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SEDEC



**“A better and more decent
world for us all”**

***Quotations appearing in this magazine are from the Papal Messages for the World Days of Peace
by Pope John Paul II***

All Contributions are gratefully acknowledged with thanks

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EDITORIAL

Today more than ever peace is the most urgent need not only in the world, but in Sri Lanka. "Peace be with you-My Peace I give into you" said the Lord. The theme of Peace has been the constant message of his Holiness Pope John Paul. "True Peace says the Pope, "must be founded on justice, upon a sense of the intangible dignity of man, upon the recognition of the equality between men, upon the basic principle of human brotherhood, that is, of the respect and love due to each man, because he is man. "Hence peace means more than the absence of war, especially to the struggling economies of under-developed nations economic equity or justice is so necessary to sustain the freedoms democracy provide. Unless the basic levels of equality exists, democratic rights are reduced to a mere electoral process which has no relevance to the quality of life.

Sri Lanka could easily be a case study of a democracy trying to sustain its political ideology amidst the increasing foreign debt which creates its own economic problems. The debt situation of 3rd World countries has been the subject of a great many international forums, for the world has seen its effect on the Latin American countries and realized the inability of under developed nations to rise above their debts. This has not only prevented any type of economic development taking place but increasingly pushed them further into greater debt. Sri Lanka relies heavily on IMF and World Bank assistance - and hence has to agree to their norms of restructuring to increase economic production and reduce wastage. In this situation while privatization / peoplization of production

takes place, welfare measures have to be whittled down to a bare minimum, and this means that the majority of the population who live below subsistence level, find it extremely difficult to obtain even the minimum for existence. In addition, the open economy has brought into the market sophisticated cheaper priced goods, which not only has reduced the demand for local products but also has led to unsatisfied consumer desires - But the sadness of Sri Lanka today is not only the prevailing economic situation but also the ethnic strife which has now taken on the dimensions of a civil war. This war is not only a continuing drain on the economy but a tragedy to our youth.

In this climate of economic disparity and civil strife, political neopotism, corruption and privilege become the operative words. It is within this context that Fr. Oswald Firth writes of a "Third World search to be human and just", and it is within this frame work, that SEDEC carries on its work of rehabilitation and relief. This year as Sri Lanka celebrates the centenary of the teaching of the social doctrine of the church - SEDEC's role is more dynamic. Its vision is to bring peace and justice, SEDEC's objective would be to create awareness among all people, and make real the words of Pope John - "Peace will never be without a hunger and thirst for justice; it will never forget the effort that has to be made in order to defend the weak, to help the poor, to promote the cause of the lowly. Peace will never betray the higher values of life in order to survive."

Manel Abhayaratna



A THIRD WORLD SEARCH TO BE HUMAN AND JUST

The Context :

The world today, racing towards the end of the millennium, is experiencing rapid change in every imaginable sphere. The Berlin wall has been ripped apart, the state of emergency was lifted in South Africa and Nelson Mandela walked free. There has been a revolution in Eastern Europe and the emergence of independent states, signalling the collapse of the Supreme Soviet Union. In Asia, while battles still rage in East Timor, Sri Lanka and certain sections of India and Pakistan, the world is becoming alert to Human Rights and their gross violations very specially in countries of the Third World.

Traditionally, Western governments assumed that human rights were mostly synonymous with multi-party elections, freedom of speech and assembly, and a host of rights of the individual, safeguarding his/her freedom from undue political interference.¹

In the Third World, however, Human Rights meant the community's right to food, to a place to live, to decent health care, education, and most of all, to freedom from political, social, economic and cultural oppression.

In International Human Rights fora, the Western interpretation of Fundamental Rights and their language gained pre-eminence after World War Two, while the Third World understanding of such rights went into relative oblivion, leaving its defence in the hands of poverty stricken communities reeling under the boot -straps of authoritarian regimes. In the event, those who suffered most were the voiceless, defenceless masses who often paid with their lives

in their attempt to claim what was justly theirs, namely, human dignity and justice which would ensure the peoples right to the basic necessities of life. All this could be collated under one single phrase, viz., the right to live in freedom"²

Of course, the poor have always known that rights like food and health care were as essential to life's well being as having freedom of speech and the power to vote. But only recently have the two definitions been considered interdependent. Over the past few years politicians and policy-makers have gradually been conceding that all human rights are of equal value and inextricably intertwined,³ forming an integral whole:

The end of Communism and the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe may have brought hopes to the newly liberated states of a better life by adopting the capitalist system based on a free market economy. But amid the orgy of freedom - talk and of improvements in the quality of life, many things remain unchanged in the Third World. World - wide over one billion people still live in absolute still poverty. One in three children suffer serious malnutrition and one and a half billion people lack basic health care. About half a million women perish annually when pregnant or while giving birth. In many Asian Countries, persistent droughts and continuous floods have turned attempts at development into a disaster.⁴

2. David Hollenback, Both Bread and Freedom : The Interconnection of economic and political rights in recent Catholic Thought, in Human Rights and the Global Mission of the Church, BII Massachusetts, Pg. 31.

3. cf. The New Internationalist, Pg. 5.

4. cf. The New Internationalist, Pg. 6.

1. The New Internationalist, March 1992, No. 229.
Pg. 4 and 5.

The Sri Lankan Context :

Sri Lanka is in no way an exception to the massive poverty and exploitation experienced in many Countries of Asia, and with perhaps greater intensity in those Countries of South Asia. Here, power and wealth have been concentrated in the hands of social elites, and the economic system, under the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have inflicted untold suffering very specially on the poorer sectors of Society.

The British left Sri Lanka bequeathing to us a heavily centralized form of Government, a dependent economy, and arbitrarily demarcated provincial boundaries. They failed to respect the religio-cultural and ethnic plurality of our people and the aspirations of minorities, all of which has contributed casually to the national crisis from which we now find it difficult to extricate ourselves.

The Tamils in the North and the East, having faced injustices for years and being deprived of the fruits of economic development, have resorted to arms with the purpose of achieving self-determination of the Tamil Community. Frustrated Sinhala youth in the South attempted an armed overthrow of the establishment and its unjust structures. One must admit that the strategy of armed revolt to rectify injustices did not generate the wholehearted support of the people. Nevertheless, there was a general feeling that the Social and Economic reasons that lead to the twin revolts were justifiable. The military suppression that followed these revolts and the gruesome killings executed in the most hideous forms, such as burning on tyres, decapitated bodies floating on rivers, are clear indications of a society that had been cut loose from its religio-cultural moorings and lost its ethical bearings.

This is not the end of a long listed tale of woe. Over 71,000 girls in the three Free Trade Zones, eeking out an existence in sweat-shops known as garment factories; a large segment of our women driven into the desert countries to fetch a few petrodollars, and that, under shameful conditions; a 35% level of malnutrition among mothers and children in rural areas; a 50% population of the metropolis jammed

into shanties along the backwaters of Colombo, and an ever tense unemployed youth population, all these form today a part of the socio-economic fabric that constitutes the Sri Lankan reality.

The long story of a people hidden in the hills, living a life of bondage, the pathos of the peasant villages whose lands were once pillaged to grow commercialized cash crops, the profits of which are absorbed by multi-nationals, leaving the land sterile due to the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, are elements of a long story of pauperization and powerlessness.

The sea coast has been exposed to perverse vices spawned by an unregulated tourist trade. This has led to the fisherfolk being dispossessed of their traditional fishing grounds on which five star hotels and nefarious bistros have cropped up. These people's livelihood has been affected and their economic base has been disrupted. The persisting North-East War has further compounded the calamitous situation of the fisherfolk who are hindered from plying their trade in the troubled waters of the war zones. These are the essential strands that complete the pathetic mosaic of the Sri Lankan reality.

Situational Poverty :

The recent Poverty study on Sri Lanka, completed in December 1991, under the auspices of the European NGO Forum on Sri Lanka, has been very revealing.

The study clearly makes references to the liberalizing economy and the structural adjustments carried out under the dictates of the two Western economic giants, the IMF and the World Bank involved in forcing the government's fist to remove the State's monopoly in the area of social welfare: "... any precipitated withdrawal from free social welfare provision inevitably resulted in increased hardships for those least able to cope with it". Very real fears have, therefore, been expressed that "the thirteen years of economic reform undergone (since 1977) had resulted in a worsening of quality of life for Sri Lanka's people, in particular the poor".⁵

5. European NGO Forum on Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Poverty study, December 1991, Pg. 2.

Even though the commissioned study reveals that the above has not occurred in all its dimensions, it maintains that there has been no improvement in the situation of the poor. "Statistical data indicate that the core of absolute poor in the country has remained roughly constant - around 25% of the total population since the start of the 1970s. And, all policies including those implemented under the adjustment programmes, have failed to meet this groups needs. There is clearly an urgent need to design economic policy so that it includes this group of people within the benefits of economic growth".⁶ The level at which absolute poverty has aimed its most severe blow appears to be the female headed households.

The research also indicates that absolute poverty is rural, rather than an urban problem. "This seems to contradict the much repeated assertions by IMF and World Bank staff that economic reform will benefit rural areas, and small scale producers within the economy as a whole. In Sri Lanka at least, there appear to be no grounds to support such assertions. Indeed, the reverse would appear to be the case."⁷ There is clearly then an urgent need to redesign programmes to ensure greater economic benefits to the poorer sectors of society in Sri Lanka.

6. Percentage distribution of total household income by per capita income deciles indicate how the poor have become poorer, while the rich have become richer.

Year	Deciles				
	1st	2nd	3rd	9th	10th
1981	3.5	5.3	5.9	13.8	27.4
1985	2.4	3.8	4.5	13.5	38.8

(Source : Labour force and Socio-economic Survey 1985 / 86 - Preliminary Report, Department of Census and Statistics, 1987).

This is also confirmed by surveys conducted on adult calorie consumption.

Deciles	78/79	80/81	81/82	85/86
1	1,730	1,587	1,566	1,832
10	3,762	3,877	3,905	4,171

(Source, Sri Lanka : Sustaining the adjustment process. World Bank 1990).

7. Ibid., Pg 3.

While the proportion of absolutely poor does not appear to have changed, the number of relative poverty appears to be on the increase, and this, as the study indicates, for two reasons : First, employment cutbacks which has reduced the cumulative family income: second, the additional economic activity which has resulted in elite groups enjoying considerable gains while the vast majority are simply able to maintain real levels of consumption and earnings.⁸

The Place and Role of the Asian Church :

A. Rerouting Theology;

The Church in Asia is immersed in a continent of great and varied religio - cultural traditions. She forms but a small part, a minority in fact, of the many religio - cultural forces assisting Asia in its struggle for fuller life.

Asia, which is the home of over 1/2 of the World's population (2866 million out of 4917 million,⁹ is also where "the Church suffers suspicious, subtle discrimination and lack of freedom in the face of increasing statism and religious fundamentalism."¹⁰

As already mentioned, "Asia is a continent of massive poverty and exploitation with the levers of power and wealth in the hands of a social elite."¹¹ "Tribal and ethnic minorities, women and children, workers, peasants and fisherfolk, shanty dwellers and plantation workers are the ones that bear the brunt of poverty and exploitation. This is evident in agrarian bondage, in the tragic effects of tourism, and in migrant and overseas labour often groaning under inhuman and trying conditions in its attempts to survive."¹²

8. Ibid., Pg. 3

9. United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1986, Pg. 17.

10. A Statement of the Colloquium on Social Doctrine of the Church in the Context of Asia, January 20 - 24, Pattaya, Thailand, No. 1.

11. Ibid, No. 2

12. Ibid, No. 3

In the face of such glaring poverty it is important to ask ourselves what should be the role of the Church in Asia, and more specifically for us, her place in Sri Lanka. At the outset, it is essential to realize that we live in a Country where Christians are a minority. It would, therefore, be an anomaly and highly restrictive of the Church's mission to consider the liberative message of the Bible as applicable primarily to Christians and merely by extension to those of other religions.

The Christian Council of 1442, held in Florence - Ferrara, declared: "The holy Church of Rome firmly believes, confesses and proclaims that no one - not just the heathen, but also the Jews, heretics schismatics - outside the catholic church can have a part in eternal life, but that they will go to hell fire.....".¹³ A very unfortunate assumption, indeed!"

While this was the mind of the Church for centuries, the Bible's liberation of a people is clearly indicative of the struggle for freedom of all exploited people, of people in bondage, whose dignity has been marred by deprivation of even their basic needs. The cause for such impoverishment of people is to be found not in the lethargy and ignorance of these simple folk, but in the evasive socio - economic structures that keep almost half of the Countries population in economic bondage.¹⁴ This has the least to do with their being heathens, jews, heretics and schismatics.

