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Nēthrā

A non - specialist journal for lively minds

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Nēthrā welcomes contributions from scholars and writers. Since the journal's interests are omnivorous, there is no restriction on subject-matter. Ideally, however, *Nēthrā* looks for material that is serious without being ponderous, readable and interesting without being superficial, and comprehensible even to readers who are not specialists in the intellectual field in which the subject is situated.

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Nēthrā also invites creative writing - poems or stories - from both Sri Lankan and foreign writers.

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Sonali Moonesinghe is an Anthropologist currently working at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies on issues of Ethnic diversity and the peaceful co-existence of communities. She hopes to do further research and analysis on the effects of armed conflict on children in Sri Lanka. One of her passions in life is dance. She has had a long relationship with the Vajira and Chitrasena School

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Parvati is a pseudonym used by the poet of the Jeganathan poem. For a variety of reasons the poet prefers to use this pen-name instead of his/her own.

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The Role of Small arms and Light weapons in Sri Lanka: Understanding Children of a gun-culture

Sonali Moonesinghe

As in the case of most South Asian post-colonial nations, Sri Lanka suffers from "the post-colonial syndrome," and is living its share of post-independent instabilities, insecurities and traumas. The complex and contentious issues that surround Sri Lanka's multi-ethnic society, has culminated in a protracted conflict (of almost 20 years) with the Tamil Eelam movement pursuing its quest for a separate state. It is heartening news that the war may have finally reached an end. With the peace process in effect and negotiations between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continuing, it is critical that the question of small arms (SA) and light weapons (LW) proliferation and arms circulation in civil society be addressed.

I have attempted to focus on the effects of the circulation of small arms in society as it affects children, within the broader context of the impact of armed conflict on children. My emphasis is on the *effects* of the availability of SA/LWs, its resulting violence, and its contribution to the creation of a militarized culture. I have approached another dimension of children and armed conflict by pointing out that the increased circulation of SAs and LWs in society has contributed towards the creation of a militarized society and a culture of violence in which, children have taken to arms, participated directly in war and are therefore, victims of such a society, not only as direct targets but also as perpetrators of violence.

My present research on children affected by conflict is an ongoing project, and is part of a longer-term program that involves a study of the effects of war on children. The program will hopefully in the future involve a broad research agenda utilizing

social science methodology and analysis to examine why so many children and adolescents are involved in contemporary conflicts both as combatants and victims.

As various sources indicate, compilations of systematic and comprehensive data that establish direct links between children and small arms during conflict, particularly as child soldiers in Sri Lanka is minimal. Research in the area of children and conflict in general has probably not focused on direct linkages between small arms and children as a central part of its agenda until recently. There are practical limitations as well, in terms of accessing direct sources of information and obtaining accurate empirical data on these issues, particularly during conflict. Conscription and recruitment of children and even acknowledgment of child soldiers by the militant group/LTTE has been a sensitive issue. Given the climate of a ceasefire currently in effect and with the ongoing peace agreement negotiations, there has been a reluctance to address the issue of conscription by the key players in the peace process. It has, however, received considerable public attention with the visit of The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict dealing with Children, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and more recently through UNICEF involvements. I have, therefore, looked at the issue of small arms and its impacts on children in a general sense, noting the contributions of SAs and LWs availability relying primarily on secondary information as well as from some information obtained from informal interviews.

Some Historical Details

It has been well documented and established that the increasing availability and use of small arms and light weapons has been the primary or sole tools of violence in every recent conflict,[1] and Sri Lanka is no exception. Ninety percent of victims in recent wars worldwide have been killed by small arms and light weapons, with women and children as the highest casualties. Estimates

indicate that thousands of civilians are killed by small arms fire every year, and as primary instruments of violence in internecine conflicts they are responsible for a large number of deaths and displacement of citizens around the world. Additionally, they consume large amounts of resources of all affected countries.[2] Studies show that the damage inflicted by the widespread use of SA/LW is not only confined to casualties, but has had a drastic and negative impact on the socio-economic and political security at national, regional and global levels.

An important point to note in the context of Sri Lanka is the distinction between the proliferation of major weapons systems and diffusion (both important while diffusion is more significant in Sri Lanka's context) of small arms and light weapons.[3] Proliferation suggests an increase in the number of weapons possessed by certain governments/states, diffusion suggests the dispersion of arms within societies, extending not only to governments and state owned entities, but also to private armies and militias, insurgent groups, criminal organizations and other non-state actors, including the category of child soldiers. Sri Lanka is but one case in South Asia, characterized by societal violence, to which a huge diffusion of weapons has contributed to and exacerbated violent political turmoil together with an increase in organized crime overall. In an analyses of the problem of small arms and its impact on children therefore, it is necessary to consider not only geographical proliferation of weapons but also how they become available to ever-expanding segments of societies.

Globally, the nature of conflict itself has undergone a dramatic change, particularly since the end of World War II and more so since the end of the cold war. Contemporary conflict is characterized by inter-state war being replaced by intra-state or internal conflicts which may involve various groups of non-state parties such as ethnic, religious, sectarian and so forth. Typically, non-state groups involved in protracted conflict tend to recruit children into their fighting forces as a result of gradually depleting adult resources.

Clearly there is a vicious cycle of mutual reinforcement of weapons and conflict. When the proliferation of SA/LW provides an environment conducive to conflict, society tends to resort to conflict as a means of settling differences. Conflicts in turn further increase the use and dependency on weapons. As pointed out in various studies[4] both the intensity and the duration of violence are determined by the availability and easy access of SA/LWs and their proliferation in the region of conflict, encouraging militancy rather than the negotiation and peaceful resolution of differences.

In addition, the protracted nature of these conflicts, apart from high casualty rates, leads to massive upheavals of civilian population causing large scale displacement of peoples, posing a major threat to the security of civil society and overall human security. When human security, summed up as economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security[5] are compromised and/or destroyed, people lose confidence in the state's ability to enforce the law and provide protection. This leads to situations of anarchy where the average person resorts to the use of arms to seek protection and security. The destruction of human security which provides an environment that enables development becomes a barrier to socio-economic development agendas. Obstruction to human development in turn causes societal dissatisfaction, unrest and eventual aggression and violence. This is again a mutual reinforcement of conditions in which disruptions of human security lead to potential conflict and/or conflict, and conflict in turn, to the destruction of security. In this context, some see the availability of SAs and LWs as 'weaponizing societal discontent' and empowering various non-state actors. To deal with them, the police and para-military forces often let loose a reign of terror under pressure to retrieve the situation.[6] Thus, caught between these two forces men, women and in particular children suffer the most casualties.

Long-term risks in these situations, in which human security has deteriorated, include the potential for a militarization of society and the creation of a climate which produces child soldiers.

Children who grow up knowing only violence and destruction are more prone to participate in conflicts, more often than not, for the lack of other alternatives. It has also been established that children are more likely to be recruited in protracted conflicts because of the loss of adults over the course of the war and the need of armed forces/militants to replenish its fighting force. This is reflected in the LTTE recruitment patterns in Sri Lanka's conflict.

During the last decade more than two million children have been killed worldwide, more than six million permanently disabled or seriously injured in armed conflict,[7] over 10 million traumatized and more than a million orphaned. Recent figures have also indicated that almost one-half of the world's 21 million refugees are children, while it is estimated that 13 million children have been internally displaced.[8] More than 300,000 children under 18 years of age, girls and boys, are fighting as soldiers with government armed forces and armed opposition groups in more than 30 countries worldwide. At least half a million are serving in the armed forces or armed groups of at least 85 countries. Millions of children worldwide receive military training and indoctrination in youth movements and schools. Most child soldiers are aged between 15 and 18 years of age; however, age seven has been recorded as the youngest so far.[9] While many children are recruited and fight in the frontlines, others are used in a non-combatant capacity, as spies, messengers, sentries, decoys, porters and sexual slaves and often used to lay and clear landmines. As reports on this subject point out the inadequacies or note the conservative estimates of available statistical data on children in conflict situations, what is clear is that children are recruited, captured, demobilized, wounded and/or killed everyday.

Small Arms, Light Arms and the Growth of Militancy in Sri Lanka

In the Sri Lankan situation, I have focused on the scenario of the 'ethnic conflict' and a militaristic environment that has resulted

from the recent protracted conflict in which, the militant group the LTTE and the state have been engaged in a long drawn out civil war. Although other militant/insurgent groups have emerged in Sri Lanka, my focus on this particular group is not only because of the protracted nature of this conflict, but also due to its high use of child soldiers. It is interesting to observe the pattern and development of this militant group, and note how the escalation of the war and violence coincided directly with an increase in their capacity to procure and employ weapons. I note in particular, the origins of this movement, with the initial acquisition of small arms, moving on to light weapons and graduating to more sophisticated weaponry. Clearly their ability to access weapons increased their success as a military organization and this is reflected in the gradual improvement of their military capabilities and successful military operations from the 1970s period onward.

In the mid 1970s the LTTE possessed the capability to assassinate its opponents; in the late 1970s, to attack a police patrol; in early 1980s to attack an army patrol; in mid 1980s to overrun a police station; in the late 1980s to overrun an isolated army camp; in the early 1990s to overrun and army camp that could be reinforced; and since the mid 1990s to hold territory and engage the military in face-to-face combat.[10] As the facts further indicate and substantiate, their procurement history reveals a correlation between successful military operations and the availability and acquisition of weapons.

The LTTE history of SA/LW procurement is recorded chronologically[11] beginning in the early 1970s. From 1972 to 1983 they emerged with a few pistols, revolvers and shotguns procured mostly from smugglers/criminals in Northern Sri Lanka, comprising of a force of around 33 members. From 1983 to 1987 the LTTE grew to approximately 3000 members and had acquired some firearms, short-range personal weapons and a few SMGs and one G3 rifle. From 1983, the LTTE began to develop its own independent procurement and shipping network through India's foreign intelligence agency the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).[12] They purchased their first vessel in early 1984 and

shipped their first arms consignment which consisted of Rocket Propelled Grenade Launchers (RPGs) Light Anti-tank Weapons (LAWs), M16s and grenades among other items. By 1999 they had established a fleet of 10 ships owned by front companies and located throughout Asia which played a vital role in supplying explosives, arms, ammunition and war material directly to the LTTE theatre of operations.[13] An indigenous weapons manufacturing industry was developed during this period in India's Tamil Nadu region, and in Sri Lanka's Jaffna Peninsula. From 1987 to 1994 the LTTE force increased to approximately 15,000.[14] Supplies from RAW had stopped after 1987 during the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) occupation period, but ironically, the Sri Lankan government under the then President Premadasa, provided weapons and war-related equipment to the LTTE, in their quest opposing IPKF presence in Sri Lanka during the 1989-1990 time frame.

During the 1990 to 1994, the LTTE purchased weapons from the southern belt of former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is recorded that they purchased 50 tons of TNT and 10 tons of RDX from the Rubezone Chemical Plant in Ukraine in 1994 and in this same year procured Russian manufactured Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs) from Cambodia. By the late 1990s, the LTTE was acquiring weapons from the Balkans, the southern belt of the former Soviet Union, Southern Africa and Southeast Asia.[15] After developing a dependency on mortars and artillery, the LTTE heisted a ship carrying some 34, 000 81mm mortars in July 1997 and procured a consignment of Multi-barrel Rocket Launchers (MBRL) from Serbia. These acquisitions enabled the LTTE to increase its firepower dramatically. Within five years of acquiring mortars and artillery, the LTTE crossed the threshold from a guerrilla organization to a semi-conventional organization.[16]

These accounts indicate that LTTE sources for weapons ranged from both Sri Lankan and Indian military captures (apprx.10, 000 automatic weapons), weapons provided directly by Indian (during1983-1987) and Sri Lankan governments (during1989-90) and weapons procured from overseas. The LTTE

had acquired long-range artillery through attacks on Sri Lankan military camps from 1993 onward, with the largest haul made in 1996 (Mullaitivu base-complex) recovering $70 million worth of arms.[17] Another account sums up LTTE's procurement history by citing four main sources from where they obtained their weapons: Afghanistan via the Indo-Pakistan border; directly from Indian external sources; indigenous production; and munitions/ supplies captured from the Sri Lankan military.[18]

In the context of illicit arms trade, we are well aware that the lines between legal and illegal transactions are often blurred. Clearly there were multiple factors and sources that led to the excessive and destabilizing arms acquisition and buildup in the case of this militant group. By providing these details, my purpose here is not simply to provide an overview of an arms procurement history, but to give some idea of the growth and development pattern of this particular group as a militant group, in terms of their ability to access and utilize weapons, SA/LWs in particular.

While the effect of small arms on children is closely linked to the broader impact of armed conflict on children, certain factors do emerge that link children directly with the impact of small arms, specifically in terms of its use in perpetrating violence. Children, as is well documented, suffer from both direct and indirect consequences of arms flows and circulation facilitating conflict and violence. Ready availability of small arms and light weapons not only facilitate the use of children as combatants but has resulted in the death and maiming of thousands of children whose homes, families and schools were attacked. The presence and use of weapons have left children with disintegrated families and have made them vulnerable to exploitation, disease and death.

