two years to compile Noolthettam that has 1000 annotated entries," said N. Selvarajah, speaking to the Northeastern Herald.

Selvarajah's beginnings were comparatively modest as the librarian of Chunnakam Ramanathan College in the 1970s. After a stint of being in charge of Sarvodaya's library in the Jaffna District, he became the librarian at the Evelyn Ratnam Institute in Jaffna and later at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Colombo. He went on to found the Ayothy Library Services an organisation devoted to library development and was in charge of two of its publications dealing with library science and bibliography.

His visit to Sri Lanka was partly in connection with the publication of Noolthettam that was launched in Colombo last Sunday. This compilation of 1000 entries is classified into three: according to subject, which are the principal entries, followed by classification on the basis of titles and authors. They are also annotated. Noolthettam is formatted according to the Dewey decimal classification. The significance of Selvarajah's work can only be seen when it is examined against the parlous state in which bibliographical classification of Tamil books from Sri Lanka is.

"I believe there are between 5000 and 8000 volumes of Tamil writing from Sri Lanka," said Selvarajah. It is also important to note the volumes he is referring to are books starting with the Story of Assambai in 1895 and do not include writing preserved in ola form.

What is however alarming, but not uncommon in this country, is that these 8000 volumes are not recorded in their entirety anywhere. "It is the function of a national library to collect and record all of a nation's writings. This has not happened here," Selvarajah stressed.

It is the function of national libraries to compile lists of books, journals and other written materials published and unpublished within the borders of that country. Therefore India and the west include in bibliographies only Sri Lankan Tamil writing published in their respective countries. Sri Lanka that should have a central repository of Sri Lankan Tamil writing does not have one.

"This is especially unfortunate because roughly about 40% of Tamil writing by Sri Lankan authors is published outside the country," says Selvarajah.

He estimates that only between 500 and 700 titles by Tamil authors from Sri Lanka would have found a place in the bibliography compiled by the Sri Lanka National Library Services Board. "How would they have a comprehensive bibliography when they do not have access to exhibitions of Tamil books overseas?" asked Selvarajah an amused smile playing on cherubic face.

An important reason for Tamil books – even those published in Sri Lanka – not being registered at the national library is due to printers who are obliged to send copies to the archives being either lazy, or constrained by costs to do so.

"I do not think it is a deliberate policy of the government to sabotage Tamil writing. Rather, it is sheer carelessness. They do not have sufficient number of staff that read and understand Tamil. Of course you could say it is deliberate on the basis these organisations do not recruit Tamil-speaking staff," Selvarajah conceded.

Of publishing done of Tamil books by Sri Lankan authors overseas, almost 80% is in south India. Since most of the books are self-published, these author-publishers prefer India because publishing is very cheap.

"The other advantage is the Government of India has a scheme whereby the state purchases around 300 to 400 books to distribute among the school and state libraries. This guarantees that at least some books sell. Usually the remaining are distributed by their authors among known people," Selvarajah said.

In Europe the system is different. Here, with advances in technology, desktop publishing is available to all who wish to use it. The only cost is that of printing, since most books are privately published. The core constraint is distribution however. Due to the limited reading public of Tamil books, they tend to be distributed free through Tamil literary circles, bookshops specialising in catering to Tamil clientele, or to friends and relatives.

"The Tamil book-publishing industry in Europe and the west is not a profitable one. It is mostly a labour of love. I would include my own books in the same category," said Selvarajah.

Tracing the history of book publishing in Tamil and bibliographical studies, which are in a way intertwined, he said output had been on fairly even keel till about the 1960s. They took an upward climb soon after.

"I think the introduction of swabasha as the medium of instruction in the late 1950s and early 1960s helped this trend," Selvarajah said. The imposition of controls on importing books by the SLFP government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike in the 1970s also helped by forcing Tamils of Sri Lanka to write, and the trends that were established refused to dry up even after book imports were liberalised later. The upward trend of this period reached a plateau between the late-1970s and early-1980s after which there was a steep rise once more, "And the trend is still going on," says Selvarajah.

He attributes three different stimuli for this second upsurge of Tamil writing from Sri Lanka. First, with the war, Tamils from Sri Lanka had a story to tell; second the relative economic prosperity in western societies and India for some immigrant Tamils give them the luxury to indulge in literary production.

"Thirdly, immigration has allowed us to view our national problems from a distance and helps to give it perspective," said Selvarajah, with a far away look descending upon him as if to emphasise the point.

However, unlike post-colonial literatures in English for instance, where immigrant writing has focused on non-white experience in western societies such as alienation and inability to come to terms with new realities, Selvarajah says Sri Lankan Tamil writing, especially fiction, does not necessarily conform to that mode.

"Much of the writing in poetry and short stories tends to be experiential. Interestingly, there is very little love poetry; much of the verse is revolutionary or speak of the horrors of war," explained Selvarajah.

There are also important non-fiction works that have come through the meeting of cultures. He spoke of a German – Tamil dictionary with contemporary references compiled by V. Saravana bavan in 1992 as one example.

Selvarajah looks upon his own work as path breaking in the general bibliography category of Sri Lankan Tamil writing. There have been subject bibliographies compiled in the past. Sri Lankan Tamil novels published between 1895 and 1975 prepared N. Subramaniam of the University of Jaffna is one such. S. H. N. Jameel has published a bibliography of Sri Lankan Muslim writing from 1895-2000 in four volumes, which though having 1975 entries, is unfortunately not annotated. Another work is Bibliography of Sri Lankan Tamil literature prepared in the 1970s by Kanagasenthinathan. Bibliographies of Tamil writing in Sri Lanka, compiled in Tamil, is pretty much limited to these. Speaking of the Jaffna public library onto whose board of advisors he was appointed in 1991, he said it had always remained a municipal library. "Jaffna library, despite its vast resources, was not famous till it was burnt down," he said. "And then it assumed a political

significance."Since it was not a national library, Jaffna did not have a book depository. Therefore, all books published in Tamil did not reach it. Since the depository was the National Library Services Board in southern Sri Lanka (first at the University of Peradeniya under the able guidance of H. A. I. Goonatilleke before it was shifted to Colombo), printers in the northeast were reluctant, or just careless about sending copies of published works in Tamil for registration. Selvarajah said there was an attempt to make Jaffna library a regional library for the northeast, but the project did not take off.

