



The Iraq War and Women

The Iraq war has demonstrated to the world how wars are made in the minds of men. All parts of the world declaimed against the excuse of war to settle international problems. However, while the world howled its protests, marched in demonstrations, called conferences and knelt in prayer, in an attempt to stay another conflict, the US churned out its justification for war against Iraq on its own initiative. It chose to ignore all other possible avenues of bringing down the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein. Some of the anti-war reports show how women staged protest actions. It is the experience of all countries that have suffered wars, that women and children become victims of war. Women suffer all the side effects of war and are directly affected by all the horrors of war. Women en masse are anti-war.

Women's protests from across the globe came in different forms. In Australia women in black marched in Adelaide's Victoria Square with banners declaring 'No war on Iraq' while Australian leaders took the country into the 'coalition of the willing'. In the U.S itself the women's anti-war campaign named 'Women to Women' involved letter writing from women in US to women in Iraq, declaring that they will not participate in war-making efforts against the people of Iraq. In the text of the letter they say.

"As women—as mothers and

daughters, grandmothers and aunts, as sisters—we are reaching out to you, offering our friendship, support, and strength. You are not alone in the struggle for peace and justice.

We pledge to do everything within our power to prevent further suffering for you, your children, and all of the Iraqi people." Thousands of signed letters were collected and presented publicly on International Women's Day.

Another anti-war call came from prominent Japanese women who professed solidarity with all peace loving women and people of the world. They called on the Japanese government to commit itself to stopping the war. Their appeal sent out in January 2003 declared 'No attack against Iraq', 'No war' 'My Peace Action'. In the Philippines, prayer vigils, press conferences and

roundtable discussions took place seeking to detract President Arroyo from supporting the US. In many other parts of the world - Germany, France, Switzerland, Indonesia, women joined campaigns to ban US consumer products as an anti-war protest.

"Invest in caring not killing." was the call from the world wide grassroots level network Global Women's Strike (GWS) as they marched in protest against the war. Over 70 countries participated in different locations around the world. In the UK the GWS group conducted a daily picket at the Parliament Square outside Westminster, with an open microphone where everyone could voice their protests.

The war in spite of the global protests and UN efforts has been waged with an intensity that paid good heed to the most modern war technology and has enacted a world tragedy. Iraqi women and children are still suffering unendingly due to the harshest possible sanctions placed by the US. More than 3,000 Iraqi children die a week it is reported due to lack of health care, many foreign doctors and nurses having left for fear of war.

The Head of the UN Women's Fund has therefore called on the international community not to forget the needs of the Iraqi women and to recognise the right of Iraqi women to participate in decision making for their future.

in this issue

Editorial.....	1
What is new for Women.....	2
An Update on Women's	
Political Participation	3
It's about women.....	4
Shulpa - Intern and friend.....	5
Women's Studies Course.....	5
Peace Link to Jaffna.....	6-7
The Story of Sara Baartman.....	8
Understanding CEDAW.....	9
News Around.....	9
Life on the other side.....	9
Women's link with criminal Law	10
From the Bookshelf.....	11
WERC News.....	12

What's new for Women

With the 'Ceasefire' holding on for a year and more, and bringing in its wake a 'no-war' stretch of time, the country's population and especially the women are experiencing a 'new' atmosphere - an air of calm, devoid of fear and anxiety. It is a wonderfully new prospect especially for all women of Sri Lanka who have suffered in varying degree, through 20 years of war, and are now adjusting themselves to a new life, albeit it with new challenges.

We see the challenge of reconciliation above all others as a basic to preserving the peaceful air we appreciate so much today. For, women North and South and elsewhere were only acclimatised to a war situation and with it to a psychological mind set of mistrust and fear. Hence shedding this façade and reconciling with the 'others' comes almost naturally to women who possess the capacity to instinctively care and share. And so we have seen within these past months an unprecedented flow of humanity from the south to the north and vice versa, a flow of warmth, sympathy and understanding, a nation's bonding of a people cut off from each other in their own mother land. It is on this foundation that our peaceful atmosphere can survive and peace processes progress.