Small Arms, Light Weapons as Incentives

It is important to observe certain characteristics and features of SA/LWs which are noted in various reports and studies as significant contributory factors that encourage its use by children/

child soldiers in particular, and in internal conflicts in general. It is useful therefore, to look at the categories of SAs and LWs and ascertain the features that contribute to a greater likelihood of children using them in conflict.

Categories of SA/LWs used in these conflicts which have been identified in the Sri Lankan context, range from clubs, knives, machetes, pistols, rifles, assault rifles and sub-machine guns; light and medium range machine guns, heavy machine guns, (HMG) anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, light mortars and grenades.[19] The widespread appeal that SAs and LWs have as the weapons of choice in the internal conflicts of developing nations as in Sri Lanka, is most likely due to certain technical and utilitarian characteristics that both facilitate its use and contribute to its popularity. These are well documented, for example SAs and LWs have an exceptionally low rate of obsolescence; rarely need spare parts; do not need introductory elaborate infrastructure for their production and manufacture; once control over these weapons is lost, it becomes difficult to maintain any control or regulation; can be moved from one non-state actor/group to another with considerable speed; are less expensive than conventional weapons, can be easily used without extensive training; and being light are fit to be carried on the person.

An ICRC study indicates that due to the simplicity and durability of small arms and light weapons, and because they are easy to handle effectively with a minimum of training,[20] they are widely used in conflicts involving uneducated combatants and children. Media interviews with a Senior Army official records that in Sri Lanka, children used as soldiers were provided with only a rudimentary weapons training and were used as cannon fodder in mass rebel attacks on army bases.[21] Referring to an LTTE raid of a north-eastern army base complex, he notes that of the 300 rebels who died in that particular incident, more than half were teenagers and many of them girls. It has been pointed out that it is easier to arm and indoctrinate children given that technology of war is easy, and weapons light. This is exemplified by the fact that the AK47 rifle, reputed to be the world's fastest selling assault

rifle, can be stripped and re-assembled by a child of 10.[22] Several sources, witnesses of the conflict, residing in the northern region in Sri Lanka have stated that the most popularly used weapons by children in combat among others, are the AK47 and T56 rifles, and grenades. Interestingly, it was indicated that children did not typically use pistols, they were primarily used by the militant hierarchy.[23]

Media reports of the 1995-1996[24] period in Sri Lanka have stated that child soldiers who survive battle became hardened fighters. Many brutal massacres of men, women and children in remote hamlets bordering the north and east were carried out by machete-wielding LTTE child fighters.[25] Sri Lanka has seen many children used as soldiers by the armed opposition group, the LTTE. They are also known to have mobilized special battalions of teenage girls and boys, for instance the "Charles Anthony" battalion, aka the "baby brigade."[26] It is said that Tiger casualties have shown that most of the children are aged 14-18, while the younger ones are usually kept in reserve. However, in large scale, mass attacks children maybe used in greater numbers. In specialized units such as the 'leopards,' children form an effective fighting force in difficult battles[27]

The Dynamics involved in creating Child-Combatants or "Child-Soldiers"

A child soldier is defined as 'any person under 18 years of age who is a member of or attached to the armed forces or an armed group, whether or not there is an armed conflict.'[28] Research has shown that children do not necessarily have to participate as combatants to be perceived as members of an armed group or force; they function in a variety of ways besides actual handling of weapons, during the course of ongoing conflict situations.

In terms of assessing the actual numbers of children as soldiers is problematic in the absence of a database; therefore, available figures will remain as relative estimates. According to

Sri Lanka's Directorate of Military Intelligence, approximately 60% of the LTTE fighters are below the age of 18 years. An assessment based on the age of the corpses of LTTE fighters killed in combat, estimates the figure at 40% which include both males and females less than 18 years of age.[29]

Having observed the large numbers of child participants in direct conflict, it is important to question why children participate in conflict. This brings up various issues, which highlight the fact that lines between voluntary participation and forced recruitment/conscription are often blurred. Although forced recruitment is practiced in the case of Sri Lanka, a large number of children are not so much coerced as exposed to subtle manipulations;[30] hence, giving rise to difficulties in determining the practice and eliminating it. What is described as the "Pied Piper" enticement, lays out a variety of psychological methods, which have been used to play on their immaturity, natural curiosity and love for adventure. Public displays of war paraphernalia, funerals and posters of fallen heroes; speeches and videos often displayed in schools; heroic melodious songs and stories have all served to draw out feelings of patriotism and create a compelling milieu, a "martyr cult."[31] Based on psychiatric observations in the conflict ridden northern region, we are advised on the vulnerability of children during their impressionable formative years, causing permanent scarring of their developing personalities as a result of participation in conflict.[32] Children who came for treatment were suffering from a range of conditions, from neurotic conditions such as somatisation/sleep deprivation, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder to more severe forms of psychosis, particularly those who had inflicted violence.

Noting that military leaders express their preference for younger recruits, reasons observed are because they are less likely to question orders from adults, are more likely to be fearless as they do not appreciate the dangers they face, are small in size and agile. The plea is made to hold those responsible for recruiting, training and deploying child soldiers as war criminals and not the children themselves who surrender or are captured.[33] Additionally,

I would argue that there is a critical need to examine and question existing socio-political systems, structural processes, and resulting economic marginalization, which cause societal discontent, leading to political violence and armed conflict. Resulting militancy and a 'gun culture' is the backdrop within which to examine the sad phenomena of children participating in active combat.

Children are also often subjected to socio-political, economic and cultural pressures that often provide them with little alternative than to 'voluntarily' join armed forces/groups. An in depth study of the Sri Lankan conflict situation will also show that similar factors caused social discontent which led to political violence and the outbreak of conflict in the first place. In turn, this poses questions that challenge notions of human security and development.

With increasing international and domestic concern regarding the use of child soldiers, we are cautioned that condemning and prohibiting child recruitment is not enough, we need to understand the local conditions under which children become soldiers, the broader social picture, and work towards improving these conditions.[34] Informal interviews of residents in the northern region stressed the importance of looking at the context in which a number of children joined the militant organization. Reasons why children become fighters are categorized into 'push' and 'pull' factors which provide some insights into this broader picture.

Referring to push factors, deprivation, socio-cultural factors, traumatization, [war trauma] brutalization and institutionalized violence, are cited as a key factors that makes children more likely to become child soldiers.[35] Since the civil war began (in 1983) in the north-east of Sri Lanka, children have been traumatized by common experiences such as shelling, helicopter strafing, round ups, cordon and search operations, deaths, injury, destruction, mass arrests, detention, shootings, grenade explosions and landmines. Security forces have targeted Tamil youths, particularly within the age group 15-35 in their checking, cordon and search operations, often detained for

interrogation, torture, execution or even rape[36] The vicious cycle of violence is noted here, as most of the young men tried to escape the "Herodian solution" adopted by the Sri Lankan army to crush the militancy by joining the militants or fleeing abroad. Institutionalized violence through the enforcement of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulations allowed detention for long periods without judicial process, with torture and disappearances occurring regularly. This created a sense of fear, frustration, hopelessness and discontent whereby joining the group of fighters was a means of putting things right and/or a way out.

In addition, deprivation of employment, income, food, destruction of healthcare facilities in the north-east, disruption of education and schools arose as a result of the protracted conflict. Unequal opportunities for access to further education, sports, foreign scholarships and jobs in the state sector had also increased and were some of the key grievances which originally laid the seeds for the separatist war. Social restrictions of women, social oppression through caste barriers were some of the other factors, all of which pushed young men and women into militancy as a means of escape and liberation.[37]

Pull factors outlined in this study reflect the increased use of children in indirect and direct military activities by both state and non-state actors.[38] It is stated that since the beginning of the civil war in 1983, children had been used by the army for odd jobs, in the home-guard and by various Tamil militant groups i.e. the Indian backed Tamil National Army (TNA). From 1987 it is noted that the LTTE, the dominant separatist group, banned other Tamil militant groups and started using children and women as fighters due to the lack of older men participating in the war. A point of significance is that from 1987 to 1994 was the time period in which the LTTE increased its force to 15, 000.[39] But it is noted that at this time recruitment remained largely 'voluntary.' It seems very probable that this voluntary element was due to the fact that by then it was several years well into the war, which had disrupted and/or destroyed most political/administrative

structures, social services and processes of civil society. The North-East became essentially an area under siege leaving little or no alternatives for the normal flow of life. Child recruitment became institutionalized after 1990,[40] interestingly, this is also the time frame that the LTTE as the facts indicate, had achieved its maximum fighting capacity by their ability to engage the military in face-to-face combat,[41] and emerge as a conventional fighting force.

As we observe the various factors that have propelled society into violence and political conflict, we cannot escape the reality of the wide spread small arms proliferation, possession and usage that finally are key elements in the propensity toward violence, and the perpetuation of conflict, political, economic marginalization and overall insecurity. Thus in countries affected by violent conflict, the proliferation of SA and LWs can be perceived as a major obstacle to any process seeking to establish or consolidate a lasting or external peace which is of key concern in Sri Lanka's post-conflict context. The final solution, therefore, and the most effective way to protect children is to prevent the outbreak of war, to remove the conditions (to which small arms and light weapons are key contributory factors) that create a climate of violence.

Reason for concern exists in some recent reports of child conscription, noted as ongoing even after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the LTTE, particularly in the eastern regions. It is indicated that conscription has been massively concentrated in Batticaloa. The LTTE's intake [children] in recent months runs into thousands.[42] It is also indicated that the LTTE far from giving up on child conscription, has changed its pattern that they are recruiting from areas where information will be slow in reaching the outside world. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has responded actively to complaints from areas more accessible which resulted in the release of several recently abducted children.

On a more hopeful note, pursuant to the third session of peace talks held in December 2002, the parties agreed that a

priority area for humanitarian action is to improve the situation for children affected by conflict. The official communiqué from the December talks have noted that the LTTE will engage in a partnership with the UNICEF to draw up an action plan for restoring normalcy to the lives of children.[43] The UNICEF coordinated database indicates that there are 730 reported cases of child recruitment to be resolved but notes that to date, the LTTE has returned about 350 former child recruits directly to their families which is seen as a positive step.[44] During the current visit of UNICEF director Carol Bellamy to Sri Lanka, the LTTE offered the explanation that continued recruitment maybe occurring at the lower ranks because "their work has not filtered down,"[45] but not at leadership levels as they are committed to both non-recruitment and release of children. In this regard the UNICEF is prepared to work with them on a communication campaign in order to ensure that leadership decisions filter down to the lower ranks.

Foot Notes

1 See Iffat S. Malik, *Countering Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in South Asia* (2000): 232-33.

2 See Salma, Malik, "The Scourge of Small Arms: Challenge to Human Security," *IPRI Journal* 2, no. 2 (2002): 47.

3 See "Arms Availability and the Situation of Civilians in Armed Conflict," *ICRC Study* (1999).

4 See M. Gaillard and I.S. Malik, *South Asia at Gunpoint* (2000): 263-271, 231-245.

5 See Salma, Malik, 48-49.

6 Ibid., 54.

7 J. Freedson, "The Impact of Conflict on Children -The Role of Small Arms," *Disarmament Forum* (2002).

8 See "Children and Armed Conflict Program," *Social Science Research Council (SSRC)* Update (2002).

9 See "Child Soldiers: An Overview, The Coalition to Stop the Use

of Child Soldiers." www.child-soldiers.org

10 R. Gunaratna, "Sources of Arms Supplies to the LTTE: Successes and Failures of the Sri Lankan State in Managing the Threat," *South Asia at Gunpoint* (2002): 62.

11 Ibid., (2002): 62-72.

12 Ibid., 70-71. See also R. Gunaratna. *Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis & National Security*, (1998) and Gaillard citing to the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service* website http://www.csis-gc.ca: 266; Peter Chalk's Commentary No. 77 which states the following: "Between 1983 and 1987, the Indian Government played a key role in supporting the militant Tamil struggle in Sri Lanka....."

13 M. Gaillard, 267.

14 Other sources indicate a figure of roughly 10, 000 fighting forces, of which 20-40% may have been children (D. Somasundaram, 2002) around the 87-90 time period. Yet another source indicates the fighting force figure at 13,200 (B. Shutta, 2002) These discrepancies attest to the difficulties in obtaining accurate data/ information in this area.

15 R. Gunaratna, *South Asia at Gunpoint,* 59-72.

16 Ibid., 58-59.

17 Ibid. 72.

18 M. Gaillard, 266.

19 S. Malik. (2002): 50.

20 See ICRC Study. (1999): 21-27.

21 See *LTTE in The Eyes of The World* – a compilation of press clippings conceptualized and published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Colombo, Sri Lanka (December 1997)

22 UNICEF Annual Report (1995)

23 Information based on informal interviews conducted on a visit to Jaffna, prior zone of conflict. Discussions with military personnel have confirmed this.