He said a national library is a structure, which has a legal book depository. Jaffna library however, even if it is reconstructed, will remain a municipal library. A possible solution is to make it a wing of the National Library Services Board as in the U.K where the national library has wings in different parts of the country. If this is accomplished, Jaffna library could legally access resources for library development for collecting, cataloguing and compiling bibliographies.

Selvarajah believes that a national bibliography should be put together once the Jaffna library or a similar institution catering to the compilation of Tamil books and journals is set up. This will be an authoritative body with the necessary legal backup. "Till then I will do it," he says.

Now the first volume of 1000 entries is complete, Selvarajah is compiling the second volume that will contain the next 1000 entries. He expects to bring out six or seven volumes to cover a substantial portion of his area of specialisation. He said his visit to Sri Lanka is also partly a fund-raising mission. He hopes to go to France and Malaysia shortly to drum up financial support for the forthcoming volumes.

"I also hope to obtain support from authors by asking them to provide information about their books. They could send me a copy, if they can afford it. Otherwise, even vital information about the book such as title, author's name, printer, contents, number and size of pages would be welcome," said Selvarajah.

GOVT - LTTE TUSSLE OVER RE-OPENING OF JAFFNA LIBRARY

— Kesara Abeywardena

A tussle between the government and the LTTE is taking place on the reopening of the Jaffna Public Library which is scheduled for Friday.

Jaffna sources said that the LTTE had strongly objected to the reopening ceremony on Friday to be attended by several government ministers and had instructed the Municipal Commissioner of the Jaffna Municipal Council not to have the opening ceremony. The public library comes under the Jaffna Municipal Council which is controlled by the TULF.

However the government and the Jaffna Municipal Council are expected to go ahead with the opening of the Jaffna Public Library on Friday despite severe objections from the LTTE. Several front organisations of the LTTE had also openly objected to the reopening ceremony saying that the reconstruction work of the library building was not yet fully completed.

Jaffna Mayor S. Kandiah told "The Island" yesterday that the reconstructed Jaffna Library would be opened by TULF stalwart and Jaffna district MP V. Anandasangari on Friday as scheduled. He ruled out any objections to the opening ceremony and said that the reconstruction work of the building was almost finished.

Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Refugees Minister Jayalath Jayawardena who was in Jaffna yesterday said there was no problem regarding the reopening of the library and it would take place as scheduled. He said that Power and Energy Minister and deputy leader of the UNP Karu Jayasuriya was also expected to attend the ceremony.

Jaffna Mayor S. Kandiah had already sent invitations to government ministers and other dignitaries for the ceremony. Jaffna

sources said that the LTTE was not in favour of government ministers and other democratically elected representatives of the Tamils in Jaffna being in the limelight in the area.

Meanwhile Rehabilitation Ministry sources said that a meeting is expected to be held today in this regard to take a final decision on the issue. Earlier it was reported that the LTTE had objected to a move by the government to bring school children from the North to Colombo to participate in the Independence Day celebrations.

The Jaffna Public Library which was a central symbol of the North-East conflict was burned during the District Development Council elections in 1981. With the recapturing of Jaffna by the government troops the reconstruction of the library building also began. Over Rs.120 million had been allocated to the reconstruction of the massive building. The work so far had cost Rs. 98 million, reconstruction ministry sources said.

Library After Renovation Work 2003



President urges re-opening of Jaffna Library

Saturday 15.2.2003 Daily News

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga yesterday called for the re-opening of the Jaffna Public Library, saying it would be an "important step in bringing reconciliation and healing in our land".

In a news release issued yesterday, President Kumaratunga regretted the cancellation of the reopening of the Jaffna Public Library.

"It is regrettable that at time when the Government and the LTTE are engaged in talks aimed at resolving the ethnic conflict and bringing healing and reconciliation amongst our peoples, that the reopening of the Library which would be an important milestone in rehabilitation and reconstruction is being obstructed by the LTTE. This demonstrates the fallacy of the notion that rehabilitation and reconstruction should receive priority," the President added.

She said: "The burning of the Jaffna Public Library in 1981 was a watershed event which contributed significantly to deep divisions in our country. The reconstruction of the same, commenced after the writ of government was reestablished in Jaffna in 1995, was with the intent, to right the wrongs committed in the past, an act of wanton destruction for which the then government was clearly complicit.

"The current peace process is deficient in its lack of safe guards for democratic rights and freedoms. This totalitarian act is sadly symbolic of the current trends in the North and East to curtail independent thinking, dialogue and critical analysis. The Jaffna Public Library has long been a symbol of learning and liberation for the people of the North. The wanton destruction of which was symptomatic of a totalitarian state two decades ago and the prevention of its reopening is a totalitarianism of another kind."

The People's Alliance said yesterday that the government had bowed to the threats of the LTTE betraying democracy.

"We want to emphasise that the cancellation of the re-opening was done at the instance of the Government. The Government

has advised the TULF and its Leader Ananda Sangaree to bow down to the LTTE and cancel the meeting," PA media spokesman Sarath Amunugama said at a news briefing.

Dr. Amunugama said: "When we must strengthen the political establishment of people who are freely and democratically elected in the Jaffna peninsula, the Government is encouraging violence and stopping public events which had been decided upon by the elected representatives in Jaffna."

He recalled that the PA initiated the book and brick donation programme to restore the Jaffna Library.

France donates 800 books to famed Jaffna library

Tue Feb 11, 5:07 AM ET

Jaffna, Sri Lanka - The French government on Tuesday donated 800 books to the reconstructed Jaffna Library, which was destroyed during an anti-Tamil arson attack 22 years ago.

French Junior Foreign Minister Renaud Muselier made the donation during a visit to Jaffna, an ethnic Tamil majority city in northern Sri Lanka.

The government has renovated the public library — which officially reopens Friday — in a bid to win back the confidence of Tamils, who comprise a minority in most of the country. The library lost its entire collection of 97,000 books and about 150 centuries-old Tamil scripts on herbal medicine when the original two - story building was destroyed in June 1981. The destruction disillusioned many young Tamils, who later joined militant groups to fight a civil war against the government, dominated by the country's Sinhalese majority. The Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger rebels signed a cease-fire last February and are holding peace talks to end the 19-year war.

LIBRARY RECONSTRUCTION TO HIDE CULTURAL GENOCIDE ?