Not just new, but a landmark achievement for women, is the decision to include the gender component in the peace process. Though this aspect did not surface in the early stages of the peace talks there is a clear indication that the gender aspect has been recognised. Subsequently it was announced by the Norwegian government that "a committee of women will be instituted to explore the effective inclusion of gender issues in the peace process." The committee of ten women activists comprises five from the government and five from the LTTE. They are, Government - Dr. Kumari Jayawardene, Dr. Deepika Udagama, Kumudini Samuel, Faizun Zackariya, Dr. Fazeela Riyaz and LTTE - Thamalini Subramaniam, Kaaya Somasunderam, Premila Somasundaram, Sulthamathy Sanmugaraja, Yalisai Balasingham.

It is expected that they will submit proposals on women's interests and concerns, their views and opinions. This

development is the outcome of unceasing lobbying by women activists over the years especially during the war years, demanding peace. The appointment of this advisory sub committee of women is seen as an unprecedented step forward gained by them at this point of time when there is an international awareness of the importance of women's presence in formal peace negotiations. It envisions a hopeful future for women's participation not in the peace process alone but elsewhere as well.

Following on this is another encouraging new development. The triple R project - Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation going ahead for the restoration of the war torn North, has seen the relevance of seeking women's opinions, suggestions, ideas and concerns. It is gratifying to find gender consultants being included in the personnel used for the drafting of initial surveys of the area. The World Bank engaged the services of Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran, Director, WERC for The Gender Dimension on Housing needs and both Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran Mrs. Anberiya Hanifa, WERC Board member, for Identifying Specific Gender Issues in the Rehabilitation Reconstruction Process, two areas indeed which essentially need women's concern and understanding in planning for the future.

A memorable event was organised by the Action Network for Migrant Workers where WERC staff along with other organizations, migrant workers' families and activists who campaigned on their behalf, met at Lipton's Circus on July 1st 2003. The occasion was to celebrate and make the public aware of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their families, which came into force on this day, as the seventh basic human rights instrument of the UN.....

"Overall, the International Convention seeks to play a role in preventing and eliminating the exploitation of all migrant workers and members of their families including an end to illegal or clandestine movements and to irregular or undocumented situations."

An update on Women's Political Participation

Women in Sri Lanka indulged in politics with the winning of adult franchise as far back as 1931, and in the years following, our records feature several outstanding women pioneers. However progress has been slow in the years between then and now, a period of over 70 years, during which the percentage of women in parliament and local legislatures has hardly ever risen above 5%. Nevertheless among these several women we count the World's first Prime Minister as well as today's Executive President. But our women NGOs and activists and others who see the low representation of women politicians as a glaring anomaly, have been carrying on a relentless campaign, though bemoaning their failure to make headway for many reasons which are now well identified. However the strategies adopted to change the situation seem to be yielding results. The news report that the Women's Affairs Minister has proposed to the government a quota for women representatives has been a long standing demand by concerned women.

The Minister has proposed an allocation of 25% representation of women in local government where at present it is only 2.7%. She has also proposed 25% seats in Parliament for women, where the present percentage is 4.4 and also 25% from the national list as well.

The fact that a 'quota' has been accepted on principle is a great, firm, step forward for women. In spite of the many criticisms of the quota system, it could be generally welcomed in the Sri Lankan context as a break through. This decision, giving a semblance of space for women and thereby a sense of security too, in a men-dominated field, would encourage women to step into the political field and get a toehold in the line of decision-making.

We hope women representatives will now make use of the opportunity to have their voices heard in matters of concern to them and we have firm faith that the government will consider these proposals rationally on behalf of the 53% of the population which is female.