24 R. Gunasekera, "LTTE in The Eyes of The World," Reuters Report, (1996).

25 Ibid.

26 See "Child Soldiers: Overview." Information also obtained from January 2003 discussion with Sri Lankan military official

27 D..Somasundaram is a professor University of Jaffna, Dept. of Psychiatry. See his "Child Soldiers: understanding the context," *British Medical Journal* (May 25, 2002); also based on discussion with Somasundaram in Jaffna, December 2002.

28 See L. Alfredson, *Child Soldiers, Displacement & Human Security* (2002); see also the language of International Legal Standards governing Child Soldiers for definitions i.e. international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, and international labor law.

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39 See R. Gunaratne, 63.

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41 Ibid., 62.

42 UTHR Report, (October 2002): 6-16. Here it is indicated that upto the time of the report, conscription was taking place in the Eastern Region.

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Jeganathan of Thambiattai

Parvati

Jeganathan, I dreamt of you,
You, whom I have only read about,
Examining your hands had seen
Dolphins
Driving between your fingers
And turning your palms up
Had spoken of your new posting,
And how you would buy gold
A gold wreath for your grave and for
your mother's neck
Stationary between movement and
mass,
For neither know you now
Seven years of bad luck little brother
Seven years to die
Bullets for your belt

The little figures of red clay
Break one by one by one.

I could not find my child
I found the troop of monkeys,
I saw them I tell you
I saw them.
I saw the troop of monkeys
I could not find my child.
Arre, Arre, Araro
Araro, Araro
Arre, Arre, Araro
I could not see my dear little child

Footnotes

Jeganathan, fourteen, of Thambiattai,
a village in the East
brought,
30 miles by his mother, for treatment
LTTE kept him for six months
Returned him with his mind lost
Forcible, voluntary no one knows
Since the MoU forcible child conscription has
risen in the East
At night LTTE vans drive across Batticaloa
Abducting children and political opponents
(I hear they are starting again in the North)
He consoled his mother
Telling her that he will buy a gold necklace for her
When he gets his new posting
Visu of Thambiattai an LTTE cadre
High in the ranks
It is reported
Builds himself a nice new house

Demeter the goddess of the earth,
Refused in her grief to let crops grow
And the hearths grew cold
She roamed the earth shouting 'Persephone'
Child, come on home
Persephone, abducted by Hades the king of
Hell
Raped by his gaze.
Zeus himself descended, for even he in his
lofty mountain home was burnt
By her wrath
Persephone
'Child come home and let life heal you'
The six pomegranate seeds,
Persephone in hell for six months of the year

Six months they had you, Jeganathan
of Thambiattai
They fed you pomegranates to sweeten
your mouth
To hell and back,
We have no treatment for that
Mad boy

The little figures of red clay
Break one by one by one.

She brought you like angry Demeter
To her;
I do not know what to say,
For I have no answers
and you
Have no more tears

She says,

Maybe I could
have cradled you and
sung,
Kanne, Kannmani ye, Kan valararyo
You mad little boy, born against my
flesh
Slung across my body
Little bell, when you were born,
I had no gold to give, just my arms
Boy,
Gone in the stillness of night
With a smile like picked bone

The winds carry the stories to me
There are vans they say, or men
Routes violate us at night across the
shadow lines
Abducted cries hold silence to court

Under his powerful hands
Thrusting her face to the unseeable ceiling
To be home with her mother again
The plants hide in sorrow until they feel her
tread again
Lullabies we all learned fluttering our lashes
Sung to sleep, by Amma, who sang about the
lost children
She looks for in the jungle.
With only the monkey troop to be seen.
For Amma and Appa, whose children have
gone
Over the seas, to the place of the dead and the
cold

Kanne, Kannmani ye, Kan valararyo
More Tamil lullabies
As dear as my eyes, the sight of my eyes,
won't you go to sleep ?'
Your three uncles will rain kisses on you like
the monsoon,
They welcome you into life and into marriage
with their daughters

What songs we expend on our children,
Don't come home without them,
In your trips to the North
To survey the peace from horizon to horizon
To place your flags, your lines and your pieces
of paper
Remember the children taken from our grasp
And all our empty songs, our lullabies
Remember our children taken from our grasp
When you talk to their abductors
And their king
I will tear up all your papers, break your desk
Dream,

Tell me now of white elephants
Uncles of your fourteen year life
With their gifts,
That bring your dowry, your bride so close
They will give you nothing
Nothing to eat and nothing to think about
Will Visu build you a house too?

Where is your story my child?
Little plucked birds all in a row
There is nothing to be told, they say
They know nothing they say
The words we trade fall lifeless
The little figures of red clay
Break one by one by one

Who hit you kunju?
With their arms that embrace you
Monkey child
Sore from the new cuts on your shoulder

Kanne,
Kannmani ye,
Kan valararyo
You should have stayed at home
When they go hunting in the night
Silence is brought to court

Softly softly we tread
While they stamp the earth beneath our feet
I do not know whom to tell
Or who cares to listen

deep in my heart I do believe
one day
There can be no more tears

For I want to shout
Spit your useless words out
Choking my voice and
My mad little boy,
little skulls around my neck
to this useless land I never owned,
To this world,
I have given four, I will give no more
For you were not mine to give
And not theirs to take

One night
I,
dreamt of you
Jeganathan of Thambiattai
and
Your mother's scream
Who walked 30 miles for treatment
Begging Rosemary for remembrance
I,
dream of rivers,
They flow down my legs into the dust
at my feet
watching
The little figures of red clay
Break one by one by one

Trauma, Community and Human Rights: Approaches when Working with Survivors of Violence

Arancha Garcia del Soto

(This paper was presented on March 7th at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies when Dr. Del Soto was in Sri Lanka in her capacity as an expert on psychosocial work)

I'm an "unaware foreigner" on my first trip to Sri Lanka. My guess is that we all become ignorant aliens when going out of the countries from where we come and, sometimes even within our own countries. The more one reads about Sri Lanka, its past, its violent times and its present situation, the more one needs to continue learning. For now, all I can share with you are some examples based on my experience when working with survivors of violence, in what is "formally" called "post-conflict" settings of Latin America and the Balkans.

The present situation in Sri Lanka cannot be labeled a post-conflict situation, and it cannot be compared with any other so-called post conflict scenarios. Every situation of violence and its aftermath is unique, but some features are similar. We cannot directly extrapolate solutions from one country to another, but I believe that a comparative approach might help us to engage in a useful analysis that enhances the anticipation of some options towards rebuilding individual and social justice.

The Scope of Psychosocial Work

During the last ten years I've been interested in the theory and the practice of the so-called "psychosocial work with survivors

of violence," and I feel passionate about it despite the lack of definition of the term "psychosocial." Psychosocial work can focus on very different actions that go all the way from individual psychological assistance (the so-called therapy in the western countries) to education or child day-care activities. Inger Agger (1996) listed more than 100 tasks that could be considered part of psychosocial work. The term by itself is related to different but complementary phenomena, at the individual and social levels. I believe that to make progress when working with survivors of violence, we need to better understand the connections between individual needs (psychological), community work (social), and human rights work (legal and political).

To enhance this connected approach when doing psychosocial work, one needs to emphasize 3 main features:

(1) Holistic Approach

This can help bridge gaps to avoid the power issues between different disciplines and between theory and applied work. This embraces always being inclusive of different groups regarding gender, age and origin (rural/urban).

(2) Empowerment and Analysis

We all tend to agree on how important it is to give voice to the people and their real needs, to listen to them. But it is difficult to combine this bottom-up approach with effective planning that is inclusive and representative of the range of needs we are dealing with. In a recent publication, it is argued that "staff who try to be very participatory, spend[ing] too much time investigating 'real needs' or women's needs rather than delivering schemes, are soon seen as under-performing by both project and community." (Cooke and Kothari 2002) We keep struggling to find better approaches that combine the civil society participation with effective legal and political designs.

(3) Networking and Coordination

Some of you at the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies meeting stated how, when analyzing the psychosocial work that you've been conducting with the people during the last three years, you felt that you could have done "the same thing with less effort" if you had been able to organize yourselves better and improve networks. I had the chance a few years ago of getting to know very skilled Sri Lankan professionals doing psychosocial work, like Gameela Samarasinghe and Keishini Soysa. Along with many others, they are still committed to working with survivors of violence. Hopefully, psychosocial workers, lawyers, doctors and other professionals from Colombo, Jaffna, Kandy and also from the rural areas will improve their ways of cooperation in the future.

From Individual Suffering to Social Healing

When working with survivors of violence we engage in their personal and collective processes to search for order and reason after the chaos. But we have a semantic problem of finding the right language when dealing with suffering. Often we have no words to refer to all the different shades that suffering and horror may take. In this sense, "trauma" is an imported concept. The criticisms of such a diagnosis are increasing. In 1990, an article was published by W. J. Scott illustrated that a group of Vietnam veterans, along with social workers and psychiatrists, established an analysis group that convinced the American Psychiatric Association to include the new diagnosis in DSM-III (this is the Mental Disorders Manual par excellence). This resulted in a process in which war suffering was medicalized so veterans could gain benefits such as pensions. It is amazing to see the proliferation of "trauma workshops" conducted by westerners (and some times by locals), ignoring the social structure and cultural reality of the people.

For the most radical oppositionists, the PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) diagnosis is useless when dealing with war victims, unless it considers the socio-cultural realities and needs of these individuals. It is decisive to learn how survivors make sense out of the violent experiences they've gone through. Some succumb to horror and remain defenseless, while many others find a resiliency in themselves that they were not aware of. When I visited some of the refugees in Nelekulum, in Vavuniya, they expressed hope (especially those who were "going back home") that helped them to put all their efforts into this returning process.

In Latin America, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Spain there is a primary sequence followed by some survivors concerning the transformation process of individual suffering into a more collective effort aimed at a peaceful social environment.

Individual Suffering → Collective Initiatives → Social Reconciliation

We have descriptions of the personal processes of women who were raped during the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, how they started to recover/regain control over their lives, and how they ultimately gave testimonies at The Hague Tribunal (Richter 1997). By giving their testimonies they participated in building new frameworks for human rights that enable the formulation of "policies towards the past" (Martin 1999) that aim to promote "final reconciliation." For some, the terms justice restoration or reparation should substitute with the term reconciliation. The basic argument here is that it is only when the truth has been acknowledged publicly that talk about reconciliation can take place, and that in some contexts present silence can pay a high price in the future because it imposes an artificial reconciliation. Also, when perpetrators abuse a group of individual victims who are by definition physically defenseless and inferior, there is a tendency to ignore the term "reconciliation" and lean towards the use of "reparation." It's the value of memory in order to avoid future violence that is given primacy here as opposed to an

artificially imposed forgiveness. There are different levels of reparation and each one influences the survivors at the individual and the family levels, but also at the community and the social levels (Perez Sales 2002)[1].

Going back to the sequence that we are trying to reflect on (from suffering to collective activism to human rights work), one of the first phases occurs when the basic need to share and belong is restored at the individual level. It is then that people might start to engage in collective activism. The need of the survivors to stay connected can promote civil society initiatives that draw the path towards the restoration of justice. In Chile they expressed it as "... the type of wish for survival you get through the involvement in the movement" or "... when they steal your voice but not your strength to keep on resisting and fighting."[2] In Latin America, the women's groups took the position "better to be a loser that nonexistent," because a loser's voice can still be heard and you still have the possibility of changing unjust situations. When making people disappear, the role of the aggressors was to make the victims nonexistent. The goal of the survivors was (in Oscar Wilde's terms) to have "memory busting into" society, so that they were not forgotten.

But we all know of individuals and small groups of victims that have remained passive and defenseless. Especially for the very poor and the mentally disabled, to become engaged in social activism or even to engage in income-generating activities can be too difficult, even a luxury.

The Individual, Community and Human Rights Approaches

The PTSD approach is the more individual approach, and because of the basic reasons just mentioned it needs to be adapted to the specificity of the situations and culture of the survivors. When I say openly that trauma is an imported concept and that it has also been overused because of western interests, I'm not denying

individual suffering. We all know persons who were unable to live their lives because of the suffering they were going through. It doesn't always correspond to the formal description of "PTSD," but many times it's very close. At Culipuran Refugee Camp, in Jaffna, a 4-year-old girl started crying when she was reminded by the flash of a camera of the light of a gunshot. But individual counseling does not cure everything, especially in settings where the structural causes of violence have to do with poverty and the denial of basic social rights.

In the community approach, mental health tends to be understood more as a social good than a private trait. The idea of recovering after violence due to accompanying processes and mutual support—both based on the community members' involvement—is central. I personally think that one of the best publications on community psychosocial work is by Carlos Beristain *"Rebuilding the Social Fabric: A Critical Approach to Humanitarian Aid."* It will be shortly published in English. Although it focuses on Latin America, it poses examples from other continents.

