

A.P.C. : Internalising the search for solution
— Mervyn de Silva

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 12 No 10 September 15, 1989 Price Rs. 5.00 Registered at the GPO, Sri Lanka QJ/32/NEWS/89



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TRENDS

PRIVATISATION ON HOLD?

Privatisation of state owned business undertakings, an IMF requirement for continued assistance, is likely to be put on hold, the *Island* reported, quoting informed analysts. A trial attempt, the Rs. 100 million public issue of United Motors Limited, a Government Owned Business undertaking, was not working out despite a heavy advertising campaign. The public was not responding. Of only Rs. 30 million worth of shares sold the bulk had been bought by the state-owned Insurance Corporation.

The report, quoting analysts, said that without restoration of peace in Sri Lanka it was unrealistic to expect the investing public to put their money into any business, let alone in a Government sponsored privatisation drive.

A Government appointed Privatisation Commission, now sitting, was likely to recommend partial privatisation, informed sources said.

VARSITIES - NOT YET

Universities will not be re-opened till next year, the Higher Education Ministry and the vice chancellors have agreed. Among the reasons: There is no record of the number of university students who have disappeared, a Sunday newspaper report said.

A.P.C. President's Peace Call - not averse to changes

President R. Premadasa opening All Party Conference (APC) at the BMICH on Wednesday morning declared that he was not averse to change if such a change was to bring forth desired results. New solutions should be found for the new problems that we face. "Let us all, as we proceed in these deliberations, not be wedded to ideological positions and policies which we feel compelled to uphold. Let us rather in the spirit which has brought us together, search for the solutions through the process of this dialogue. In this exercise we shall not seek political advantage for ourselves but work with sincerity, mutual trust and understanding," he said.

The President added that he abhorred violence and believed in non-violence. He said that he wished to make a special appeal to all those outside the democratic process to return to the mainstream, to join this dialogue to jointly search for solutions to the country's problems.

Mr. Premadasa observed that grievances, sufferings and frustrations could not be set right by resorting to violence. They must be identified and remedied. The way of democracy was dialogue. "I am confident

that with today's fresh beginning and your co-operation we could overcome the present crisis and establish national reconciliation", the President told the 69 delegates of the 21 political parties and groups that attended the conference.

President Premadasa further said:

"This is indeed a historic occasion. We are all here as representatives of political parties and groups. We are all assembled here for three purposes.

Firstly, to express our common desire and solidarity on a collective search for a viable solution to the problems of violence and unrest that have afflicted all our people and enveloped our motherland. We are not here to apportion blame to anyone.

Secondly, to consider and endorse the modalities that have emerged during our informal consultations leading to this meeting today.

Thirdly, to make a determined and concerted effort to bring those that are outside the mainstream of politics into the democratic process, to restore peace, to strengthen the civil administration and the rule of law, to introduce structural reforms and promote stability. →

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Price Rs. 5.00

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,
COLOMBO - 2.

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Telephone: 547584

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Printed by Ananda Press
82/5, Wolfendel Street, Colombo 13.
Telephone: 435975

All of us present here today have our own political identities. It is true that we differ in our ideologies, policies and programmes. Yet, we are all agreed on the urgent need for peace and stability. Our endeavour should be to identify the basic principles to which all parties and groups can subscribe without compromising their respective identities and policies. It is our desire to work with an open mind in our search for a solution. We should strive to identify the root causes of this conflict and remedy them. No purpose will be served in treating the symptoms.

It is clear that we are confronted with a national crisis undermining our way of life, and the very foundations of our society. Our democratic values and institutions have become targets. We could effectively meet these assaults by choosing democratic methods.

We are all meeting today to put our heads together and collectively work out an effective solution. I feel confident that we can overcome this crisis. In our long history we have gone through and surmounted much more critical events and episodes. Our people are deeply religious, peace loving, non violent and democratic. We have a moral obligation to protect them.

As you are aware, this Conference has been convened to consider the many proposals that have been made to resolve the present crisis. Several political parties and groups have made specific proposals. All the political parties and groups who are represented at this meeting, have placed as their first priority, the cessation of violence and the restoration of peace and normalcy in our country. There is total agreement among all of us on this issue.

I thank you for the several suggestions and proposals you have made in your communications and in your discussions with me. Let us give serious consideration to them. When the dialogue we are launching

today is set in motion, more views and more approaches will emerge. We could go into all of them collectively and hopefully, work out a feasible solution.

When I assumed office nine months ago, I made a solemn declaration that consultation, compromise and consensus would be articles of faith in my conduct of State affairs. I have reiterated that solemn declaration without reservations. I have consistently sought to apply those principles in the search for solutions to the problems

our country is facing. They epitomise the democratic spirit, pluralism of views and the ethic of give-and-take which are so vital to make our democratic system work.

You will recall that I revoked the Emergency as soon as I assumed office and ordered the release of over 1800 persons held in custody. It is in the same spirit that I made several other initiatives aimed at bringing back those outside the mainstream and ending bloodshed. As you are aware some have responded and others have not.

Letter

THREE TACTICS

I write on a topic which I feel that not only the Tamils of Sri Lanka must know about; not only the people of Sri Lanka must know about, but even the rest of the world must know about. Hence I request that you give it the prominence it deserves.

1. The L.T.T.E.'s biggest boast in Oct/Nov. 1987 was that they will blacken Rajiv's face. Having tried and failed they are now resorting to inhuman tactics hoping to derive the same results. They tried three different tactics and almost succeeded in the first while failed miserably in the other two:—

(a) They purposely planned the attack in the crowded market area of V.V.T., a thoroughly un-gherrilla tactic — knowing full well that innocent people will definitely get killed. Well, they managed to pull their trick and get some foreign papers also, without realising the back stage drama, to call it the "Indian May Lai".

(b) But at Manner the I.P.K.F. to fire back into the Hospital from which the L.T.T.E. was attacking. But the I.P.K.F. did not retaliate and valiantly chose death!! It was a

dismal exposure and a flop for the L.T.T.E.

(c) The land mine explosion at Trincomalee which killed a few civilians did not click at all. Having lived with the L.T.T.E. and watched them grow with their growls and whines we can be sure of hearing many more of these "I.P.K.F. atrocities". Let those who will soon hear of such inhuman incidents be warned and not to be fooled.

2. Another unexplainable lapse: The E.R.O.S. which is supposed to have been the public mouth piece of the L.T.T.E. at the Parliamentary elections and after, had expressed its opinion about the presence and withdrawal of the I.P.K.F. in May or June this year. This was counter to the L.T.T.E. position and showed that 90% of the North and East had their reservations on the I.P.K.F. withdrawal. But why did the L.T.T.E. wait for all this time to react? Has the L.T.T.E. decided finally to include the E.R.O.S. also in its hit list and show publicly its rabid fascist blood in them.

V. K. Shenmugam

Anaipanthi,
Jaffna.

A.P.C: Sri Lanka internalises the search for solution

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

The All-Party Conference (APC) which opened at the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall on Sept. 13 is the first serious post 1987 attempt to construct a national consensus. On the need for such a consensus, there is hardly any disagreement. President Jayawardene convened such a conference two years before he signed the July 1987 "Peace Accord". He sought the support of a broad national consensus that would strengthen his hand in negotiating a settlement with the Tamils on the ethnic issue. But Sinhala-Tamil differences proved too wide and the APC soon collapsed.

Under mounting Indian diplomatic and military pressure, Jayawardene had no option but to

sign a bilateral agreement with the Indian government over the heads of the Sinhala people, and the LTTE. Though in the circumstances quite understandable, Jayawardene's "secret pact", without any attempt to consult the majority Sinhalese and no consensual backing at all, only aggravated the crisis, extending the area of violent conflict to the Sinhalese south.

Faced with an even more harrowing and all-pervasive crisis that threatens to tear the island asunder, plunging it perhaps into total anarchy and barbarism, an embattled President Premadasa is trying to demonstrate that his own magic formula of consultation, compromise and consensus can work. Whatever his own reasons,

the All-Party Conference is probably the very last chance to save Sri Lanka from going over the edge.

Though the chances of success may be slim, the APC is also the first serious effort to internalise the search for a solution to a problem which the ethnic conflict had externalised. In the process, India had assumed a major, even commanding, role in Sri Lanka's affairs.

Ever since he took office in January, Mr. Premadasa has laboured with single-minded determination and against heavy odds, to limit Indian involvement. Hence his "opening" to the 'Tigers' which of course made Delhi furious.

With much less chance of success, Premadasa has also tried to do with the JVP what he did with its Tamil counterpart, the LTTE, in the mistaken belief that the two situations are comparable. It took two years of battering by the mighty Indian Army to convince the LTTE that for all its proven resourcefulness as guerrilla fighters, its cadres needed a 'breather'. It was the LTTE which made the "opening".

When the IPKF finally leaves — sooner the better — the 'Tigers' could perhaps recover their once unassailable political-military dominance in the north, a reasonable calculation since the LTTE is only losing men, while the EPRLF governing the north-east, is losing credibility. The more the EPRLF conscripts Tamil teenagers for its "Citizens Volunteer Force" and trains them in special camps set up with Indian help, the more the EPRLF is seen in Tamil eyes as Delhi's surrogate and in Sinhalese eyes as India's "contras". In the past month, the JVP has taken quite a beating from the Sri Lanka Army. The JVP too needs a

How quickly the LSSP and CP changed their minds once Mrs. Bandaranaike decided to participate in the APC, and how rudely they left their erstwhile partner, the NSSP, in the bitter cold. The Trotskyite NSSP now joins Mr. Nihal Perera D. J. P. to become a two-man boycott brigade, if you don't count Mr. Wijeweera's JVP, which had ignored President Premadasa's 'Peace Conference' with utter indifference bordering on contempt.

The JVP DJV know full well that the "Peace Conference" will not halt the tough repression of the security forces. If there had been a ceasefire however short-lived, the JVP may have considered 'token participation' through sympathisers, or low key personnel. But for them, peace talks while the military onslaught goes on is not an exercise that can have their support.

On the other side of the communal divide, the LTTE has decided to be "observers", kennar perhaps to observe the behaviour of the EPRLF-TULF-EROS combine than study the moves of the major opposition (Sinhala) parties.

An equally significant and parallel development is what looks like a revised timetable for the IPKF pull-out. Evidently, if Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne expressed his satisfaction at the Belgrade summit when Mr. Gandhi made a new offer to complete the withdrawal by December, probably coinciding with the Indian general election.

breather but the Sri Lanka army will not go away. So it has to get the army off its back in other ways. Public opinion and political pressure are its main weapons.

Either because certain strata, especially the youth, within each Sinhala party are sympathetic to the JVP's ultra-nationalist ideology or out of sheer fear of reprisals by an organisation that excels in coercion and terror, the major opposition parties take up the JVP's cause vis-a-vis the army. This is true of trade unions and professional organisations too. Their common platform is human rights. The attack is on the army and its excesses, when in fact much of the indiscriminate killing and the brutality is the work of shadowy, un-named militias.

The swelling chorus of opposition criticism creates a dilemma for President Premadasa. He has been keeping a line open to the JVP through certain pro-JVP politicians and small parties. His "soft" attitude to the JVP, a sharp contrast to the tough line of President Jayewardene, has not made him popular with the armed forces.

When the JVP made the strategic mistake of threatening the families of those soldiers who did not quit the army by July 29, the anniversary of the 'Indo-Sri Lanka Accord', the army captured the moral high ground. It was all set to launch its massive onslaught on "subversives". Premadasa had to choose. It was however his Prime Minister, Mr. D. B. Wijetunge, who went on the air to denounce "facist-terrorists", a term favoured by President Jayewardene. Though he has not been so merciless in his verbal assaults on the JVP, Premadasa has now been compelled to stand by his army openly.

Premadasa has had to retreat on the political front too. Five opposition parties who argue that the presidency is part of the problem demanded the setting up of a "provisional government" answerable directly to parliament. The constitution they said should be amended to transfer some of the Executive President's powers to

Parliament. **Premadasa cannot take the threat lightly, since important Cabinet ministers are far from unresponsive to the opposition demand.**

Agriculture Minister Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali recently extolled the virtues of parliamentary government and then proceeded to argue for the right of government MP's to a 'secret ballot' on vital national issues and "matters of conscience". The opposition which has a combined strength of one hundred (100) in a house 225 (two twenty five) needs only fifteen rebels to defeat the government. At a seminar held at the same Bandaranaike Hall on Sept 9th, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake the Plantations Minister said "if the constitution has to be changed, let it happen. If the Presidency has to be abolished for the sake of peace, let it be so. No party discipline should hamper us in the search for peace."