Just at this time comes the UNIFEM update in a press release on women's political participation around the

world, which interestingly states that a positive change is seen. It says

*"The goal of increasing women's political participation is a long-standing one. The target of 30 percent representation in key decision-making positions has been agreed on at numerous international conferences in the last decade. Although there were definite signs of progress in all regions between 2000 and 2002 towards meeting the target, **Progress 2002** indicates that women are still on the whole largely absent from parliaments. They account for about 14 per cent of members in 2002 overall. Only 11 countries had reached the 30 per cent benchmark in 2002 - Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Iceland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Costa Rica, Argentina and Mozambique. All of these countries have used quotas.*

Furthermore, the report also shows that unlike the other indicators of progress which show systematic differences between wealthy and poor countries and an undeniable link between poverty and gender inequality, there are no such differences in terms of women's participation in national governments. This is the only indicator that is not affected by national poverty, resulting in the fact that in some wealthy countries, women's political participation is well below that achieved in many developing nations. The United States, France and Japan, where women's share of parliamentary seats are 12 per cent, 11.8 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, lag behind 13 developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which is experiencing the greatest regional poverty in the world. In South Africa and Mozambique, women's share of seats is 30 per cent, while Rwanda and Uganda have 25.7 per cent and 24.7 per cent respectively."

We are stepping up, we hope.

Women in the International Criminal Court

The ICC is the world's first tribunal for genocide war crimes and crimes against humanity. Being the world's first permanent judicial institution, independent of the UN system it will provide legal expertise on violence against women and aims to maintain gender parity at the ICC. Out of the 18 places available for judges, 7 have been filled by women hailing from Ireland, Thailand, Brazil, Ghana, Costa Rica, South Africa and Latvia. It is mandated to have fair representation of women and men of all levels.

The creation of the ICC is seen as being especially important for women because it "can dramatically raise the standard of response for responding to crimes against women" which have long been overlooked.

Commenting on the selection of seven women judges, the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice says, "a historic achievement in light of the traditionally very low number of women serving in international tribunals."

Women Police Officers in Iran

Newly elected President of Iran, Mohamed Khamenei is making efforts to give due consideration to address an area long neglected. Women's concerns and women's rights in the country are receiving a fillip, and as a result women have been allowed to join up as officers in the Police Force. In the past women were allowed to perform only administrative work. Now for the first time women Police Officers handle criminal cases having undergone training in firearms, Judo, fencing and laying mines, thought not in the use of heavy machines

In January 2003 as many as 400 women joined the Police force as officers.

Chinese Women Artists

Women artists in China are lately locating a place for themselves in society. Women painters have in recent years been producing their art "through a feminist lens". For women to come into their own and express themselves through their art is something unusual in the Chinese art world in general. But the new generation believe they have the same rights and opportunities as men and wish to break the belief that there have been no great women artists in China.

All aspects of society being male dominated, women's art too is judged by men's standards and considered good only by a man's view of a woman. Since the 1990s, perspectives have changed and the present generation of women artists have developed a style with a significance of their own.

Rise in Crime against Women

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has revealed an increase of crimes against women in India. It is reported that a rape is committed every once in 54 minutes, someone is molested every 26 minutes and a dowry death happens every 54 minutes.

New Delhi has earned a negative image as the 'crime capital of India'. Statistics have revealed an increase in crimes against women, such as cruelty, sexual harassment, rapes and dowry deaths. Of the country's 1078 rape cases reported 34.7% took place in Delhi.

The Delhi Police are alarmed at the increasing crime rate against women and agree that in spite of various legislation protecting women's rights, they are still exploited.

Dowry Hunters

New Delhi recently reported a landmark case where the bride, Nisha Sharma, called off her wedding and informed the police that her groom had demanded a dowry.

The custom of the bridegroom demanding a dowry and cash gifts is a custom common enough in India and one that has caused many serious problems for the bride's family. Although it was banned by law in the 1980s and is punishable with imprisonment the law is observed more in the breach, giving the custom a traditional sanction. The demand for dowry more often than not finds the bride's family submitting to the demand rather than facing the indignity of a cancelled marriage.