In the human rights approach, the claim for justice includes the debate about the tools for justice. This is to ask how effective and real institutions established after violence are? Lately we have been witnessing processes showing how some political commitments towards ideas of forgiveness haven't been very effective because they deny the right of remembrance, the right of historical memory.

The Need for Justice: Examples of Processes in Various Countries

In Spain, the political transition during the late '70s included a political pact of not mentioning the civil war in public. As a result, more than sixty years after the civil war ended, we are still dealing with the exhumation of some mass graves or questioning the validity of the constitution designed 25 years ago during the

transition. Terrorism still exists in the country I come from. Several political groups claim that it is now, many years after, that we are paying the high price for silencing the violations of human rights that occurred during violent times. And they are still demanding justice. Forgetting can be sometimes functional at the individual and the group levels, but achieving forgiveness in order to rebuild a social fabric that includes all sides requires a process and a timing that needs to effectively deal with the justice claims of some survivors (Martin Beristain and Paez 2000).

In Sierra Leone, they have recently started a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that is accused of being an ineffective symbol, designed to allow politicians to continue with the transition after violence, without really taking into account the interests of the survivors. In December 2002, some women who had suffered sexual aggressions during the war complained: "How can I testify, knowing that the aggressor is not going to be punished, when he's being reintegrated and living again in my same village? I feel threatened and full of fear!" (Garcia del Soto 2002).[3] Treating the memory of the victims appropriately will help avoid future conflict. But it seems that there's a tendency to adopt institutions for forgiveness that are artificially imposed and do not reflect the needs of the survivors. Why is that so? Perhaps because foreign models of forgiveness are exported from other countries where they might have worked. Again, each country has its own understanding of forgiveness derived from, among other things, the characteristics of the violent period and its own religious traditions.

An example where some survivors sometimes tend to move from individual suffering towards social support and later towards activism (apart form the ones already mentioned in Bosnia or Chile) is Argentina. *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* is a group of women whose sons and daughters were made to disappear during the dictatorship. It happened that some of their pregnant daughters gave birth before they were killed and these babies were given in adoption to different people. Madres have been fighting for more than 20 years and have achieved the approval of a Law of

Devolution of the Stolen Children that, among other things, obliges the children of uncertain parentage to have blood tests to prove who their real parents were- to determine whether or not they are the biological children of the couples assassinated during the dictatorship.

In these processes that show the synergies between individual pain and collective action, there are some very relevant mediating actors. Some of them are institutional, like the religious churches (the Catholic church was very active in supporting the victims of the violence in El Salvador and Chile, but not so in Argentina where it became more aligned with the military aggressors). I also need to learn about the roles of different religious leaders regarding violence in Sri Lanka. Another mediating actor can be psychosocial workers, including teachers, who have individual access to the survivors and usually know the communities well. In Guatemala, psychosocial workers played a very active role in designing methodology to collect testimonies for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Ideally, psychosocial workers, lawyers, journalists, religious leaders and politicians should be very aware about how the survivors feel, about issues of confidentiality, protection and ethics in order to comply with the best methods for social reconciliation or restoration. But things are never easy, and in a majority of the violent situations many aggressors are victims at the same time. How to support them, how to individually and socially reintegrate them into society are some pressing issues in this regards. Also, threats to human rights workers are extended here to all the actors involved in the process. We all have concrete names in mind of lawyers, priests, teachers, etc. who have been killed because they were "uncomfortable" for one side or the other, or for all sides.

I want to briefly describe two examples in Bosnia & Herzegovina regarding the connection between psychosocial and human rights work. The first issue I want to discuss is on the so-called minority return phenomenon, and the second is on rape as a war crime. Minority return was a term used in B&H to

describe the return of refugees to their hometowns after these towns changed ethnic rule during the war, which meant that the enemy had taken control of those areas. In many cases it seemed a forced return. Very few families felt completely sure about returning and most of them had many fears, doubts and questions about how things were in their original hometowns, how they were going to be treated, what had happened to their properties (houses and land), what the possibilities of going back to their own houses were, and how the devolution of property was going to function. Is it comparable here in Sri Lanka, with the ongoing processes? The role of information is decisive when having to make such important decisions. And how this information is provided to the potential returnees is also very important. The psychosocial workers played a decisive role finding the right information, and working together with the new local governments for the sake of the displaced families. They often did it case-by-case, almost family by family in some areas in B&H. The Sri Lankan idea of the "mediators" favoring return might work well. That is to be seen.

The conditions that tend to favor return (as shown for Bosnia & Herzegovina in a study conducted by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, ECRE) are represented by the following sequence: (1) the lack of violence and land mines, (2) the possibility of economic subsistence, (3) the right resources for the education of their children and the devolution of property and, after all of these, (4) feeling accompanied by members of the same group and similar psychological wellness. These priorities might not work in the same order here, but in my limited knowledge these are certainly concerns also shared by the potential returnees in Sri Lanka.

Rape as a war crime is my second example from Bosnia & Herzegovina. When we talk about doing psychosocial work with raped women in violent conflicts, we necessarily need to emphasize the person and not the condition. We also need to consider the changing role of women after conflicts. Some such

concerns are when the ex-combatants (male) come back home unemployed in some cases, and feel frustrated which in turn leads to the increase of domestic violence. Rape is increasingly used as a war weapon, aiming to destroy community and family bonds through sexual aggression against the female members of the enemy group. In Bosnia some of the victims started to speak up, after, of course, the support of their families and some psychosocial staff. The media, both domestic and international, also helped in enhancing these types of testimonies at The Hague Tribunal. This was the first time in history that rape was treated as a separate crime in war and this process is a consequence of the widespread, long-term efforts on the part of the activists and human rights groups. On June 27, 1996, after collecting enough testimonies, The Hague announced the indictment of eight male Bosnian Serb military and police officers on charges of raping Bosnian women. In April 2001, rape was declared a war crime under International Humanitarian Law.

Some Future Potential Psychosocial Issues to Deal with in Sri Lanka

Let me put on the table now a hypothesis for Sri Lanka. If the peace negotiations develop successfully, some type of tribunal may be set up. It might be the case that some women are asked or freely want to give their testimonies in such a potential institution. Then, if that's the case, the issues of protection and confidentiality of the witnesses and the issues of real justice and reconciliation might become more salient and public than they are now. And these are tasks for almost everybody in Sri Lanka to be involved in, starting with different professionals (lawyers, politicians, doctors, psychologists, social workers, journalists, etc.) and regular citizens who are mostly concerned about their daily meals and the future of their children.

One last common problem to all post-violent or quasi post-violent situations is the exhumation of the mass graves. I know a

little bit about the cases in Bosnia, Guatemala, Peru, Chile and now Spain. In your country, I was told in Jaffna about the case of Chemany, a mass grave opened in 1997 and re-closed for various reasons. Today I learned in the newspaper about Udaṭalawinna's case. From a psychosocial perspective, mass grave openings fulfill a positive social and a psychological function. The social goal is that it records injustice through giving names to the victims of violence. From the psychological perspective, it allows for double grief. First, it allows the grief for the missing person that is not missing any longer, thereby closing the period of uncertainty, and the psychological torture that comes from the impossibility of betraying that person's memory when one considers him/her dead. Secondly, it allows the grief for one's own pain (for being a victim of the loss of the loved one). I consider the Sri Lankan initiative of issuing "death certificates" for the missing an interesting one, both from the social and the individual impact these have on the family members of the victims. Exhumations should then be positive from almost all different perspectives. But, as it turns out, many family members re-experience a lot of distress, pain and outrage and it's not so positive for the individuals related to the bodies exhumed, at least in the short term. The different stages of reactions and the functionality that exhumations present, is still to be researched.

Let me finish by just mentioning some of the main features of your work in Sri Lanka as I've learned them. They belong to a long list such as the MOU, constitutional design, de-mining, devolution of property, re-integration of ex-combatants, gender based violence, child labor soldiers, and sexual exploitation of females ex-combatants. Let me also say that these issues are not new, but that you'll have to deal with them as if it were occurring for the first time. I heard from different people in the island that at present you are getting a lot of new donors and organizations. It's been said that the internationals' role fluctuate between the imposition, the assistance that creates dependency, and the accompanying. I believe that the best thing that internationals can bring to Sri Lanka are economic resources. Because I think

that you have great professionals engaged in psychosocial work here already.

I want to emphasize that you are the main actors. It is all of you and the rest of the citizens that should be in charge of deciding how to better approach these realities. I personally think that the psychosocial workers should also have a voice because many of the survivors can speak through the psychosocial staff and be better heard in other institutions. We need to improve the ways of working together, building bridges. Psychosocial work can play a useful role when improving the connections between the recognition of people's suffering, civil society dynamics and deliberative democracy mechanisms. We still have a lot of things to learn to better connect psychology, socio-economic institutions and legal and political frames.

Foot Notes

1 There are at least seven components to the concept of "reparation": (1) emotional reparation of the survivors, (2) moral reparation as the restoration of their private and public image, (3) economic reparation, (4) legal reparation, (5) community reparation as the rebuilding of the fabric and community bonds, (6) social reparation as to avoid polarization and promote cooperation between the traditionally confronted groups and, lastly, (7) historical reparation as to establish the truth for the sake of historical memory.

2 Patricio Guzman shows these testimonies in the documentary film *The Pinochet Case*.

3 This is based on the work and interviews I had done for the NGO Sierra Leone Opportunities Industrialization Centre

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The Census in Colonial Ceylon

Kamaljit Bhasin Malik

I

Contemporary political debates in Sri Lanka take for granted the three bounded ethnic categories of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim. Moreover, these categories are projected back onto the past, and the ethnic conflict that has tortured the country over the last two decades is sometimes seen as a continuation of a two thousand year old confrontation between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Potent though these primordialist explanations are, they obscure the fact that identities are not given facts of nature, but rather, constructed over time and space. One of the most significant moments for the eventual emergence of enclosed, monolithic, reified identities in Sri Lanka was the establishment by the colonial government of the decennial census taking exercise in 1871.

The volumes of the Ceylon census are a fascinating read because they are a window into the colonial mindset and allow us to see the way in which Ceylon was not only perceived but also imagined. The shifts and changes in the categories used to describe the population of the Island reflect the changes in colonial perceptions of their subjects, as well as the changes in the self-perceptions of these subjects. This article is an attempt to illustrate the way in which the census counted and objectified natives and divided them into distinct social groups such as castes, races and nationalities. To bring this process into sharp focus particular attention is paid to the fate of 'syncretic' or 'hybrid' communities who were seen as 'deviant' on account of their layered identities and multiple identity claims. This article will also refer to examples of how the census functioned in the Indian context to provide a comparative perspective and point out that the census worked in similar ways in different colonial situations.

The Beginnings of the Sri Lankan Census

The history of the Ceylon census must be seen in the total context of the efforts of the British colonial government to collect systematic information about the society and economy of the countries they ruled. Percival, writing in 1803 of Colombo says: "There is no part of the world where so many different languages are spoken, or which contains such a mixture of nations, manners, and religions." (Denham 1912, 144) This 'mixture' mystified the colonial officials and the census taking exercise may be looked at as an attempt to understand it and make it manageable. The census is a classic example of what Edward Said would refer to as the discourse of orientalism, which created a vista of exoticism, strangeness and difference. Quoting Said, Arjun Appadurai notes that various colonial projects (but particularly the census one might add) specialized "in the particularizing and dividing of things oriental into manageable parts." (Appadurai 1993, 314) Though allegedly utilitarian in intent the census more than anything else (except the army) gave the colonial rulers an illusion of control over the colony and its population.