In a typical move, Premadasa has put the "provisional government" proposal on the conference agenda instead of confronting the opposition on an issue where opinion currents are running against him. Mrs. Bandaranaike will use the conference as best as she can to publicise the pro-

visional government idea and mobilise public opinion. Only Mrs. Bandaranaike's presence was required to make the APC exercise credible.

Unwittingly India or anti-India propagandists may have helped. At the same seminar, India which usually dominates any discussion of the current crisis, was hardly mentioned. A lonely EPRLF spokesman, greeted frostily by the audience, was given short shrift by the chairperson. The EPRLF man's questions were ignored. The anti-India sentiment may have had something to do with the report circulating at the highest levels of both the UNP and the SLFP that the "Indians were trying to sabotage the conference." Delhi, apparently, was not keen on Sri Lankan attempts to solve Sri Lankan problems" as a top SLFP'er complained bitterly.

The JVP helped Premadasa to defeat Mrs. Bandaranaike in order to avert a change of regime that would have legitimacy. India helped Premadasa for other reasons. Evidently Delhi now wants to thwart and de-stabilise him. But, Premadasa and Bandaranaike, have made common cause in the interests of a national (in fact, Sinhala) consensus, at least for now.

180 Days Credit for Imports

A sign of Sri Lanka's plight is that the government is having to finance imports of wheat, sugar, rice and fuel on 180-day letters of credit. Suppliers are demanding that offshore foreign banks independently confirm that payment will be made. Importers of non-essential goods are being asked to put up a 100 per cent cash margin.

As business circles see it, the balance of payments squeeze is putting an irresistible pressure on the government to come to terms with the International Monetary Fund. One IMF mission left 10 days ago without an agreement, and another arrives in 10 days.

The IMF is withholding a \$37m drawing on structural adjust-

ment facility until Sri Lanka enters new commitments. Payment on this would unlock \$60m more in balance-of-payments support from the World Bank and new aid from western donor nations.

Some hard decisions have already been taken. The President's Jenesaviya programme, involving a Rs 2,500-a-month (£44) payment for the poorest families, has been shelved for this year, along with another welfare programme for midday meals; the two would have cost Rs 4bn for 1989.

But the most difficult decisions remain. The removal of subsidies on wheat and flour could push up the cost of a

(Continued on page 11)

IPKF enmeshed in tangled Tamil web

David Housego, reports on fears of a bloodbath

Can India withdraw her forces from north Sri Lanka while safeguarding their honour and prestige in a way that is the dream of governments extracting themselves from a messy situation?

In the Jaffna peninsula, the heartland of the six-year Tamil conflict for a separate state, feelings are torn between the longings for peace of an exhausted people and the fears that the departure of the Indian troops will be the prelude to another war.

Everywhere, the flat landscape, criss-crossed by a maze of lanes that provide ideal cover for guerrilla operations, bears the scars of the savage fighting. Houses remain flattened from the bombardment of the area by the Sri Lankan armed forces over two years ago — in what now seems that distant period before the arrival of the Indian troops and when India was still looked on as a benefactor. Burned out vehicles have been left to rust.

In the streets of Jaffna town and in the villages there are few young men to be seen. Some have left. Others stay at home to try to avoid conscription into new India-backed Civilian Volunteer force or the counter-pressure from the Tamil Tigers, the most powerful of the Tamil groups and the one still fighting for a Tamil state. Many middle-class professionals — engineers, doctors, accountants — have also left.

Indian officers rightly point to the signs of "normalcy". Jaffna town boasts the one university in the country that is open, though the schools are closed. In the town and suburbs regular patrolling by the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) means that there are not the extremist Sinhalese movement,

the JVP, imposes on the south. But for the last six weeks Jaffna has been blacked out at night because JVP action further south has resulted in power cuts.

But the hopes of peace, as expressed in the scars of conflict, are offset by the preparations for continuing war. Relations between the rival Tamil factions — EPRLF, LTTE (Tigers) and EROS — have been poisoned by feuds and killings. In the centre of Jaffna, the EPRLF and EROS, two of the groups which have agreed to participate in the democratic process, guard their offices with stone barricades and machine gun posts as though this were Beirut.

"There are more weapons in this area than before the accord," says Mr. V. Balakumar, the secretary of EROS, referring to the Indo-Sri Lanka accord of two years ago which provided for the laying down of arms. "Weapons will be a permanent factor in our society."

The EPRLF, whose secretary, Mr. A. V. Perumal, is Chief Minister of the Indian-supported north-east provincial council, has been trying to build up the Civilian Volunteer Force in part to protect itself from reprisals by the Tigers.

In nearby Vadaramatchi district, stronghold of the Tamil Tigers, the Tigers have stepped up armed patrols and attacks on the Indian forces in the past two months both as a way of demonstrating their power to their Sri Lankan rivals and of driving the Indians out. The timing coincides with their understanding with President R. Premadasa on accelerating the Indians' departure.

"If India just pulls out there will be a bloodbath," says a senior member of the Tamil com-

munity. He does not believe there can be peace without the Tigers being brought into an agreement. But the Tigers reject Indian proposals for a conciliation committee among the Tamil groups and refuse to sit alongside Mr. Perumal whom they term a "quising".

As an organisation which can help the Tamils achieve their political goals of greater autonomy and provide for their security, the Indian Peacekeeping Force has largely eaten up its credit. The Indians were welcomed by many Tamils — excluding the Tigers — when they arrived after the hammering the the Tamils had taken from the Sri Lankan army.

But the Indians have suffered the unpopularity that comes to foreign armies fighting "dirty" wars outside their frontiers. As a Hindi-speaking army, they have found it hard to win hearts and minds among a Tamil population. They should have had more understanding with the community and tried, for instance to get youth leaders together," says Dr. R. Theivendrum, the head of the local Red Cross. They almost certainly made a political blunder in putting their weight behind Mr. Perumal whose support is confined to the east and whose EPRLF is hated for its brutal methods.

What the Indian force has been able to do is to eliminate many of the Tigers' senior cadres. The Tigers are a much depleted guerrilla group which is increasingly relying on children and teenagers in its operations. But the Indians will not be able to leave honourably unless the Tigers allow them to do so. Equally the Tigers, should they ever come to power, will be dependent on their northern neighbour. The logic of the situation is that one day the two sides again sit down to talk.

Nationalism and the Crisis of Violence in Sri Lanka

Bruce Kappler

Violence in its extreme humanity-annihilating form is the "order" of life in present day Sri Lanka. Anguished Sri Lankans from all walks of life but intellectuals especially, are exploring the roots of its dynamic and are questioning the very nature of their social and political world. There is urgency for some understanding as Sri Lanka appears to be in the agonized throes of self-destruction. The following is intended as a modest contribution to discussion. It is stimulated by a recent evaluation by Professor Perinbanayagam of my book *Legends of People, Myths of State* but no less by my own concern for the present situation born of a long association with the country. However, I should stress that Sri Lanka's plight is of general human concern. It raises vital issues about violence, which is present in all human societies, and how it should be approached by a sociology sensitive to the very personal human tragedies created in its anger. In other words, while what I have to say is specifically relevant to Sri Lanka, the violence which Sri Lankans are experiencing can cast light on what is sadly a very human phenomenon.

In his review of *Legends of People, Myths of State*, Professor Perinbanayagam takes the opportunity to present his own understanding of the factors underlying and motivating Sri Lanka's crisis of violence. Strongly economic and materialist in orientation, he echoes conventional sociological perspectives, long tried in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Paraphrasing what I see to be Perinbanaya-

gam's argument, he interprets the violence as being the expression of frustrations born of fundamental contradictions in the fabric of Sri Lanka's political economy. Changes wrought in the colonial and post-colonial periods produced a range of equalitarian aspirations ("liberal myths") which were contradicted in the real relations of class and other "traditionally" borne inequalities. This is a approach with which I am in modified agreement and which was in large measure assumed in *Legends* and even, somewhat backhandedly, acknowledged by Perinbanayagam.

Nonetheless, Perinbanayagam contends that *Legends* is flawed and limited because it pays scant attention to the "liberal myths". These, he says, are more crucial for comprehending the current violent crisis than the nationalist myths of the exploits of such heroes as Sinhabahu, Vijaya, and Dutugemunu recounted in the *Mahavamsa* and in a succession of later chronicles. He dismisses or reduces the importance I attach to Sinhala Buddhist understanding of evil and of the demonic, and to ritual practices of sorcery.

Perinbanayagam ignores the fact that *Legends* is NOT directed to a full understanding or to an explanation of the present crisis, although it does examine some of the forces involved in events (the 1983 anti-Tamil riots, and the war by the Sri Lanka State against Tamil separatists) preceding the violent turmoil of today. *Legends* takes as its general problem the ideology of nationalism and the closely connected questions of ethnic communalism, identity, and ethnic discrimination. These central problems undeniably form major elements in the present situation.

Prof. Perinbanayagam's comment appeared in the June 1st and June 15th issues of this Journal — Ed.

ELEPHANT'S TAIL

Perinbanayagam says I have only caught hold of the "elephant's tail". This may be. But at times in recent Sri Lanka history the tail, ridiculously tiny though it may be, appears to control and direct the elephant. The examination of this absurdity seems to me to be highly pertinent to the direction and dynamic of Sri Lanka's escalating violence. By stressing his "liberal myths" Perinbanayagam has not so much caught an elephant as behaved like some self-alarmed ostrich which hides its head from the dreadful reality which will devour it. *Legends* is certainly not the whole picture. It was written in the context of other wellknown interpretations, many of which Perinbanayagam does little more than re-represent. An intention of the book was to expand on aspects of the situation often overlooked or insufficiently accounted for.

There is one item on Perinbanayagam's critical agenda which I must reject before I go any further. He adopts a rhetoric which harks back to outdated professional rivalries. Thus he is the sociologist concerned with the "real" while I am the anthropologist who investigates only the "ideal". This dichotomization grossly misrepresents my argument which is explicitly designed to break free from any kind of real/ideal dualism. But worse, I see little meaning or sense to sociology/anthropology identifications in the way Perinbanayagam introduces them. They refer to the politics of an

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academic world divorced from the politics of Sri Lanka. In my practice there is no sensible distinction between anthropology and sociology. All understanding of human realities must be anthropological, a term I use in its literal sense and not in its confined academic professional meaning.

Perinbanayagam states that my argument, common with much anthropology, has the fault of treating culture as a separate phenomenon, independent of economic and political processes (*Guardian* 1/6/89 p.24). My point is entirely the opposite. "Culture" to me is a relatively trivial concept. This is so for I regard culture to be everything that human beings do as meaningful action. It is all-pervasive and inseparable from the other dimensions of human endeavour. In my usage it is far from unitary and integrated but, rather, diverse and richly varied. But I do not treat "culture" as an object.

HEGEMONY OF IDEOLOGY

The treatment of "culture" as an object, its reification, and most crucially its fetishism — the reverence of culture as some kind of sacred, determining and dictating thing — is the creation of nationalism. My general point is this and the problem of *Legends* is to explore how this nationalist creation is constructed and how it comes to have away in the imagination of ordinary human beings. I am chiefly concerned with the hegemonic power of nationalist ideology.

Because *Legends of People, Myths of State* is not readily available in Sri Lanka, and because I think the direction of the argument is still relevant to what is a rapidly changing context, the key aims and conceptions of the book require some restatement. Perinbanayagam's evaluation gives little clue to content or to the structure of interpretation.

Legends of People, Myths of State Revisited

Legends of People, Myths of

State is first and foremost concerned with a broad and critical exploration of the ideology of modern nationalism. In contradistinction to much scholarly discussion of the phenomenon, I contend that nationalist ideologies sometimes inscribe radically distinct arguments. These are revealed in different conceptions of "authority", "power", the "state", the "nation", and conceptions of "community" and "identity".

Crucial to the demonstration of this hypothesis is my use of a comparative method. Two case studies are used. One is Sri Lanka and the other Australia. The difference in nationalist ideology is revealed in the contrast. I show that Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism which finds its authority in the ancient religious chronicles of the island is hierarchical in logic. The conception of "state" and "nation" is in accordance with a principle of divine cosmic kingship. The state incorporates the nation and, in a sense, the integrity of the nation and also personal individual autonomy and coherence is dependent on a powerful ordering state. Australian nationalism is somewhat different. Although markedly secular in tone it is nonetheless part of long historical Judeo-Christian traditions which, like Buddhist traditions in Sri Lanka, are continually shifting and transforming in meaning. In Australian nationalist ideology, individual autonomy is highly valued and indeed is threatened by the existence of a powerful state. To some extent the nation and the state are opposed. The constitutional and legal institutions of Australia and of many other western nations reflect nation and state oppositions and are intended to mediate, for example, the relation of national citizens not just to one another but also to state bureaucratic and political bodies. Both nationalisms, I show, are capable of contributing to great human suffering quite as much as each may fuel the impetus to human liberation.