But 21 year old Nisha Sharma, a software engineering final year student, well aware that the law was on her side, not only walked out on the groom but had him jailed, for his last minute decision to demand a dowry of 1- 2 million. Nisha's courageous action has shot her into fame as Delhi's newspapers hailed her action which would give new inspiration to the old battle against dowry.

It raised a huge outcry against a practice long outlawed. Two brides-to-be have already followed suit and had their grooms arrested. Sharma herself has received several proposals of marriage and even an invitation to stand for elections.

We salute Sharma for her bold stance as a woman, who is undaunted by male chauvinism and has helped to put a near defunct law into practice.

It should make a bridegroom mind his step in the traditional dowry hunt while brides-to-be will, hopefully, be emboldened by Sharma's example.

Shilpa - Intern and Friend

Shilpa Chikara came from the Netherlands where she had been attached to a University and involved in research on women and employment.

Interested in women's issues as she was, she had consulted the 'Lonely Planet' guide and found her way to WERC. Though shy at first she was soon able to win over everybody with her charming smile and vibrant personality. Even though she came from the far away shores of Europe she is of Indian origin and easily adapted to our lifestyle and wavelength. She made herself at home among us and our activities and was soon helping Romela with her workshops and contributing to the project office with innovative ideas and the writing up of project proposals.

We make special mention of the enthusiasm with which she pursued and successfully concluded an arrangement for obtaining funds for our next project with women in the Batticoloa area. We are grateful to Shilpa for her interest and cooperation.

Though she has been with us only for a few months we feel she is very much a part of our organisation. Sadly we bid her adieu and wish her well in her future endeavours.

And Shilpa says

After six months of association with WERC, I will soon have to say good-bye. It was in December 2002 that I had casually dropped in at the office of WERC to inquire about a possibility to work on a voluntary basis in this institute. At WERC, I was very pleased to see the relaxed yet dedicated pace of work by the staff. Since this institute works for women issues, a field of my interest, I was more than happy to join it.

As a volunteer sometimes it can be difficult to find one's way into an already running organization. However I was fortunate not to encounter that feeling at WERC. I really wish all the best for the starting of the new project for single-women by providing them skills for income generating activities, and a long lasting partnership with Soroptimist in Holland.

Working at WERC has been memorable for me

With best wishes

Shilpa

Women's Studies Course for South Asian Women Held in Colombo

The three-month certificate course on Women's Studies commenced on the 2nd of February and ended on the 25th of April 2003. It was conducted by the Institute of Women's Studies, Lahore, in collaboration with Women and Media Collective, Colombo. The students from South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and a majority from Sri Lanka, were members of NGOs, lecturers and postgraduate students. The faculty too consisted of lecturers from India and Pakistan with the majority from Sri Lanka, who were university lecturers, women activists, gender specialists, artists and others.

The sessions included history, women and space, political economy, identity politics, culture, literature, conflict, peace, women's movement and feminist theories.

The history session, traced women's oppression and subordination from centuries Before Christ. It was interesting to note that women at one point were worshipped as Goddesses due to their ability to create life. The session on Political Economy gave light to the multiple burdens borne by women due to the economic crisis. Identity Politics threw light on the different identities and how they are writ on the bodies of women, for instance, women are forced to dress in a particular way by men, to protect culture. The space utilised by women was given importance in the session Women and Space. In order to get practical experience visits were made to slums, and the Free Trade Zone. The session on Conflict too included a visit to the conflict zone. The other sessions also portrayed women's role and their oppressed position.

Viewing and reviewing films related to the topics concerned as well as field visits were included. As it was a residential course there were sessions and discussions at night too.

The sessions were brought to a close with an award ceremony to which the faculty and many distinguished women activists were invited. Those who obtained above 70% received certificates. Medals were awarded to six outstanding students in honour of six women activists of the past. Women thus honoured for the first time were Leena Irene Haputhanthri, Rajini Thiranagama, Meenachchi Ammal Natesa Aiyar, Razia Bhatti, Ameneh Azam Ali and Rukhsana Hameedi.