There was a time when the Church's mission thrust in Third world countries was to convert people to the "one and true" faith. The deep freezed deposit of faith was considered to be the sole possession of the Western Church, and was explained to the oriental mind in Greco - Roman, European - enlightenment terminology that proved to be highly incomprehensible to a Third world people groaning under colonial exploitation. According to this western teaching,

the tragedy of human kind was assumed to have begun with original sin. The coming of Jesus and his death was to pay a ransom to god for this sin and buy back from God sinful humankind.¹⁵

Such a doctrine may go unquestioned within a Community of people born into Christianity. But what about the millions of others who continue to be adherents of other religious faiths What of those who have no religious beliefs andatheists ? Does not such an interpretation of man's proneness to evil encourage the salvation of his individual soul which is totally uninvolved with the historical context of the world's events. If poverty and deprivation and death are the results of "Original Sin", how would we explain the super affluence and consumerism of the west and of oriental Eastern giants like Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. Have they been exonerated of paying the price of original sin?

What have been the implications of absorbing the understanding of original sin, as it has been presented to us? Thus far does it not imply that the unbaptized are under the sway and dominance of satan, while the baptized have been saved ? Does it not imply that it is the woman who leads men into sin, which negates the dignity of women? Has it not implied that original sin is linked to sexual desires, which has become a nightmare, let us say, to the plantation workers¹⁶ in the hill Country. Jesus teaching however seems to be otherwise.

Jesus does not speak of "buying back" humanity. After all, humanity was never sold to anyone, certainly not to satan. Such a theory would cast aspersions on the almighty goodness of God. What Jesus does speak of is liberating a people from all forms of oppression (Luke 4/16-30). His mission must be understood as a struggle to transform unjust and evil society¹⁷.

13. Quoted in, Right Relationships, Tissa Balasuriya, OMI, De Routing and Re-Rooting of Christian Theology, Logos, Volume 30, Sept. / Dec. 1991, Pg. 6.

14. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 35 - 37

15. Right Relationships, op. cit. Pg. 185

16. This experience is a result of my close contact with the Hill Country Plantation Workers with whom I have been in association for nearly five years.

17. Cf. Right Relationships, op. cit., Pg. 187

Jesus whole spirituality was not confined to saving of one's soul (a rather selfish spirituality), and using the sacraments for this selfish purpose. His Spirituality was based on sacrificing one's own life (Kenosis) to save others. This is the true meaning of the love He so often spoke of. This is the non violent way in which Jesus proposed to build God's Kingdom where justice and love would reign supreme. After all, Justice is nothing else but love in action. This was the "orthopraxis" (doctrine and action) of his whole teaching on which authentic spirituality must be based; a system of values that was built on the concern one has for the other, the "small people" and the underprivileged.

B. Attempts to Build a New World

There certainly has been a number of attempts on the part of the Church both to understand the causes of the corruption and exploitation that has spelled disaster to the Third world and provide certain responses to the crisis. Some of the responses transcended or by-passed the sufferings of the masses, while some others were nothing more than a temporary solace to such sufferings.

(i) The Spiritual Alone :

The first such attempt has been to emphasize that the Church's concern is purely spiritual and religious. Here, questions of Social justice and the political power-play remain outside the scope and competence of the Church. These are businesses to which the State and political forum must address themselves. Economic and political questions will need the Church's intervention only in so far as they refer to the individual Christian's interior life and spiritual well-being; or when they affect the rights of the Church as an institution.

A faith / society, spiritual / secular, body / soul dualism lie at the root of this response. "This is wholly alien to a faith committed to Creation, Incarnation, Resurrection and Sacramental practice. It is alien to the historical life and ministry of Jesus in which faith finds its root and sustenance." Such a

doctrine is alien to the religious ethos of the Asian people.

This doctrine of dualism held sway for a long time in Asian Churches of Colonial theologies and spiritualities. The concept of other-worldliness, where suffering people would receive their due reward, favoured the exploitation carried on by the colonial masters. Few today would defend or profess such dualism. And yet we notice it beneath the surface influencing our decisions.¹⁸

(ii) God's Will

The second attempt is "to see social realities and situations of poverty, deprivation, oppression and suffering as a result of a divine disposition, as occasions of meritorious endurance for some and virtuous generosity for others."¹⁹ This is downright fatalism and a pre-determination of history which robs men/women of their freedom to opt for a better world. The thesis calls into question the goodness of God who has created man / woman to His likeness, a free being with the power to choose, to be autonomous and inventive. Embracing this theory would be tantamount to saying that men / women are not responsible for their own history and for the future of the earth.

(iii) Relief and Welfare

The third attempt to build a new world is "to address poverty, misery and suffering directly by providing relief and undertaking emergency measures. This is the traditional way in which love has always glowed in the heart of the Church. In this area, the Church's social responsibility has hardly ever been lacking. Institutions for the care of the sick, the orphan, the leper, the aged, the mentally deranged and the wayfarer have clearly proved the Church's magnanimity."

18. I am indebted to Fr. Samuel Ryan from whose article "Asia and Justice", in *Liberation in Asia*, (Theological Perspectives), Pgs. 2 - 10, I have extensively drawn for this paper.

19. Samuel Ryan, *Asia and Justice*, Op. cit., Pg. 7

This attempt to succor the poor is of vital importance as long as human existence remains frail, vulnerable and subject to the vagaries of nature and to the maleficence of men which give rise to interminable wars and destruction.

But, asks Samuel Ryan, in a remarkable article on Asia and Justice, "... Should not relief remain strictly an emergency measure which may not be institutionalized and perpetuated? Is it right to give the impression that the task of the Church is to pick up year after year those whom the system breaks and throws out and to enable them to die loved for an hour or two, but never to call a halt to the process of destroying women and men by the million?"

"Is it right for the Church to undertake the cleaning up of the human debris while paying never enough attention to the nature of the system and the cause of unlimited wretchedness in a world of untold resources? Can the Church be true to itself and to the Reign of God in undertaking relief and emergency work without adverting to the question of justice and the rights of the people, and without consciously and expressly giving to relief services the biblical dimension of prophetic criticism and prophetic protest?"²⁰

(iv) Technology :

The fourth attempt at eliminating poverty, misery and suffering has been efforts at modernization, namely, the endeavour to introduce new technology into industry, agriculture, and communication in an effort to overcome "backwardness" which is identified as the root cause of deprivation and suffering.

The unfortunate presupposition here is that all forms of technological development has come to us from the west. Even Paul VI, in his famous encyclical "Populorum Progressio," maintains a similar view. He

recalls that the colonizers "brought their science and technical knowledge and left beneficial results of their presence in so many underdeveloped regions".²¹ One tends to forget that "Science and technological knowledge of a high degree had existed in China and India many Centuries before they appeared in the West. In the little island of Sri Lanka, even before the Christian era, improving on an even earlier Indian technology, the people began an intricate hydraulic irrigation system in face of the remains of which even the most modern scientific mind boggles. . ." ²²

Pope Paul VI is undoubtedly aware, however, of the damage done by agro-industries to countries like ours : "It must certainly be recognized that colonizing powers have often furthered their own interests . . . and their departure has left a precarious economy, bound up for instance with the production of one kind of crop whose market prices are subjected to sudden and considerable variations."²³

Studies on agro-technology have manifestly shown an increase in the World's cereal production, from 1,333 million tons in 1974, to 16,388.5 million tons in 1983, (an increase of 24% on a world scale). But such an increase in cereal production necessitates the use of very expensive technology, sophisticated machinery and trained man-power which Third World Countries can ill afford.

While the Green Revolution has increased the output of agricultural products, studies indicate that these efforts have been supported and promoted by international organizations and multi-lateral donor-agencies. Research on bio-technology has been embarked on by private multinational companies which have made Third World Countries dependent upon them.

20. Ibid., Pg. 7 and 8.

21. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 7

22. Paul Caspersz, *Asia's Third World Response*, Vidyajothi, 1991, October, Pg. 567

23. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, No. 7

What we perceive today is that agro-technology has commercialized agriculture, inducing Third World Countries to engage in the production of cash crops instead of food-crops. This sort of "mining" of agriculture, that is, the extracting of value as fast as possible from intensely farmed areas, have changed consumption patterns, increased malnutrition and hunger, and subjected farmers of the Third World to Market forces. The cash crops were evidently for cash exports and denied the Third World of much needed food crops.²⁴ (Island, 25th March, Wednesday, 1992).

The arguments put forward here are not against the adoption of technology or the need of modernization. The argument rather is against the naive idea that technological modernization (whether it be in the area of agriculture, the garment industry or otherwise), is sufficient to meet the present day economic problems of Asia. What we need are types of technology which could be of service to the needy masses and make a contribution to their human dignity and to the cause of justice. Selling off to multi-naionals every inch of our land will not further the cause of eliminating poverty. Such attempts can only make Third World Countries pawns in the hands of Western institutions. The adoption of technology should not be detrimental to people who must necessarily be the centre of our concern.

C. Structural Change

There are small groups within the Church who have become aware that earlier attempts by the Church to eliminate poverty and misery and build a better world have not been all that successful. All social and economic indicators point to a direction where the poor have become poorer while the rich have become considerably richer.²⁵

These small groups have made certain definite options; they are moving out of elite institutions, non-protesting welfare operations and well provided city life into the slums, the villages, the far flung rural districts, the remote areas where the gypsies live, into the coastal areas where poor fisherfolk toil to support a Traditional Church, mingled with instilled beliefs and practices they never dared challenge.

These groups have perceived that beyond individual sins there stand structural injustices; that these are responsible for the massive poverty and continuous sufferings experienced by hundreds of millions of hard-working people; that the protraction of such a socio-economic and politically dominant system where a few benefit from the sweat of the majority, necessitates the setting up of armies, indulgence in arms trade, development of scientifically refined methods of torture, assassination, abduction and destabilisation, and all these to support monstrous dictatorships under the pretext of safeguarding democracy.

Those who have made an option in the direction building up base Communities of justice, love and sharing are now developing a theology and a spirituality to inspire and sustain their lives. While absorbing the values of an opted poverty peculiar to ancient spiritual writers and oriental sages, they also assume the spirituality of struggle against oppressive structures that is reminiscent of semitic traditions in the hope of being closer to the suffering masses. It is with them that a critical awareness of the reality is shared and definite lines of non-violent mass actions are chartered to bring about a change where greater humanity, equality, freedom and justice would prevail.

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24. The Island, 25th March, Wednesday, 1992. Article by T. B. Subasinha, Dept. of Economics, University of Kelaniya.

25. See Foot Note No. 6.



PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY : A SOUTH ASIAN PROFILE

Public accountability is one of the core values of the democratic process. The essence of the democratic form of government is that those wielding authority and making decisions in the exercise of public power consistently remain answerable for their actions to the community from which they derive their power.

As civil government began to encompass larger tracts of territory and more extensive populations, and as the range and complexity of social requirements increased at a significant pace, it became necessary to conceive of structures, sometimes intricate and sophisticated, to enable the essential functions of government to be discharged by a chosen few, reflecting however the will of the community at large. Throughout the ages this has been the major practical application of democratic theory.

Diverse forms of government have been suggested to accomplish this object. Cabinet government inspired by the Westminster model and the Presidential system, versions of which have been resorted to in countries like the United States of America and France, are the two principal modalities typical of contemporary political experience. It will be seen, however, that neither system is intrinsically capable of providing acceptable guarantees with regard to public accountability, and that the success of the system selected to suit the nuances and priorities of a given social and cultural context depends inevitably on the availability of variety of safeguards which, in their cumulative impact, will ensure the protection of basic democratic values within the framework of the system adopted.

It will no doubt be of some interest to nations in the South Asian region to examine the experience of the Indian Ocean Island of Sri Lanka in respect of political structures and ideologies which have been developed for the primary purpose of achieving public accountability. Sri Lanka or Ceylon, as the Island was described until the promulgation of its First Republican Constitution of 1972, has the advantage of sustained exposure to constitutional mechanisms, as varied in their objectives as they are imaginative in content, which held sway successively in the Island since the early decades of the present century.

Throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century when several Constitutions were in force in succession, for example, the McCallum, Manning and Donoughmore Constitutions, the British Raj symbolised by the authority of the Governor and his officials showed itself adamant to retain in its own hands, responsibility for a variety of matters which formed the pith and substance of the functions devolving upon the executive branch of government. Even as late as the middle of the century, upon the eve of the advent of the Soulbury Constitution which signified Dominion status, three officials nominated by the Governor - namely the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Legal Secretary - were entrusted with responsibility for vital functions of government which were totally removed from control, however vestigial, by the elected representatives of the people.