I must stress that the importance of the comparison is not in the contrast alone. Fundamental aspects of the Sri Lanka situation are revealed through the Australian analysis and vice versa. In other words, the case studies should not be treated independently of the other as Perinbanayagam seems to have done. If he had paid due regard to the Australian part he would have noticed a severe critique of liberal democratic ideologies in their nationalist form. I note that sociologies or anthropologies largely grounded in western historical contexts still seem to assume a kind of evolutionary linear progression from "hierarchy" to the "egalitarian" ideologies of the west, assuming that the latter constitute liberating advances over the shackling of the former. A deep intent of my exploration of nationalism is to contest this kind of evolutionism — one so much part of western colonial and post-colonial domination.

The comparison, apart from revealing distinctions in nationalist ideologies, is also engaged to demonstrate the force of the respective ideologies in giving particular sense, shape and direction to human action and interpretations of experience. A major point developed is that while the modern phenomenon of ethnicity may have broad similarities worldwide, under the conditions of particular nationalist ideologies it may assume a specific shape and inner dynamic. The egalitarian ideologies of the west tend to be exclusivist whereas the hierarchical form of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism tends to be incorporative. The anger against Tamils in 1983 concerned their intent to separate and the violence was oriented to their reincorporation and subordination in hierarchy. The hostility to Indian intervention was not so much exclusivist which is how Perinbanayagam reads me, as the fury of reincorporating, hierarchializing

(Continued on page 19)

The politics and economics of ethnic conflict

Perhaps the LTTE was hegemonic because it is the concentrated expression, so to speak, of the Tamil people. Perhaps that is why it and not the other groups were able to strike deep roots. It is the Tamil people who produce and sustain the LTTE and stood by as the youth of TELO and EPRLF were butchered. They applauded, encouraged, took pride in and even suggested the massacre of unarmed Sinhalese. They thronged the streets of Jaffna to pay their last respects to Victor Fusilas, the butcher of Anuradhapura. Perhaps the PLOT thesis of 1922 that Jaffna society was inherently counter-revolutionary, was correct. What can we infer about the political culture, level of consciousness and collective psychology of the Tamil community which sustained the LTTE as the overwhelmingly dominant force of their liberation struggle? It is true that the LTTE didn't incorporate the masses into the struggle but why not look at it the other way around too? Stalin speaks of a 'common psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture' (my emphasis — D.J.) as a defining characteristic of a nation. The cultural factor is a manifestation, an expression, an *opi* phenomenon. What is important is the **undergirding psychological make-up**. What does the hegemony of the LTTE tell us, in short, of the psychological makeup of the Tamil nation? As a sub theme, what of the psychological makeup of the educated, better off Tamils who support the LTTE at the expense of the other liberation organisations? Perhaps every peoples get the vanguard they deserve!

The Old Testament is replete with examples of collective historical responsibility, from the deluge that saved only Noah and the others in his Ark, to the plagues visited upon Egypt and the fire and brimstone hurled on Sodom and Gomorrah. If

our people, the Sinhala people, could not give rise to a pro-peace, anti-racist movement, perhaps the only other way out was to have brought them to their knees. The same goes for the Tamil masses. When the EPRLF took the lead in protesting the disappearance of Vijitharan, the Jaffna campus student, at the hands of the LTTE, and the onslaught on the EPRLF ensued, many Jaffna folk said that the latter organisation should have conceded the hegemony of the Tigers and not provoked it with this protest.

The IPKF offensive is a fitting irony because the Tamil militants and people considered India closer to them than the Sinhala working people and Southern progressive movement!

While one bears in mind the human suffering caused by the IPKF operations, one also realises that is not the sole index of the character of a war and the attitude that Marxists should adopt towards it. There must have been far greater suffering when the allied armies bombed, shelled and battered their way into Italian and German cities. Likewise when the Vietnamese entered Phnom Penh (there are still large numbers of refugees inside the Thai border) and when the Tanzanians entered Idi Amin's Kampala.

That the LTTEers are courageous is indubitable, but so too were the Japanese soldiers who defended the Pacific Islands, as were their 'kamikaze' pilots. It is on the basis of doctrine of the collective guilt of societies that reparations were extracted from occupied Germany and that the Soviets dismantled all factories and shipped them off to the U. S. S. R. It was J. R. Jayewardena in the course of an anti-Soviet speech in San Francisco who opposed reparations and urged forgiveness for Japan, thereby becoming the beloved of the Japanese Right.

At the outset, the secessionist slogan had some meaning. It should have been used to prise maximum autonomy out of the Sinhalese. But after Anuradhapura, secessionism meant actually hitting the Sinhala masses, not just the State. The Tigers were never for a negotiated political solution, but were hard-core separatists. This is why they rejected the offer to put forward counter proposals after Thimpu which would concretize their four principles; which they dodged in Bangalore in November 1985 and did not accept the December 19th proposals. It is true that capitalism and Sinhala chauvinism bred this separatism, but the Tamil reaction was disproportionate just as Polpotism was an excessive and disproportionate response to the U. S. war.

SINHALA NATIONALISM

Class interests have always to be articulated in national-popular, national-democratic or popular-democratic terms. This brings us to a problem that I have been unsuccessfully wrestling with since the days (1984) I kicked off, in an exchange with Ajith Samaranyake and Dr. Nalin de Silva, the 'Dhiveine debate' on culture, viz. trying to identify components of 'national' and 'democratic' ideology which we can weld into a new project. Is there any element of Sinhala nationalism/patriotism that is progressive today? Are there any elements in Sinhala nationalism that can be 'pulled out' and put together in a different package?

Ever since Dharmapala, Sinhala nationalism has been so drenched with ethno-religious chauvinism, that one finds it very hard to identify such 'uncontaminated' elements. The whole ideological complex seems so tightly interlinked and so 'radioactive' that an attempt to pull out one element to be used for different, healthier purposes, brings the whole ideology in

its train. I still think though, that in a different context, a progressive potential exists, but on the planes of **economy and foreign policy**. To put it differently, the Sinhalese, being a dominant nation, no longer have a 'national liberation struggle' and such formulae are reactionary. But there is a place for what Fidel calls an '**independentista**' struggle against neo-colonial dependency especially with regard to **foreign debt** (and Indian hegemony). But today this requires a breakup of the polyclass Sinhala national bloc and its recomposition into a **popular democratic bloc**.

A VACUUM IN THIRD WORLD MARXISM, A TASK FOR THIRD WORLD MARXISTS

This brings us to the complex nature of the National Question in Sri Lanka today. Let us remember that **there is no theory of the National Question in the dependent formations, in Marxism-Leninism to date**. This question has been theorized in the contexts of —

1. Pre-capitalist autocracy (Tsarist Russia) which was also a **metropolitan** i.e. imperialist formation.)
2. Semi-peripheral formations (Central and Eastern Europe)
3. Straightforward colonial situations (India, China). Hence the formulation, the '**National-Colonial Question**'. This is the question of National Liberation.

But what of the 'internal' national questions? Much writing has been done on the Welsh, Scots, Basques, Quebecois. Tom Nairn's book is truly brilliant. But what of struggles in the periphery? Some work has been done on the **ethnic** aspect of struggles (Indians in Guatemala), yet these are questions which do not deal with a **fully fledged secessionist** struggle as in Sri Lanka. True, Sri Lanka is not unique. The Moros of Mindanao, various struggles in India, Pakistan,

Eritrea and the Kurds have produced some literature but they are all descriptive, informative and often propagandist. Nothing conceptual, theoretical has been done. No one has addressed the following problems —

1. The problem of the National Question in post/neo colonial formations, i.e. the question of independent struggles within politically independent societies, which, unlike Britain/Ireland or Spain, still have to struggle against dependency and thus have a 'national/patriotic' or 'independentista' aspect to their revolution. These social formations are themselves **dominated** while they dominate other national groups within.
2. The problem of linking this struggle for devolution/federalism with the overall problem of democratising the state structure — a problem that Clive Thomas deals with so well. A complicating factor is that federalism was an anarchist slogan rejected by Marx, but we have things to learn from Bakunin and Kropotkin.
3. The problem of linking these struggles for democracy with the struggle for socialism i.e. the connection between the anti-authoritarian and the anti-capitalist struggles.
4. The problem of linking these three struggles — for devolution, overall democracy, socialism — with the anti-dependency, anti-imperialist struggle.
5. Articulating these with the struggle against fascist movements 'from below' and the ideological struggles against all forms of obscurantism.
6. Linking these with the strategic, tactical and organisational problems of armed revolution (which Clive Thomas doesn't do).

We must bear in mind that revolutions hitherto have taken place in contexts that were —

- a. pre-capitalist (Russia, Ethiopia)
- b. colonial, semi-colonial, early neo colonial (Vietnam, China, Cuba)
- c. oligarchic (Cuba, Nicaragua), or
- d. fascist (Albania, Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe where the revolution was with courtesy of the Red Army)

We have to situate our problem in the very different context of a politically independent yet neo-colonial, modern capitalist (not pre-capitalist or oligarchic) and authoritarian (not fascist) formation. This is an entirely new problematic and conceptual challenge.

The questions of political philosophy that we are finally left with are perhaps these: What are the factors making for a durable peace and what are those rendering another inter-ethnic war inevitable? If peace proves longlasting, the System gets stabilized, but then again, it will be deprived of the option of an ethnic diversion as the crisis deepens — so which outcome is in our interests? What kind of society do we desire and what are we willing to do to change existing society? What are the limits of what is possible in our society in this historical period? What kind of society are we willing to settle for; what kind of society are we willing to put up with? What aren't we willing to put up with? Chile, proves that there is no peaceful path to socialism but I think that Latin American and Southern Europe also demonstrate that a peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy is possible. At some point resistance to the institutionalised (i.e. State) violence around us may involve violence. But how not to permit ourselves to be prematurely provoked? Indonesia shows that under certain conditions the very prospect of a left-led coalition government will trigger preventive counter

revolution. How do we avoid the needless carnage and brutalisation of war? We must be sure that what we are unleashing is worth it, from the point of view of the masses — not from our point of view.

Quite apart from the absence of a subjective factor, there seems to be a massive structural blockage to democratic socialist revolution in the present historical period and, in fact, the absence or chronic weakness of the subjective factor is a reflection of this — which in turn has to do with culture in the very broadest sense. If chauvinism proves to be a 'bottom up' phenomenon, then do we, the Sinhala and Tamil nations, fall into Engels' category of 'whole reactionary nations'? This category has been much criticized but the list of critics has one notable absentee: Karl Marx.

POSTSCRIPT

Political Economy of Ethnic Conflict

I define ethnicity as a cross-class, primordial collective identity, relating to horizontal changes in a social formation. Is ethnic conflict due to a combination of modernization and repression? Most commentators answer in the affirmative, Tom Nairn being the most sophisticated advocate of this position. Most Sri Lankan progressives attribute our ethnic turmoil to a combination of the open economy and the UNP's authoritarian rule expressed in the Presidential system. This received wisdom does not however explain the fact that the Federal party metamorphosed into the Tamil United Front and then the Tamil United Liberation Front and adopted a secessionist stance, in the Vaddukottai Resolution, in 1976. It does not explain the fact that the TULF swept the polls on this frankly separatist platform at the General Elections of 1977. It fails to shed any light on the fact that the Tamilian armed struggle commenced in 1972. In other words all of this took place before

the open economy and UNP rule.

The more sophisticated variant of this standard left view is that ethnic conflict is rooted in the stresses of transition from the phase of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) to that of the open economy. Even this more nuanced view fails to explain the powerful prevalence over a long period, of a variety of ethnic insurgencies in Burma, with its closed economy.

The notion that ethnic conflict is somehow attributable to the existence of a capitalist economy is given the lie by the rash of ethnic unrest in the Soviet Union. Any attempt to lay the exclusive blame at the door of the Stalinist model comes up against the massive fact of ethno-regional tumult in Yugoslavia which has experienced a very different kind of socialism.

The other allied notion that ethnic violence in Sri Lanka, and the July 1983 riots in particular, were a by product of the degradation of values due to the consumerism that accompanies the open economy, does not explain the ethnic riots of 1958, '57 and of course 1958.

The Kapferer/Perinbanayagam Debate

The ongoing exchange between Professor Bruce Kapferer and H. S. Perinbanayagam seems to me to circle around the main issue, without actually getting firmly to grips with it. Prof. Kapferer, who our friend Newton Gunasinghe rightly considered to have done the most exciting and original research on Sri Lanka in recent times, brilliantly uncovers aspects of our socio-cultural matrix. Prof. Perinbanayagam replies that these are not axiomatic 'givens' but that these myths are instrumentalised by various classes in furtherance of their multiple and competing political projects.