— S. Somithran

A controversy has erupted between Jaffna Mayor Sellan Kanthayan and certain civil society organisations over reopening of the Jaffna library scheduled for today. Informed sources told the North eastern Herald it is allegedly due to differences on whether the building's reconstruction by the government is a subtle way of erasing an act of cultural genocide perpetrated over two decades ago when Sinhala thugs burnt the edifice down. However, those opposed to the reopening charged that they were only against the event because of the physical defects in the building. They said those defects had been glossed over by the mayor in his haste to get on with the reopening.

Civil society organisations, including student bodies have protested that since the building had shortcomings arising from faulty engineering it should not be reopened till the building is made totally safe for users. Sources said there were plans to hold a black flag protest in the event the mayor tried to open the building against the wishes of the students and other members of civil society.

The mayor speaking to the Northeastern Herald said that it was pointless keeping the building closed if it could be used. "Whatever that was to be completed with the monies already allocated has been done. Additions will be done from funding from the Ministry of Rehabilitation," he said. Sources said that interested political parties were trying their best to manipulate matters so that they could win kudos for the reconstruction. The reconstruction was originally under taken by a private party, which was eventually taken over by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) and thereby came under the government.

"The PA was very keen on rebuilding the library so that it could score one over the UNP that was responsible for the building's destruction in 1981. Now the UNF is trying one better and saying it will be able to rebuild the edifice. Its all political posturing," said sources unwilling to be identified.

They said when the UNF had come to power in 2001, Minister Jayalath Jayewardene had spearheaded the move to expedite its reopening. He had promised it would be done before Thai Pongal and would be reopened by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. That however had not materialised and now the Jaffna Municipal Council has taken over playing the lead role.

Jaffna library is a municipal library: hence the importance the Municipal Council is attaching to the reopening. Further, furniture and fittings too have been turned out in the municipal workshop. Civil society bodies and students however claim that over and above the tussle to claim credit for the reopening of the building, southern governments were keen on wiping out an act of cultural genocide by appearing to make restitution. "Once a new building is put up the evidence of the barbarity of what took place will be forgotten," said students.

They said that in other countries when an act of disgrace like the burning of a library was perpetrated memorials were erected to remain as symbols of the past, whereas here a subtle and concerted effort was being made to deny proof of the incident.

Sources pointed to the Holocaust Museum and other institutions that kept alive memories of the past despite the shame they caused individuals and communities. Hooligans with close ties with the UNP of that time, who were in Jaffna for the District Development Council elections in 1981, allegedly burnt the Jaffna library. Controversial Industries Minister Cyril Mathew and Lands and Mahaweli Minister Gamini Dissanayake, are widely blamed for not preventing the burning of the library when it was in their power to do so.

Meanwhile, sources claimed the library is a public good that was rehabilitated to be of benefit to the Jaffna public. They said the public supported the reopening and it was only a politically-motivated minority who were against.

"Nobody will protest unless there is backing for it from outside," the sources said. They did not elaborate on who the 'outsiders' were.

Famed Jaffna library not reopening, soldiers guard complex

www.museum-security.org, Fri Feb 14, 1:41 AM ET

JAFFNA, Sri Lanka - The Sri Lankan government postponed the reopening of the library in the northern city of Jaffna on Friday and posted armed troops to guard it after a controversy erupted between local councilors and Tamil rebels. All 23 members of the town council in Tamil-dominated city resigned Thursday, alleging they had been threatened by rebel supporters who sought the postponement.

The rebel supporters argue that reopening the library, whose cherished Tamil texts were destroyed in an arson attack 22 years ago by an anti-Tamil mob, should wait until more books are collected and until after an additional wing is built with material explaining the building's history and the effects of its destruction. The arson in 1981 disillusioned many young Tamils, prompting them to join militants fighting against the Sinhalese-dominated government. Council members, who are mostly moderate Tamils, alleged that supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamileelam had pressured them to block the opening due Friday, but did not elaborate on the threats. On Friday, nearly 40 Sri Lankan soldiers and policemen guarded the library.

The library was renovated at a cost of 120 million rupees (US\$1.26 million). It lost its entire collection of 97,000 books and about 150 centuries-old Tamil scripts on herbal medicine when the original two - story building was destroyed in the 1981 attack. The rebels started their insurgency in 1983 to create a separate state for the minority Tamils. They say Tamils are discriminated against by the Sinhalese in education and jobs. Jaffna, which is 300 kilometers (185 miles) north of the capital, Colombo, was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting in a war that killed more than 65,000 people and displaced 1.6 million.

A Norway-brokered cease-fire signed last February halted the conflict, and the rebels have agreed for regional autonomy instead of total independence.

Opening of the Jaffna Public Library

Tamil Net February 13, 2003

All twenty one members of the Jaffna Municipal Council led by Mayor Mr Sellan Kandian Thursday tendered their resignation in protest to the pressure exerted on them by some organisations to put off the opening of the renovated Jaffna public library scheduled to be held on Friday February 14, sources said.

Tension mounted in the Jaffna town as the Mayor Mr. Sellan Kandian who vowed to go ahead with the scheduled opening of the renovated Jaffna public library on Friday was diffused with the resignation of all municipal councilors including the Mayor. MC sources said the opening of the Jaffna Public Library would not be held on Friday as announced by the Mayor.

Mayor Mr. Sellan Kandian was insisting that the library should be opened before the municipal council completes its tenure of office on February 17, sources said.

International Tamil Students Union and the Consortium of Public Organisations requested the Mayor to put off the opening of the public library for a later date as the construction work was yet to be completed.

The organisation estimated that only 25% of the construction work had been completed. But according to the Mayor, 99 percent of the reconstruction of the Jaffna public library had been completed and the Jaffna MC too had unanimously decided to open the library on Friday 14.

In 1999, Rs. 120 million was allocated for the reconstruction of the Library by the government. The work of reconstruction was first given to an Indian firm. But, due to some mal practices, the work was later handed over to the government buildings department.

The Jaffna public Library was burnt down in 1981 by the Sri Lankan Police and Sinhala thugs on the eve of the district development council elections. The library, considered as one of the finest in South Asia containing a cultural heritage that comprised around 97,000 priceless books and about 150 centuries' old irreplaceable Tamil manuscripts, lost its entire collection when the original two storied building was destroyed.