The theory of Cabinet government which Ceylon accepted under the aegis of the Soulbury Constitution when she gained Independence from Westminster in 1948 is sustained by underpinnings

which specifically address the issue of public accountability. Cabinet government rests on the pivotal institution of Parliament, itself consisting of the elected representatives of the people. Representative democracy is enshrined in the modalities of Cabinet government in so far as the Cabinet is dependent for its existence upon the goodwill of the legislature which could, at any time, bring about a state of things in which the Cabinet would be compelled to relinquish office. The Cabinet consists of the leaders of the political party which commands the majority of seats in Parliament. The Cabinet is headed by a Prime Minister who is the acknowledged head of the political party which dominates Parliament. The victorious political party, having secured acceptance by the electorate, formulates executive policy in Cabinet and ensures the enforcement of that policy in practice by legislative provisions which reflect the will of the majority of the legislature.

The Cabinet system of government is fundamentally compatible with the principle of public accountability because of the reality of financial control of the Cabinet by Parliament. This is the lever which, in the ultimate analysis, enables the legislature to impose its will upon the executive. The government, of course, requires funds to carry on its essential activities, and it is for Parliament to determine whether these funds are to be made available to the Cabinet or not. The rejection of the Annual Appropriation Bill (the Budget) by Parliament will make it impossible for the Government to continue to function, and its resignation in these circumstances is inevitable.

At the same time, of course, it has to be recognised candidly that control, within the framework of the Cabinet system, is not one - sided but reciprocal. Just as Parliament, by virtue of its control over public finance and by other methods, can bend the executive to its will, so also the executive has at its disposal ample means for influencing the actions of the legislature. The Principal instrument through which this control is capable of being exercised is the threat of dissolution of Parliament. If the Cabinet is denied financial supply, or if any measure of policy crucial to the Cabinet is rejected

by the legislature, the Prime Minister as head of the Cabinet has the power to advise the Head of State to dissolve Parliament. This means that members of the legislature are compelled to defend their seats at a general election - a prospect which, understandably, they may not relish at a time when the popularity of the incumbent administration is perceived to be at a low ebb.

Notions of public accountability, in the contemporary public law of Sri Lanka, have to be reconciled with the advent of the Executive Presidential system of government which forms the cornerstone of the Second Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka which was promulgated in 1978. The need for an Executive Presidential system was articulated with vigour against the backdrop of strikingly adverse economic circumstances which underscored the crucial significance of an accelerated programme of economic development. It was argued that in a Third World context a government committed to the objective of development within a brief time - frame has no option but to make unpopular decisions when occasion demands, and that the political will to make such decisions is of necessity eroded by some of the features of the Cabinet system of government.

The essence of the criticism directed against the Cabinet system is that it entails excessive dependence of the executive upon the whims and caprices of the legislature. A government firmly resolved to pursue a programme of action in the long - term interest of the country may well be obliged to repudiate populist attitudes and to implement policies which, for the time being, are thought to be harsh or oppressive. This is precisely the type of situation in which members of the governing party in the legislature may be under virtually irresistible pressure from their respective constituents to cross over from the ranks of the Government to those of Opposition. There is also the contingency, far from fanciful or even improbable in the setting especially of developing nations, that bribery, corruption or undue pressure in some other form may be resorted to with a view to debilitating the strength of the administration in Parliament.

The thrust of these factors is to weaken the position of the executive and to make it indecisive or vacillating in situations calling for intrepidity of outlook in the making of decisions in the national interest. For this reason the contention was advanced that a President not performing a purely ceremonial or titular function but invested instead with the substance of executive authority, should constitute the centrepiece of the Constitution. What is more, it was emphasized that the President, just like Parliament, should derive his mandate directly from the people. This was ensured by a constitutional provision which declared that the President would be elected by the people for a fixed term of years. During this period he has an undeniable mandate as Head of State and as Head of Government to formulate and implement executive policy. The cardinal characteristic of such a system, its protagonists contended, was that it prevented the executive from being compelled to occupy a position of subordination to the legislature.

While the reality is undeniable that this system enables the President to dominate the entire spectrum of executive policy making and implementation and indeed places in the hands of the President a range and degree of authority quite unlike that at the disposal of the most powerful of Prime Ministers, it nevertheless remains true that the Presidential system, too, has built into it inevitable modalities of legislative control largely finding expression through the mechanism of surveillance in respect of public funds. The President, no less than the Cabinet, has of necessity to rely upon funds voted by Parliament. Under the Presidential system, just as under the Cabinet system, Parliament may at its discretion withhold supply and so stultify the functioning of the governmental process. In this manner, finally, public accountability of the Executive President is preserved through Parliament's control of the public exchequer.

It is apparent, then, under both the Cabinet and the Presidential models of government, that the functions and responsibilities of the legislature are of pivotal significance in relation to the vitality of the methods whereby accountability of the executive branch of government is ensured. This highlights the importance of the legislature reflecting, in its

composition and in its predilections, the aspirations of the community at large. The irreducible element of public accountability in any meaningful sense is a truly representative Parliament.

Assessed from this standpoint, a system of proportional representation, which was introduced into Sri Lanka after 1977 supplanting the 'first past the post' Westminster model which had been entrenched in the election laws of the country until then, manifestly has much to commend it. Its primary advantage is that it produces a balanced legislature, the composition of which accurately reflects the state of public opinion prevailing in the country at the relevant time. The system of proportional representation is often criticised on two grounds. The first is that it tends to produce unstable government which could totter and disintegrate in consequence of the manipulation and realignment of political forces. The second is that the immediacy of the nexus between the constituent and his member of Parliament, in the form in which this nexus typically exists in the case of single member constituencies, is weakened by the proportional representation system in terms of which members represent not electorates but large districts, so that a constituent having a problem would not have an obvious person to turn to for the purpose of seeking redress. Notwithstanding these limitations, however, the Sri Lankan experience leaves no room for doubt as to the overall advantages of this system in comparison with its predecessor.

Whether in the context of the Cabinet system or in that of the Executive Presidential system, it is important to stress that public accountability can be a reality only if a variety of other elements are deliberately nurtured and developed. These factors are significant enough to warrant enumeration seriatim and brief discussion.

(i) The Judiciary. – Especially in the setting of a constitutional system which recognises an enforceable Bill of Rights and the principle pertaining to the justiciability of legislation, with the result that legislation which Parliament purports to enact can itself be struck down on the ground of incompatibility with mandatory provisions for the paramount law, it

is crucial that the judiciary should enjoy the confidence of the public with regard to its impartiality and objectivity.

The public should have no cause to entertain even any marginal doubt with regard to the capability and the inclination of the judiciary to mete out justice, in conflicts between the State and the individual, with an even hand. An institution such as the Judicial Service Commission responsible for the appointment, transfer, promotion and dismissal of the minor judiciary must be established by the Constitution so as to, insulate judges from political and other pressures. The methods of appointment of judges of the highest courts should make it possible for professional competence and stature to be regarded as the governing criteria. Judges, once appointed, must have security of tenure and the assurance that their salaries and conditions of service will not be altered to their disadvantage during the period of their incumbency. While these constitutional and legal safeguards are necessary, the experience of South Asian nations is that the independence and integrity of the judiciary rest in the final analysis upon the calibre, the strength of character and the values of the individuals holding judicial office.

(ii) A vigorous multi-party system. This is an indispensable ingredient of the preservation of values connected with public accountability. A vigilant and articulate Opposition is a potent factor in engendering the kind of environment in which use of administrative power can be effectively restrained.

(iii) The vitality and freedom of mass media. Transparency of the governmental process, and its constant subjection to public scrutiny and evaluation are exceedingly helpful in ensuring purity and incorruptibility of public life. There should be a variety of shades of political opinion finding expression through the mass media. There must be willingness to probe matters of concern to the public and to accord publicity to the findings which are reached. Investigative journalism, in particular, has much to do with the upholding of standards of probity and rectitude at all levels of the administration by exposure of unacceptable behaviour. The media have a primary responsibility

with regard to inculcating a critical outlook and an inquiring mind in as wide a section of the public as possible.

(iv) The vigour of voluntary associations. Participatory habits and values are a necessary ingredient for the survival of liberty. The assertion and defence of one's views must be undertaken not only at the overtly political level in respect of the activities of government but in a variety of other organisations relevant to places of work, worship, recreation, cultural activity, trade unions and the like.

(v) Consultative mechanisms enabling continuing interaction between the community and its elected representatives. In Sri Lanka, for example, apart from members of the national legislature, there are regional bodies such as the provincial councils. Since the needs and priorities of the people vary materially from district to district it is useful and productive to arrange meetings from time to time to enable members of Parliament and those elected to the provincial councils and local authorities to forge coherent approaches on a regional basis to pressing problems.

(vi) The Ombudsman. Judicial remedies are not exclusive with regard to the protection of basic rights and the control of action incompatible with the rule of law. The Ombudsman - today a central feature of most Commonwealth Constitutions - has a crucial role to play in discouraging abuse of power.

(vii) The Public Petitions Committee. This is a Committee of Parliament to which the public has access in order to complain of administrative and other injustices. Its vitality is often a reliable indicator of the strength of public opinion.

(viii) The Public Accounts Committee. Legislative control of public finance is largely achieved by means of this Committee. It is, unfortunately, the experience of most Asian countries that this mechanism is not used with as much effectiveness as it should be.

(ix) Active interest in public affairs by professional groups.

(x) An intrepid and independent public service. Accountability is greatly strengthened by a public service which is able, without inhibition, to give the executive the benefit of its sincere advice,

However, the objectivity and detachment of outlook which should be expected of the public service is in practice feasible only if matters pertaining to the appointment, promotion, transfer and dismissal of public officials are determined by a body remote from the ambit of partisan political influence.

Conclusion

Public accountability is ultimately a matter of attitudes and priorities with the community. Constitutional and legal mechanisms can do no more than provide the framework within which central concepts of accountability can be given practical expression. Whether this aspiration is fulfilled or not, depends largely on the vigour of public opinion, and the strength of values reinforced by the factors identified earlier contribute significantly to fortifying this tradition in the context of modern South Asian Society.

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It is indeed true that Peace will accept obedience to just law and legitimate authority, but it will never be alien to considerations of the common good and man's moral freedom.

* * *

When Peace loses its equilibrium and efficiency, Human Rights become precarious and are compromised; when there is no Peace, right loses its human stature.



HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

The world has witnessed momentous changes.

Perhaps there is no comparable period in this century which has so dramatically changed the course of human destiny. During these years, we witnessed the liberal democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, the collapse and subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union into sovereign, equal and independent Republics, somewhat loosely linked together as the Commonwealth of Independent States. These changes had important consequences for the developing world for with the collapse of an ideology there was similar loss of certainty with regard to the efficacy of an alternative development vision. In South Africa, equally dramatic changes have taken place which have captured the political imagination of those engaged in the struggle throughout the world for the dismantling of apartheid. Constitutional negotiations are now taking place which are likely to bring about black majority rule, while safeguarding the rights and freedoms of all regardless of colour or ethnicity. Even if a constitution acceptable to all is drafted the larger challenge would be to overcome the extensive brutalisation, and to restore respect for the rule of law. Even within our sub-continent, we have witnessed during the past four years, changes which were beyond our most optimistic expectations. In the landlocked Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal sovereignty has been vested in the people of Nepal, Who are now governed by an elected government. In Pakistan, and Bangladesh, both of which countries emerged out of a bloody partition or equally brutal civil war, multi-party democracy has taken the place of military regimes. These were moments of triumph in the struggle for democracy and human rights.

We also had our moments of tragedy, of anguish and of despair. In June of 1989, in Tiananmen Square many dreams were shattered when the students

democracy movement was brutally crushed. In Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi and other political dissidents languish in incarceration, while the military junta refuses to transfer power to the National League for Democracy which won a colossal electoral victory in May 1990. In our society, the quest for peace remains elusive, despite each cycle of brutality reminding us of the futility of violence and of destruction.

Paul Sieghart, the renowned human rights scholar and activist, has stated that one of the most cynical propositions in politics is that "You cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs". In the field of economic development, it has meant that you cannot create the benefits of growth, without violating at least temporarily the human rights of a substantial number of citizens. This thesis has led many countries in South-East Asia to argue that human rights and democracy must be subordinated to the imperatives of development. The newly industrialised countries which are sometimes described as the four tigers - are cited as inspiring examples of this dubious proposition. But of these countries, two, Singapore and Hong Kong are small city-states, and it would be difficult to draw broad generalisations from their very particular experiences. In the absence of empirical evidence the proposition seems no more than an assertion of ideology. It became further discredited with the collapse of the Marcos regime, as it became clear that the proposition was no more than a justification for authoritarianism and for the naked abuse of political power. It is one of the singular achievements of this development decade that it is now widely accepted that human rights is integral to development. This means that respect for individual human rights promotes and does not hinder economic development.