To me this begs the question. Why do these classes seek to

utilise precisely those backward, racist and retrogressive aspects of our culture? Or if you prefer, why do they do so unconsciously? To sharpen my point, why do the counterparts of these classes in other societies not behave in the same fashion? Why does a petit-bourgeois formation like the Sandinistas in Nicaragua not display the same attitude towards the question of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities and also towards their ideological and political opponents, as does the petit bourgeois JVP of Sri Lanka? Why did Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral not rely on tribalism and black racism, but instead wage a struggle against these, despite the fact that these elements were embedded in the cultural structures of Africa? Why do we see the emergence within the same society and indeed the same broad national liberal movement, of progressive political programmes like that of the M. P. L. A. and retrogressive ones like that of the F. N. L. A. (Angola)? Under what circumstances does the one and not the other gain hegemony? Why is Maoism in Kampuchea so very different from Maoism in the Philippines? How comes it that bourgeois opposition in Sri Lanka (the SLFP) was more hawkish and militaristic on the ethnic issue than the right wing, pro-imperialist, authoritarian UNP government, in stark contrast to the positions of the Filipino, Pakistani and Israeli mainstream oppositions (to name just a few!) vis-à-vis their own Governments on similar issues concerning minorities?

My contention that the cluster of questions here indicate what should be the main area of radical scholarly inquiry is supported by the following lines of Karl Marx, in which one also finds an indication of the proper analytic methodology one should follow if we are to proceed further with this quest. The lines are from Marx's 1877 November letter to the editorial board of the *Diechestrermye Zapiski* (Fatherland Notes).

"Thus events strikingly analogous but taking place in different historical surroundings led to totally different results. By studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon, (my emphasis — D. J.) but one will never arrive there by using as one's master key a general historical-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super historical."

Narodnism in Sri Lanka

The JVP has been recently characterised by some on the Sri Lankan left as a semi-Narodnik movement. While this is true in the broadest sense, the failure to understand the specificity of Narodnism in Sri Lanka, which in turn reflects the failure to grasp the specificity of the Sri Lanka petit-bourgeoisie as manifested in the particularities of its political behaviour, leads to grotesque political conclusions. I would say that most revolutionary armed movements in the Third World are much closer to the Narodnik/Socialist Revolutionary (SR) tradition than to the Bolshevik, though they are usually an amalgam of the two. This is a fact I do not lament, because it is almost inevitably so, due to the level of capitalist development that obtains in such societies. The Narodnik response is an inevitable one at a certain stage of capitalist development and a Bolshevik response (and most certainly the hegemony of such a response) presupposes a different level of capitalist development which has not been reached in most peripheral capitalist formations. The problem however does not reside here, as Trotskyists would have us believe. The crucial problem is that Narodnism in Russia and in most parts of the Third World, differs drastically from that in Sri Lanka, due to (a) the nature

of Sri Lankan society, (b) the nature of the Sri Lankan petit bourgeoisie, and (c) the political socialisation and acculturation of the leadership of petit bourgeois political movements in Sri Lanka. The Russian Narodniks were an exceedingly humane and romantic set of educated and cultured young men and women. Their tactic of individual terrorism was one of selective surgical violence. The Sri Lankan neo-Narodniks are not a small group as were the Russian ones and have a much larger mass base. Their terrorism has almost nothing in common with that of the Russian Narodniks and SRs. It is terrorism on a mass scale, terrorism that targets innocent, non-combatant, unarmed civilians including women and children.

The point therefore is that while Narodnism is an inevitable and often healthy progressive phenomenon in most parts of the Third World, there are some societies in which it manifests itself as or degenerates into Polpotism which is separated only by a very fine line from the original 'National Socialism'.

Here, one probably has to go back to Marx, Engels and Lenin on the phenomena of 'barbarism' and 'Asiatic despotism' and also Rosa Luxemburg's brilliant remark on the phenomenon of the "lumpenisation of all classes of society" (verlumpung).

The policy of "Sinhala only" which deprived the southern youth of the humanising influences of world literature, the de-secularisation of University education and the evident lowering of standards for the recruitment of academic staff with the opening of the two Universities, Vidyodaya and Vidyasankara (and the change in the character of the student movement consequent to this), and finally the media-wise and district wise standardisation scheme in entrance to Universities which ensured that it *wasn't* the 'best and the brightest' who made it to the

campuses, could go a long way in explaining the specificities of Sri Lankan Narodnism and the political behaviour of the JVP.

(Concluded)

180 Days...

(Continued from page 4)

loaf of bread by over 40 per cent to about Rs 5. Mr. Premadasa evidently feels that this could cause food riots and play into hands of the JVP.

Overall, the IMF wants to contain the budget deficit to 12 per cent of GDP, as against the 15 per cent in the government estimates. This marks a softening on its original of 10 per cent of GDP.

Parallel with this the Fund is seeking a slight slowing of monetary expansion (M1) to 18 per cent this year — which allows for an optimistic 2-3 per cent real growth in GNP and 15 per cent inflation. Interest rates have been rising, with one year Treasury bills now at 19 per cent, reflecting the tightening of monetary policy.

The influence of Fund thinking is already being reflected in the accelerated depreciation of the rupee over the last two weeks.

Failure to reach an agreement with the Fund would make it almost impossible for Sri Lanka to obtain the commercial credits needed to finance its import bill and current account deficit. Because the consequences in terms of shortages and higher inflation would be so painful, businessmen believe the president will submit to the inevitable.

(F7)

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY – greatest thinker of the first half of this century

Ranjit Fernando

Ananda Coomaraswamy once suggested that Buddhism has been so much admired in the West mainly for what it is not; and he said of Hinduism, that although it had been examined by European scholars for more than a century, a faithful account of it, might well be given in the form of a categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it, alike by European scholars and by Indians trained in modern modes of thought.

In the same way, it could perhaps be said of Coomaraswamy himself, that he is admired in Lanka, as in India, almost entirely for what he was not, and that a true account of his ideas might well take the form of a denial of the statements made about him in the land of his birth.

Coomaraswamy has long been presented, both in India and in Lanka, as a patriot, a famous Indologist and art historian, an eminent scholar and orientalist; it would be as well to examine the validity of these widely held beliefs about a man who was undoubtedly one of the greatest figures of our time.

The subject matter of all Coomaraswamy's mature writings can be placed under one heading, namely, Tradition. The Tradition which he writes about has little to do with the current usage of this term to mean customs or social patterns that have prevailed for some time. Coomaraswamy's theme is the unchanging Primordial and Universal Tradition which, as he shows,

was the source from which all the true religious of the present as well as the past came forth, and likewise the forms of all those societies which were moulded by religion. The particular aspect of Tradition which Coomaraswamy chose as his own speciality—the one best suited to his own talents—was, of course, the traditional view of art, now mainly associated with the East, but once universally accepted by East alike, as also by the civilisations of antiquity and, indeed, by all those societies which we are pleased to call primitive. Coomaraswamy never tired of demonstrating that the traditional view of life and of art was always the universal and normal view until the Greeks of the so called classical period first introduced a view of life and of art fundamentally at variance with the hitherto accepted view. In his aversion to what has been called "the Greek miracle" Coomaraswamy is at one with Plato whose attitude to the changes which were taking place in his time was, to say the least, one of the strongest disapproval. Coomaraswamy shows, as Plato did that view of life and of art invented and glorified by the Greeks, and subsequently adopted by the Romans was, in the context of the long history of mankind, an abnormal view; an aberration; and that although this view lost its hold on men's minds with the rise of Christendom in the Middle Ages, it was to re-establish itself with greater force at the Renaissance thus becoming responsible for the fundamental ills of the modern world.

In all traditional societies, quite apart from his ability to reason, man was always considered capable of going further and achieving direct, intuitive knowledge of absolute truth which, as the traditionalist writer, Gai Eaton

says, 'carries with it an immediate certainty provided by no other kind of knowledge. In the modern world,' he continues, 'we use to think in terms of "intellectual progress", by which we mean a progress in the ideas which men formulate with regard to the nature of things; but, from the point of view of traditional knowledge, there can be no progress, except in so far as particular individuals advance from ignorance to reflected or rational knowledge, and from reason to direct intuitive knowledge which we might add, by its nature cannot be defined, but which nevertheless, stands over and above all other forms of knowledge being nothing less than knowledge itself.

From a traditional point of view, the fault of the Greeks lay in their substitution of the rational faculty for the supra-rational as the highest faculty of man, and, in the words of Coomaraswamy's distinguished colleague, René Guenon, it almost seems as if the Greeks, at a moment when they were about to disappear from history, wished to avenge themselves for their incomprehension by imposing on a whole section of mankind the limitations of their own mental horizon.' Since the Renaissance, as Eaton points out, 'the modern world has, of course, gone much further than did the Greeks in the denial even of the possibility of a real knowledge which transcends the narrow limits of the individual mentality.' Moreover, as we are all aware, that which, from a traditional point of view appears to be a serious narrowing of horizons, is seen from our modern point of view as an unprecedented intellectual breakthrough!

While it is hardly possible in a brief summary, such as this, to further discuss the issues in-

(Read by Ranjit Sanderasingh at the 112th Birth Anniversary Commemorative Meeting of Ananda Coomaraswamy at the 'Festival of Lanka' Inauguration on Sunday 20th August 1989 at 5.30 p.m. at the Samudra Ballroom, Taj Samudra, Colombo.)

volved, we might usefully ponder on Plato's story of the subterranean cave where some men have been confined since childhood. These men are familiar only with the shadows cast by a fire upon the dark walls of the cave which they have all the time to study, and about which they are most knowledgeable. They know nothing of the outside world and therefore do not believe in its existence. Coomaraswamy, like Plato, would have us realise that we, too, are in darkness like these men, and that we would do well to seek the light of another world above, by concerning ourselves with those things which our ancestors knew and understood so well. He constantly points out, that modern or untraditional societies are shaped by the ideas men develop by their own powers of reasoning, there finally being as many sets of ideas as there are men; he also tries to show that traditional societies, on the other hand, were based on perennial ideas of quite another order—ideas of divine origin and revealed whereby all the aspects of a society were determined.

A recurrent theme in Coomaraswamy's writings was the traditional view of art. When referring to European art, he repeatedly stressed that Graeco-Roman art and Renaissance art, like all more modern schools of European art, were of earthly inspiration and therefore of human origin like the philosophies that went with them, whereas traditional art, like traditional philosophy, was related to the metaphysical order and therefore religious in character and divine in origin. We now see in that in his earliest works such as the monumental *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, Coomaraswamy did not as yet fully understand the difference between these two contrasting points of view which were to form the basis of his later and more significant work: in his early writings, his profound understanding of the traditional arts of Greater India, as indeed his already considerable grasp of the true meaning

of religion, was a little clouded with modernistic prejudice, the outcome, no doubt, of early academic training in England which was of a kind that he had, even then, begun to despise. But later, following his association with the French metaphysician, René Guenon, Coomaraswamy's writings assumed the complete correctness of exposition and great authority which we associate with his most mature work.

Insofar as we are able to see that an universalist approach to the study of the world's religions, coupled with an understanding of the true meaning of Tradition, have, at the present time, a special importance for the modern world, we shall also see that two men, the Frenchmen, René Guenon, and Sri Lanka's Ananda Coomaraswamy, stand out as the greatest thinkers of the first half of this century. A great gulf separated their thought from the thought of nearly all their contemporaries. The second half of this century has witnessed the emergence of a whole school founded on their pioneering work and on the Perennial Philosophy, a movement which has found acceptance in many parts of a confused and bewildered world.

It will now be apparent that, if we are to regard Coomaraswamy as an eminent orientalist and art historian, it must first be clearly understood, that he stands apart from almost all all those other scholars who can be similarly described, in that while they approach the life and art of traditional societies from a modern standpoint (which is both 'sceptical and evolutionary', to use his own words), Coomaraswamy, like his few true colleagues and collaborators, takes the view that Tradition can only be understood by a careful consideration of its own point of view however inconvenient this may be. Once this is realised, it would certainly be true, not only to say that Coomaraswamy was an eminent scholar, but, as Marco Pallis has said a prince among scholars.

Coomaraswamy saw that a feudal or hierarchical society based on metaphysical principles is essentially superior to the supposedly egalitarian systems held in such high esteem today. Like Plato, he maintained that democracy was one of the worst forms of government, nor did he view any other materialistic system with more favour. His enthusiasm for such institutions as caste and kingship was based, not on sentiment, but on a profound understanding of the vital relationship between spiritual authority and temporal power in society and government. He would hardly have approved of the road which India and Lanka have taken since achieving their so-called independence, although he would have regarded it as inevitable.