The first modern census of Ceylon was conducted in 1871. Mr. G. S. Williams the Acting Registrar General described the "mixed spirit of apprehension and anger excited by the sudden announcement of the census" and attributed it to the fact that it was "regarded as an invasion of the privacy of domestic life, so jealously guarded by the Eastern nations." (Williams 1873, xiv) He recorded that people ran away to the jungles to conceal themselves, and there was even an increase in the number of marriages because rumour had it that the object of the census was to discover the number of unmarried youths so they could be sent to Europe which had been denuded of its youth by a great war. (Williams 1871, xii) British census officials in India also included in their reports accounts of rumours, which were purported to circulate among the Indian population. In Oudh in 1869 it was rumoured that one male from each family was to be taken as a recruit to the army. One report circulated that the Queen

of England desired two women to be sent from each village to fan her day and night and the census was merely a subterfuge for carrying out the queen's orders. (Cohn 1987) Lest we see these manifestations of apprehension at the invasion of privacy as an example of curious 'oriental' behaviour, it is important to point out that when the idea of a census was first proposed in England it was strenuously resisted as highly dangerous to society. In Ceylon, one Member of Parliament spoke of the census as "totally subversive to the last remains of English liberty". Another expressed a fear that it would lead to some public misfortune and would be followed by "an epidemical disorder." (Denham 1912)

In his report on the *Census of Ceylon* 1871, G. S. Williams emphasized the similarity between the census taking exercise on the Island and in England. He asserted that the "only feature, which marks its individuality" is the "provision for the proclamation by beat of 'tom-tom,' an instrument which plays a more important role in the government of this island than is commonly known to the residents in England." (Williams 1871, xi) However, even a cursory look at the way in which the census was organized contradicts this assertion of similarity. In England the census evolved out of concerns over a decline in the population. The British census began with and maintained a bias towards the questions of numerical decline or increase in the population, economic issues affecting poverty, the need for poor relief, and questions of occupation. It was primarily demographic and economic. All questions dealing with religion were to be answered on a voluntary basis, and each person could refuse to answer them. (Jones 1981) While the British census exhibited either a disinterest in or a reluctance to explore the subject of religion, the census in Ceylon and other colonies used religion and race as fundamental categories. Moreover, as Appadurai points out, both the British and French census projects tended to reserve their most invasive investigations for the social margins: the poor, the insane, the infirm and the criminal. By contrast, in the colonies, the entire population was seen as different in problematic ways, this shift lying at the very heart of orientalism. (Appadurai 1993, 318)

In their attempt to capture the reality of the Island they ruled, and arrive at an official version of knowledge about its society, the colonial officials played around with the identity categories in the census. Social categories were not constructed in a systematic manner; they emerged from a series of administrative and legal decisions, which were influenced both by information provided by the Ceylonese and by pre-exiting British attitudes. A quick look at the changes in the categories employed between 1871 and 1946 will show that categories were continuously combined, separated, intermixed and restructured. As the colonial period wore on, the census categories became increasingly racial, and this was coupled with an eventual conflation of racial, linguistic and religious identities. But one colonial assumption that did not change was that natives were members of a distinct group and their behaviour, physical features, needs were determined by the fact of their belonging to that particular group. (Wickramasinghe 1995, 5) Ceylon's population was seen not as a collection of individuals, but as a collection of groups defined on the basis of race or religion. This assumption about the nature of colonial society, which came to be regarded as commonsense, created problems for the postcolonial states because it made it extremely difficult to conceptualise the nation in relation to any sort of civil society on the western model, since all social groups, all habits of thought, and all traditions of politics were seen as emanations of group identity and essential bodily differences. (C. Breckenridge and P. Van der Veer, 12)

To make the above claim is not to deny the colonized populations all agency and claim that they imbibed colonial classificatory practices without resisting them or moulding them, but to point out that colonial discourse in the shape of institutions like the census had a great deal of authority and influence. This was so because the data generated by the census became the basis for the distribution of political power, government patronage and access to education and employment. This makes us ask if census categories are a total imposition of the colonial master, or if they are also reflections of how the colonized saw themselves at a

particular moment of history. This essay concentrates on colonial discourse and the way it privileged monolithic and static definitions of identity; however, it does not assume that colonial discourse was the most important determinant of identity formation. Only detailed studies will reveal the extent to which the colonial consensus that emerged on questions of identity had its roots in 18th and 19th century social practices.

Some Categories

The census conducted in 1824 used caste as a category but by 1871 this category had been done away with. It was decided that "caste in Ceylon is not so important a factor in social life as it is in India," (Lee 1892, 3) possibly because it was felt that Buddhism as opposed to Hinduism did not provide a religious sanction for caste. Also, the secondary place accorded to religion, as opposed to 'nationality' or 'race' in the Ceylon censuses may be partly attributed to the fact that in the early days of British rule there was a lot of confusion over the religious beliefs of the islanders. (Rogers 1993) The Householders Form printed in 1871 was organized under the following heads: locality, description of house, name, condition, sex, occupation, place of birth, race, religious denomination, if deaf, dumb, blind, cripple or insane. Interestingly, the form for the Shipping Schedule asked no questions about race or religion and was limited to an enquiry of name, rank, sex, age, occupation, place of birth and infirmities.

The 1871 census report listed 72 nationalities and 24 races. As Wickramasinghe points out, there was a certain amount of incoherence in these classifications. Sinhalese and Tamil were races as well as nationalities. Afghans, Americans, Anglo-Indians, Brahmins, Half Castes, Chetties, Hindustanees were listed under the heading of nationality. The races that were enumerated included Tamils, Sinhalese, Malays, Moors and Burghers, along with Arabs, Bengalis, Brahmins and Carnatics. It is interesting to note that labels like Half-Caste and Brahmin were used alongside American and Afghan and there were many different terms for

people from the Indian subcontinent, ranging from Brahmin to Bengali to Hindustani to Carnatic. One cannot but wonder what category a Bengali Brahmin would have been put under, and what exactly was meant by Hindustani at this time. Was it someone who spoke Hindustani? Or was it someone who was from Hindustan? In which case Hindustani could subsume all the other categories used for people from India. Under the heading religious denomination the 1871 census listed people as belonging to the following categories: Baptist, Buddhist, Church of England, Christian, Israelite, Lutheran, Muhammadan, Protestant, Rationalist, Sattiya Vedam, Saivite, Veddah, Vishnuite. Significantly there was no mention of Hindus yet. But by 1881 Hindu emerged as a distinct category but the distinction made between Saivites and Vishnuites had disappeared.

A comparison of the 1871 census with the one carried out only ten years later in 1881 makes clear that there was a rationalization and simplification of the categories available for people to classify themselves under. As pointed out above, the distinction between Saivites and Vishnuites disappeared although Christians were still enumerated according to their denomination. In 1881 there were only seven races left, namely, Europeans, Sinhalese, Tamils, Moormen, Malays, Veddas and Others. In one of the tables, which lists all the races of Ceylon, there are 72 nationalities mentioned. This is a clear indicator of the categorical confusion in the minds of the census officials who seemed to have used the terms race and nationality interchangeably.

The superintendent of the 1901 census, P. Arunachalam invoked Hegel and wrote that "the drift of modern thought is to understand nationality as an aggregation of persons believed or presumed to belong to the same stock and having a common language, character and political institution. Whatever the proper meaning of the term may be, in Ceylon for at least half a century certain 'nationalities' or 'races' have been officially recognized." (Arunachalam 1902, 73) E. B. Denham, the superintendent of the census operations in 1911 disagreed with Arunachalam and felt 'the word nationality... cannot be regarded as an appropriate

description of the various peoples in Ceylon". He went on to say that, "the races in Ceylon are clearly differentiated – intermarriages between them have been very rare; they have each their own particular religion to which the majority belongs, and they speak different languages." (209) In keeping with this view, Denham proposed what he referred to as 'certain general rules': "all Sinhalese are either Buddhists or Christians, all Tamils are either Hindus or Christians... all Moors and Malays are Muhammadan; and all Europeans and Burghers are Christians." (255) He did not put down any rules drawing a line between race and language, but it was assumed that all Sinhalese spoke Sinhala and all Tamils spoke Tamil. The census did not ask for returns on mother tongue till 1946 (ironically the 1946 census defines mother tongue as the language of the father!). So the question of bilingual people did not arise.

By 1911 much of the confusion that was symptomatic of the earlier censuses had disappeared. A process of rationalization had taken place and the number of races had stabilized at eleven: Low Country and Kandyan Sinhalese, Indian Tamils, Ceylon Tamils, Indian Moors, Ceylon Moors, Malays, Burghers, Veddahs, Europeans and Others. The aggregation and disaggregation of categories were politically charged. The ways in which differences between groups were in turn emphasized or played down reflected and fed into political developments. Since the British viewed their colonial subjects not as individuals but as members of a group, which was racially, ethnically or religiously defined, the introduction of a measure of representative government meant that these group identities were in turn emphasized by the native populations. When a Legislative Council was set up in 1833 the Governor nominated one Low Country Sinhalese, one Burgher and one Tamil to be the Ceylonese representatives on it. (Wickramasinghe, 28) This inevitably led to the Kandyans demanding their own representative and emphasizing their distinct racial and historical identity to justify their demand. The British conceded, and consequently the Low Country and Kandyan Sinhalese were distinguished from one

another in the census of 1901. In 1922 however, a court ruled that the Low Country and Kandyan Sinhalese "did not belong to different races but the same race." (R. Stirrat and R. L. Stirrat 1990, 30) In keeping with this ruling and the general political trend by which the major difference that was emerging was between the majority 'Aryan' Sinhalese, and the minority 'Dravidian' Tamils, the 1946 census stated that "the division of the Sinhalese into Up Country and Low Country Sinhalese is the result of historical accident and betokens no racial distinction." (Ranasingha 1950, 151)

The Emergence of Separate Fixed Identities

While the differences between the two groups of Sinhalese came to be played down, the differences between the Indian-born and Ceylon Tamils were increasingly highlighted. The 1911 census made a distinction between Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils. This had important political implications because Tamils who had seen themselves as a dominant community may have felt that they were reduced to a minority. This may have been one of the factors which led to the appearance of 'separatist' demands within the Tamil political community. (Wickramasinge, 29)

These two examples illustrate the argument that British rule, through the instrument of the census, substantialized heterogeneity, formalizing racial difference and making it the basis for political representation. In India a campaign was initiated in 1931 against any record of caste on the grounds that the recording of caste differences by the census tended to perpetuate the caste system. The census of 1931 however continued to take note of caste-based identities and argued it is "difficult to see why the record of a fact that actually exists should tend to stabilize that existence. It is just as easy to argue that it is impossible to get rid of any institution by ignoring its existence like the proverbial ostrich." (Census of India 1931) It is difficult to be convinced by this line of thinking because the racial categories frozen by the

census shaped the way in which colonial subjects imagined and perceived the political community. This is not to say that caste based differences did not exist in India, or that ethnicity was not a marker of difference in Ceylon prior to the institutionalisation of difference through the census, it is rather to say that the census reified identities and gave them a new totalising character.

To explain the division of Ceylonese society into different categories the census invoked a particular version of the history of the Island and confirmed race or ethnicity as the central feature of social identity in not only the present but also the past. The 1901 census had a chapter on the history of Ceylon, something that had not been there in the earlier census reports. As expected, the view of history subscribed to by the writers of the census reports was a record of conflict between the two communities of Tamils and Sinhalese; instances of coexistence and interaction were not given much importance in British administrative traditions of writing history, and were therefore only mentioned in a cursory manner. In the 1901 census Arunachalam wrote that the Tamils and the Sinhalese had lived on the Island for two thousand years, "whether in friendly intercourse or in the fierce conflict of war and devastation." The conflict between the young Sinhala-Buddhist Duttugemunu and the old and righteous Tamil king Elara figured prominently in Arunahchalam's narrative who described the Tamils as a "continuous source of harassment" to the Sinhalese. (14) Denham who wrote in 1911 continued in the same vein as Arunachalam. He wrote that the Sinhalese and the Tamils are found in the "closest intercourse" from the earliest times, "first as one invader succeeded another, then allied under rulers from South India... again struggling in warfare, which was practically civil war, then engaged in a conquest for predominance...followed by a further period of successful raids from South India." (209)

The words 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' made an entry into the census through the chapter on history. Arunachalam referred to the 'Aryan origin' of the Sinhalese and wrote of the Sinhalese language as being 'Indo Aryan'. While he conceded that "Ceylon

has had close relations, sometimes hostile, with the Dravidian races of South India, especially the Tamils and the Sinhalese language has been greatly influenced by Tamil. But there is no fundamental Dravidian element in the language." (75) This racial discourse within the census which deployed the categories of 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' to justify differences between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, reflected the preoccupation of turn of the century academics with race and racial difference. British administrators introduced the ideas made popular by Indologists like Max Muller into the colonies, and the colonial intelligentsia readily took up these ideas. Race based labels that in retrospect appear ahistorical, externally imposed and arbitrary, were often indigenised, and became vital to those to whom they were applied. (Robb 1995, 7) It was the popularity of racial ideology and the developments in physical anthropology and linguistics, which were responsible for the definition of essentially linguistic groups such as Sinhalese and Tamil in terms of physical characteristics which were supposed to be specific to those groups. (Wickramasinghe, 9) There was a widespread confusion between biological and cultural concepts and this was reflected in the census through the ideas of men like Arunachalam who maintained that the "true origins of all the races can be determined not only through philology but through anthropometry." (75) The hold of such ideas on the minds of the census officials proved extremely durable and even Dr. N. D. Wijesekara who was the deputy superintendent of the census as late as 1946, claimed that a 'scientific definition' of race is "a group of people showing similar tendencies, features and mental make up." (Wijesekara 1946, 64)

In contrast in India anthropometry had begun to fall out of favour in the official colonial discourse by the 1920s and instead textual evidence from the ancient chronicles was being used to support racial theories. The 1946 census, which included in it 'A Note on the Ethnology of the Races of Ceylon' was a classic example of the lasting provenance of anthropometry and gave detailed physical descriptions of the different race types in the Island. It described the 'Sinhala dolico' type as follows: "He has

a long narrow head with a slight alveolar prognathism. He has thin lips with fine teeth, slightly wavy black hair, moderate body hair, small eyes dark in colour, small narrow nose, and is of short or medium stature." (169) In contrast the armenoid type, which the author found among the Tamils, is described as having "a heavily built body with a tendency to corpulency." The description goes on as follows: "He has a short head that is brachycephalic. Prognathism is absent. He has thick lips with the lower lip tending to be pendant, dark wavy hair with a profusion of body hair. The eyes are somewhat long. The nose is prominent and with a hooked beak shape." (170)

By 1946 the census had shed its earlier confusion over categories such as 'race' and 'nationality'. The division of Ceylonese society had been rationalized and the racial groupings of Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamil, Indian Tamil, Ceylon Moor, Indian Moor, Malay, Burgher and Veddah and Other had been firmly established. The differences between these groupings were explained by the selective use of history, by racial theories and by anthropometry. Through the census religious and racial communities were mapped, counted and above all compared with other religious and racial communities. The censuses provided statistics for literacy and education according to race and religion, and even the infirm, the insane and prisoners were enumerated by race and religion rather than region even as late as 1946. Moreover, there had been a conflation of race, language and religion as exemplified by the 'rules' put forward by E. P. Denham referred to above. In keeping with this trend there was a growing ambivalence towards groups that did not fit into the neat categories created by the census. One way to uncover the mindset of the colonial census takers is to look at their treatment of groups that straddled the categorical divisions within the census.