The question does arise as to what we mean by human rights in this regard. Does it mean civil and political rights such as the right to life, the freedom from torture or arbitrary arrest, and the freedom of speech? Or should our definition of human rights also include social, economic and cultural rights such as the right to food, the right to health, education and a livelihood. This is an issue which in the past divided the East and the West. The countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union tended to accord primacy to social and economic rights, while the West emphasised the centrality of civil and political rights. With the collapse of the cold war, there is apprehension that social - economic rights would be further downgraded. Although it is frequently asserted that civil - political and social - economic rights are interdependent, this appears to be no more than empty rhetoric. There are no effective mechanisms to monitor socioeconomic rights, and they tend to be viewed negatively as policy aspirations rather than giving rise to rights which are legally enforceable against a state. Central to any process of development is the elimination of poverty. Poverty is associated with widespread denial of human rights as the poor are powerless, unable to organise and defend themselves. As more developing countries pursue developmental models which emphasise economic liberalization, there is apprehension that this could lead to the dismantling of social welfare measures and further decline in the physical quality of life of the poor and the disadvantaged. Even within industrialised countries, there is a realisation that they can no longer ignore the social needs of the urban underclass and that the continuing neglect of these issues could place in jeopardy, the egalitarian ideals which are central to the democratic order.

A question which has become central to the relationship between human rights and development is the issue of political conditionalities. This means that the industrialised countries which provide developmental assistance, now insist that the continuance of such assistance would be dependent on the observance of political conditions such as good governance and the observance of civil and political rights. Developing countries, by and large, have resisted the link between human rights and aid on the ground that such conditions infringe on their national sovereignty. Human rights groups on the other hand, have welcomed such

initiatives as they believe that they are likely to result in improved compliance with international human rights standards. They also argue that there are no issues of national sovereignty which would serve as a barrier to international concern on human rights and humanitarian issues. They further argue that developing countries by becoming signatories to international human rights instruments, voluntarily accept international scrutiny of their domestic human rights records. Even the World Bank which had in the past, refused to take account of non-economic factors in defining its policies on assistance, has increasingly recognised the importance of "good governance".

But link between human rights and development threatens to further polarise the international community along North - South lines.

In East Timor in November 91, Indonesian soldiers fired at a funeral procession killing and injuring dozens of civilians. In response to international protest against the incident, Indonesia appointed an inquiry tribunal. In consequence of the report, the Government expressed regret and suspended two senior military officials who were in charge of the soldiers. Many observers mistakenly interpreted the Indonesian response as an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of international human rights concerns. However, the Indonesian Government within a few weeks terminated its aid relationship with the Netherlands which had been one of the most severe critics of the East Timor incident. There was similar retaliatory action by Kenya when it served diplomatic relations with Norway in response to Norwegian criticism of Kenya's treatment of political dissidents. China has been one of the leading opponents any attempt to link human rights records to aid, trade or multilateral assistance. China was subject to continuing criticism of its suppression of the pro-democracy movement, and of political dissidents. U. S. representatives of multilateral development banks are required to oppose loans to governments engaged in the gross violations of international human rights. After the Tienanmen square massacre, the U. S. opposed loans to China from June 89 until Feb. 90.

If the donor community is to be effective in maintaining this policy, there is a need for both credibility and consistency. Credibility is related to the ability of the North to ensure that in the South within

its national borders categories such as refugees, migrant workers and its own under-class, are not subject to discriminatory and arbitrary treatment. There can be no such credibility if there is conspicuous disparity between domestic practices and international policies on human rights. The issue of consistency arises when there is selectivity with regard to the countries who are subject to punitive measures. Is the decision to suspend or terminate developmental assistance based solely on human rights considerations or is it more likely that factors such as geo-political importance, the economic model pursued by the recipient country and domestic politics are likely to influence such decisions.

The whole question of political conditionalities has also resulted in criticism that developed countries are seeking to impose western values and institutions on non-western societies under the guise of promoting good governance and human rights. The universal character of human rights is now being challenged by many nations in the South. Aung San Suu Kyi recently argued that it is a puzzlement to the Burmese on how concepts which recognise "inherent dignity, equal and inalienable rights of human beings, and which accept that all men are endowed with reason and conscience, and which recommend the universal spirit of brotherhood can be inimical to indigenous values. It is also difficult for them to understand how any of the rights contained in the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be seen as anything but wholesome and good. If ideas and beliefs are to be denied validity outside geographical and cultural bounds of their origins, Buddhism would be confined to North India, Christianity to a narrow tract in the Middle East and Islam to Arabia. However traditional conceptions of justice, and governance have been imaginatively invoked to support the struggle for democracy.

The recent conflict in Thailand between pro-democracy forces and the Thai military, provides us with an interesting example on the role of traditions in the political life of Thailand. The Thai King intervened in this conflict and the reverence for tradition was so strong that both the military and civilian groups engaged in the struggle for democracy unquestioningly accepted his resolution of the crisis. The King lent his weight in favour of constitutional amendment, to the effect that the Prime Minister should be elected by the Parliament, and this decision was unanimously endorsed. The explanation for this important example of the continuing relevance of Thailand's Kingship's tradition

is related to the importance that law and custom play in upholding notions of just governance. The Thai King is on the one hand, regarded as an embryo Buddha, and on the other hand, the embodiment of justice. In the struggle for democracy and human rights, there is a role for the selective appropriation of tradition.

The next issue that we need to consider relates to the protection of what is known as group rights. In the history of the human rights movement, the international covenants focussed on the protection of the individual. It is clear that this is no congratulate. There are indigenous groups, ethnic minorities, and religious minorities who seek protection, both of their group's identity and the group's rights. One of the least understood concepts of group rights, is the right of self determination.

This is the right of a group to freely determine its political status and to freely pursue its economic, social and cultural development. It is a principle that is frequently asserted in the course of political struggle, but its transformation into a legal right continues to be the subject of fierce debate. It is equally clear that there is no advantage to a ethnic group or minority to achieve political freedom and self rule, if individuals within that group do not have the freedom of speech, movement or of expression. The interdependence of group rights and individual rights become self-evident.

The challenge that faces us is that of ensuring the issues of human rights and development do not become polarized into north-south issues.

The issues of democracy and human rights are far too important to become further politicised.

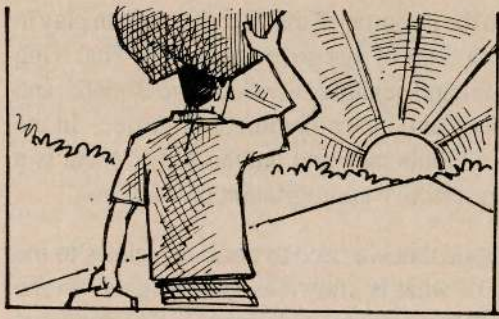
We must build the bridges of understanding which are necessary to fashion a world which is united by people who are committed to a core of human values.

Aung San Suu Kyi once said that it should be our common endeavour to prove that the spirit of man can transcend the flaws of human nature. In the struggle for human values, it is immoral to be pessimistic. We must ensure that the values of tolerance, pluralism and of accommodation will ultimately triumph against the forces of bigotry, and of domination

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JANASAVIYA AS A SEARCH FOR NEW VALUES

I think that today Sri Lanka is going through a civilizational crisis. By civilizational crisis, I mean, a crisis or a process of shock and change that is so extraordinary and unusual in both depth and scale, as to shake a whole society out of the conventional mindsets and stereo-types that it was used to applying in day-to-day thinking and activity. If we look back with detachment at the high points of this crisis during the last decade, when social contradictions have burst open (Like the Eelam War or the Southern Insurgency), there are fairly clear signs of systemic collapse and disintegration.

Another sign of this is the disintegration of values, of the old value system. We are caught in a period of transition. The old values that we are used to are no longer tenable in living terms. The terms of reference, the terms of existence of those values have changed. But the new values to replace those old values have still not been born, have still not been clarified. So you are caught in a limbo where you have to live without values which have been re-defined. Therefore today we have to search very very committedly for new values. We have to strive to retain a degree of internal discipline in our life, in our thinking, in order to maintain a degree of wholeness and the kind of integrity that we need, if we are to have mastery in understanding the problems of our society. It's only if we can understand these problems that we will be able to find the answers. Because then, we will be less prone to mistake symptoms for causes.

Another very important manifestation of breakdown in values is the erosion of a moral code. That is fundamental to all our problems. We don't have a moral code, a moral base to our thinking, our actions,

our human and social relationships. Today we are not in control of the processes that we are caught up in. The processes are controlling us. Hence the level and magnitude of alienation in our society today.

The Search

How should we be searching for new values and a new morality? This is a most important question—the process and the method by which we seek for new values, new criteria, a new moral edifice. Here we need to focus very clearly on internal factors i.e. all factors internal to the context one is talking about and the structure one is working within. For example, if we are talking about Sri Lankan agriculture, the questions to be asked have to be derived from within that sector. The problems of the dry zone are totally different from the problems of the hill country wet zone. The problems of the hill country wet zone are the problems of landuse - how to raise the productivity of the limited land that is available. The problems of the dry zone are not problems of landlessness, but of scarce water, soil moisture and soil fertility. The poor in the dry zone are a landed poor. So alienating land to the poor in the dry zone is of dubious value.

I'm not saying that we only need the internal factor, that you should romanticise this and say that everything can be done through internal factors. There is a need for external factors, for external stimuli, for external comparison and so on. There is a very clear need for that. What I'm saying is that we have to take the specificities of each situation into account. And also when we are trying to look for answers, we should consider the past and present experiences relevant to the particular situation. The Specific conditions of the situation under

consideration should serve as the main landmarks and guidelines for our thinking. And a thorough understanding of those specificities is a pre-condition for understanding and further theorising about those situations.

The concern with the internal factor is not an obsessive one or a limitless one. The very concern for the internal factor produces an understanding of the limits of the internal factor. It's through recognition of the limitations of the internal factor that one relates to external factors. For example, take the case of technology. Look at rainfed farming in the dry zone. In the short term you can't irrigate a whole complex network of tanks. That means that we will have to compensate for the limitations we experience today in dry zone rainfed farming by adopting other possible technologies. So once one has identified the limits of the internal factor, then one looks for parallel systems which will complement the internal.

Janasaviya is, I would argue, a very strong candidate for representing what is new and what is nativist in Sri Lankan thought and action. In terms of the search for that new civilizational - moral - valuational frame-work, Janasaviya is a very rich case of those complex and multiple strands which go to make up a new way of thinking. Janasaviya is large enough and big enough and complex enough to encompass all areas - political, moral, psychological, economic, social, cultural and so on. Janasaviya is also an attempt to reverse decades of Sri Lankan history which is top down, bureaucratic and rule - bound in moral - psychological terms. So Janasaviya is a fundamental attempt at reversing all the thinking of the past which moves us away from the innermost lives of our poor people. In that sense Janasaviya is a discovery of people in all their richness and multi - dimensionality. I think that never before in our history have we discovered the people in these terms. There was a qualitatively different perception of the people during the pre-colonial times when we were independent. But the perception of the role of people in society in the Janasaviya paradigm is very very different from the perception of the role of people in a feudal way of thinking, in a feudal culture.

Democratization

This brings us to the whole question of democracy, of democratic thought and action. The appreciation and understanding of the value and significance of Janasaviya is directly in terms of democratic values. Because in Janasaviya every human being, particularly the poor human being, who was always being taken for granted, who was leading a non-human or semi-human existence, really becomes aware of his or her own identity and of his or her true self-worth often for the first time in his or her life. The poor begin to re-discover their humanity, reassess their humanity and begin to function as full human beings—what we would call the "whole person". Through that process they would graduate to the mainstream of societal life. So from a situation of more or less extreme deprivation and alienation, within a very short time, a reversal takes place in their whole lives. It's as if they are reborn to themselves, to the area in which they live, to the society and to the community. This is a new mobilization, a new democratisation that is taking place at the ground level.

Janasaviya is perhaps the first of those totalistic articulations of empowerment, of enrichment, of helping people to stand up on their own feet. I said in a totalistic sense because in our recent history there have been many attempts at similar democratisation. For example, the Paddy Lands Act of 1958 was a significant attempt at democratization of a sub sector. Then there is the experience of land reform in 1972 and 1976 and also, very significantly, the experience of free education. Another major step in democratization was the Million Houses Programme. But all these took place within very specific sectors; they were not multi-sectoral. Janasaviya is multi-sectoral; it cuts across all the sectors in the development structure and hence it is much larger, much wider and more comprehensive than any one of those earlier sectoral exercises in democratization. Janasaviya is multi-sectoral and focuses very clearly on the poor: it has got a quality and a character which puts it in a class and a category by itself. This is what distinguishes it from other attempts at democratization however significant, valuable and successful.