It is well known that, from the very beginning, Coomaraswamy deplored the influence of the West on Eastern peoples, and especially the consequences of British rule in Greater India. He has therefore been placed alongside those who in India and Lanka have been regarded as national leaders in the struggle for independence. But here again, a complete difference or approach separates Coomaraswamy from his contemporaries, for it was not imperialism or the domination of one people by another that he was concerned about, but rather the destruction of traditional societies by peoples who had abandoned sacred forms. It was what the British stood for and not the British that he detested; on the contrary, there is no doubt that he loved England because he knew another, older England which in form as well as spirit was so much like the oriental world he understood so well.

It would, in conclusion, be appropriate to quote the words of that highly respected English artist-philosopher, Eric Gill, who in his autobiography paid Coomaraswamy this great tribute: 'there was one person... to whose influence I am deeply

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India's Lanka Policy in Retrospect

Urmila Phadnis

BROADLY speaking, the phenomenon of the autonomist demands of the Sri Lankan Tamils in the forties turning secessionist in the seventies was symptomatic of a gradual erosion of national consensus among various political parties and groups on critical national issues. The Sinhalese insurgency of 1971 symbolised this erosion in the form of a revolt against the United Front regime led by the SLFP leader, Mrs Sirimavo Bandernaike. The subsequent demand of Eelam was a manifestation of this in ethnic terms.

To a considerable extent, such an erosion could be ascribed to the inability of the ruling regimes to cope with the demands of an 'overheated' polity and the stresses of a mal-developed economy, with employment opportunity structure shrinking in a demographic pattern wherein unemployed youth swelled the workforce in ever increasing numbers. In the Sinhalese areas this provided the grist to the JVP and in the north to the secessionist forces. With the politics of patronage becoming increasingly partisan, the competition for power-sharing and its management began to get increasingly polarised at two levels: the Central and the Central-local.

At the Central level, the Sinhalese-Buddhist resurgence in the mid-fifties and the gradual crystallisation of a two-major party system operated in a manner as to assume increasing ethnic overtones. The fact that in the highly volatile and competitive ethos of the party system, both the UNP and the SLFP had their basis in the Sinhalese majority areas implied their partisan vulnerability on the ethnic question. Consensus on the issue of safeguards to minority was not easy to arrive at because both, when out of

power, had tried to cash in on Sinhalese-Buddhist sentiments.

The fact that from 1956 to 1977 these two parties alternately formed the government and the Opposition at fairly regular intervals with a fairly uniform behaviour pattern vis-a-vis the demands of the minority Tamil community could hardly build its confidence in the Centre.

Besides, earlier the electoral calculus had been operative in a manner as to leave enough impetus for coalition-building as well as leverage for the parties in Opposition. The mammoth majority of the United Front in 1970 somewhat changed this situation by virtually marginalising the Opposition. And when in 1977 the electoral tide swelled in favour of the UNP, there was hardly any qualitative change in the increasingly peripheral position of the minority groups and parties.

Moreover, during this period, in their respective efforts to cope with the socio-economic crisis, the policies of the UNP and the SLFP led to a virtual imposition of "constitutional dictatorship" with the country being governed under Emergency regulations.

Not only this, the nature of the Emergency regimes was such as to lead to an increasing centralisation at the apex. Thus, although in the 1972 Constitution, the first post-colonial Constitution promulgated by the UF, the supremacy of Parliament was recognised, the functioning of the political framework was such as to subordinate in effect the judiciary and legislature to the executive.

This was even more apparent in the 1978 Constitution which replaced the parliamentary system with a presidential model fashioned on the De Gaulist pattern. The UNP leader, J. R. Jayewardene, found a rationale for such a change over on the ground that for the acceleration of econo-

mic development, a strong and stable government was needed.

A judicious balance between democratic participation and political stability, he believed, would be realised best in such a system as a President would not be subject to 'constituency' considerations that legislators were and, therefore, would be able to bring about a reconciliation of diverse views as the head of the country, not of a party or government.

In effect, the President was very much a nominee of the party. More so, such executive-centred government was hardly conducive to the requisite checks and balances between the various organs of government which had already been eroded during the UF regime.

Not only, this with its brute majority, the UNP regime harnessed the constitutional apparatus as a political gambit by seeking the verdict of the people for the extension of its parliamentary tenure through a referendum. It won the referendum in 1982 but hardly the legitimacy for governance. More so, the groundswell of protest and dissent which would have found its usual electoral expression was smothered through such a device.

The consequence of this was extra-constitutional explosions with its worst manifestation being in the ethnic realm. This would also largely explain why the JVP became in due course the rallying point of that segment of population which had reasons to feel dissatisfied not only with the political style of the UNP leadership but also with its economic policies which tended to be iniquitous in their impact.

Finally, the oppositionist, anti-UNP stand of the JVP had also a well-propagated Sinhalese-Buddhist ideological nexus of nationalism and 'national liberation,' with Indian 'imperialists' as its major enemy and the IPKF as the symbol of their presence.

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There is no doubt that particularly since the 1980s the utterances of a number of Sri Lankan leaders and the tone of the government-controlled media were at times highly critical and inflammatory vis-a-vis India's initiatives and response on the ethnic question.

India's airdrop of food in Jaffna in June 1987 had an immediate context for the burst of critical reactions. Signed in less than seven weeks after the event, it is not surprising that in the barrage of such protracted criticism regarding India's intention and motives, the accord was perceived, as it were, as an act of "gun-boat diplomacy" by a segment of influential Sinhalese.

Thus, within the ruling UNP itself it had its critics though somewhat muted. In the Opposition the most strident criticism came from the SLFP and the most virulent from the then proscribed JVP whose dramatic resurgence after the accord was partly related to the manner and extent of its mobilisation of criticism vis-a-vis the accord in general as a 'sellout' to India.

It is this respect that the perception of India in the average Sri Lankan psyche needs a closer scrutiny. Broad generalisations may not do justice to the complex configuration of the Sri Lankan society and its web of relationship with India. Even so, they require a closer look as they seem to impinge on the present bilateral relationship.

Broadly speaking, in the Sri Lankan context, the first level of differentiation is at the community level. Thus, for an average Tamil, India is the fountain spring of his socio-cultural identity and also a sanctuary as and when confronted by the majority Sinhalese community.

As for an average Sinhalese, India is a source of solace as well as a cause for deep offence. It is like the two sides of a coin — India of the North and India of the south, with India of the north symbolising it as the land of Prince Vijaya (his chronicled ancestor from Bengal).

Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi, and India of the south — that of Tamil kings invading it from time to time as also of Tamil immigrants. Such a gap between India of the north and India of the south, seems to me, has been increasingly diffused over the past few years.

Closely related to this is the manner in which the linkage of the north with the south is perceived. The south, meaning mostly Tamil Nadu, is viewed in an adversarial image particularly in the context of the present ethnic conflict. If the north, the land of Buddha, Gandhi and Nehru fails to contain the 'intransigence' of the south, then whether his be connivance or acquiescence, the perception of the south having an upper hand vis-a-vis the Sri Lankan question becomes a significant concern in the average Sinhalese psyche.

At times, this perception assumes a poignancy with the Sinhalese maintaining that as with the Tamils so with the Sinhalese their ancestry is Indian. And so are the roots of their language and culture. Why do then policy-makers in India talk of Sinhalese as "they" and Tamils as "we"? Implicit in such statements may be the imperatives of ruling. Nonetheless, encompassing the earlier stereotype of India of the north as much as that of the south, Delhi's response to the situation in its neighbourhood has been diffused enough to incorporate the 'benign' and 'malign' components of the earlier stereotypes.

Such a perceptual diffusion of India's role has been very much a part of the political discourse and dynamics of Sri Lanka during this decade in the context of which the pressure-exerting potential and capabilities of its big neighbour have loomed large. What is more, the increasing involvement of India in the ethnic problem of the country leading to the signing of the accord has been such as to make its presence sharply visible in the form of the IPKF.

The IPKF was charged with the responsibility of guaranteeing peace and creating conditions for the cessation of hostilities including, among other things, surrender of arms by the Tamil militants. Understandably, it was welcomed on arrival in the Tamil areas as it brought hopes of a durable peace. This did not last for long. In less than three months it had to try to bridle the LTTE through military and extra-military means. Alongside its task of taming the LTTE, the IPKF was also required to facilitate the building of electoral and political mechanisms so that devolution of powers could become effective. This was by no means an enviable task. In the process, it found its image tarnished among a segment of the population, particularly in the north where the people at times were caught in the cross-fire between the LTTE and the IPKF.

By early 1989, however, the IPKF had weakened the LTTE considerably. But for such a weakening it would not have responded the call of the Sri Lanka President to join the mainstream of Sri Lankan politics. And when it did in April 1989, it was with a view to buying time and getting the IPKF off its back.

Thus, for different reasons, the demand for the withdrawal of the IPKF represented interest-convergence of the President and the LTTE. Confronted with the political and economic challenges of his less than four months old presidency, Premadasa presumably calculated that the announcement of a deadline for the IPKF withdrawal could be tactically and politically useful in the south for it would take the winds out of the sails of the Opposition including the JVP. In the north, the announcement would bring to the negotiating table the most intractable military group.

However, such a move meant by-passing the newly elected provincial government in the north-east. Moreover, the June 1 declaration of the President,

regarding the withdrawal of the IPKF by 31 July 1989, apart from its suddenness, was not in consonance with certain understandings on the subject with Delhi.

In fact, in the last two months, the war of words on both the sides led to an impasse for which the leadership of both the countries must acknowledge responsibility. Thus, Premadasa sought withdrawal of the IPKF in a manner as to provide enough provocation for Rajiv Gandhi to take an equally obdurate stance. Rajiv Gandhi need not necessarily have resorted to a reactive and somewhat overbearing approach but this is exactly what his response connoted. Worse of all, both the sides, apart from the peremptory tone of their statements, stuck to positions unilaterally arrived at vis-a-vis what was a bilateral agreement.

In this context the position taken by India of lingering the implementation of the agreement (including devolution of powers to the provincial council) to the withdrawal of the IPKF is not only contentious and untenable but also fraught with serious implications for the future. The manner in which India used the IPKF as an instrument "to preserve the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka and to ensure the safety, security and legitimate interests of the Tamils", can also be viewed as the by-product of Gandhi's Sri Lanka policy. The past thus seems to have cast dark shadows on the present. India's action in utilising its military arm to settle a political solution also raises a wider issue of the extent and limit of state support to the Indian diaspora. Such support needs to be questioned and reviewed in terms of its socio-political costs and benefits.

Though the arrival in India of the Sri Lankan delegation headed by the Foreign Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne and the token IPKF withdrawal from Jaffna has brought some relief on the second anniversary of the accord, bilateral tensions remain. Viewed in the light of the domestic

situation in Sri Lanka where the anniversary of the accord is also marked by the deaths of more than 100 people as part of the JVP's militant moves for the immediate withdrawal of the IPKF, the Sri Lankan leadership cannot retract beyond a point. On the other side, with the electoral compulsions weighing heavily in Rajiv Gandhi's calculations, a pre-election time-frame (presuming election will be held by the end of the year) for the IPKF's withdrawal may not be easy to come by.

Alongside the difficult exercise of evolving a mutually acceptable

time frame for the phased withdrawal of the IPKF is the issue of cessation of hostilities by the IPKF against the LTTE. The recent assassination of the TULF leaders in Colombo allegedly by the LTTE cadre is hardly reassuring in this context. However, though symbolising the state of turbulence and the stresses and strains on the Sri Lankan system, this can hardly be a justification for the prolonged presence of the IPKF.

Equally significant, in this respect, is a feeling among a

(Continued on Page 24)

OPINION

What is to be done

The government should take the following steps forthwith for the preservation of the life of youth and students and their right to education:

- (a) End the state of emergency in order to guarantee the re-opening of the universities and the schools in a peaceful and free atmosphere and to facilitate the setting up of and the free functioning of committees of students, teachers and parents separately and jointly.
- (b) Provide for the holding of impartial inquiries by a commission consisting of student representatives and other impartial persons into incidents of killing, kidnapping and torture of students by the police and the armed forces and para-military groups and privately organised armed gangs.
- (c) Provide for the holding of impartial inquiries by a commission consisting of representatives of the youth and other impartial persons into incidents of killing, kidnapping and torture of persons other than students by the police, the armed forces and para-military groups and privately organised armed gangs.
- (d) Ban all para-military groups and privately organised armed gangs, and disarm and dissolve them.
- (e) Punish according to the nature and the degree of guilt involved and/or rehabilitate all those found by the commissions of inquiry referred to in paragraphs (b) and (c) above to have committed criminal acts whilst in the police force or the armed forces or para-military groups or privately organised armed gangs.
- (f) Release, forthwith all students and other persons held under emergency regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act and NOT charged under the normal law and enlarge on bail all those who are so charged.
- (g) Guarantee that arrests of persons will be only under the normal law and only by the police and make legal provision for such arrested persons to be immediately enlarged on bail or remanded, by depending on the nature of the charge, by court.
- (h) Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act which gives power to the police to arbitrarily arrest and incarcerate persons in police stations or elsewhere and to obtain so-called confessions from them under torture to be used against them in court and which leads to a state of emergency situation *ipso facto*.