The course provided the rich experience of widening our knowledge in a 'living and working together' environment, which was greatly appreciated by the participants.

We are thankful to the funders and those who conducted the course, and I am grateful to WERC for giving me this opportunity to participate.

Romela

PEACE LINK TO JAFFNA

On 25th February 2003, 7 members of WERC staff together with the Executive Director, Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran and Board Member Ms. Bernadeen de Silva, left for Jaffna. Although this was originally planned as a staff outing it evolved into a mission, a Peace Link with our sisters in the North. To this end the Executive Director had written to several development organisations and others engaged in rebuilding the war torn areas, and a rather tight schedule was arranged.

Having stayed the night in Anuradhapura, we proceeded along the A9. This was a very uncomfortable journey as the road was broken in several places and often it was only a tract of land through the scrub jungle. The trees on either side were covered with red dust which resembled blood from a distance. The tedious process of checkpoints completed we entered the northern province. This area was dotted with broken buildings, burnt jungle land, damaged



army lorries and tanks and notices on either side warning the wayfarers to be careful of landmines and other explosives. But there

were distinct signs of life limping back to a semblance of normalcy. We saw families consisting of 4 or 5 members in tiny cadjan huts and little plots of vegetables and tobacco.

We reached our destination in Manipay at around 2.45 p.m and after a sumptuous lunch, we drove to HUDEC. This is the Human Development Centre which is an arm of SEDEC Colombo in Jaffna. We met the Director Rev. Jeyakumar and his associates for an informal discussion on the situation in the North and East and the problems they are facing in the aftermath of the signing of the MOU and the return to a semblance of peace.

We found the close association this organization has made with the displaced persons had produced encouraging results with the expertise of their specialists. It was the aim of this group to establish an effective forum for organizations and persons of different categories such as widows, and mothers. Each participant discussed at length the work carried out by them with the displaced.



Rev. Jeyakumar spoke of the fresh problems that had arisen after the signing of the MOU. These were, unwed mothers, extra marital affairs and children born out

of wedlock and the impossibility of getting them birth certificates, orphaned children, and adults injured and still being injured by landmines, and last but not least the problem of addiction to liquor especially Kasippu, the highly potent local brew which was freely available. This addiction caused related problems such as deterioration of health, physical abuse of close relatives especially the wife and children, and neglect of the family and the resulting poverty. He said that the Centre was carrying out awareness raising in schools and counselling for the families. Some of the addicts came voluntarily for treatment but most of them were in denial and this made it harder to handle.

Questioned by WERC staff on forced conscription Fr. Jeyakumar said that there was no large scale forced conscription but that sometimes teenagers were attracted to join.

One of the other persons who was present with the Reverend was introduced as a member of the LTTE political wing and spoke in Tamil which Dr. Selvy and the Rev. translated. He said that the problems faced by the people was displacement. He said that 34,000 families living in the High Security Zone were displaced and living either in rented houses or in refugee camps. The Army was still occupying parts of schools or in close proximity to the schools and this caused children to be fearful that there might be hostilities. He requested that we visitors from Colombo could lobby for responsible action to be taken immediately to remove or relocate these army personnel. He said that after one year there was no concrete action taken and the attitude of the government was lethargic to say the least. There was an underlying sense of anger and disappointment. They feel that the government displayed a complacent attitude now that there was no fear of bombs but they warn of repercussions if no action is taken to solve these problems.

Fr. Jeyakumar speaking further said that they had started a Building Bridges project whereby groups of persons from the South came and stayed with families in the North for 2 or 3 days and vice versa. This taught them to respect the rights of others and even though there was a language barrier there was peaceful non-aggressive communication. This is also a very difficult process as a whole generation



do not know anything other than a war situation. They feel cheated as they have not had a childhood. The gun in their

hand gives them the only sense of achievement. They cannot integrate in a normal atmosphere. They realise their shortcomings and this makes them aggressive. They feel that their life is wasted.