Stereotypes and Labels

Today I think it will be a mistake to think in terms of clearly separable systems. The lesson that we have to learn is that development is a result of a mix, a complex mix, of all systems. Take the whole dichotomy of the private and public sectors. If you try to box these two sectors separately and say that development be private sector based or public sector based, it will be wrong. There are certain things which would probably work better in the public sector and certain things which would probably work better in the private sector. So one has to have a new way of thinking where you draw from both and get the correct kind of mix. This is where stereotypes are dangerous. Labels are unhelpful because they do not facilitate clarity of thinking and tend to over-simplify things. The most important thing is to retain the primacy of democracy, retain the primacy of people-people's freedom and people's identities. If the systems that we are fashioning, that we are discovering, that we are working with help us (both internally in our own lives as well as externally in society) to feel a greater and greater sense of participation, involvement, self-fulfilment and satisfaction, that obviously is the right system.

And that is the direction in which society should move. If we can design the course of our social engineering and our social development in that direction, the labels wouldn't matter and we would get a new kind of community-based, people-based society and development where people matter. And where people matter, all the other things that go with people like environment and the resource base would get protected and conserved. I can't think of people-based, people-oriented development where the environment would be damaged or destroyed. I mean the two things don't go together. So where the effects and the processes are humanising and are in the direction of enriching human beings and their lives, inevitably they would also result in the enrichment and creative development of the environment and all the things that go to make society and social life.

I see Janasaviya as something which has got tremendous undiscovered, unrealised potential in

terms of a concept, in terms of a perspective, in terms of a philosophy, in terms of a value system, and in terms of practice. As Janasaviya evolves, we are rediscovering new potentialities and new depths withing Janasaviya. That is completely consistent with the nature of Janasaviya because it's a case of people, who are conscious, who are searching and who are struggling and are learning from their own experience. I, for one, think that Janasaviya is a tremendous resource for learning.

An Alternative

Janasaviya is already playing a significant role in democratizing society. Let's compare the situation we were in October 1989 and the situation today. In October 1989 were we not living in a context where the future was very uncertain, where there was no hope in terms of democratic values, where there was very little hope in terms of the sustainability and the growth of democratic values. Today we find that there is a lot of hope. Of course it would be an exaggeration to say that Janasaviya is the source or the prime source of hope. At the same time it would not be an exaggeration to say that Janasaviya has won public confidence starting with the poor who are the beneficiaries of Janasaviya – that is 157,000 families.

In this sense Janasaviya certainly constitutes an alternative, a very proximate hope that binds all the poor in this country. Here is an attempt to reverse the flow of resources and the flow of activities frontally. Here an attempt at restructuring society is taking place while placing us at the centre of our own development process. Here is a case where Government and non-government organizations are trying to participate in the process of the people rather than inviting people to participate in the processes of governmental or non-governmental organizations.

Not only the poor but anyone who feels, anyone who thinks deeply of his or her society can participate in this process in many ways. I think even to ask a question about Janasaviya, even to show concern for a poor family and to actively assist a poor family is a part of Janasaviya.

There is a very close link between Janasaviya and the ongoing process of devolution and decentralization. In fact the very premise of Janasaviya is that you devolve and decentralise right down to the level of the individual person. The poor families and the poor people cannot stand up on their own feet, cannot join the mainstream of production, cannot become productive unless they have authority to make their own decisions. That means devolution, that means decentralization, giving space to people and empowering them to organise locally for their own betterment and mobilise their own resources in case they wish to do so. So there is a one-to-one connection between Janasaviya and decentralization and devolution.

Old Thinking and New Thinking

Finally we come to the attitudes of the elites towards Janasaviya. That perhaps is the element of this

society that is most conservative. They are not used to trusting the people, trusting the poor. Their preception of the role of the people in society is different. Their approach to the problems of the people is not a democratic, participatory approach but a top-down one. Therefore they have a hostile attitude towards Janasaviya. I see this conflict between the elite and Janasaviya as a conflict between old thinking and new thinking.

We have to bring about a change in these old attitudes, in this old perception because an aware, enlightened elite is a need of the hour. This struggle against old attitudes and approaches is an important aspect of our struggle to generate new thinking and new values.

Susil Siriwardene

Janasaviya Commissioner.

Peace is a fundamental good which involves respecting and promoting essential human values : the right to life at every stage of its development ; the right to be respected, regardless of race, sex or religious convictions ; the right to the material goods necessary for life; the right to work and to a fair distribution of its fruits for a well-ordered and harmonious coexistence. As individuals, we must feel the commitment to living those values of justice, which are crowned by the supreme law of love : "You shall love your neighbour as yourself".

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure development, a subject of great importance to developing countries like us not only because it is necessary to promote socio economic development, but also to preserve democratic institutions in our society. Social Infrastructure which includes education, welfare and community services, housing, sanitation and water supply not only involves physical development of such facilities but also reflects the political thinking and development priorities.

Sri Lanka was one of the pioneering nations to devote a large volume of resources for the development of social infrastructure. Even prior to independence Sri Lanka had launched free education and food subsidy programmes. Successive governments since independence irrespective of ideological differences expanded these programmes to develop social infrastructure countrywide. Governments not only allocated a large volume of budgetary resources on education, health and food subsidy programmes, sometimes reaching levels as high as 7% of GDP but also expanded physical infrastructure facilities throughout the island providing people greater access to education, health and other community facilities and ensuring consumption of basic food items.

This country achieved an immense social progress on all fronts i. e. high literacy rate, high life expectancy, low infant mortality rate, low death rate, low birth rate, etc. bringing Sri Lanka's social indicators to a much higher standard often comparable with that of advanced countries as early as 1970s. The World Bank in early 1970s pre-occupying with the well known basic needs approach to economic development took Sri Lanka

as a model. Scholars all over the world using new indicators like the PQLI (Physical Quality of Life Index) commended Sri Lanka's immense social progress.

There is also no doubt that the same policies provided not only greater opportunities but much more equal opportunities to all segments of Sri Lankans and contributed positively towards improved income distribution.

In 1977 this country adopted far reaching economic reforms removing some barriers to international trade. Economic activities were liberalised and state interventions were reduced. A large number of activities was deregulated. The economy was guided along by market forces. With some slippages here and there, the same commitment, and the same strategy with more or less the same volume of resources for social infrastructure development are still being pursued.

Despite all what we have achieved in Sri Lanka, for nearly a half a century the Sri Lankan economy has remained much below its potential. Except the period between 1978 - 1983, the economy has grown at around 3 - 4 per cent. The country is now facing much more social, political and economic challenges. Our economy does not appear to be capable of sustaining our social infrastructure progress. Indicators of poverty has risen. Despite all development effort 50 per cent of the people needs food stamps. Unemployment is too high and it is intolerable in the case of educated youths. Countries such as Malaysia have taken off, not only leaving us behind in terms of economic progress but also in terms of social infrastructure development.

Many people including professionals who speak on social infrastructure development speak many positive achievements in this country. I fully endorse these views. However let me share a few of my ideas, since I sincerely believe that a new strategy, a new vision and a new era has to be worked out for Sri Lanka to enter the year 2000.

If we consider the negative aspects that have been produced by the policies that have been followed during the last thirty to forty years this country witnessed youths revolting against democracy, the political framework which our social infrastructure development should have strengthened. The country also witnessed a considerable political uncertainty threatening our social fabric in Sri Lanka.

Let us consider specific issues relevant to the social infrastructure strategy.

Take education and health for instance. All successive governments have expanded basic educational facilities throughout Sri Lanka. Although there is much to be desired, most Sri Lankans have fair access to education and health facilities. The situation is much superior compared to most third world countries. The entire facility is freely provided.

But on the other hand, all over Sri Lanka a large scale private practice of both education and health is being conducted. It appears that there is a parallel market for education and health. What does this mean? Does it indicate that free education and free health are no longer needed? Or does it mean that the government has failed in delivering these service?

Our education system has produced a large number of educated youth largely in the field of liberal arts. We have also produced outstanding professionals in the fields of medicine, engineering, business, banking and public policies. Nevertheless, a large number of educated youth are not in a position to find productive opportunities and become active partners to development. Those who find such opportunities are unable to find adequate remuneration. Some are subject to political harassment. They cannot perform their professional tasks without political blessings. Hence, our professionals either leave Sri Lanka or enter the private market in order to maximise personal gains. How do we develop a strategy to overcome these problems and get the maximum benefits from social infrastructure development.

Housing has received a much wider attention in recent years. We are moving very fast providing houses almost to every broader in terms of statistical numbers. But if we take our housing needs and take a realistic view about our limited resources like land, financial capital, environmental considerations etc. One might wonder whether we have adopted a right kind of policy strategy for housing.

Social infrastructure the way we have approached particularly since independence is clearly political. Successive governments have politicised the issue rather than adopting a long term strategy for the development of social infrastructure. As a result, today this subject is much more political than it should be. It is now time for all of us to reconsider our strategy towards the development of social infrastructure for year 2000.

Dr. Kamal Karunanayake.

***Love and Peace are correlative Entities. Peace is a Product of Love :
True Love, Human Love.***

***"Treat others as you would like them to treat you;
That is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets".***



WHITHER - SRI LANKA

There has been no period of the history of Sri Lanka where the question of peace, justice and human rights has effected people so much. This tremendous concern is because these factors have been denied to the people. There are meetings, seminars, discussions and various writers have expressed their opinions on this prevailing situation. Sri Lanka is a Buddhist Country where essentially peace loving and peaceful citizens live. Yet today in our country peace has been destroyed. The chief factors are. The demand of a group of Dravidian citizens requesting a separate kingdom and setting out on a course of violence to obtain that kingdom by resorting to arms. This struggle has gone on for a number of years and has been responsible for the destruction of over thousands of lives. It has also led to the destruction of the resources in the country which cannot be ignored. The money that could be spent on development has been spent on this war to purchase arms and equipments. There is no end in sight, there is not even a shadow of a peace to be seen. Today this struggle is intensified. The LTTE (Tigers) are killing even little children to achieve their goal of a separate state which can really never be given. Due to this violence today in the North there is no peace. Thousands of innocent Tamils are in refugee camps. The Tigers too have their detention camps for those who disagree with them. Innocent Tamil citizens are searching and praying for peace. Other Tamil Organizations and Tamil Political Parties who are against the brutality of Tigers too seek peace. In the same way India too is concerned and has taken action against the LTTE Groups.

In fact due to this situation peace is desired by all. This is the only real desire in the country.

A few years ago in the Island's Southern areas too there was a breakdown of peace, and even today there is no freedom from fear and terror. The climate is not suitable for freedom in this country. In Maharagama and Ampara recently there were Bomb blasts in which a large number of people were killed. In some places today there is yet disappearance of persons and bodies are found on the road sides. We can see from this that there is no peace yet in this country. In fact it has been said that some of those who took part in the recent Pada Yatra too have disappeared and could perhaps have been killed. The killing of persons and the different forms of intimidation that prevail have brought the whole country in to a state of fear. It is not only the Tigers or the JVP who are responsible for this. In a statement issued by Premadasa Udugampola a former DIG he has said a group called Black Cats have been responsible for the disappearance and death of the number of persons.

A similar organization called PRRA too has been also heard of in the past. Many of our people are not unaware as to those who have set up these organisations. Some have used these groups for their personnel gain, to settle private scores and some for political revenge. In this way peace has been gradually destroyed in this country. In this context no one has the freedom to meet, write and criticise. This situation did not occur today or yesterday. In 1982 a meeting of the Sinhala Balamandalaya held at the All Buddhist Congress Hall under the chairmanship of Ven. Sobita was disrupted. A group of persons broke in to the meeting threatened and assaulted the organizers, in fact Prof. Sarathchandra escaped from being killed that day as he was severally assaulted and thrown in to a drain. I believe we were harassed by a group who, too my

mind were connected with the Government. They came in C.T.B. Buses. In such a climate it is not possible to hold even a free election. Innocent lives are in danger and leadership will be obtained by violence & intimidation.

That such a situation has risen in a Buddhist country such as Sri Lanka is a shame. People often question and other countries are shocked by the murders and violence they hear off and see. In a country where the majority of Sinhala, Tamils and Muslims seek peace, a few are responsible for the violence and terror that has led to the breakdown of peace. In this context the Buddhist clergy and other spiritual leaders must join hands to seek peace and try to end the violence and fear that is there.