Empty statements made by the government or by political parties outside the government either jointly or separately without a programme such as the one set out above will be of no use.

— H. A. Seneviratne

Four Decades of Independence Workshop

Review by a Special Correspondent

The International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo sponsored a three-day workshop on "Sri Lanka: Four Decades of Independence". The Conference was held on the 11th 12th of August in Colombo. The papers were on five basic themes: (1) crisis of democracy and legal order, (2) the process of social, elite and class formation, (3) cultural identity, ethnicity and nationalism, (4) literacy and cultural consciousness and (5) income distribution, rural poverty and social justice. A serious effort was made throughout the conference to link sociological, cultural, historical, economic and anthropological scholarship. An important consideration throughout the discussions was to relate these themes and issues to the contemporary crisis in Sri Lanka.

This workshop which was organized by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies was opened by Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, Director. In his opening remarks, Dr. Tiruchelvam stressed that this Workshop had been convened in an attempt to examine some of the concepts and paradigms which have been used to assess the developmental and historiographical experience of Sri Lanka during the past 4 decades. Dr. Tiruchelvam also hoped that the Workshop would provide insight into the main intellectual thrusts of Sri Lankan Scholarship and even more importantly, try to help us comprehend the depths of the socio-economic crisis Sri Lankan Society faces today.

Prof. Kingsley de Silva expanded on a similar theme in his Keynote address as he looked back to the period of transference of power. Sri Lanka, soon after it emerged as an independent state, had been viewed as a model colony and democracy due to its recognition of plurality and the government's attempts to create a welfare state. Yet, how have we regressed to our present state. Prof. de Silva

was of the opinion that we could never be free of our past and thus should try to cope with and live with our past in order to continue in our present.

Discussions at the Workshop were greatly facilitated by the fact that all the background papers had been circulated beforehand thus circumventing lengthy presentations which tend to be the norm at most conferences organised in Sri Lanka. Limiting the sessions to a maximum of 30 participants gave an opportunity for all to have their say as well as to probe a specific issue to greater depth.

The workshop which spanned 2 1/2 days was split into 5 sessions, each of which pursued a specific theme. These themes were preliminarily articulated by the discussants for each session who briefly summarised and criticised the papers whilst also attempting to relate the issues raised in the papers to the current situation in the country.

Session I which was chaired by Prof. Gananath Obeyesekere centred around the theme **CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY AND LEGAL ORDER**. The background papers circulated for discussion were: Political and Legal Legitimacy — The Tale of Two constitutions by G. L. Peiris; The Rise of Counter-State Politics; The Politics of the Judiciary in Plural Society by Neelan Tiruchelvam; Sri Lanka: The Contradictions of the Social Democratic State by Wlick Moore; Problems of Defence and Security by K. M. de Silva. Mr. H. L. de Silva P.C. was the Discussant.

The key theme of the discussion that followed was the nature of the post-colonial state and counter state politics. In an effort to conceptualize this, the papers taken as a whole, as well as much of the discussion, attempted to separate analytically, the notion of 'legal legitimacy' from 'social legitimacy'. One strand of the discussion focussed on how legal legitimacy is cons-

tructed, (or undermined), by the judicial community, and also, examined the perception of these constructions among the subordinate classes. The process of legitimization in the two groups, was agreed to be quite different, the discussion then broadened to the issue of social legitimacy.

Once again, the construction of legitimacy, at an 'elite' level was examined, together with social perceptions of this construction. Importantly, time was spent discussing the politics of counter-state movements, that called the legitimacy of the state into question. In the Sri Lankan case, it was argued, that the rise of a strong stream of counter-state politics in recent times was precipitated by abrogation of an agreed upon 'social contract' between the state and the subordinate classes. In the effort to re-conceptualize the Sri Lankan class formation, the category of intermediate classes was mooted. The point was made that it was the ideology of the intermediate classes that had been co-opted into the 'social contract'. Theoretically, however, it was argued by others, that the notion of a single order of social legitimacy itself, inherent in the notion of a 'social contract' was flawed. Another interesting issue that was raised, was the rationality/irrationality of the state, as well counter state movements.

Session II which was chaired by Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke centred around the theme **THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL, ELITE AND CLASS FORMATION**. The background papers circulated for discussion were: **Patterns of Dominance, 1632-1980's Prolegomena** by Michael Roberts; **Access to Education and Social Mobility** by A. V. de S. Indraratne; **Politics of Plantation Labour** by Rachel Kurian; **Change and Class Formation in Post-Independent Sri Lanka** by Jayantha Perera. Mr. Sunil Bastian was the Discussant.

Prof. Michael Roberts's paper we felt, made a useful contribution to the conceptualization of the categories of social class in Sri Lanka. Prof. Roberts makes an interesting distinction between the "middle class", defined by patterns of consumption, and "bourgeoisie" defined by structural relations of production.

Dr. Jayantha Perera's paper on Mahaweli Settlements also called for a re-consideration of classical economic classifications such as the rural/urban dichotomy that is used in the analysis of patterns of mobility. Where do settlement schemes fit into this model? Are terms such as "landlord", "tenant" with its accumulated conceptual baggage going to be useful when discussing "landlords" who work as wage labourers for multinational corporations?

Another concept singled out for deconstruction was the myth of the "Traditional Village". Most scholars tended to use this reified notion of a timeless and static village devoid of all animosity and violence, self-sufficient in rice and untainted by any Capitalist penetration and influence, as an originating loci for whatever thesis they wished to propound. This idyllic village does not exist anywhere and never did.

A myth that was closely linked to this was the belief that Sinhala society is not caste conscious. As a matter of fact social oppression is closely tied to caste oppression and subordination. Links between counter-state movements and subordinate castes were also discussed.

It was also noted that not enough attention had been paid to the penetration of the state and politics in the rural areas, plantations, and of course, the settlement areas. What are the consequences of the emerging class of agrarian entrepreneurs who are re-investing surplus outside the agrarian sector?

Session III which was chaired by Prof. Veena Das centered around the theme **CULTURAL IDENTITY, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM**. The back-

ground papers circulated for discussion were: **Of Vijaya and Maruta: Reflections on Nation, National Discourse of Race and Dynasties** by Radhika Coomaraswamy; **Nationalist Ideology and a Comparative Anthropology** by Bruce Kaplorer; **Buddhism: The Encounter of an Axial Age Religion with Modernism** by Gananath Obeyesekere. Prof. Stanley Tambiah was the Discussant.

Some major questions emerged in this session. The first pertained to the continuities, and discontinuities of Sinhala and Tamil Cultural identity, and ethnicity over time. This was raised by Michael Roberts, and Stanley Tambiah in response to Radhika Coomaraswamy's paper. The discussion also moved to Leslie Gunawardena's widely read paper, **The People of the Lion**. This paper, then became a site for debate over the nature of the historical production of Sinhala-Tamil conflict. Coomaraswamy, in particular, stressed the shifting nature of the self/other dichotomy vis-a-vis the 'Sinhala' political order.

Another moment in this discussion was the debate over the influence of nineteenth century European ideas of 'race', on indigenous constructions of identity. K. N. O. Dharmadasa questioned Gunawardena's argument that the Sinhala Orientalist James D'Alwis's racist categories were influenced by reading the German Orientalist Max Müller. Coomaraswamy pointed out, however, to a widespread, well articulated European discourse on 'race' that predated James D'Alwis, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The debate then moved to the contemporary constructions of identity, keeping the historical issues raised in mind. Theoretically, an interesting point that was stressed was the social constructivist nature of ethnic identity.

A different set of concerns also informed the discussion. First located in the paper presented, by Obeyesekere the question, which was drawn sharply by Tambiah, related to the fundamental contradiction of the other-

worldly nature of doctrinal Buddhism, and the this-worldly nature of much of Buddhist practice. In the light of this question, Obeyesekere's classic construct of Protestant Buddhism received careful scrutiny. Obeyesekere argued that the notion of 'Protestant Buddhism' was to be understood metaphorically. He also noted that it should not be seen as a simple economic ethic, as in the Weberian construct. Others also pointed out that the link in the Sri Lankan case between 'Protestant Buddhism' and Nationalism was absent in the European one.

Session IV which was chaired by Dr. Michael Roberts centered around the theme **LITERARY AND CONSCIOUSNESS**. The background papers circulated for discussion were: **The Sinhala Literary Tradition: Debate and Discourse** by Ranjini Obeyesekere; **Hunger for Images: Myths of Femininity in the Sri Lankan Cinema 1947-1988** by Laleen Jayamanne; **National and Ethnic Culture and Cultural Identity** by K.N.O. Dharmadasa. Mr. Reggie Siriwardena was the Discussant.

In his opening comments, Mr. Reggie Siriwardena called into question the usage of such constructed categories as "literature". When talking of literature in Sri Lanka, people generally only discuss genres that have been "consecrated" by academic institutions eg: fiction, drama and poetry, within this category. It is also this intelligentsia that decides what is aesthetically and morally good or bad. Therefore Piyadasa Sirisena's works will be highlighted while the impact of popular romances which were as important during this period are never discussed. In the same way, teledramas will be analysed under mass communication but not under literature. There is a crying need to widen all our categories today despite the contradictions that may be contained within them.

Critiqued once again was the myth of the "Traditional Village" with its unspoiled landscapes and immemorable family pictures. Laleen Jayamanne uses Baudrillard

to come to grips with this contradiction in our society. In brief, when the 'real' is in a state of flux, the media creates simulations of a romantic past so that one finally loses touch with what one originally thought to be real.

Interpretations of literary works which can also be influenced by hegemonic ideologies which in their own way try to posit an imaginary 'real'. For example Martin Wickremasinghe's novel **Gamperaliya** which sensitively portrays the oppressive and conflicting environment of a village was instead heralded for depicting village unity and cordiality in a recent article by an ideologue.

This entire discourse seems to be taking place within a context of purism. Mr. Reggie Siriwardena sees the "traditional village" as the central cultural myth through which xenophobic strata of the Sinhala intelligentsia have constructed for themselves and others as a defensive bastion against what they see as the destructive elements of a multi-ethnic, "western" outer world impinging upon us. It is this narrow world view which has exacerbated the current crisis.

It was also noted, not surprisingly, that the "moment" of greatest creativity in the modern Sinhala literary tradition was produced by bi-lingual intellectuals in the 50's who successfully fused foreign and indigenous forms in their work.

This current fetish of purism is also extended towards women as they are usually made the terrain of discourses on tradition and religion. Feminism is seen as being a completely "western" concept (despite our 10th century Buddhist nuns voicing similar opinions in the now popular Theri Gathas) and thus absolutely reprehensible when articulated by Sri Lankan women. A great deal of rape and violence perpetrated against women in films can most often be linked to the sexual emancipation of the female characters. Much of post 77 violence also had a strong element of sexual violence.

In the "traditional village" both these strands of purism are brought to a fruition. Not only is the village and its landscape untouched and unspoiled but so are its women in their attire and ornamentation and conduct. Thus the village too is feminized—like an essence that should be preserved.

This discourse of purity and essentialism has also been extended to silence any form of dissent. When this form of chauvinism is taken up by counter-state movements its overwhelming effectivity is guaranteed through the gun. However, in the context of the state and counter state movements—both who brandish the gun—the debate is continued through the medium of graffiti and posters. Thus we are now being confronted with new myths, new literatures and new art forms.

Session V which was chaired by Prof. Kingsley de Silva centered around the theme **INCOME DISTRIBUTION, RURAL POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**. The background papers circulated for discussion were **Economic liberalisation, Growth and Poverty: Sri Lanka in long run Perspective** by Mick Moore; **Sustainable Development and Social Welfare** by Godfrey Gunatilleke; **Reflection on Priorities of Settlement Development in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka** by G. H. Peiris. Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke and Dr. S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe were the Discussants.

The key point that emerged in this session was the "interpretability" of statistical data, i.e. its malleability in the face of the ideological orientation of different authors.

Importance was given to the pattern of state and private investment and its effect on

(Continued on page 24)

Nationalism....

(Continued from page 7)

ideology. India blocked the nationalist Sinhalese urge to re-establish political and cultural hegemony. More, the Indian

presence "stabilized" an inversion of the proper order of things in the Sinhala nationalist view. While there is no necessity for this view, through the glass of nationalism it communicated radically a Sinhalese subordination which could then be used as an explanation for a great diversity of suffering. This understanding maintains its political significance today.