The next day 27th we visited the Good Shepherd Centre and met the Director Fr. Bernard who is also a trustee of the Jaffna Public Library and had tea with him. The Executive Director presented a selection of WERC publications to the Jaffna Public Library which Fr. Bernard accepted. During this time we discussed with him the present situation in the North. He inquired how we felt having seen the



Our visit had left us with many thoughts whirling in our heads. It was the human element that touched us most. Could we imagine that what we had recently seen was another part of our motherland. Those men, women and

destruction on the way to Jaffna. We expressed sadness at the wanton destruction. I was particularly struck by the difference in the Jaffna which I remembered as a child, the old buildings, the bustling towns, the houses with the high fences and the drumstick trees growing on the boundaries. The present damaged, pock marked buildings, burnt out shells of houses, parched land, almost non-existent fences were all a stark reminder of the ravages of war.

In the afternoon we visited the Jaffna University Department of Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology and met the Dean, Dr. Shanmugalingan and his assistant Doreen. He also showed us one of his publications. WERC purchased some of these publications including his book the New Face of Durga. This book focusses on the rising worship of the goddess Durga and the new forms of worship that have begun. This worship had brought about a levelling between castes where the priests of temple Durga are sometimes of a lesser caste than the Brahmins. Prayers to the Deities were all that the masses had to cling to at this time.

De-
Anthro-

We next visited the Women's Development Centre and met the Director Saroja Sivachandran. About 40 – 50 of the affected girls and ladies with whom she works had gathered there. They explained that the most affected by the conflict were the women due to their gender and marginalized role in society. Some of the girls spoke of the difficulties they undergo in certain areas. We were able to get first hand information from them of the life they now lead in Jaffna. We were happy to have come in contact with them.

Some of us also visited Nagadeepa before returning to Colombo on the 1st of March.

We also visited the Centre for performing Arts invited by Fr. Servari who had his students gathered to meet us. They were mostly displaced girls who spoke of their problems. The students were very enthusiastic and friendly, spoke about their street performances and acted a short dialogue as to how the dowry system breaks up families.

children were our counter parts, only distance separating us. These were people rebuilding their lives after 20 years of suffering and struggling to survive through a war.

How could we help was uppermost in our minds. From the conversations we had with the people in Jaffna certain ideas emerged. We felt our advocacy and lobbying could be put to good use on various issues. Media misrepresentation of facts and incidents creating wrong impressions which cause bitterness and dissension could be minimized. The need for gender sensitization was very clear. The women believe that dowry is a necessity and since the war, males of marriageable age are limited in number and the dowry price high. The need for women to be empowered to enable them to take responsibility for their future and face new challenges, is very great. Now that we have made many contacts in Jaffna we have to take the initiative to provide some form of assistance.

THE STORY OF SARA BAARTMAN (OR SCIENTIFIC RACISM)

poem at the burial April 27th 2002. Today Sara's remains lie buried in a beautiful site in East Cape.

Read on

Tribute to Sara Baartman

I have come to take you home -
home! Remember the veld?
The lush green grass beneath the big oak trees?
The air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white
and the water in the stream chuckle sing-songs
as it hobbles along over little stones.

I have come to wrench you away -
away from the poking eyes of the man-made monster
who lives in the dark with his racist clutches of imperialism,
who dissects your body bit by bit,
who likens your soul to that of satan
and declares himself the ultimate God!
I have come to soothe your heavy heart,
I offer my bosom to your weary soul.
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands,
I will run my lips over the lines in your neck,
I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you
and I will sing for you
for I have come to bring you peace.

I have come to take you home
where the ancient mountains shout your name.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill.
Your blankets are covered in buchu and mint.
The proteas stand in yellow and white —
I have come to take you home
where I will sing for you,
for you have brought me peace.