II

The Hybrid Categories

In his influential book *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson refers to the census makers' passion for completeness and unambiguity, and intolerance towards multiple, politically 'transvestite', blurred or changing identifications. He adds that the census has no patience with 'fractions' and that a favourite fiction of the census is that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place in it. In Ceylon this attitude was applied to social realities and histories which were 'syncretic' and often this did not allow for the ideal congruence of race, language and religion promoted by the census.

Some amount of work has been done to uncover this mixed and hybrid history of Ceylon. Elizabeth Nissan and R. L. Stirrat point out that the great historic centres of 'Sinhala-Buddhist' civilization like Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa throw up inscriptional evidence of Tamil speaking groups living in these areas, being employed in the army and serving in temples. There is also ample architectural and sculptural evidence of Sinhalese links with Indian and Tamil civilization and even the presence of Indian craftsmen. In Jaffna there are place names with Sinhalese origins and Buddhist remains have been discovered in the archaeological sites there. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that members of the Salagama, Durava and Karava castes are descendents from Hindu India who were 'Sinhalized' over time. The Tamil kings of Kandy are known to have revived the Buddhist monastic order and restored Buddhist temples. At the same time however these Tamil kings also participated in Saivite worship. (E. Nissan and Stirrat, 23-24) Many Sinhalese aristocratic families had Indian ancestors and also worshipped Saivite gods who were integrated into the fabric of popular Buddhism.

There is also evidence to suggest that prior to the nineteenth century the identity of people tended to be variable and contextual.

The term 'Sinhalese' for instance seems to have functioned as both a cultural and political label without implying any belief in shared ancestry. Although the Sinhala language was associated with the idea of Sinhala culture, groups in the Kandyan kingdom, for instance the Radalas, who regarded themselves as Sinhalese, used the Tamil script while signing important documents. Moreover, an eighteenth century Pali chronicle refers to Kirthi Sri Rajasimha as 'our Sinhala ruler' even though he was a Nayakkar who was technically not racially or culturally Sinhalese. (Rogers, 154)

In the 1911 census report Denham quoted Emerson Tennent as saying, "Prodigious numbers of nominal Christians designate themselves 'Christian Buddhists,' or Government 'Christians,' and with scarcely an exception they are either heathens or sceptics. When we ask people their religion, the common reply is we are of the Government religion." (266) Denham added, "The consequence was that the number of Christians given in the early records is all out of proportion to the actual fact. The numbers are those of baptized Christians, and baptism was regarded as a Government regulation, and was actually known as *Christiyani karanawa*, or making Christian." (266) This example also proves that in the pre-modern period people's identities were shifting, contingent and were not such that they could fit definitely into one or the other of the census categories. However, this was not just a pre modern phenomenon particular to Ceylon. In South Asia it is common for the same person to apply different 'religions' to different situations. Similarly, well into the twentieth century, Anglophone Ceylonese who had attended Christian scripture lessons at school and were examined in their knowledge of the Bible, but were part of Buddhist households, probably regarded Christianity as the civic religion of the day – Christianity for public life, Buddhism for private." (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988, 209) It can be argued that if people were confronted with a question as to what their 'true' religion was they would reply Buddhist, therefore making it difficult to base any argument on the multiple identity claims of people on the examples given

above, and pointless to lament the fact that the census ignored such shifting and contingent identity formulations.

The census, however, was not only blind to the layered nature of identity referred to above, it was also extremely ambivalent to any claims that defied the congruence of race, religion and language that it took increasingly for granted. The development of this attitude among census-takers can be illustrated by referring to the fate within the census of the numerically quite small group of 'Tamil Buddhists'. This group becomes visible in the 1881 census which gave statistics according to race and religion. In that year 86% of Tamils were said to be Hindus, 12% Christians, and 12, 813 Tamils were recorded as being Buddhists. No further comment was made on this group other than that half of them were residents of the Western Province. (Lee, xxiii) By the time of the 1891 census the number of Tamil Buddhists had grown to 15,861 and as many as 16.5% of Tamils in the Western Province were enumerated as being Buddhists. (36) In his *Manual of the Vanni Districts* written in 1895, J. P. Lewis of the Ceylon civil service referred to the existence of three 'Sinhalese Hindus' but added that he had never seen them. He went on to write, "Vavuniya also possessed four 'Tamil Buddhists' but I have not been more fortunate in regard to these curiosities than I have with respect to the three 'Sinhalese Hindus." (90) The colonial classifier was at a loss over how to fit groups that blurred the boundary between what he saw as the mutually exclusive categories of Tamil-Hindu and Sinhala-Buddhist into his neat classificatory grid. More often than not, this confusion in the minds of classifiers was projected back onto the native, who was shown to be either ignorant or a curiosity. (Rajasingham 2001, 12) Today if one asks a Sri Lankan about Tamil Buddhists their response is one of incredulity and surprise that such a group ever existed. Moreover, the LTTE, which is in the business of policing Tamil cultural practices would probably have little patience with Tamil Buddhists who would certainly be viewed as deviant and threatening to their official definition of Tamil identity.

As the census was rationalized and racialized it seemed to become increasingly necessary to explain (away) identity-claims that appeared to be anomalies. In the 1901 census Report P. Arunachalam explained that many Tamils "who were really Hindus" continued to be written as Buddhists at the census "owing to misunderstanding on the part of the enumerators as well as the enumerated." He went on to say, "There is no Tamil equivalent of the word 'Hindu', which is known only to persons educated in English. An ignorant Tamil, when asked his religion would be at a loss to state it under any of the census categories. In Sinhalese districts, where there are no Hindu temples, a Tamil of this class might even attend and offer worship at a Buddhist temple, Buddha being regarded by some as the incarnation of Vishnu." (96) Clearly, people were not encouraged to classify themselves as Tamil Buddhists and enumerators at the 1911 census were instructed, "in case of Tamils stating they are Buddhists, to ascertain carefully whether they mean they go to a kovil or temple, or to a vihare or pansala, and to satisfy themselves that these Tamils were really Buddhists." (Denham, 252) The 1921 and 1946 censuses did not record the existence of any Tamil Buddhists, and the very category of Tamil Buddhist had disappeared not only from the country wide census tables but even from the tables dealing with the Western Province where as many as 16.5% of Tamils had been enumerated as Buddhist in 1891. It is difficult to say, however, whether this disappearance reflected the fact that the number of Tamil Buddhists actually decreased due to the spread of ideas which made clear links between race, language and religion, or whether this group became a blind spot for the census because it resisted the census's neat classificatory logic.

"In spite of the closest political connection, the two races (of Tamil and Sinhalese) are as distinct today in Ceylon as the limits of their settlements are clearly defined. Though Tamils described themselves in the census schedule as Buddhists, and Sinhalese entered Tamil as the only language they could read and write, it is inconceivable that any Sinhalese would enter himself as a Tamil, or a Tamil as a Sinhalese" (209) wrote E. B. Denham

in his report on the census of 1911. In the very next paragraph, however, Denham went on to say that all authorities are agreed that the Sinhalese are a 'mixed race' and that there must have been a 'constant fusion' of the two races of Tamil and Sinhalese through history. Further, "certain castes in Ceylon today trace their descent directly from South Indian tribes, and along the coast from Negombo to Puttalam Tamil is as much spoken as Sinhalese by villagers calling themselves Sinhalese, but undoubtedly of Tamil descent... even in the Kurunegala District there are Sinhalese Karawas, the majority of whom are Hindus and speak Tamil." (209) The census, however, could not accommodate the mixed and hybrid nature of these communities and they were therefore pushed into either the Sinhalese or the Tamil column in the table on race.

In India too, groups that straddled the labels of Hindu and Muslim and claimed to belong to both groupings puzzled and exasperated census officials and gazetteers because they resisted easy classification. The author of the 1921 census of India insisted that this matter "is not one of statistical importance so long as these communities [were] definitely attached to one of the main religions and return themselves as of that community." (Census of India 1923) In spite of this attitude of the colonial state many communities returned themselves as being 'Hindu-Muhammadan' as late as 1911. After that however, they were included in one or the other of the religious categories. For these groups a categorical ambiguity was the preferred state of being and their tragedy has been the growing incursion of the conflictual categories of the census onto their self-representational terrain. (Mayaram 1997) Even though the contemporary Indian census is blind to the existence of such syncretic groups, they continue to exist and show up in the volumes of the Anthropological Survey of India which lists as many as 600 communities as lying between religions. (Singh 1994)

The continuing existence of syncretic communities is not peculiar to India. Even in Sri Lanka these groups continue to exist. There are a significant number of people in the coastal belt

between Chilaw and Kotahena who regard themselves as Sinhalese, but speak Tamil at home and have identifiable Tamil connections. Similarly, certain fishing communities in Negombo speak Tamil but insist that their jati is Sinhala. In periods of ethnic polarity and conflict, however, it becomes difficult for groups to claim multiple identities and one finds that they discard one facet of their identity and emphasize another. The children of the groups described above would speak Sinhala and not Tamil and it seems the general trend within these groups is towards Sinhalization. A classic example of the way people are forced to discard aspects of their identity to preserve their social position, are the advertisements put by the Bharatas in newspapers after 1983 in which they announced that they were not Tamil. The Colombo Chetties have also recently persuaded the government to rescind their previous classification within the label Tamil and to place them among the category of Other. (Roberts) The census, however, had failed to develop mechanisms through which to allow syncretic groups their multiple articulations of identity when they might have wanted to emphasize their multiple allegiances.

In the early part of the twentieth century when quasi-scientific racist ideologies held sway, mixtures of categories came to be regarded as dangerous, feeble or ridiculous – as with mulattos, Babus, or Company-Style art, all of which bastard forms were thought to be inferior to their purer equivalents. (Robb, 3) It was this tendency that was embodied in the censuses with regard to not only syncretic communities, but also individuals who were products of mixed marriages. Again, as far as the census was concerned these individuals had to be identified with either the race of the father or that of the mother. They could not claim both and pretty soon they could not even claim the mother's race and were automatically assigned the race of the father. In 1911 the revenue officer of Tamankaduwa in the North Central Province where the number of Veddas was double the number at the previous census reported, "A large number of people of mixed Vedda descent were designated Veddas by the enumerators, as the custom in Tamankaduwa is to go by the mother's nationality.

The offspring of Vedda women, be they wives of Sinhalese or Tamils, are all classified as Veddas. The number of real Veddas is therefore not so great." (Denham 209) By 1946 any surviving confusion or regard for local practices which gave children the mother's nationality were firmly done away with and it was made clear that the criterion for determining race was racial stock, and that offspring of different races were to be put into the father's stock.

Syncretic groups have recently become the favourite subject of academics exploring ideas relating to 'hybridity' and 'multiculturalism.' Scholarship on these syncretic communities has tended to view them as a sort of Dionysian punctuation in a generalized articulation of conflicting, mutually exclusive identity groupings, and it also seems to be assumed that syncretism offers greater possibilities of communal harmony and tolerance. This approach to syncretic communities which tends to romanticize them and treat them as anthropological curiosities comes dangerously close to the attitude of the colonial census taker who also viewed these groups as 'curiosities' and somehow deviant. It would be more useful to attempt to historicize these communities and examine how they developed over time and the political and cultural processes that have endangered their continuing existence.