I do NOT state that such ideologies are causal. This is **Perinbansyagani's** misunderstanding. Nationalist ideologies do not of themselves bring about violence or engender the destructiveness of communalism or of ethnic prejudice.

IDEOLOGY AS RATIONALE

What I DO say is that they can come to give coherent direction to a violence which is already part of political and economic processes. Nationalist ideologies can give form and direction to violence and imbue it with a rationale. I also say that once nationalist ideologies take a dominant hold over consciousness they can be involved in major redefinitions, redirections, and transformations of the meaning of a great diversity of experience. Thus feelings of rage engendered by poverty, unemployment, bureaucratic delays, personal humiliation at the hands of superiors etc, can take on new import within nationalist ideological understanding, perhaps deflecting consciousness away from the immediate nature of the context within which the rage initially took form. As I said in **Legends**, what may indeed be the fury of class becomes, through the distorting reinterpretation of nationalist ideology, a fury which can discover a new meaning in collective "national" or ethnic suffering, a heightening of a feeling of ethnic identity, and a resolution in ethnic destruction.

(To be continued)

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Devolution and Merger

Kumar Rupasingha

The 1987 Accord is replete with ambiguities. For instance, on the question of merger, the referendum clause dilutes the notion of the "traditional homeland" (to the chagrin of the Tamil political representatives) while the clause stipulating possible postponement of the referendum at the discretion of the President further dilutes the referendum clause (to the chagrin of the Sinhala-Buddhist forces). This discrepancy and ambiguity could well emerge as a main point of contention in the future.

Yet another unresolved contentious issue with all the potentials for conflict escalation is the question of security and political participation of the Sinhalese settlers in the merged Northern and Eastern provinces. The 19 December proposals from the Sri Lankan government for instance, recommended merging the Sinhalese-majority areas in the District of Ampara with Moneragala District. This was rejected by the Tamil side as an unacceptable trifurcation of their traditional homeland, while the Sri Lankan government responded by stopping its state-aided settlement of Sinhalese peasants in the Tamil areas. This is likely to remain one of the most contentious and explosive issues in the post-Accord period — as it was before the Accord.

Yet another instance of ambiguity pertains to the devolution of power. The Accord does not spell out the extent and content of such devolution, treating it as a mere "residual" matter to be negotiated in the future. To get a clear idea of the issues involved, we have to study the protracted process of conferences, mediation efforts and proposals from both sides. The proposals of 19 December constitute a starting point for discussions with regard to se-

veral difficult and contentious issues. Those pertain to law and order, land settlement, the linkages between the Northern and Eastern provinces and the relationship between the centre and the devolved unit. Among the Tamil community, however, there are fears, not only about the inadequacy of the powers to be devolved but about the security of the package itself. It is therefore argued that devolution must be constitutionally guaranteed. But there is also some cause for optimism. Although it delayed and prevaricated on the issue, the government did go ahead with Provincial Council elections in the North and the East. Several of the Tamil parties boycotted the elections which included the moderate TULF and the militant LTTE and left the field open for the EPRLF to sweep the polls uncontested. At least in the Eastern Province there appeared to be a large turnout despite threats and intimidation by the LTTE. The EPRLF position is difficult and complex, where with limited resources it now has to implement a package of policies.

3.4 Short Term Prospects for Peace

At the time of writing a new political situation has emerged which may have serious consequences for Peace in Sri Lanka. There is now a new President who has been installed into power. Since his inauguration, the President has called for peace and reconciliation and has repeatedly emphasised that a military solution to the conflict will not be a solution. His position is a strong criticism of the policies of his predecessor. He has consistently emphasized dialogue and is persuading the militants on both sides to join the democratic process. He has been a con-

sistent critic of the role of India and has indicated that he would prefer a phased and regulated withdrawal of Indian troops. The Indian Government has responded saying that it will withdraw its military forces once the provincial councils in the North and the East will be able to provide for law and order.

The most important factor in such protracted conflicts is the political will and determination shown by leaders to change a vicious cycle of war to a virtuous cycle of peace. At present this condition is fulfilled by the statements of President Premadasa. But this is only a sufficient condition, the necessary conditions are protracted peace negotiations, confidence building, and peace building which will be the challenges for the next few years.

4. Long Term prospects for Peace

4.1 Towards a Multi-ethnic, Multi-lingual and Pluralist Society

A crucial problem confronting conflict management in deeply divided multi-ethnic societies is how to reach consensus and legitimacy for agreements reached. Often ethnic leaders are outmanoeuvred by more extremist tendencies who are prepared to de-legitimise agreements by terrorist attacks bombings and assassinations. Moreover, subjective definitions of the conflict, as perceived by the parties themselves, often get ignored. If these subjective views are overlooked in a proposal, the conflict issue is likely to arise again.

With the passage in Parliament of the Accord and with the obligations of India, Sinhalese chauvinist forces which had enjoyed state power now become anti-state forces opposed

to the liberal democratic experiment. The presence of over 60,000 Indian troops encourages and provides legitimacy to anti-state forces. It draws on their deep-seated fears of the "threat from the North" and helps to mobilize sub-nationalist assertions of the Sinhalese. Hostility to the liberal democratic conception is evident in the recent spate of assassinations and other forms of terror and selective killings. A situation is rapidly developing where the state has a writ neither in the North nor in the South.

The concept of a unitary state may be at the heart of the problem. This notion of a unitary state, with strong centralization of power, has been compounded since Sri Lanka achieved independence in 1948. Most attempts at decentralization of power — local government, decentralized administrative system, District Development Councils — were experimental and cosmetic. In all cases, the political centralized elites were able to assert control. Of course, the new "devolution package" is the most recent and the most contentious. Provincial Councils are intended not only for the North and the East but will be applied to the whole country. Despite boycotts by some of the major political parties these Provincial Councils are in operation. Guidelines on which powers devolve to the Provincial Councils, which are to remain with the centre and which are to be concurrent remain to be worked out in practice. The devolution package also deals with the powers of the Governor, the Chief Minister — not to mention those of the army and police. President Premadasa has repeatedly reiterated his faith in the Provincial Councils, and has demanded that the centralized administration and Minister genuinely devolve power to the regions. Unfortunately, there has been very little discussion amongst the masses and the political parties on these matters. Certainly local government administration and the management

of provincial councils on a countrywide basis may form the basis for genuine decentralisation of power.

A multi-ethnic state with considerable devolution of power appears to be the model which could best enhance economic development, peace and the realization of self-determination and human rights for all communities. Whether such a decentralized power structure can operate within a unitary state will be a point of contention, unique in the current situation is that the government has attempted to diffuse Sinhalese fears by granting provincial autonomy not only to the contentious areas but to the whole country. As argued earlier, guidelines and procedures have to be elaborated, and there must be a strong will to implement the provisions of the law. A federal state with decentralization and devolution of power to five provinces had been proposed earlier by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in 1926. It was considered, but dropped by the Donoughmore Constitution. Interestingly, during the deliberations before the Soulbury Commission the Tamil Congress did not come forth with any proposals for a federal system. This was to take place in the post-independence period with the formation of the Federal Party in 1951.

During the recent discussions, proposals for a federal solution have come from democratic, secular forces from within sections of the Sinhala and Tamil political formations. The concept of the federal state, if it is to emerge as a viable alternative, must demythologize the reproduction of two essential sets of myths: firstly, the "chosen people syndrome" of the Sinhalese and the fear of the "demon" from the North; secondly, the fear of the Sinhalese as "imperialistic" and the abandoning of "Pan Tamil" and other variants of separatist mythologies nurtured by sections of the Tamil people.

4.2 Security

A fundamental question is how to provide a sense of security to a minority which has experienced the excesses committed by an undisciplined security force. Such a sense of security is needed to persuade over one hundred thousand refugees to return home for the task of reconstruction. It would involve assurance that the pogroms of the past will not be repeated, and that the people have the protection of law and order.

The Sri Lankan security force and the police must be converted from a Sinhalese ethnic army into a multi-ethnic army. Efforts must be made to create a professional security force capable of distinguishing between "terrorists" and civilians. The army must be de-politized and this requires international cooperation in police and army training. Moreover, it will be interesting to see how the guerrilla army can be transferred into the police and the army of the North and the East.

4.3 Reforms of the Plantation Sector

Another factor is the question of the civil and political status of the Indian workers living on the tea estates in the Central Highlands. Already some Tamil groups have been advocating a linkage of the Northern Tamil question with the problems of these plantation workers, claiming that a future Eelam should incorporate Tamil-speaking peoples of the Central Province. Such claims would only serve to heighten Sinhalese anxiety and confirm fears with regard to the "Balkanization" of the country. The government has restored citizenship rights to this community, but much remains to be done before they become citizens enjoying equal democratic rights. Citizenship rights mean that as citizens they would be entitled to all the facilities available to the rest of the population. To

(Continued on page 35)

Thoughts of Shan

Tilak A. Gunawardhana

Political Memoirs of an unrepentant Communist

by N. Shanmugathasan 1989. Price Rs. 50/- 303 pages

What strikes the reader, whether he agrees with Shanmugathasan's brand of Marxism or not, is the clarity of his vision. He has never been an opportunist, in both the practical as well as the theoretical sense.

If by some quirk of historical necessity (non-Marxists would say fate) Shanmugathasan became the head of a proletarian dictatorship in Sri Lanka, say in the sixties, this book would have been published by the Sri Lanka Peoples State Publishing House as our version of Mao's Red Book (Mao's Thoughts), and would have become required reading for every literate adult in this country. If not exactly this, something re-written by Kumari Jayawardena (who would have been in charge of the publication of the twenty volume Shanmugathasan's 'Collected Works') ruthlessly removing the more sentimental and obviously petit-bourgeois reminiscing (eg: references to Nihal Jayawickreme time and again and how he assisted the Great Dear Leader and Marxist Thinker to avoid being treated too harshly by a bourgeois government in detention, neglecting of course the thousands of common proletarians), would have been published. She would have produced a vigorously doctrinaire handbook with a strong didactic tone in sharp contrast to her scholarly dissertation which was written in pre-Shanmugathasan times under British imperialist guidance, at the London University, if I am not mistaken.

Then I can imagine our beloved Great Leader and Marxist Thinker, and President of the Peoples Republic of Sri Lanka, Shanmugathasan, overthrown and our next great beloved leader Wijeweera coming to power with the help of 'capitalist roader'

Den Xiao Ping, in the 70's, and the red book 'Thoughts of N. Shanmugathasan' banned, and burnt in public as being as reactionary and backward looking as the Tripitaka and the Bible, and the editor Kumari Jayawardena made to languish in a concentration camp in Wallawaya in the company of K. M. de Silva, Amaradasa Fernando, Batty Weerakoon and Victor Ivan. Then one could get hold of the only copy of the original publication available, in the extensive library of Ian Goonutillake, and I could imagine how he would extract it from a secret hiding place behind a tall bookshelf, and tell the inquirer in hushed tones that it is now a 'collectors item'!

As everyone knows he was the unwavering Mao follower, and in the book there is a great deal about him, and criticism of post Mao Chinese leadership, 'capitalist roaders'. Unlike the other Communist party and its leadership, Shanmugathasan had the honesty to break away from both the Chinese and the Albanians when their policies changed. The leadership of the pro-Moscow wing held firmly to the Moscow line through all the vicissitudes of changes in the Moscow hierarchy, ignoring all the criticisms of Khrushchev of the Stalin era, the Brezhnev restoration and now Gorbachev's Perestroika and glasnost. The Moscow wing here like all other Moscow oriented communist parties are not bothered about the illogicality of holding on to contradictory propositions. Shanmugathasan to his credit has been honest to himself, even though some may think he is misguided. He has in this book aired his views with great sincerity, and he has explained his position vis a vis the Trotskyites, the pro-Moscow Communist Party, and the J.V.P. very clearly.

Unfortunately or fortunately, having failed to lead the proletarian revolution with the Red Flag Union at its head, Shanmugathasan has done the next best thing—writing his memoirs. I do not know if the plantation workers and the depressed castes in the North would remember his valiant efforts at organising them to usher the dawn of a new era, steering clear of Trotskyism, reformism of the Communist Party headed by Keuneman, and Che Guevarism of the J.V.P. At least those who are students of the left movement in this country would for a long time to come, remember this reminiscing tour of a yet unsatisfactorily charted period in our recent history. I wish he had the time and patience to expand the more historically important period in which the L.S.S.P. and the original Communist party played a crucial role in taking the left movement forward. We still do not know precisely why the organised Marxists splintured so much in this country especially in the fifties and sixties. The J.V.P. phenomenon has been dealt with from a Marxist point of view, but then he has not been able to say much about the changes that have taken place in J.V.P. philosophy or tactics between their first emergence in the early seventies, and the recent expansion with another organisation in tandem the D.J.V. (The Desha premis).