Widely regarded by the Tamil community as an act of cultural vandalism, the destruction of Jaffna Library by the predominantly Sinhalese police has long been a point of resentment.

Do we begin the *Esela Perahera* with the *Randoli*?

OPENING OF THE JAFFNA LIBRARY

Professor K. Sivathamby

Post-Ceasefire Agreement politics in Sri Lanka brings up charges and counter-charges blaming one party to the agreement or the other. These litanies vary with the language used by the press. The latest has been on the failure of the Jaffna Public Library to be reopened last Friday. From Her Excellency the President to His Worship the Mayor of Jaffna, every one has had their say. The voices of the students of the Jaffna University, those of the NGOs concerned, as well as the general public that are always suspected of repeating their Master's voice – the LTTE's – have made their contribution. The Demala Santhanaya about which the Sinhala press created a mystique, is virtually ripped open with the TULF having to face much of the criticism; and also the praise of some though from very unlikely sources.

The problem is the reopening of the public library of Jaffna is a matter of grave concern. As one interested in the study of Sri Lankan Tamil society and who has had the pleasure or pain of going through a quarter century of war between the security forces and the Tamils (not the militants alone), it is my duty to share with my non-Tamil friends the importance of the Jaffna Public Library and its history.

In the Tamil psyche the burning of the Jaffna public library in 1981 constitutes a major symbol of what was aimed at them – a total annihilation of all their intellectual resources. If one makes a careful study of the Sri Lankan Tamil literature during this period of resistance, one would find 1981 as a major dividing line. The burning of the library mobilizes the entire population against the oppressive actions of the State. A poet described it as "Fire on the clouds" and one of major South Indian painter Veerasanthanam has depicted this on canvas.

It is also one of the early incidents of vandalism that shocked many Sinhalese. They just could not condone this act by the security forces. Many of those who believed in the oneness of the country offered their personal libraries for redeveloping the burnt institution. In his last will, Peiter Keuneman mentioned donating his books to the Jaffna public library.

This was also an incident that shocked the conscience of the world. No civilized society would take the burning of a library as an inevitable part of military war or strategy.

In fact, it is the burning of the library that really looms largest in the minds of discerning Sinhalese about the horrors of the ethnic war. This incident gnaws at the roots of their being and disturbs them tremendously. The earlier we do something to erase that bitter memory, the better it will be.

I am in total agreement that the new phoenix that has arisen from the ashes should sing not of the bloody past but of the charming future for an equal, just and united Sri Lanka. But this has to be done properly. This should not be hurried. We should not try to whitewash nor should we sweep the past under the carpet.

Before I go into the arithmetic of this problem, I wish to emphasize another aspect of the of the library's destruction. The night it was burnt was also election night – elections to the District Development Council, Jaffna. Those who were charged with the burning of the library were the additional 'resources' that were brought to Jaffna and temporarily stationed at Duraipappah Stadium that lies to the northeast of the Library.

It was also the night when efforts were made to stifle a free and fair election. Government Agent Jaffna, Yogendra Duraiswamy, was searching for six lost ballot boxes in all the likely places they could have been hidden, including where those who had come to 'work' for the elections were lodged. The six ballot boxes were never recovered. To me, this unsung incident is of equal importance as the burning of the intellectual materials in the library. For democracy proper to come back to Jaffna, there should be no such threats hereafter.

To come back to the library, one should not take it as any municipal library. Those who know its history and the calibre of the people involved in its planning will realize that it was to be an intellectual core housing all the possible data relating to Knowledge.

As one who used it, I know how meticulously it was planned and how effectively it worked. I remember the steel cupboards containing donations from various learned men of Jaffna. I cannot to this day forget the collection of Cumaraswamy, the renowned father of the late TULF Leader C. Vanniasingam. Two other cupboards contained all the known literary source materials of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. That loss can never be replaced. There were also cupboards with books gifted by Christian priests. (If I remember right, there was also some material on which Rev. Fr. Gnanapragasar worked). Rev. Fr. H.S. David, the lean slightly built man with sparkling eyes, was usually seen brooding carefully over those volumes.

No wonder the destruction of the Jaffna Public Library looms so large. But we got to come out of this, come out of this in such a manner that will assure us of a greater unity and the need to be fearless about any further incidents of this type occurring, not only in Jaffna but also in any other part of our country. Such a task must be undertaken with foresight and a sense of thoroughness leaving nothing to chance.

The truth is the building was not complete. Sunday Veerakesari of 16 February has published a report stating that Rs.23 million was needed to complete the renovation and that on the day of the reopening, the building did not have fire extinguishers, air-conditioning and the lift has not been installed, the roof and the cafeteria were not completed and the purchase of generators had not been done. They had only furnished 80 % of the building. Telephones had not been fixed nor could there be any use of the Internet. To add to these, there is a major cry against the inadequate stock of books. My student told me impishly that one section of a rack was full of social studies readers published by the NIE (these are the books about which the Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union protested for giving a distorted version of the history of Tamils in Sri Lanka).

Jokes apart, any decent reopening should have publicised the names of the donors and institutions that had helped the library with books. I think we owe it to those people – Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and even foreigners. There has been accusation that the municipal council took the books from two branch libraries and brought them here. What happens to users in those branches?

There are graver problems if one knows the geography of where the Jaffna Public Library is situated. The environs of the library that lie on the east, southeast and south are in ruins. The once busy

Main Street is an area with broken walls and overgrown shrubs. It is a picture of desolation. The Rest House is not there, the former Town Hall, an example of exquisite Victorian architecture, is rubble. On the northern side however, Veerasingham Hall has been renovated and the Jaffna Central College lying almost opposite the library is also functioning. It was not many days ago that Minister T. Maheswaran openly indicted the government for not yet voting a single cent for the rehabilitation of Jaffna. I do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of the government to rebuild Jaffna. But the question is: what are the priorities. Refugees are getting back voluntarily, renovating their houses, re-demarcating their properties and trying to start a new life. In a situation like this, we should start by restoring basic needs first and work gradually toward retrieving the lost grandeur of Jaffna. There is no point in producing more heat than light.

It is true (I hope) that peace has finally arrived. If so, let us proceed from the first to the last and not last to first. Any Buddhist knows that the Randoli Perahera, the pageant that demonstrates the grandeur of the Kandyan culture comes at the end, or as the grand finale to the Eseala Perahera that begins with the more basic rituals and ceremonies. Similarly, in Hindu temples the therr (chariot) and theerththam festivals do not come at the beginning of the season.