It can be stated that one of the chief reasons by which peace has been destroyed is party politics. To remain in power is the only principle of politicians and they will even destroy the peace that exists in the country to reach this goal. In fact political parties should take responsibilities for the state of affairs in the country. Power hungry politicians to obtain the vote have used 'sectoral' politics, the present tragedy is mainly due to this.

Justice too has been effected and destroyed in this situation. In any country a people's trust in law and justice is necessary. But it is now no secret that in our country justice and the law are biased, and often at the end of any election, law and justice have a habit of taking a holiday! Very often office is given solely on political patronage. In the previous Government the Job Bank was started for the express purpose of giving jobs to those of one political party. Due to this system those who were not politically suitable were chosen for jobs and the others were ignored regardless of their qualifications or merit and naturally this led to frustration.

During the previous government Ven. Ratnasara started an organisation with the support of all religious leaders. In Gampaha he held a meeting of this organisation with the support of all religious leaders. In Gampaha he held a meeting of this organisation and the police under the instructions of Premadasa Udugampola DIG disrupted the meeting. In the courts the Ven. Ratnasara was awarded

compensation of Rs. 12,000/- and Mr. Udugampola was ordered to pay this amount. This fine was paid by the Government and Mr. Udugampola gave a promotion. It was obvious that justice could not be meted out fairly to all. Mrs. Vivinne Gunawardene was assaulted and harassed by the police and when judgement was given in her favour the Judge's house was surrounded by thugs and he was threatened and intimidated. The then President stated that this incident showed how efficient democracy was in this country! If those found fault by the courts are promoted by the government and safely guarded, then law and justice is but a mockery. So many instances of this nature have occurred during this period, law and justice have lost their value and the trust people have in them has been destroyed. In any country when the independence and credibility of law is destroyed then the result is dangerous, as people resort to violence and physical force to achieve their objectives. This is the situation that has now befallen this country. The Tamil youth in the North and Sinhala youth in South cannot achieve anything divided by the narrow boundaries of race. They must understand the situation that is gradually occurring in the whole country and fight together against the injustices the people are facing. Racial Groups fighting each other has left room for injustices to occur and they cannot be controlled.

The intelligentsia must use their abilities to show the youth the correct path. In countries such as Philippines, Bangladesh and the African countries illiteracy has been used as a means by which the powerful keep the many in slavery and suppress their rights and freedom. But in Sri Lanka the situation is different. We have clever educated literate persons and for a number of years the people have received the knowledge of rightful leadership from the Buddhist Clergy – an indigenous and powerful organisation. Yet today certain monks have obtained political patronage and have lost their ability to show the way whereby a righteous society can be built.

Peace can come to our country only when people are united. The vote is the most valuable treasure a person has and regardless of fear or intimidation the vote must be used to choose whom ever one likes and what ever party one wishes to. The vote is the only power a citizen has. The Election Commissioners

recent report shows that in the last General Election thuggery and corruption was of a very high level and the right to exercise freely one's vote was limited. If this situation continues democracy will be totally destroyed. It is the right of a people to choose a government freely without fear. If this right is destroyed then there will be an attempt by the youth to resort to violence to obtain those rights and

freedom. If this happens Sri Lanka never have the peace, that is needed so desperately to develop the country, and make the lives of people happy and prosperous. The Youth of the country Sinhala and Tamil must, unite to bring peace and develop the country for the benefit of all its citizens.

Kotte Naga Viharadhipathi
Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero

Peace and Life. They are supreme values in the civil order. They are also values that are interdependent. Do we want Peace? Then let us defend Life!

But it is not only war that kills Peace. Every crime against life is a blow to Peace, especially if it strikes at the moral conduct of the people.

The discussion can continue by reviewing the hundred forms in which offences against life seem to be becoming normal behaviour: where individual crime is organized to become collective; to ensure the silence and complicity of whole groups of citizens; to make private vendetta a vile collective duty, terrorism a phenomenon of legitimate political or social affirmation, police torture an effective means of public power no longer directed towards restoring order but towards imposing ignoble repression. It is impossible for peace to flourish where the safety of life is compromised in this way. Where violence rages, true peace ends. But where human rights are truly professed and publicly recognized and defended, Peace becomes the joyful and operative atmosphere of life in society.



ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR WHOM ?

The lie for most that is true for many is difficult to defeat. This encapsulated the dogma on the "open economy." It is true that many in our country today are economically better off than they have ever been. But most are not. Those of us who lead affluent lives rarely if ever go to the villages, slums and homes of the less affluent. Instead we live in our own world of air-conditioned cars, international schools, air-conditioned offices, home videos, supermarkets, stockmarkets, clubs and five-star hotels. So we neither have the opportunity to hear or to see a different reality.

Among others, the World Bank and IMF have been telling all of us who live in poor countries that the only way to reduce poverty is through increases in economic output and that the future growth of our countries depends on accelerating growth in the rich countries. Now within Sri Lanka too, we seem to be agreeing with that same basic message. We hear our political and business elites argue that in order to help the poor the government must help the rich.

The most recent budget puts this theory into practice in a particularly aggravated form. The government reduced the taxes on the private sector and gave up a couple of billions worth of potential tax revenues. Other incentives such as cheap bank credit for exporters and concessions for assets held abroad were also given. It was said that the private sector needed to make more profits in order to save more for investment so that jobs and prosperity would eventually flow to the poor. This in effect is the "trickle down" theory of development.

There are two questionable premises, however, in the argument. The first lies in its hope that the rich

will re-invest their profits instead of spending it on conspicuous consumption. The second lies in the assumption that the private sector is the only engine of growth of the economy.

As regards the first, Prof. Ediriwira Sarachchandra has sagely noted, "The affluent few make a vulgar display of their wealth. They zoom along in their high powered air-conditioned automobiles while the poor stand in queues for overcrowded buses for a journey filled with risks." However, it is the second premise, the notion that the private sector is the engine of the country's economy, that has to be seriously debated.

There is now a general acceptance that the state sector having failed, the private sector must take over. People should be helped to help themselves. It is on this reasoning that many incentives have been given to the private sector in the hope that it will become more powerful and pull the entire nation out of its poverty.

If it is correct that the only alternative to the state sector is the private sector then the reasoning above makes sense. If there are only two engines and one has come to a halt, then the other must do the job. But we need to be careful about what we mean by the "private sector."

The Unorganised Sector

During the colonial period, an economic structure which was dualistic in nature was imposed on our nation. The main features of the economy were its dependence on international trade and the co-existence of a modern and traditional sector. The

modern sector was integrated into the international market, while the traditional sector was largely rural, subsistence-oriented and neglected. In the period after 1977, economic policies were introduced to steer the whole economy towards a greater market orientation and dependence on international trade. Nevertheless, the dualistic structure still remains.

Therefore, even today, when we talk of the private sector, what we mean is the *organised* private sector which revolves around the urban centres. For instance, upwards of two thirds of all industrial enterprises in the country are located in the Colombo and Gampaha district alone. The organised private sector employs about 20% of the employed work force. It is to this sector of the economy, especially to the owners and managers, that the massive package of governmental incentives has been directed.

But outside of the organised private sector is a vast "unorganised private sector" or "People's Economy" which is composed of farmers, masons, carpenters, small traders, labourers and so on. They constitute, by far, the largest proportion of the population. Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), in particular the development-oriented ones such as Sarvodaya, concentrate their efforts in organising and integrating this sector of the economy.

The much maligned economic policies of the 1970 - 77 period, by restricting foreign imports, gave this essentially small-scale sector a boost and helped to strengthen the domestic production base dispersed throughout the country. The inability of the government of that time to obtain foreign aid and the two massive external shocks caused by the oil price hike and world food shortage of 1972-73 have left us with a fearful memory. State-run enterprises that were inefficient monopolies in their areas of production and state licensing over much of the economy made matters worse. But to the extent that the economic policies of that period gave emphasis to the unorganised private sector, it was more positive for the long term growth, social justice and cultural integrity of Sri Lanka than what is found today.

The organised private sector as defined above is undoubtedly an engine of growth but its limitations

in fostering nationwide development need to be noted. Typically the private sector considers the unorganised sector as merely a cheap supplier of labour and raw materials to be kept unorganised and exploited rather than to be organised and empowered. This is to be expected because profit maximisation and not rural development is the natural goal of the private sector. On the other hand, the organised private sector is rich and powerful enough not to need special incentives from the government. The unorganised private sector is a better candidate for special incentives if the fruits of development are to be better distributed.

Structural Adjustments

In general, foreign aid is given to governments on the basis of their usefulness as military allies, respect for human rights and openness of their economic policies. As Sri Lanka is weak on the first two counts, our policy makers are very vulnerable to pressure on the third. So we see that despite President Premadasa's genuine belief in the Janasaviya ideal of development, the government is following the standard World Bank and IMF prescriptions and focussing its attention on the well being and prosperity of the organised private sector.

The unfortunate fact is that by removing almost all import protections due to this pressure, these policies have had the effect of devastating the unorganised private sector in a manner that countries such as Japan, Taiwan and South Korea never permitted when they were developing.

The experience of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea are commonly invoked to demonstrate the success of export-oriented and free market economies. However, the economic histories of these countries bear little resemblance to the free market myths attributed to them. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea combined different aspects of the planned and free market models to come up with competitive economies. Each built its economic success upon a foundation of radical land reform, massive investments in basic education and dense networks of rural organisations that integrated the rural economy. The government provided policy

guidelines and protected producers in the agricultural and industrial sectors from foreign competition. Compared to these Sri Lanka's present economic policies are indeed a far cry.

But inspired by optimism and self-interest defenders of our World Bank and IMF inspired policies tell us that this is the only way in which we can become a Newly Industrialised Country. On the other hand, when shown the consequences of their policies, they tell us that they have no choice because the international donors have forced these measures upon us.

To put the matter in a nutshell, the chief beneficiaries of "free trade" between the rich and the poor are the rich. In order to receive the WB / IMF money, the government is being forced to do "structural adjustments" that hit the wage earners and poor people everywhere. The chief beneficiaries of the WB / IMF connection and its associated increase in international trade, contracts, commissions and other forms of "easy money" are the rich countries and locally, the business people with special acumen or access to political patronage and the professionals. The local poor are being left to fend for themselves together with an emasculated Janasaviya.

Statistics collected by the Central Bank show this very clearly. They show that the poor and the middle class are getting a raw deal, not a new deal. Even the Janasaviya programme, which the government, no doubt sincerely promised would be its lead development programme, has now been effectively demoted to being categorised as "a consumption-oriented welfare expenditure" which should, together with all other welfare programmes not account for more than strictly limited proportion of the government's budget.

The unsatisfactoriness of the new deal to the poor can be seen in the fact that the incentives that were given to them in the past in the form of cheap fertiliser, guaranteed prices and good health and education services are now being denied to the poor. Fertiliser prices have increased by 300 percent since 1990. Spending on health and education, which are the building blocks of a nation have been more than

halved as a proportion of GNP from what they were in the 1960s and 70s. It is because of these past investments that Sri Lanka still continues to rank high among the world's countries in terms of the quality of life of the people, but the gap is narrowing.

Evidence of Hardship

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that despite all the foreign aid received and reforms carried out at the instigation of the WB/IMF, the position of the general population as a whole has been deteriorating in the past several years. For instance, a survey on literacy (NATE) in 1990 revealed that the literacy rate, far from improving, had actually decreased. A Central Bank survey in 1987 showed that the intake of calories per person declined between 1982 and 1987. Food is the most basic of human needs. The decline in literacy levels and the reduction of the calory intake is serious evidence of a growing malaise rather than of an enhanced quality of life.

The distribution of income is another very important indicator of where the fruits of development are really going. Central Bank data shows that the income benefits of the economic growth experienced after 1977 have favoured the upper income groups much more than the lower groups. The share of the bottom 40 percent who received a total income share of 19.3 percent in 1973 declined to 16 percent in 1985 and still further to 11.3 percent in 1987. On the other hand, the income share of the highest 20 percent increased from 43 percent in 1973 to 52.3 percent in 1985 and still further to 57 percent in 1987.

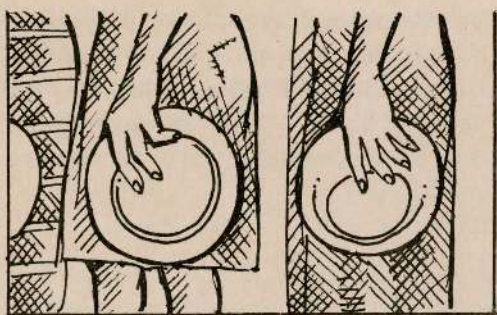
Especially in the last two years the high rate of inflation which reached 20% last year according to official figures (which is generally believed to be an underestimate) has eaten into the purchasing power of the poor and the middle class. In 1990 the real wages of government employees fell by 7 percent. In the organised private sector it dropped by 4 percent. These declines would be worse if we considered the unofficial rate of inflation. What this means is that people were getting poorer even though the economy grew by that highly publicised 6 percent.