III

Nationalist Categories

The census was one instance in which colonial subjects were confronted with the question of who they were and what their social and cultural systems were. But clearly, not all answers were acceptable and some were ignored. Moreover, there was always a possibility of a gap between the actual question which an enumerator asked an individual and how the individual's answer was interpreted first by a clerk and eventually by a supervisor of the census of a district or a larger unit. Census schedules were 'ordered' into tables and this 'ordering' was often an act of interpretation and not just a process of copying details from census slips. It could also happen that answers were intentionally misrepresented by census officials as seems to be the case in a reference made by Denham to a petition received from a Kandyan who stated that the Araccchi of his village, who was angry with him deliberately described his residence as *Yaddessalagewatta* which means garden of a tom-tom beater, in order to degrade him and his family in society. (Denham, 179) Even if one believes that this anecdote describes an uncommon occurrence, labels were often assigned to people regardless of the claims they might have made, or the cultural practices they might have, as in the case of syncretic communities. The 1871 census for instance has Half-Caste as one of the headings in its table on Nationality, and it seems highly unlikely that anyone would refer to him or herself as a Half-Caste. At the same time occasionally a category figures in the census which the officials themselves cannot make sense of and which they include for its curiosity value for instance in 1911 Denham notes that seventy persons gave their religion as Snake charmers. (272)

Before concluding, it is necessary to emphasize that the census was not merely a descriptive exercise of numbers regarding races, religious groups, villages etc. The census was part of the

language of policy debates and played a justificatory role in supporting or subverting policy decisions. This is amply illustrated by the words of the superintendent of the 1946 census, A. G. Ranasingha who wrote "Political developments indicated that a census would be useful in connection with any reapportionment of seats in the Ceylon Legislature that a Commission recently appointed with Lord Salisbury as Chairman, might make." (27) The flow of subject populations through the institutions, whether political or educational or legal, that were created by the colonial authorities based on the census and the photographic image of the Island created what Benedict Anderson calls 'traffic habits' which in turn gave real social life to what had to some extent been a fantasy of the colonial state.

The need to clearly categorize and homogenize populations did not end with colonialism but was inherited by anti-colonial nationalisms and was fundamental to the nationalist imagination. Nationalism was not so much the answer to the colonial Orientalism but rather an *avatar* of it. Nationalism reinforced the clear definition of people and communities as being either Sinhala Buddhist or Tamil, Hindu or Muslim, majority or minority and this tendency has only intensified with the growth of ethnic and communal conflict in the South Asian region. With this background it would be interesting to analyse the contemporary censuses to discover if individuals are still categorized on the basis of ethnicity, religion and caste, and also what attitude the census adopts towards syncretic groups. Does it recognize them or are they written off because they are seen as numerically and therefore politically insignificant? Such an exercise might enable a better understanding about the extent to which post-colonial nation-states have held on to colonial classificatory systems, and also of the ways in which post-colonial states view their culturally diverse populations.

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Can Governance make sense for Women in South Asia?

Nira Wickramasinghe

(This paper was a presentation, a laudation and an analysis of *Women and Governance in South Asia: Reimagining the State*, which was edited by Yasmin Tambiah. Colombo, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2002.)

It is a great pleasure to be here today to say a few words about this book *Women and Governance: Reimagining the State*, edited by a friend, colleague at ICES, and historian, all in one, Dr Yasmin Tambiah. My comments will focus essentially on the introduction and the Pakistan chapter.

What then is this book about? It is, like many other books, on the 'nation-state' in South Asia, arguably one of the most problematic instruments of democracy that the non-Western world borrowed from the West. Ashis Nandy makes the point that 'the culture of the state' is often the crucial clue to the way democracy functions or does not function in an Afro-Asian context. In his recent book *Time Warps*, he comments on how 'no study or analysis' of long term cultures of politics in this part of the world, is complete unless expectations and anxieties over the state within the political leadership and among ordinary citizens are systematically explored'.

When you sift through a library catalogue or a recent catalogue of new books published by reputed academic publishers, you will find a number of titles that incorporate words such as imagining and reimagining, sometimes with the sole purpose of attracting a particular type of reader, for the sake of appearance rather than content (old wine in new bottles). In the case of this book, the title fits the content perfectly. This book is indeed about

the ways in which women in different South Asian locations envision a state that would empower them and their communities. It is about their opinions on, and visions and experiences of what the authors of the papers call 'governance'. It is in short about the way in which South Asian women perceive and reimagine the state.

To illustrate my points in detail, this presentation will be divided in three parts:

First, I will try to assess the book in its entirety both as a report and scholarly work. Then, I will examine the chapter on Pakistan, and finally make a few comments on the contribution of this volume to the study of governance.

I. Is it a Book or a report?

The first comment I wish to make relates to the nature of this work. I found it difficult to decide whether it was a report or a research work as it combines features of both genres. Not that every creative work should fall into neat categories, but it is important in relation to the targeted readership that differs from report to scholarly work. If it were conceived as a research/ scholarly work, it lacks certain characteristics. One is an index, the essential tool of a researcher; a bibliography, that puts together the entire literature on the subject; and a list of persons interviewed, or if they wish to remain anonymous, a list with names changed but including some basic information, age, location, employment. The absence of a conclusion that wraps the papers together and links them gives the book a disconnected sense as one turns the last page.

This work has nevertheless a number of features that lend it affinity to the academic/scholarly genre: the quality of the writing and the level of analysis in the introduction and Pakistan chapter being the most significant. What I feel is that the content of this book/report arranged in a different way, (chapters shortened, repetitions erased, the recommendations as the basis

of a concluding chapter), would make an extremely important contribution to scholarship. There is an exceptional clarity in the language and very little jargon used which makes me feel it could reach out to a wider reading public. At present the hybrid identity of this book – not really a report nor really a scholarly book in its entirety- comes I think from the nature of the project that spawned it.

The Project and Methodologies

Women and Governance/Democratic Process in South Asia: Re-imagining the State is a regional project that was launched in 1998 by the ICES, Colombo carried out in partnership with Shtrii Shakti (Nepal), Shirkat Gah (Pakistan) Ain o Salish Kendra (Bangladesh), Ekatra (North India) and Asmita (South India). Two main themes guided the research namely: (a) Women's engagement with formal political process, and (b) Women's engagement with and visions of the state. The research was carried out by means of archival investigation, a survey, focus group discussions, relevant case studies and select in-depth interviews. As Tambiah explained in the introduction of this book, this project grew out of a number of concerns:

1. the need to examine women's relationship with the state, especially in the context of increasing ethno-religious hostilities and center-periphery tensions

2. to establish why, inspite of a history of women heads of state, participation of women citizens in the different levels of government and in other public decision-making forums were minimal in the absence of affirmative action initiatives

3. to understand the nature of women's engagement in politics where such opportunities existed

4. to foreground women's vision/revisions of the state

If this book is a report, one may not expect its authors to cover the entire range of secondary literature regarding women and governance. If on the other hand it aspires to be a contribution of a more scholarly nature, then there are certain gaps that I feel need to be filled. If one takes the SL paper for instance although there is no bibliography, it appears quite clearly that the team has primarily relied on secondary sources produced by well-known scholars. It is imperative to widen the scope of references to include not only ICES familiar/friendly authors but other valid writers and academics. Let me just suggest one. Dr Janaki Jayawardena's University of York, Phd thesis on *Cultural Construction of the Sinhala Woman and Women's Lives in Post-independence Sri Lanka* is one such useful piece of work. It is based on field work in Badulla, Hambantota and Colombo, that uses oral history and life cycle as methodology. Her thesis questions many of the assumptions of previous scholars on popular perceptions of women's organisations.

In short my feeling is that the data in this book is very rich, sometimes fascinating, but that if it had been written up, less as a collection of reports and more as integrated chapters of one book, the outcome would have been a better read.

II. Pakistan Study

The Pakistan study consists of three parts. The first section examines "State Structures and Processes Impacting on Women." The second which constitutes the bulk of the chapter is devoted to "Research Findings" and the third puts forward some "Conclusions and Recommendations." One criticism I have here is to point out that these three sections tend to say, in different ways, under different headings, the same things. One senses in the first section the richness of the data but the analysis is sometimes overbearing and mutes the voices of these 1609 women who were interviewed for the purpose of this chapter. I would have liked to hear the unmediated voices of women. Quantitative

research gives a somewhat incomplete pictures, it does not tell us how women accept, react and respond to discrimination and oppression. What lacks most in the paper on Pakistan – although I am sure the raw data would have plenty of information - is a sense of the social imaginary through which cultures, by means of language, map and decipher the world. The very words of the women interviewed would have helped us understand how women from different regions and social classes thought about the state and helped define 'governance,' since their narratives had to be based on the discourses available to them.

These reservations apart, this chapter gives us a fascinating insight into the politicization of women in Pakistan. Issues such as the modernization and militarisation of the state are looked at with much sensitivity. It states clearly that the land reforms under Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not transform the feudal environment that can be identified as a major obstacle to women's participation in political process. Provinces in Pakistan – Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) - are also examined as highly differentiated in social, economic and political terms, as well as in geographical and natural resource terms. Each culturally distinct region has its own social formations, traditional systems of self-governance, and forms of dispute resolution that have a direct bearing on women's negotiations for space and their activism. This chapter examines the erosion of the influence of these traditional systems: *panchayat* in Punjab, the *jirga* in NWFP, and tribal heads such as *wadera* and *sardar* in Sindh and Baluchistan respectively. The changing space for women to articulate their demands is analysed with great nuance. From the openness of the 1971-1977 period to the shrinking of women's rights and space under Zia's military regime inspite of a doubling of the women seats in the national assembly are discussed. A good example that illustrates how one can have increased representation along with increased repression.

How do women in Pakistan reimagine the state? The section on conclusions and recommendations highlights that there is no clear articulation of what would constitute an appropriate feminist

nation-state or what would replace the nation state. Women do not give answers as to what a non-hierarchical state would look like, what the family would look like and how the economy would function. There is no answer either to how legitimate political power would operate while remaining feminist. Clearly women are seeking improvements within the present system and not seeking to replace it with some other form of collective entity. Their vision of an improved state remains within the framework of a welfare oriented state. The authors highlight the unease and lack of self-confidence of women when asked to suggest how obstacles ought to be overcome compared to their ease in articulating their experience of private and public spaces. The state is perceived as a given, health and education as part of the basic functions and responsibilities of the state.

Women in Pakistan evoked their distress at the lack of forums to provide them justice. They stressed the need to increase the number of women in the judiciary and the police. There are of course regional differences for the Sindh has over 50 women judges in the lower judiciary compared with only 10-15 in the Punjab. There is also the problem of women's limited access to courts, especially in Baluchistan where societal norms prevent women from approaching the courts. Education was generally viewed as a key vehicle for changing women's lives and society as a whole.

III What can this study brings to the wider field of Governance?

This book is an important contribution. First, as it opens up possibilities for bridging disciplinary divides. Very few studies on governance would incorporate gender as even a secondary variable. Take as an example the study undertaken by the Development Studies Institute of the University of Colombo and the South Asia Institute, at the University of Heidelberg called "Local Governance and Conflict Management in Sri Lanka." It

barely even mentions the category of gender. In the same way few gender studies specialists would read the works on governance produced by the other side.

In this book the recasting of 'governance' as a form of 'deep democratic governance' that reigns outside the domain of the state constitutes a significant step in the right direction. I must, however, point out one weakness of this book of not seriously grappling with the conceptual origin and difficulties of the term 'governance.' I feel the term governance has a very loaded meaning and the choice of governance as an instrument to think about the relation of women with the state needs to be clarified.

Interestingly the conclusive words of the Pakistan paper are the following: 'Women did not see 'women's problem in isolation from the rest of society. As such very few respondents cited 'doing something for women as an ingredient of good governance'. Given the fact that women in Pakistan have always had to operate within fairly rigid patriarchal structures, this response is not surprising. But this brings out the question of semantics. Here, I would have liked to have known how governance translates into local languages, the exact words used by the majority of less educated women, and whether they were able to comprehend it, let alone define it at all. A colleague in the Colombo University Political Science Department, Dhamma Dissanayake, was studying local governance in the Moneragala district. He told me that when he used the Sinhala term of *andukeranaya* (governance) with the people he interviewed, he made it a point to explain to them exactly what was meant by that term.. He defined governance as 'the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private manage their common affairs.' The term used in Sinhala is interesting since some scholars use the term *palanaya* for governance which in many ways connotes control. Knowledge of what term is used by the researcher to translate the concept of governance, how this term is explained to interviewees in the local languages can help us interpret the answers better. I was for instance surprised that according to the survey, the most accepted professions for

Pakistani women, both rural and urban, were those of a teacher and a doctor. The authors of the essay comment on the paucity of role models that can open up women's horizon. While teaching in most societies has become a profession dominated by women, aspiring to be a doctor is not as conventional as the authors seem to say. Since it involves not only long years of study but many practices that involve the body it is an unusual answer. Hearing the exact words of the women interviewed would have helped explain what constitutes in my view a surprising answer in some Pakistani provinces, given the low levels of women's literacy.