The reopening of the Jaffna Public Library with its facilities to cater to the information and knowledge society of the 21st Century should come as the grand finale. Given the present environs of the library, no one is going to make use of this in the manner it is intended. This does not mean however that the work on the library should be delayed. It is not that the Jaffna library is not functioning now. Thanks to the efforts of the former Municipal Commissioner D. Balasingam there are branches of the library distributed in the various parts of the town. The one at Navalar Memorial Hall has a wonderful collection on the fine arts. So it is not the case of denying the facilities to people, it is a case of honoring a symbol.

I believe on the day it is earmarked to be reopened in full pomp and pageantry, we should not fail to invite the vice chancellors from all the universities in Sri Lanka, the great Buddhist scholar monks and all those who have been involved in librarianship from Ian Goonatilleke to Eashwary Corea and to Kamaldeen.

In the meanwhile, let us not start the Esala Perahera season with the Randoli. It is wise to begin at the beginning.

JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY: THE BEST IN THE REGION

— Vimukhi Fernando

Jaffna library rises from humble beginnings. Fruition of the efforts of many philanthropists, it is said that the large storehouse of knowledge grew from a free library conducted at the house of K.M.Chellappah.

Taking his example, a few intellectuals got the idea of establishing a library and formed a committee to carry out the task. Jaffna Library opened at a rented room down Hospital Road on August 1, 1934 with 844 books and 30 periodicals. It did not take long for the library to 'grow' with the reading material as well as in numbers patronising it. January 1935 saw the library shifting to amore spacious building on main Street, Jaffna.

In 1936, it was again shifted to a building near Town Hall and subscription and lending of books started. Soon, the demand for a permanent building and modern facilities began to rise and Sam Sabapathy, the first Mayor of Jaffna stood up to the task. Various fund raising campaigns were held and they managed to open the library on the present premises in 1953.

The Children's Section was opened in 1967 and the auditorium was added in 1971. At the time of its burning on June 1, 1981, it had acquired over 97,000 volumes including Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy and Isaac Thambiah collections, some valuable first editions and ola leaf manuscripts with the history of Jaffna.

The best library in the region! Again. That's what it is going to be. With the latest state-of-the-art equipment-computers, printers, scanners, colour televisions, internet facilities, micro readers; telephone, air conditioning, fire alarm and fire fighting systems. Four institutions have come forward in partnership for the task. The Ford Foundation of USA, the UNESCO, Government of Sri Lanka and the Municipal Council Jaffna. The Public library of Jaffna stands proud

again today. Painted white, a giant building of 27,880 square feet, with two wings added to its main structure.

A phoenix from the ashes. The Jaffna Library, was once a pivotal point, the symbol of intellect in the Northern capital. "The repository of Tamil Culture" it was called. However, it became a "victim" of the war that ravaged Sri Lanka for nearly two decades leaving its walls blackened with smoke, ridden with shell and bullet holes. Two decades ago, marauding gangs burnt it down, turning its wealth of knowledge into ashes.

More than 97,000 books were reported lost in the process. Priceless were the old leaf manuscripts, wherein the history of Jaffna was penned. Severe was the blow to the community in Jaffna, for the library was the backbone of this society.

And now, as peace efforts strengthen and the truce between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE continues through its second year, there is hope and opportunity. Rebuilding of the library is only "part of the larger rebuilding of society. The citizenry of Jaffna shows a tremendous spirit. People are positive towards peace and development. Part of this hope is for their future, and the future of their children," says Dr. Sumathi Ramaswamy from the Ford Foundation. "Knowledge, especially the free access to information, is the key to rebuilding a society. It plays a vital role in restoring the dignity of people. That is the UNESCO experience," adds Prithiviraj Perera, from UNESCO. Many had been the instances where UNESCO had helped in procuring, and installing libraries in troubled situations and training their staff." It is vital for intellectual and civic life," he says.

Back in Colombo from a visit to Jaffna, they are enthusiastic about their project. "A country's strength depends on institutions providing knowledge. They help people to come out of their dependence making them strong and self-reliant," say these experts.

Their plans for the peninsula's intellectual hub include a mobile library which would take the wealth of knowledge to the remote schools. Separate sections for children and disabled persons, an auditorium and an audio visual section. However, their primary concern is whether the ground situation would allow this to happen. Discussions are under way with the government to help get connectivity, to empower people with the internet, the global information sharing system.

This will help the average citizen to learn and use the internet. The aim is to make the library the centre of knowledge for the general citizenry, which is outside the university.

Sustainability is assured through technical support programmes, training for library staff and technicians, networking with other libraries.

A small fee is proposed to be charged for Library services, for maintenance purposes. A Ford Foundation grant of US \$200,000 goes into the project through UNESCO, its implementing agency.

More projects are to begin in the near future in the peninsula through UNESCO's cultural and communication arms. Preserving the heritage of selected ports, fortresses, Kovils and Temples in North and East, human rights and peace education, a peace radio station, and a media training institute are some of the future plans in the offing.

**One of
Library's
Founder
Members,
Father
T.M.F Long,
Former
Rector of
St. Patrick's
College
Jaffna,
Sri Lanka**



Book Review :

JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY: A HISTORICAL COMPILATION

REMEMBERING A CULTURAL RAPE

— Dr. Siva Thiagarajah

**Mr. N.Selvarajah's bilingual (English and Tamil) book
JAFFNA PUBLIC LIBRARY: A HISTORICAL COMPILATION
published in the United Kingdom on 1 June 2001
marks the twentieth anniversary of the burning of
Jaffna Public Library in Sri Lanka.**

THE ACT :

It was on the night of 1 June 1981 the Jaffna Public Library one of the most acclaimed libraries in South East Asia with its invaluable collection of books and rare manuscripts was set on fire.

The library had a priceless collection of 97,000 books and 10,000 manuscripts. The manuscripts included many Ola leaf books. There were Catholic religious books written since 1856 in Spanish and Dutch, and the hand-written manuscript of Robert Knox's History of Ceylon, written in 1660 while he was imprisoned in Kandy. There was "Ceylon Under Hollanders" - the manuscript by Philips Baldius written in 1672. Other works included: The Sanskrit works of Kalidasa in Ola leaf books; the Ola leaf text of 'YalpaNa Vaipava Malai' by Mylvagana Pulavar of Mathagal; some sections of the 'Rasa Murai' - the Ola leaf manuscript detailing the lineage of the Ancient Kings of Jaffna; and the Jaffna(Ola leaf) version of 'Tholkappiyam' used by Ganesha Iyer in the 1930's to write his famous commentary on the Ancient Tamil Grammar. All these were consigned to the flames!