The increasing income inequalities have much wider repercussions than simply meaning that some people are having a lot more money to spend than others. Income inequalities lead to distortions elsewhere as well. For example, before the diseases caused by poverty such as malaria, diarrhoea and other infectious diseases are eliminated, the need to treat the diseases of affluence such as heart and pressure-related diseases are consuming an increasing proportion of the health budget and medical skills. As more private cars are imported more money has to be set aside to widen and maintain urban roads. All of these expenditures mean that less is left over for development that benefits the poor.

Let us be frank. The rich are better off than they have ever been. There is no doubt about it. But the prosperity of the rich is not the well being of the nation. The affluence of Colombo is not shared by rural Sri Lanka. The re-assurance and pride that we take in the 6 percent growth rate of the economy matters little to all those whose real incomes and quality of life have fallen.

Dr. Jehan Perera

The first appeal I want to address to you, young men and women of today, is this: Do not be afraid ! Do not be afraid of your own youth, and of those deep desires you have for happiness, for truth, for beauty and for lasting love. Sometimes people say that society is afraid of those powerful desires of young people, and that you yourselves are afraid of them. Do not be afraid When I look at you, the young people, I feel great gratitude and hope.



SEDEC - RELIEF AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES

The Current situation in Sri Lanka makes one ask Quo Vadis, O Lanka? The North/East War seems poised to enter the bloodiest phase with both the Sri Lankan Armed forces and the LTTE preparing, possibly, for the final major showdown.

The intransigent stance of the LTTE has not helped the cause of the Tamils, while Sinhala passions have been aroused to such an extent that it will be virtually impossible to find consensus to a solution to the vexed problem. After nearly a decade of fighting the opposing sides in the battle are physically closer to one another but the problems they seek to solve are more distant than they had ever been.

SEDEC is the institution of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development. The current socio - political situation in Sri Lanka lays a tremendous responsibility on SEDEC. There are instances of disregard for Justice, indifference to the necessity for peace and disregard for human dignity which courtails human development in the long term. SEDEC makes its voice heard loud and clear on these matters.

Politicians and extremists on both sides have dragged this nation to a racial and social mud - hole. What is required at present is a renewal of principles and policies that transcend racial and social inequalities in administration, education, employment and a host of other vital areas of national life.

We need not dwell long on the geographical position of Sri Lanka as we have very much been in international travel magazines as a tourist paradise - the pearl of the Indian Ocean, Paradise, Serendipity

etc. known for its beautiful beaches, ancient civilization, carpets of green, as far as the eyes can see the meandering rivers, the lush vegetation of tea gardens and paddy fields and where you see the smiling faces of its care free inhabitants.

The other side of Sri Lanka which is often portrayed in the Mass Media is Man's inhumanity to his brother expressed in the most inhuman way which has made Sri Lanka, known as a land of refuge of yore, a land of refugees during the past decade. Sri Lankans are not welcome in most countries throughout the world as they are considered political refugees or economic migrants.

A. NORTH / EAST WAR:

The anti Tamil riots of July 1983 externalised the Sri Lankan conflict commencing with an exodus of over 100,000 refugees to the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The affluent fled into Madras, Trichy and Trivandrum while the rest reached various points along the South Indian coast in fishing boats at great risk to their lives. Those who were penniless were accommodated in various camps spread all over Tamil Nadu. The more affluent ones lived by themselves either by securing employment or out of remittances received from members of their families working in different parts of the World. India with its own problems of poverty could not be expected to look after the refugees in the manner refugees are cared for by the rich industrialized countries, but no one died of starvation. The welcome extended to Tamil Refugees has, however, drastically changed since the tragic killing of Rajiv Gandhi.

The more affluent and influential sections of Tamils fled to Canada and Western Europe, mostly Canada, France, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom. They have by and large been treated with sympathy and understanding.

The post 1987 era in Sri Lanka needs to be described as being one of continued violence coupled with a frightful erosion of Human Rights. The Racial conflict which has ravaged the North and East of Sri Lanka and crippled our economy continues to this day, claiming numerous lives of government soldiers, militant Liberation Tigers and innocent civilians.

The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), which marched into the North and East following the provisions of the Peace Accord signed by the Sri Lankan and Indian Governments in 1987, gave assurances that they would bring pressure on the unremitting Liberation Tigers to lay down arms. Their efforts met with considerable failure. Two years later, the formidable 50,000 strong IPKF army was forced to leave the North and East of Sri Lanka with an unfinished agenda and a certain feeling of shame.

With the new President, Mr. Ransinghe Premadasa, ceremoniously installed, hopes for a just and peaceful settlement to the armed debacle was rekindled among all peace loving communities. Discussions were entered into lasting for nearly 14 months. Hopes of peace were, however, shattered when in June 1990 the Liberation Tigers ceased fighting the IPKF backed Tamil National Army and turned their guns on the Police Stations of the East. The incident, which left the fate of nearly 500 Muslim and Sinhala policemen in the hands of the LTTE, generated much bitterness and rancour among the Security Forces towards the LTTE Militants. An enraged army, determined to wipe out the LTTE for good, have now setup several camps in the war torn areas, pushing the militants further into the jungles and into the Northern peninsula. Rumours have it that the forces are now poised for their final attack on the LTTE militants. The "ultimate" battle is doomed to be long and bloody, and is bound to cost many thousand of lives.

The prolonged war has displaced over 1.7 million people who have hardly anything to call a home to return to. Cultivation and fishing industries have suffered terrible blows. This has had severe implications on the economy and constrained progress considerably.

Operating under the guise of an ethnic conflict between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority, the ruthless LTTE added to the suffering of the Tamil people by using extortionary methods to collect funds both here and abroad.

No one doubts that injustices have been perpetrated against the Tamil minority in the North and East. The Tamils have been deprived of the benefits of economic development in their present habitat, and on them have been imposed the language of the majority. There have been restrictions on education and employment opportunities to their youth. However, these injustices can in no way justify the bloody military encounters that followed. In this, the blame must be shared by both protagonists to this senseless war : the government and the LTTE.

The Church and the Justice and Peace Commission in Sri Lanka have always maintained an unbiased stand on the so called "ethnic" conflict. Violence was vehemently condemned and measures taken to redress the sufferings of the innocent victims of war, the refugees and the displaced. Whether such persons are in the North and East, or uprooted from their homesteads and forced to move towards the South, the Church has firmly stood by them in their moments of suffering. The Church has played a vital role in this crisis not only by providing sustenance, immediate relief and attending to resettlement and rehabilitation of the unfortunate victims of this war, but also by being in solidarity with them in their terrible plight, listening to their tales of woe, and intervening in their favour with the State authorities. The Church has also stressed the need to effect legislation safeguarding the identity and rights of minorities and a devolution of power from the Centre to the Provinces (especially the North and East) in respect of greater autonomy. Many have urged constitutional changes in this direction.

The most affected are those who would not or could not leave the shores of Sri Lanka and continue to live in refugee camps or with friends and relatives in different parts of the island and in the area of conflict. There are believed to be over 220,000 families living in the Jaffna District alone of whom nearly 50,000 families have been made refugees and live in schools, refugee centres, temporary shelters and disused railway stations and bombed public buildings. (See Annexure I, Schedule of displaced persons of 12.07.91)

1. Relief Operations - North/East War - Phase III

Basic needs of food, clothing and shelter are essential to live in dignity. Besides providing these, medicines and assistance for education is given to displaced persons and those living in refugee camps. Distribution of relief is carried out through the Diocesan Centres of Jaffna, Mannar, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Kurunegala, Chilaw, Colombo and other centres.

2. Resettlement of Refugees - East :

A conventional war is being fought in different areas in the District of Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and areas North of Vavuniya in the Northern Province except Mannar Island and certain areas in the Vavuniya District which is in the control of the armed forces. In the Eastern province in the district of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara, the LTTE is still continuing with their sporadic Guerilla warfare.

In spite of the uneasy and uncertain ground conditions in the Eastern province, the Government authorities are anxious to resettle villages which have been cleared by the Security Forces. Refugees are being encouraged to return to what is left of their villages in areas in Trincomalee, Mannar Island, Ampara and Batticaloa. The project envisages the movement from the stage of relief to resettlement before the final reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. It is essentially an intermediate state to be undertaken in areas which are considered relatively safe in the context of a war being waged in the country.

The re-settlement programme will seem only to be a small step away from relief, but if successful, would be a giant leap towards reconstruction, rehabilitation and return to normalcy.

Resettlement plans also envisage the movement from dependency on relief to self-reliance and self-esteem and final acceptance of the stark realities of life and living.

With the return of refugees from India to Trincomalee and Mannar arrangements are being made to provide assistance to the Diocesan Centres of Trincomalee and Mannar to provide assistance to resettle the returnees as well. We welcome the returnees and pray that they would be in a position to pick up the threads of their shattered and scared lives and begin to lead a life of freedom and dignity.

B. SOUTHERN VIOLENCE :

Having said the above in brief about the refugees of the North/East War, we move to other areas affected by the JVP violence which we term Southern Violence. Non-ethnic violent conflict in the Southern areas of Sri Lanka had never been given such extensive publicity in the global media. The brutal suppression of the Southern insurrection in the recent past went virtually unnoticed outside the country.

Unlike the brethren from the North/East conflict, the victims and the victimized of the Southern Violence had no way of fleeing across the Palk Straits to India or to Canada and Western Europe in large numbers. They ended up burning with tyres around their necks, brutally murdered or the lucky ones with their lives in detention camps and the rest, perhaps in hiding, awaiting the next opportunity to unleash another reign of terror.

The uprising of the Southern youth whose creative energies and long accumulated frustrations were fatefully combined to strike at a system that had failed to furnish reasonable opportunities to satisfy their normal youthful aspirations.

Various reasons have been surfaced to explain the insurgency of discontented youth. State financed schools and seats of higher learning churned out thousands of rural educated youth. But, Unfortunately, the prevailing system of education miserably failed to match the needs of a highly competitive job market. The privileges generated and fostered by a westernized urban culture was to appeal to force rural youth to return to an agrarian way of life which held out to them more hardships than help to bridge the widening gap between the urban affluent and the rural poor.

The major religions for their part had no ready response or options to offer to the problematic youth facing the nation. The rural youth, though not rescinding from or rejecting the age old Buddhist doctrine and traditions, found in them no guidelines to remedy the deep rooted social and economic ills of the country.

There was, however, One organization which offered hopes of an alternative. This was the Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna (the JVP) or the Peoples Revolutionary party. Based on a Marxist - Trotskyite ideology and adapted to fire Buddhist - Sinhala Chauvinism. This organization gradually succeeded in filling the political vacuum created by a decimated, bourgeois based, sterile melee of opposition political parties. Thousands of disenchanted youth and suffering rural families saw in the JVP the harbinger of a more prospective and just future. With five lectures, spoken in the popular tongue, the JVP succeeded in systematically exposing the evils of the system and methodically presenting the logistics of dismantling the State structure. Mechanisms were designed to mobilize the masses (very specially, students, workers and farmers), to revolt and overthrow the State machinery by the use of threats and violence. Before long, the country's law and other systems were in utter disarray.

Unfortunately, the JVP miscalculated the wrath of the State's military might. What ensued was a brutal suppression of the revolt, the like of which has never been witnessed in the nation's

history. The onslaught left over 40,000 persons dead. Their bodies were found burning on used tyres in the most undignified manner, or strewn along the streets with their brains blown out or organs dismembered. Often, half-burnt bodies were found floating on rivers. A nation that used to pride on its democratic institutions appeared to have taken leave of such august traditions.

The massacre succeeded in striking fear into the masses. Before they could become fully conscious of the excess on both sides, thousands of homes were burnt and over 60, 000 had disappeared leaving hardly a trace. Thousands of families today languish in misery, eking out hand-to-mouth existence having lost their breadwinners in an uprising that bequeathed to them only shame, fear and sorrow.

The government's view has been that the living victims of this horrendous episode of our nation's history should not merit more than a modicum of sympathy from its institutions. More often than not, victimized families (whether involved or not), have been treated as the scum of the earth. Even government plans to rehabilitate the youth in detention have either stalled or are proceeding at a lamentably slow pace. Fear or repression from government forces has discouraged many organizations from coming forward to assist the victims of violence.

SEDEC is perhaps one of the few organizations that has taken a definite stand in favour of the victims to this day.