My reluctance towards adopting governance as a concept comes from its amoeba feature: it includes everything and means nothing. Unlike democracy that connotes popular participation, governance has an apolitical technical consonance that comes from its mode of entry into the social sciences jargon. The term governance etymologically derives from the Greek verb *kybenan* and noun *kybernetas* which means to steer and pilot respectively. Initially the concept related to global order rather than intra-state order. But gradually the latter assumed prominence in the concept. Rosenau's approach to governance is to clearly separate it from government. Both refer to purposive behaviour, goal oriented activities, and to a system of rules. But according to him, government is a bundle of activities which is backed by formal authority and coercive powers to ensure the implementation of duly constituted policies. Governance on the other hand refers to activities backed by shared visions and goals which may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities. Governance does not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and ensure compliance. Governance in other words is a more encompassing phenomenon than government. It embraces governmental institutions and processes, but also subsumes informal non-governmental mechanisms, allowing those persons and organizations within its purview satisfy their needs and fulfill their wants. Thus, governance not only encompasses the activities of governments but also includes other channels by which steering mechanisms ensure the framing of goals of

development, formulation of policies and their implementation. The concept of steering entrenched in its etymology is central to governance. Governance is a process by which an organization or society steers itself.

The first contemporary public appearance of the notion of good governance emerged in a World Bank report on Sub-Saharan Africa which argued that "underlying the litany of Africa's development problem is a crisis of governance." It went on to define governance as "... the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs." According to the World Bank, good governance includes some or all of the following features: an efficient public service, an independent judicial system, a legal framework to enforce contracts, an accountable administration of public funds, an independent public auditor responsible to a representative legislature, respect for the law at all levels, and pluralistic institutional structures. The World Bank view on governance was limited to establishing excellent institutional structures and processes.

In 1992 these views were further elaborated in a report dedicated to governance, which quite clearly redefined them in terms of development where policy was separated from politics. The problem of governance was said to involve the four distinct issues of poor public service management, lack of accountability, an absence of a legal framework for development and problems arising from lack of information and transparency. The underlying assumption of the World Bank's view of governance was that it was possible to have a technical solution to problems of governance independent of the form of political representation.

Governance today implies a certain depoliticisation that is in consonance with the emphasis on civil society and the market as main actors in implementing good governance. When this book addresses the issue of 'women rethinking the state' and uses the concept of governance as a tool of analysis – instead for instance of using deep democracy – isn't it in a way presupposing a diminishing role of the state? One senses some disappointment on the part of the authors of the Pakistan paper when they

acknowledge that for most women the state is still more trusted than other institutions.

What I am trying to suggest is that the term governance is not innocent, and perhaps using it as a conceptual tool limits options for imagining the state. Implicit in the use of the term is a certain disfavour for central government, the site par excellence of 'bad' governance, and an implicit favouring of the non-governmental and decentralized structures.

There are of course advantages in using the term governance. The literature on governance grounded as it is in the disciplines of IR and political science has been until now very mildly concerned with women. The governance problematic permits gender to insinuate itself into mainstream academic discourse. Generally the discourse on governance and democratic processes includes women only, as Tambiah writes, when their rights, bodies and resources threaten to become sites of contest for state power or state afforded privileges among different caste, class, religious or ethnic groups. I hope that future studies dealing with women and governance will take a more subversive approach to given concepts. I also hope this will lead some mainstream scholars to address the very specific problems faced by women in any future studies pertaining to the nation-state in South Asia and that what Nandy calls the 'expectations and anxieties' of women will enter the public discourse more forcefully.

P. R. C. Peterson: Reflections on the Great Days of the Burghers Yet Another Enjoyable Account

Farzana Haniffa

Manel Fonseka ed., *Great Days: Memoirs of a Ceylon Government Medical Officer of 1918- P.R.C Peterson,* Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 2001. P.118.

One of the Social Scientists Association's latest publications is *Great Days a Memoir of a Government Medical Officer of 1918.* Produced as an accessible and entertaining oral history, this volume is a welcome addition to the repertoire of works on Sri Lankan history produced by SSA. It is interesting also in that it joins the ever-expanding coterie of writers from the Burgher community —Carl Muller and Micheal Ondaatje —who have won international acclaim for their writings on the life of this community. Manel Fonseka's edited volume is an excellent addition to this collection of writings dealing with life amongst the Burghers of Sri Lanka.

Compiled through recorded conversations with Dr. P.R.C Peterson who was born in 1889 and entered government medical practice in 1918, the book presents the doctor's story as a series of chronologically arranged narratives about his various experiences. Its compiler/editor, Manel Fonseka, has additionally included a variety of appendices to provide an overview of the prevalent historical conditions to better contextualize the doctors own accounts. The body of the book is presented as twelve sections. The technique preserves the tenses and cadences of his voice and offers a window into a perspective that would otherwise have been lost.

The sections feature accounts ranging from information about Peterson's parents, his school days, life at medical college,

and the exigencies of the government medical practice during the late British period. The accounts are an illustration, in anecdotal form, of the professional life of an individual from the Burgher community, a community that was both a political and social intermediary —often oppositional—between the British colonial state and the native populations. The written text presented as a series of anecdotes is interspersed with photographs of places and individuals featured in the accounts. Six drawings by Barbara Mututantri-Yearsely illustrate the more intriguing events described by Dr. Peterson.

A Medical Man during the Colonial Era

Manel Fonseka, in her preface states that "the very fact of their author being an 'ordinary man' made them perhaps more representative of their time and class and community than those produced by a more spectacular or important personality"(ix). Such "ordinariness" is evoked with great poignancy and is a reflection both of life amongst the Burgher community at the turn of the century with its middle-class aspirations, and about the life of an individual.

Dr. Peterson reminisces for instance about his educational aspirations since his days at the Wellawatta Girls school, which he attended, until he was nine:

> The principal was Mrs. Tommy Kelaart. Her husband was the great cricketer. I remember her telling me, 'you must work hard and get a scholarship. You can go to England.' But there were only two scholarships for the whole country —that's all they gave – it was only the brilliant boys who got them. But once you got that, you were alright. (06)

Not being one of the "brilliant boys," Peterson decides on medicine upon his father's advice. He states at a different juncture that "The medical course was five years but I took a bit longer. I

couldn't help it. You see I was more of an athlete than a doctor. I *had* to do it I *liked* to do it because my *father* wanted me to do it." (12) Dr. Peterson was 29 by the time he completed the course, and after seven years as a District Medical Officer he makes it to Britain to further his education.

Although anecdotal reminiscences by definition tend toward simplification and nostalgia, Peterson's accounts make no attempt to whitewash the less admirable exigencies of the era and are peppered with criticisms of the status quo. During his time as a DMO the plantations feature largely in the doctor's life, and he is strongly critical of the living conditions provided for plantation workers.

> Their rooms were very small, and mother, father, children, married children, all slept in one room. Four sticks propped up a zinc roof. After some time, that would leak and repairs were painfully slow. They reported it but most planters didn't act immediately and these poor fellows would have to put up with it. Of course, the workers did whatever *they* could do- they would try to repair it personally. But they are really in shanties. And these up country districts – when it rains it really rains. (55)

According to the volume *People In Between* by Michael Roberts et al, the dictums of "decency" and "fair play" were corner stones of the "cultured gentlemen" so valued by the Burgher elite of the 19th Century (Roberts 65). These moral attitudes recounted in *People In Between* appear often in Dr. Peterson's accounts. For instance, Peterson senior was once chief clerk of the loan board. Dr. Peterson describes the manner in which he gave up the job:

> About 1926 father retired.- the result of a difference he had with one of his superiors, an Englishman.
> 'There's a friend of mine,' Mr. Peterson. He said. 'He wants a loan. Deal with him leniently.'
> 'I can't do that,' was father's reply and the next day he sent in his papers. You can't exist when something is pricking somewhere (06).

Often the "rules of cricket" are employed against those who are its most ardent proponents- the colonial establishment. Several small victories are experienced during the doctor's time in government service, especially in the plantations and are remembered with satisfaction. For instance, the doctor recounts an incident in *Dickoya* where a young planter had shot himself:

> The police arrived on the scene and so did the JPUPM[1], a planter. At about six- thirty a.m., the Inspector of Police rang me and said, 'Doctor we need a post mortem here. A man has shot himself what time can you come? 'I'll come about nine- thirty,' I said.
> But this was not acceptable to the JPUPM.[1]
> 'No no, we must get the doctor at once; we can't be all waiting here.
> Give me the phone, give me the phone.'
> So he took the phone and said, 'Doctor there's a death here and we want a post-mortem done. What time can you come over?'
> I said, 'I'll come at nine-thirty, the earliest, because I have to treat the living first and *then* treat the dead.'
>
> When I met the inspector later, about nine-thirty or so, he said to me, 'Doctor, I am very glad you gave that reply- said you couldn't come immediately. These chaps were worrying that you were delaying.'
> The Europeans in those days thought they were the kings of Ceylon. So they were very surprised that the doctor didn't come the minute they summoned him (80).

Peterson's actions call attention to the manner in which the Burghers, though having access to the plum posts within the colony as a result of their European antecedents, and their "in-between" status, were nevertheless in an oppositional relationship with the British.

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[1] The Justice of the Peace and Unofficial Police Magistrate.

Four years of the doctor's government service was spent as the acting medical superintendent of the Leprosy Hospital at Hendala. The doctor's matter-of- fact attitude toward those suffering from this demonized disease is touching. He recounts how, during his time in office, he constructed a barbershop, a cricket club and a tennis court for the patients. According to the doctor finding people to treat those suffering from the disease was not easy. Overcoming the prejudices against leprosy was not something even the medical establishment could easily do. The doctor describes the appointment of one of the Medical Superintendents: So a new man was appointed for Hendala, but he refused to come. Then another was appointed. He, too, said, 'no, I can't come.' So they appointed a third man. They forced him to come. He brought only his suitcase- though he was transferred here. He walked all around the place and every ward he entered he would come out and spit into the drain. .....

The next day, the day after the new man arrived, Dr. Jacob of the Infectious Diseases Hospital died. This chap ran to Colombo to ask for a transfer:

'Give me Jacob's place. Ill work there, but I can't work in the leper asylum!'

Mind you, *doctors*! *Qualified*! (76)

Some of the cadences of speech that have been captured by Fonseka in recording Dr. Peterson verbatim are similar to those that appear in Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*. The context, however, from which Dr. Peterson spoke, though wonderfully evoked in the drawings and helpfully referred to in the notes, was not always clear to the reader. While applauding the intention of leaving the narrative voice solely to the doctor, I do think the work as a whole would have benefited through a mechanism whereby some social and historical contexts were introduced into the body of the text. The literary enjoyment of the memoir would have been greatly enhanced if more of the information appeared readily at hand. Further, while Dr. Peterson's narrative voice was wonderful, the arrangement of anecdotes was such that the narrative ended somewhat abruptly.

Either a few more accounts or the inclusion of some historical information imparted in a non-academic format would have provided a necessary balance.

The Dilemmas Unanswered

While reading the book I also wondered why the subject matter was limited to the recounting of the doctor's time in government service. Further, even if it were to be limited to that section of his life, why was it that anecdotes from his life in the British Isles where he was a medical student were left out? And questions about why the doctor left the government practice altogether, what he did after were all questions that the text leads the reader to ask but is ultimately unable to answer. Further, I also missed any account of the community to which Peterson belonged. Especially in the late colonial period, the importance of the Burgher community in Ceylonese circles was unquestionable and the book would have benefited enormously from some reference to the many works dealing with the subject. Chief amongst these is *People In between*. Unfortunately, the book does not even appear in Manel Fonseka's notes.

All in all the book provides an excellent model for other similar efforts by which to preserve memories and the way of life espoused by a generation that is no more. I hope in fact that the text serves as an inspiration to other aspirant writers to undertake such projects. This memoir, unusual in format, is a pleasant and interesting read and a worthy addition to any library on Sri Lanka.

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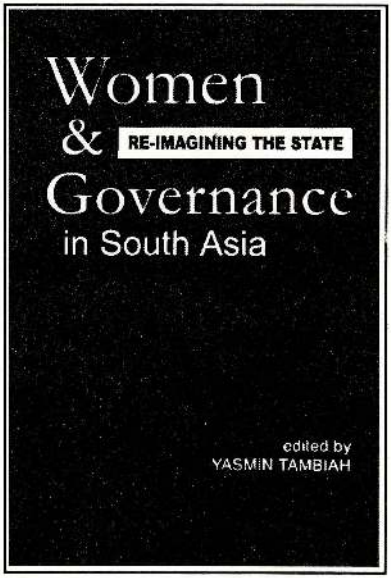
WOMEN & GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA: RE-IMAGINING THE STATE

Edited by Yasmin Tambiah



This volume brings together six studies conducted under the project, **Women and Governance/ Democratic Process in South Asia: Reimagining the State,** carried out by the six organisations: *Shtrii Shakti,* Nepal, Shirkat Gah, Pakistan, *Ain O Salish Kendra,* Bangladesh, *Ekatra,* India, *Asmita Resource Centre for Women,* India and the *International Centre for Ethnic Studies,* Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The research draws on archives, interviews, a survey and focus group discussions to address two sets of issues: women's engagement with formal political processes and women's experience and visions of the state. It is intended to inform initiatives that will promote women's active engagement in governance at the local, national and regional levels.

Yasmin Tambiah is a Research Fellow at ICES, Colombo, and coordinated the Women and Governance in South Asia project.

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