THE REASON FOR THE ARSON :

The Act of arson against the Jaffna Public Library was another instance of state-sponsored fanaticism which was let loose in the city of Jaffna between 31 May and 2 June 1981, causing mayhem, carnage and terror.

Tragic Episode Of The Jaffna Library, Sri Lanka

99

"With several high ranking Sinhalese security officers and two cabinet ministers Cyril Matthew and Gamini Dissanayaka present in the town (Jaffna), uniformed security men and plain clothed thugs carried out some well organised acts of destruction". (Nancy Murray: The State against the Tamils of Sri Lanka: RACISM AND THE AUTHORITAN STATE: London, 1984.)

"A large group of policemen (estimated variously between 100-200) went on a rampage on the night of May 31- June 1 and June 1-2, burning the market areas of Jaffna town, the office of a Tamil newspaper, the home of the member of Parliament for Jaffna and the Jaffna Public Library." (Virginia Leary: Ethnic conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka: Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists; July-August, 1981.)

"Thousands of Tamils, both young and old had their 'Konstradt' in the burning of the Jaffna Public Library. They were compelled to face up to the political reality that the Sinhala government was bent on subjugating the Tamil people and bending them to its will. They were compelled to recognise that the Sri Lankan Parliament was no place for a Tamil with self respect." (NADESAN SATYENDRA: Burning of the Jaffna Library: A konstradt for the Tamils: TAMILNATION, May 1992.)

The destruction of the Jaffna Public Library is an example of a calculated and cold blooded cultural rape among a catalogue of carnage, arson, pillage and murder. The irony is that the perpetrators of these barbaric acts call themselves 'intellects' of another race!

THE BOOK :

Mr. Selvarajah the author of this book, a consultant to the Jaffna Public Library since 1991 has painstakingly collected materials – press cuttings, editorials, articles, communiqués, leaflets, letters etc. to present this excellent tribute - a catalogue of destruction, devastation, tragedy, anger, rage, hope and faith.

The material presented spans over twenty years from 1991 to 2001, contributed by people from all walks of life. It is interesting to note that the concept of building a library in Jaffna took place more than 150 years ago. In October 1842, Mr. L.C. Grenier, Secretary to the Jaffna Magistrates Courts began collecting books for a library. In 1848 when Sir William Twinham became the Assistant Government Agent for Jaffna, he acquired Mr. Grenier's Library. On 3 June 1894 he declared this as a Public Library.

There is no information as to the intervening years. In the 1930's this library came under the management of Mr. Isaac Thambiah, the High Court judge of Jaffna. In 1933 K.M.Chellappah, a public figure of his day was conducting a free library at his home, sharing his books with others. Mr. Isaac Thambiah and Mr. Chellappah decided to pool their books and resources together. On 1 August 1934, the Jaffna Public Library was opened at Hospital Road. In January 1935, this was moved to a site at Main Street.

In 1953 Mr. Sam Sabapathy, the Mayor of Jaffna, with the corroboration of academics like Rev. Fr. Long, rector of St. Patrick's college, laid the foundations for the modern Jaffna Public Library. The first stage of this monument was completed in October 1959.

When rebuilding of the damaged library building commenced a year after its destruction, many voiced concern about the wisdom of building the library in its original site in a remote place, removed from the population. Several others raised concern about building a library near Jaffna Fort, which always housed the Army and other service personnel. These 'critics' were proven right when war broke out soon after its reconstruction. The restored building took a stern beating with shells, bombs and bullets.

A more recent idea that has been put forward is to spread out the library as small units to different parts of the peninsula, so that any future destruction would not be as calamitous as before. In many countries valuable manuscripts and rare books are preserved in microfilms and are stored in the vaults of the library. Such advanced storage facilities must be employed to preserve our rare books for future generations.

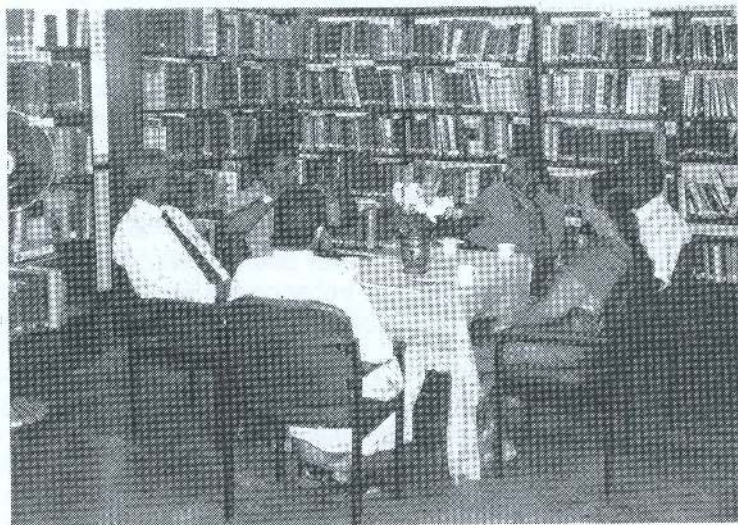
This book provides room for ideas from all sides, providing a balanced view to the administrators of this library to formulate an appropriate provision in future. Several photographs, line drawings, and maps that accompany the text enhance the quality of the book. Furthermore all 128 pages of double crown size are printed on high quality glossy paper.

Overall this is an excellent book that must be possessed by every Sri Lankan Tamil who values their cultural heritage.