1. Legal Aid for Youth in Detention :

The National Justice and Peace Commission took up the cases of 55 such detainees in the High Courts. Nearly all of them were university students and women. Almost 45 of them have been released, and some of them with adequate compensation. Many more such cases are pending to be heard in court. Most of the victims are Buddhists. Credit in this regard is due to the lawyers of Legal Aid Centre operating under the auspices of the Justice and Peace Commission. The initial programme will only serve as a pilot

venture and will undoubtedly pave the way for many such cases to be taken up. It is vital that we continue to support the group of lawyers in defending human dignity and fundamental rights to which the Church is committed.

2. Southern Youth and their families - Ensuring a future to avictimized and beleaguered generation :

In this programme we plan to provide the following assistance initially for a period of One Year, to be continued for a further two years at least based on successful implementation.

- (a) 1000 Youth released from detention to be provided training in skills.
- (b) 3000 Children of victimized families to be helped to pursue their education.
- (c) 2000 families who have lost their breadwinners to be set up in self reliant income generation projects.
- (d) 1000 families to be assisted to repair/reconstruct damaged/burnt houses.

The relief, re-settlement and rehabilitation programmes planned by SEDEC seeks to assist the most impoverished members of the Sri Lanka society irrespective of caste, creed or linguistic differences. SEDEC is one of the few Non-governmental Organisations in Sri Lanka that provides assistance to every section of an impoverished society breaking the barriers which has continued to bleed this beautiful island for nearly a decade.

The refugees and displaced people who continue to live in Sri Lanka and in refugee camps in India could be termed as the most impoverished amongst Sri Lanka refugees scattered throughout the world. The industrial nations have their own yardsticks by which they measure those who seek refugee status, be it for genuine or economic considerations. These host countries also have their own guidelines for financial and other support facilities for refugees. While welcoming these generous ideals and hospitality, we wish to stress at this stage, as a Non-governmental Organization committed to providing relief for refugees and victims of violence in Sri Lanka, that if a percentage of the funds earmarked for refugees is remitted to Non Governmental organizations such as SEDEC, it would help us to assist a greater number of people. This will also enable us to ensure building a society of those who have had the courage to live through the might displayed by the armed forces, the terror unleashed by the JVP, the LTTE and other groups who seek to rule by the culture of AK 47s, T 56s, Cyanide Capsules and a host of other instruments of death.

It is not unreasonable to get a feeling of helplessness in what is going on in Sri Lanka at present. While the combined security forces are gearing for a possible confrontation of a major scale in the North, a new chapter begins with the return of Sri Lankan refugees from India. We also read reports of confrontations between LTTE and the armed forces in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Vavuniya districts. The bomb attacks in different parts of the Island continue to add to the list of death and destruction. Despite what is going on in different parts of the island, the feelings of the people in the war zones and elsewhere in the island are overwhelmingly for peace.

Peace cannot be reduced to the mere absence of conflict; it is the tranquillity and completeness of order. It is lost by the social and economic exploitation by special interest groups which operate internationally or function as elites within developing countries. It is lost by the social divisions that it rich against poor. It is lost when the use of force produces the bitter fruit of hatred and division. It is lost when economic exploitation and internal strains on the social fabric leave the people defenceless and disillusioned. As a value, peace is continually endangered by vested interests.

“LAND BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE”

The feasibility of the proposed Hotel Complex at Kandalama is been questioned by environmentalist, the clergy and the people of the area. The reasons against this project are as varied as the persons objecting to it. In fact it is appropriate here to quote of statement of a Red Indian chieftian who refused to sign the first land treaty with United States delegates, "Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last for ever. It will not even perish by the flames of fire. As long as the sun shines and the waters flow. This land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men. Therefore we cannot sell this land". The objection to the setting up of the tourist resort in Kandalama, is very similar to the idea implicit in the Red Indian chieftian's statement.

The people of the area were unaware of the Government's decision to lease the land to Hotel developers, and they fear that while the attendant problems of tourism will affect them, the disturbance of the water levels of the tank by the Hotel Complex setting up tube wells will create serious problems to the people of the area, whose sole means of livelihood is agriculture. The Buddhist clergy of the area with the support of other Buddhist clergy, and Religious leaders have vehemently protested against this decision of the Government.

On the 12th July, Father Oswald Firth Director SEDEC joined in a peaceful protest rally and spoke emphatically saying that according to the Bible all land belonged to the people. It did not belong to a particular party or a Government. Any decision affecting the land should therefore be taken with the consent of the people.

He said that when the Government wanted to construct a tourist hotel at Iranawila in the Puttalam District, the Government published a gazette notification. The law requires such a notice. The Christian community was able to object to the proposed hotel because such a notice was published. The government later abandoned the project he said.

However, the law has been disregarded in the case of the Kandalama wewa hotel project. This was quite wrong Fr. Firth said.

He emphasised that the Christian clergy did not approve of plans to replace the country's agricultural economy with a tourism - orientated economy. Tourism has brought in great misery to Negombo and Hikkaduwa which were famous as tourist resorts. There was a breakdown in the traditional way of life.

Referring to Kandalama he said, that the lowering of the water level of the Tank would leave thousands of paddy land dry. He questioned the wisdom of building a tourist hotel which affects lives of thousands of people living by farming their land.

The hotel project would need 45,000 gallons of water per day supplied through tube wells. "Does the government charge a water tax from the hotel for using such a large volume of underground water?" he asked.

The farmers who used irrigation water to cultivate their fields were charged a water tax. When the farmers failed to pay the tax, the authorities seized the agricultural equipment belonging to them to recover water tax dues. But the government was ready to allow a tourist hotel to use 45,000 gallons of water a day free of charge. Father Firth questioned the rationale of this dual attitude.

No tourist hotel had brought any benefit to the people of the area they were built anywhere in the country. The beneficiaries were the tourists who are coming here and the big investors.

The adverse effects of the Kandalama hotel project far outweighed its so-called benefits which the proponents of the project speak about.

According to reports in the Daily News, the government was to lease the land for a period of 50 years to build the hotel. "What will happen to our people during the 50 years, when their land will turn into jungles?" he asked.

He said the Christian clergy would support the campaign against the Kandalama hotel project.

Peace must be realized in truth; it must be built upon justice; it must be animated by love; it must be brought to being in freedom.

And within a nation, on the political level, does peace have a real chance when the free sharing in collective decisions or the free enjoyment of individual liberties is not guaranteed?

On the social level, it is hard to describe as truly free those men and women who lack the guarantee of honest and adequate employment, or all those people in country villages who are still the victims of regrettable servitude.

Freedom is also reduced - and more than appears at first sight - in a society that lets itself be guided by the dogma of indefinite material growth, by the pursuit of wealth.

Freedom can also suffer from manipulation of various kinds. This is the case when the social communications media misuse their power and disregard strict objectivity.

Some kinds of "freedom" do not really deserve the name, and we must take care to defend true freedom against various counterfeits. For example, the consumer society that excess of goods not needed by. Man - can in a way constitute an abuse of freedom, when the more and more insatiable pursuit of goods is not subjected to the law of justice and of social love. Such consumerism involves a limitation of the freedom of others; and from the viewpoint of international solidarity it even affects whole Societies which are unable to obtain the minimum of goods required for their essential needs. The existence of areas of absolute poverty in the world and the existence of hunger and malnutrition pose a serious question to the countries that have developed freely.



ROLE AND STATUS OF THE SRI LANKAN WOMAN

Proper fulfillment of a woman's role as a mother, her functioning within the family, participation at community level and in overall economic development is closely related to a number of factors. These include her legal status, economic resources, health status, education, skills and access to information. It was the UN World Conference held in Mexico in 1975 which provided a forum for the first time to draw international focus on issues related to women. The UN Decade on Women which followed until 1985 served to stimulate the planning and implementation of many women centred programmes, particularly in the developing countries.

The Fundamental Rights section of the Sri Lankan Constitution (1978) clearly guarantees equality to women. In 1981, Sri Lanka also ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. It needs to be emphasized however that Sri Lankan women continue to be influenced by laws which reflect traditional and religious practices. These vary among different ethnic groups, and range from Thesavalamai laws to Muslim laws. Laws also reflect on inheritance rights, marriage, divorce and custody of children. The policy decision to extend maternity leave from 6 weeks to 3 months for the first 2 pregnancies was a progressive step for women. Many of the large private sector establishments and public institutions are now implementing this decision. Positive action has also been taken to ensure that women working in the organized sector are governed by labour laws which conform to international norms. Unfortunately, the majority of women work outside the formal sector, and are therefore, not governed by these laws. They, thus become vulnerable to exploitation.

The health status of the Sri Lankan woman is one area in which much progress has been made. The Maternal Mortality of 0.5 per 1000 live births (1985) is relatively low for a developing country with a low per capita income. However, this could be lowered even further as the major causes are still of a preventable nature. Some districts, particularly in the central hills, have higher maternal deaths than the national average. Attention is needed on the many issues related to maternal morbidity. Although the life expectancy for women at birth is 71.7 which is higher than men at 67.8, there are still many aspects related to the health of women which need to be improved. Although women are surviving longer, the quality of their life needs improvement. Nutritional deficiencies and anaemia dominate maternal morbidity. It is necessary to point out that risks to maternal health begin in the childhood of the girl child. Chronic stunting of girl children together with anaemia, poor spacing of pregnancies, and undernutrition, particularly during pregnancy, contributes to both maternal mortality and morbidity. The positive features of the Sri Lankan Health Services where women are concerned is the fact that 80% of births take place in institutions. This occurs due to 2 reasons. Sri Lankan women due to high literacy and education levels seek services and in turn, services are made available. This, coupled with a widely distributed network of clinic and home based maternal care services through Family Health Workers has contributed to remarkable declines in maternal and infant mortality. The age of marriage of girls (24.4) has also had an impact on controlling fertility, and thus, delaying child bearing. This in turn has an effect on the country's population growth rate. Child spacing is an important area to be promoted as it has a direct impact on making

motherhood safe. In fact, the access to family planning services and knowledge could be regarded as a right of all women to be fulfilled. There is growing evidence that abortions are on the increase, particularly in urban areas although reliable data is limited as abortions are illegal.

Education and Literacy are also areas in which much progress has been achieved over the past few decades. Opportunities for education are equally available to boys as well as girls. According to the 1981 census, the female percentage participation is 48.2% yr. 1 - 5, 49.4% yr. 6 - 8 and 52.2% yr. 9 - 11. Percentage female participation in Universities is 40.2%. However, gender disparities do still occur in districts such as Nuwara Eliya and Badulla, and in certain areas in the Eastern Province. This could also be so among certain ethnic groups although data is sparse. Female literacy was 82.8% in 1981. However, the literacy levels of Moor women is 71.5% and that of Tamils of Indian Origin is 55.1%, much lower than the national average.

Where economic participation and activity is concerned, Sri Lankan women appear to predominate in jobs which need low skills, are poorly paid and are in peasant and plantation work. They also dominate in small industries, petty trade and domestic service. Women enrolled in vocational training are limited. However, women work long hours in the field with men although this role is not given due recognition. In the tea plantations, over 60% of the labour force is comprised of women.

There is now a growing number of women, particularly girls, working in the Free Trade Zones and in factories, specially connected to the garment trade. More is needed in terms of catering to their welfare needs and reviewing their wage structure. Migration of unskilled women to Gulf countries was a significant trend in the 1980's. Official numbers vary from 400,000 to 500,000. Large numbers who were in Kuwait during the invasion have been repatriated but are facing major difficulties connected with loan payments and lack of an income. The impact of this on their children has still not been ascertained in any depth.

There are small numbers of female headed households scattered in nearly all districts. Although numbers at present are relatively small, this situation seems to be increasing through some research studies. These families tend to have severe economic problems. The trend towards female headed households is probably much increased following the conflict situations in the North, East and South.

Today most families are comprised of a nuclear family of father, mother and children although it also tends to extend to aged relatives and unmarried siblings. Even nuclear families maintain close kinship bonds with relatives. Marriages are monogamous and registered under Personal Laws. Marriages are often arranged, keeping in mind religious and caste considerations. The dowry system is on the decline although it is still operational.

There are an estimated 8.2 million females in Sri Lanka's population of 16.8 million people (1989 Estimate). They play a multifaceted role within their families, and in the wider context of society and development. Although much has been achieved in terms of their health status and Education levels, there is still a gap between their rights and the reality of how these are fulfilled in terms of the actual lives they lead. Roles women play within families, communities and the nation are development issues and need to be reviewed within the wide framework of development planning. Improving their economic, social and political status needs the commitment of both Government institutions as well as NGO's. This can be achieved through the development of mechanisms which are inter-disciplinary and well coordinated to be effective.

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*A Peace that is not the result of true respect
for man is not true Peace. And what do we call
this sincere feeling for man? We call it Justice.*