Unlike Lenin or Mao, who wrote a great deal while engaged in revolutionary work, our Marxists have not cared much, either to record their own experiences, or indulge in theorising on their own stands, accomplishments, and failures. Dr. N. M. Perera, and Dr. Colvin R. de Silva were in a unique position to examine our political situation in great detail starting from the thirties, and both of them had the necessary academic training to do so. However not until Kumari Jayawardena embarked on her work, was

anything systematic attempted to examine, and analyse the multi-faceted, enormously complex features of the rising working class movements of this country. Batty Weerakoon published Colvin R. De Silva's contribution, recently. Foreigners too have made some studies, but they suffer from the fact they have had to rely on published material here and that was confined to what appeared only in English. Hence, the appearance of Shanmugathasan's memoirs has been a significant addition to the literature of the left. Shanmugathasan unfortunately played only a minor role in the general left movement, and got himself isolated completely after the seventies and his Communist Party has neither a significant Trade Union membership nor any electoral moorings. He admits "I had spent a good part of my political life in the Trade Union field. It would not be an exaggeration to say that individually, I had possibly won more economic victories as well as re-instatement in employment for workers through wages boards, industrial courts and labour tribunals than, perhaps any other trade union leader... But I was now forced to ask myself the question as to whether this had led to reformism. On many an occasion I had seen that when we help to improve the economic level of any section of the workers, the tendency of such better off workers was to shun revolutionary politics or go over to reformist trade unions".

I wish he had spent some more time in going into greater detail about that golden era of left politics. Having read history at the University, this should be no difficult task. He could examine the events, movements, accomplishments, and failures from a left historian's point of view. That would greatly supplement Kumari Jayawardena's doctoral dissertation, and add another dimension to that history, the dimension only a participant could supply.

India's Lanka...

(Continued from page 16)

segment of Sri Lankans as well as Indians that in the event of the IPKF's withdrawal a fratricidal war between the militant groups appears imminent. How to bring both the LTTE and the EPRLF as well as its allies around as participants and not militant adversaries in the politics of the north-east is still another issue on which the leaderships of both the countries will have to work out certain commitments and understanding so that the process of the IPKF's withdrawal is hastened.

The fact that the ministerial-level Indo-Sri Lanka talks in New Delhi were protracted is understandable in view of the rigid stance taken by both the sides earlier. It remains yet to be seen whether the ultimate outcome of these talks will lead to a mutually agreed perception on both the sides regarding the implementation of the accord or whether further consultations between the two governments will be necessary in the coming months. In any event, delayed action in this respect would affect both -- Sri Lanka, in terms of systemic stability, if not survival; but India much more so, in terms of image, status and credibility as the pre-eminent power of the region.

(Concluded)

Four Decades...

(Continued from page 19)

growth and distribution. At the same time special attention was paid to the significance of regional and sectoral variations in industry and peasant agriculture. The pattern in the disparity of resource allocation and income distribution that emerged in the analysis could be linked to the growing resentment among different social strata and to the ensuing escalation of the ethnic conflict.

However, inspite of the fascinating analysis of economic data that was presented, the lack of a paradigm for its theoretical ordering in relation to the current crisis was noted.

In conclusion, the workshop was extremely useful in helping

us re-think much of the received wisdom of Sri Lankan studies, and reconceptualising many of the key categories of its formulation. However, it was extremely regretful that only a meagre aspect of an Eastern and Northern discourse entered the discussions.

Another profound silence in the workshop was the near total absence of gender specific analysis of data -- especially in key areas as education, development, social welfare and mobility. The majority of the participants also unfortunately displayed a reluctance to discuss feminist issues and methods of analysis. Little effort had been made by most of the paper writers to even consider the relevance of key post-modernist theorists such as Bourdieu, Foucault, Kristeva etc.

Hopefully, in the difficult years ahead, a new generation of scholars, influenced by these modern theorists, will continue to meet and keep alive Sri Lanka's rich tradition of scholarship in the Human Sciences.

Ananda Coomaraswamy:..

(Continued from page 13)

grateful; I mean the philosopher and theologian, Ananda Coomaraswamy. Others have written the truth about life and religion and man's work. Others have written good clear English. Others have had the gift of witty exposition. Others have understood the metaphysics of Christianity and others have understood the metaphysics of Hinduism and Buddhism. Others have understood the true significance of erotic drawings and sculptures. Others have seen the relationships of the true and the good and the beautiful. Others have had apparently unlimited learning. Others have loved; others have been kind and generous. But I know of no one else in whom all these powers have combined. I dare not confess myself his disciple; that would only embarrass him. I can only say that I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding.

Another look at Sarvodaya

Douglas Allen

Dharma and Development: Religion as Resource in the Sarvodaya Movement By Joanna Macy

Revised edition. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.

As noted by numerous interpreters of Theravada or Southern Buddhism, traditionally there has been a "tension" between the nirvanic and karmic pursuits and a fundamental difficulty in establishing any integral dynamic relationship between these two orientations. The spiritual movement has tended to be from a less enlightened concern with outer deeds toward an inner-directed meditation and pursuit of enlightenment — that is, toward a withdrawal from the active social world and any serious relation to the karmic realm. If one is sufficiently spiritual, why take seriously the pre-nirvanic realm? Why not strive to transcend absolutely the social, economic, cultural, and historical world of *maya* and *samsara*? This traditional orientation is completely challenged by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka.

Dharma and Development, published in 1983, was based on field work with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement done by Joanna Macy from June 1979 until June 1980. Macy, who was as much an active participant as an observer, is a practicing Buddhist, a social activist, and a board member of Sarvodaya International. In 1984, Macy returned to Sri Lanka for two extensive visits, and she has added a chapter ("Sarvodaya in the Mid-Eighies: An Update") for the revised 1985 edition.

Sarvodaya ("the awakening of all") began modestly in Sri Lanka in 1958 when a young science teacher, A. T. Ariyaratne organized a group of high school students for a two-week "holiday work camp" in a remote village. (A. T. Ariyaratne, founder and President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, has written the introduc-

tion to *Dharma and Development*.) This was the beginning of *shramadana* ("giving" or "sharing" of "human energy" or "labor" — a collective labor project), which has been at the heart of the village self-help movement, even as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement later developed complex regional, national, and international structures and relations. It has been estimated by the Movement that it engages 100,000 full-time workers, mobilizing people in about 6,000 villages in Sri Lanka.

In many places, Macy informs us that her approach is not to evaluate the Sarvodaya Movement in terms of the strengths or weakness of its economic, cultural, and community policies and programs. (Nevertheless, readers cannot fail to detect her sympathetic, even enthusiastic, attitude.) Instead, assuming that such development programs, to be successful, must gain popular participation from a value base found in the indigenous traditions, Macy focuses on how the Buddhist *Dharma* as evoked and revalorized by Sarvodaya, has provided such a foundation and source of vitality. Indeed, the Buddhist *Dharma* determines the very nature and meaning of "development," its goals, and its appropriate means.

Although *Dharma and Development* is not a philosophical work in the technical sense of detailed philosophical analysis and argumentation, it is a book of great philosophical significance. It presents the "philosophy" of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement: its Buddhist assumptions, central Buddhist concepts, Buddhist practices, goals, and criteria of evaluation. We may delineate five concerns of utmost philosophical importance.

First, Sarvodaya repeatedly claims that it is returning to

the early, revolutionary teachings of the Buddha, reclaiming their original meanings and making them relevant to contemporary Sri Lanka. Emphasized in development programs, aimed at "the awakening of all" and "the total (not just 'material') well-being" of the people, is the interdependence of life, as expressed in the Buddha's "dependent co-arising" (*pativassamuppada*). Contrasted are the causal links in "the dependent co-arising of a decadent and a Sarvodaya village." The Four Noble Truths, the Sublime Abodes, *dana*, and other basic teachings are portrayed or reinterpreted in terms of social interaction; emphasized is collective, as well as individual and personal, awakening and well-being.

Second, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement challenges much of traditional Buddhist philosophy and religion: the well-being of all, decentralized self-reliance as a development goal, a pervasive anti-authoritarian approach, a radical egalitarianism and emphasis on participation in decision-making, an opposition to social divisions such as those of class and caste, and so forth — all of this is basic on the "original" Buddhist *Dharma*.

Third, a symbiotic relationship is established between Sarvodaya and the *Sangha*: the role of Buddhist monks has been crucial in introducing, organizing, and legitimizing Sarvodaya's grassroots activities, while the Movement's spiritual foundation helps to revitalize the Order and the monks' vocation, restoring the wider social responsibilities they carried in precolonial days. This has not been without opposition from the *Sangha*, from conservative monks and those who view decentralized popular decision-making as eroding their traditional authority.

Fourth, on philosophical and religious grounds, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement challenges the major contemporary development models. Development cannot be defined exclusively in terms of narrow "economic" goals, such as maximizing the production of goods. In addition to providing food, housing, health care, education, and so forth — and these needs are not neglected — "development" must include a safe, clean, and beautiful environment and the fulfillment of cultural and spiritual needs.

Fifth, although the Movement has been culturally specific to Sri Lanka, with its primary Buddhist orientation, it claims to be religiously pluralistic, with basic principles that can be easily embraced by other faiths and with its ultimate goal of *Sarvodaya*, the awakening of all, as *vishvodaya* or world awakening.

We may raise two possible reservations, one very general and the other more specific. In most general terms, some readers will question whether the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement provides an accurate interpretation of the teaching of the Buddha, their "original meaning" later distorted. Macy does not provide textual documentation or other arguments for such interpretations; consistent with her purpose, she simply states, usually in a sympathetic and approving way, the Movement's interpretation. Certainly the Buddha's views on caste, class, women, power, and so forth may be more ambiguous than as presented here. Of course one who questions some of this interpretation of the "original teachings" may still be very enthusiastic about an attempt to be selective in the use of some of the *Dharma* to render them more applicable today.

In more specific terms, one may question whether the Sarvodaya philosophy is so idealist and utopian that it will be insufficient for the Movement to realize its own goals, such as the radical redistribution of

power necessary for the total well-being of all. In the Movement's effort to be "nonpartisan," to avoid exacerbating social divisions, and to realize the awakening of all, there is no sense in *Dharma and Development* of "struggle" against those who benefit most from oppression and exploitation in Sri Lanka. Instead there is the hope that those with power will be won over by appeals to the indigenous spiritual values and by personal good deeds and example. Macy describes the lofty values and documents the amazing accomplishments of Sarvodaya, but she never gives any examples of the economic and political elite, the oppressive and exploitative landowners, the multinational imperialist interests, and so forth voluntarily relinquishing their power and domination.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement may be viewed as a Buddhist "social gospel", sharing many similarities with recent "liberation theology" in the West (but without integrating Marx's analysis of exploitation and class struggle). By emphasizing the socioeconomic aspects and implications of the *Dharma*, Sarvodaya presents a Buddha whose teachings on social equality, economic sharing, political decision-making, and so forth are both revolutionary and relevant today; such revolutionary teachings are offered as a challenge to us if we are to realize the well-being and awakening of all.

This review was originally published in *Philosophy East & West*. It was sent to us by the author. — Ed.

Devolution...

(Continued from page 22)

succeed, this policy will have to confront the question of whether to continue such archaic production relations as the estate, the line system, where workers live, and the restriction of worker mobility. Reforms are needed to convert these vast estates into smaller

holdings, where at least part of the land would be distributed. Such a reform would help to democratize landholding and enhance democratic participation. Such land distribution should involve both communities. Unless reforms are conducted in this area soon, there is reason to fear that this would become a potent source of violent conflict.

5. Conclusion

The Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement has removed the state of armed violence and war between the two protagonists (the Sri Lankan state and the Tamil politico-military organizations), thereby opening the way for conflict management. However by resolving this issue it has generated conflicts from within the Sinhalese themselves.

If Sri Lanka is not to be drawn into a vortex where barbarism is the order of the day, an accelerated programme for conflict resolution will have to be launched. The state needs to become an instrument of conflict management in a multi-ethnic plural society. This requires imaginative reforms, so as to convert a majoritarian hegemonic-based defective state based on patron-client relationships into a rational state capable of distributing resources and according rewards according to achievement. Indeed, this means transforming the Sri Lankan polity to a democratic state, and restructuring the economy and the social relations which govern the society. It assumes a way of thinking, feeling and believing where the respective communities can form a common Sri Lankan identity. In the short term, the forces of chauvinism and ethno-populism may tend to gain ascendancy and capture the political space. In the longer perspective, the elaboration of the conflict process would depend on the relative balance of power between the key actors — Delhi, Colombo, Tamil Nadu government and the Tamil and Sinhalese politico-military formations.

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