**Handing over of 385 books on
Library and Information Science in November 2002 to the
Mayor of Jaffna Sellan Kanthaian By Mr N Selvarajah**

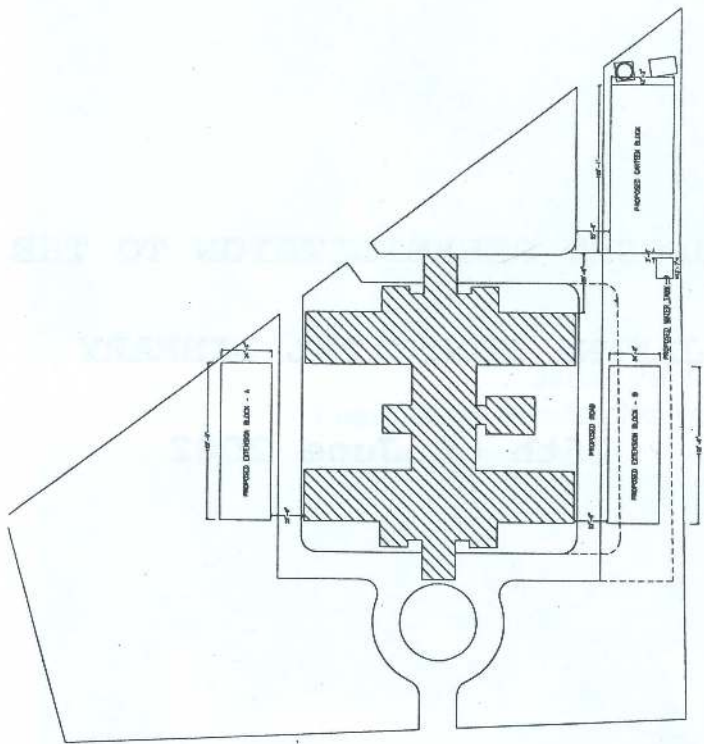


**Jaffna Public Library
Consultation Meeting November 2002**



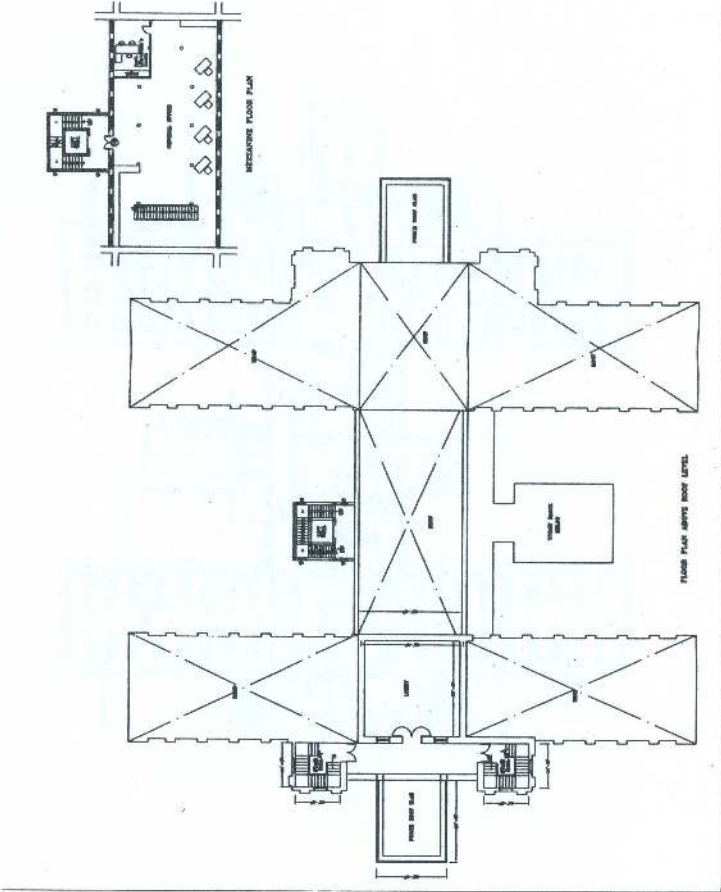
**PROPOSED REHABILITATION TO THE
JAFFNA MUNICIPAL LIBRARY**

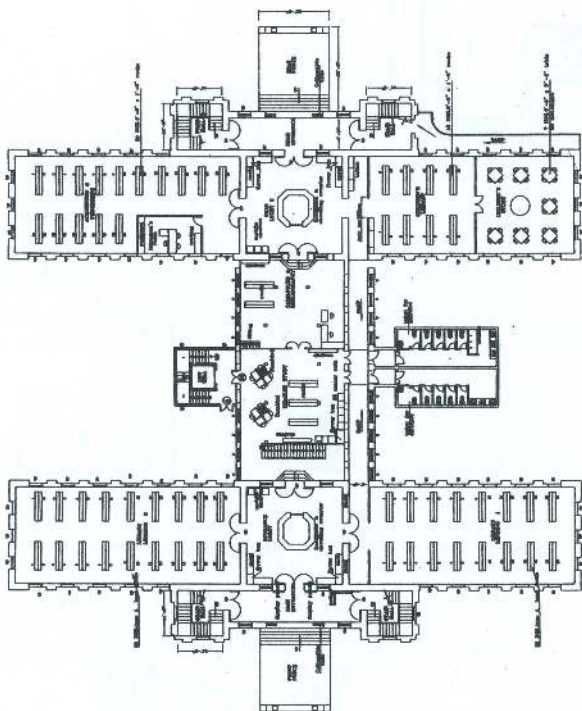
26th of June 2002



PROPOSED REHABILITATION PROJECT

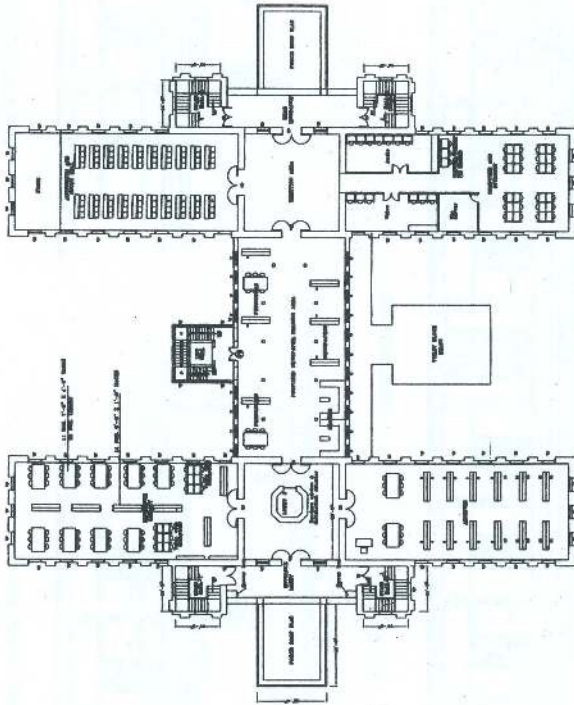
MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN & FLOOR PLAN ABOVE ROOF LEVEL

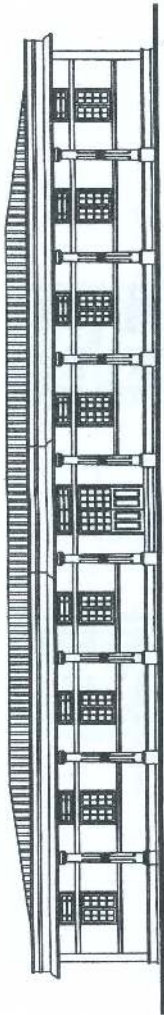




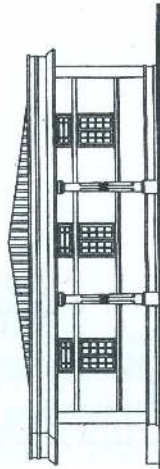
FURNITURE LAY OUT - GROUND FLOOR

FURNITURE LAY OUT - FIRST FLOOR

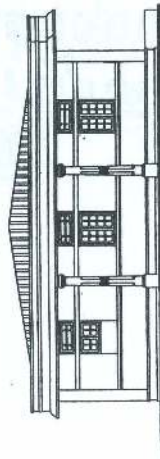




FRONT ELEVATION



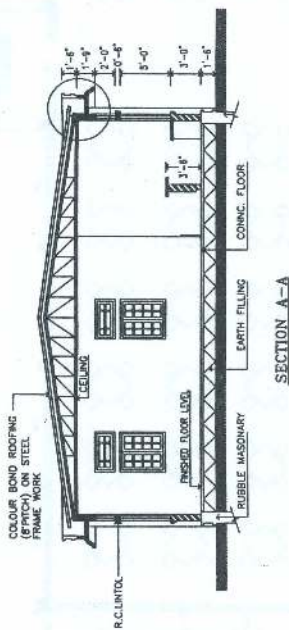
SIDE ELEVATION (CANTEEN END)



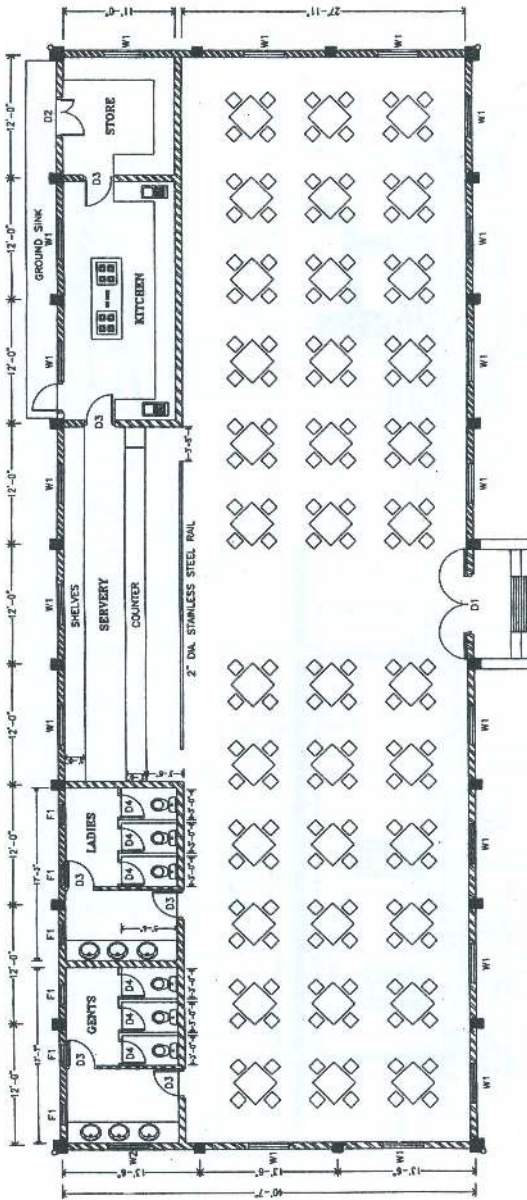
SIDE ELEVATION (TOILET END)

PROPOSED CANTEEN BLOCK - ELEVATIONS

PROPOSED CANTEN BLOCK - SECTION A - A



- NOTES**
- 1. FINISH WALL - 1/2" BRICK WITH PLASTER AND POLYMER PAINT
 - 2. ROOF - COLOUR BOND ROOFING WITH TRUSS STEEL FRAME WORK
 - 3. FLOOR & CEILING - FINISH 1/2" BRICK WITH PLASTER AND POLYMER PAINT
 - 4. WALLS - 1/2" BRICK WITH PLASTER AND POLYMER PAINT
 - 5. ROOF - COLOUR BOND ROOFING WITH TRUSS STEEL FRAME WORK
 - 6. FLOOR - 3" CONCRETE WITH POLYMER SAND
 - 7. WALLS - 1/2" BRICK WITH PLASTER AND POLYMER PAINT
 - 8. CEILING - 1/2" BRICK WITH PLASTER AND POLYMER PAINT
 - 9. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 10. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 11. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 12. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 13. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 14. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 15. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 16. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 17. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 18. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 19. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE
 - 20. FINISH FLOOR AND WALLS SHOULD BE TO FINISH LINE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

PROPOSED CANTEN BLOCK - GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Mr. Selvarajah, the compiler of this work is a well known librarian from Sri Lanka.

He began his career in 1976 as a librarian at Ramanathan College, Chunnakam and later became the chief librarian at the Jaffna District Library of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. During 1981-82 he served a year in Indonesia under United Nations Development Programme as a UN Volunteer, to organise a Rural Community Library System. In 1983 he became the chief librarian at the Evelyn Rutnam Institute for Inter-cultural Studies, affiliated to the Jaffna College.

In 1990 he became an adviser to the department of Hindu Culture, under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka. Since 1991 Mr. Selvarajah is a consultant to the Jaffna Public Library.

He was the founder-editor of the Jaffna based Noolahaviyal: a quarterly journal for Tamil speaking Librarians in Sri Lanka. He founded the Ayothy Library Services in 1985, which has published several invaluable books in Library and Information Science. He is currently working on the second volume of Noolthettam, an annotated bibliography of Sri Lankan Tamil publications.