- Diana Ferrus

Glossary:

Buchu - a herb used by Khoi-khoi people for medicinal purposes

Mint - a herb also used for medicinal and cooking purposes

Proteas - the national flower of South Africa

Veld - wide open space.

(Based on information sent by Diana Ferrus)



Diana Ferrus

Sara Baartman, an indigenous South African (Khoi) woman, was taken away in 1810 from her mother country under false pretences by a Dutchman Hendrik Cezar and English ship's surgeon, William Dunlop. When she arrived in England in 1810 she was paraded as a sexual freak. This humiliation continued in Paris where she was sold to an animal trainer. She died at the age of 25 and George Cuvier, Napoleon's scientist dissected her body, took out her brain and genitals, put them in formalin in glass jars to display in the Museum of Man (Muse de l'Homme) in Paris. He then wrote a book on her describing in full detail her body and how she was not fully human, but half animal. This was done in the times of scientific racism. She became the base on which they drafted their hierarchy of races showing Europeans on top, and the Khoi-Khoi people from whom Sara Baartman as well as Diana Ferrus are descended, at the bottom.

After the first democratic elections in 1994, attempts were made to have Sara's remains returned to her home country. Even President Mandela tried without success as the remains belonged to the French Museum. In the meantime Diana Ferrus was studying in Holland, and was feeling homesick one evening, when her thoughts went back to Sara and how she would have felt. Thus was her poem composed, the words just came, she says "surely from a Higher Hand".

A French Senator Nicholas About, petitioning for bringing back Sara's remains, happened to read Diana's poem on the web site. He used it in his argument and moved the French Senate and Assembly to vote unanimously for the return of Sara.

Diana went with the government delegation that brought the remains from Paris and she read her

Women's link with Criminal Law

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a "woman" as 'an elderly female'. A woman therefore can be described in the form of a mother, a daughter, a wife, a sister within a family.

At the same time "law" can be defined as a particular legal system that binds a community together. Thus, every member in that specific community is bound by the provisions of that particular legal system.

* There are 2 basic sections in Law

Substantive Law – which identifies a person's rights, duties and obligations i.e. Constitutional Law, Administrative Law

Procedural Law – in an instance where the above mentioned rights, duties or delegations are violated, this introduces the procedure through which a person may seek remedy. i.e. Law of Evidence

* How can 'women' and criminal law be linked?

'Woman' in contemporary society plays the role of a housewife, breadwinner, nurturer, community worker all in one. She makes a worthy contribution to society at large through her multiple roles. It is inevitable that she be not subjected to violence, sexual harassment, physical assault, and discrimination. This is where we may apply provisions set out in the criminal Law (i.e. Penal Code) pertaining to offences against women.

It would therefore be relevant to ask two questions "What is an offence?" and "What is a wrongful Act?" In the eyes of the law an 'offence' is a punishable, illegal act committed against society and its members. To complete the offence two components have to be fulfilled.

- * the mental aspect (*men's rea*)
- * physical act (*actus reus*)

A "Wrongful Act" is an act committed against morality. Every wrongful act may not necessarily be an offence, but every offence is a wrongful act.

* Violence against Women

There are many forms of Violence against women, but whatever form it takes violence affects women also in a multitude of ways. It affects her mentality, physical well-being, her education, health, character, independence, personality etc. The effects will also be reflected in her children's upbringing, and family. Finally, negative effects will be reflected in her poor and damaged personality and her weak contribution to the nation's development in general. One can see very good reason why all forms of violence against women should be eliminated.

The causes for violence against women may be enumerated thus, with 'patriarchy' 'cultural barriers' heading the list while cultural barriers comes a close second. These are followed by lack of decision making power, inequality, women's limited participation in politics and media, weak economic power and gender division of labour.

The foregoing being the causes, the forms of violence against women are as many as they are varied. Most of them are usually heard of or seen as common place incidents, while the media excels in reporting all sordid details as sensational news. As is to be expected in this day and time, rape heads the list.

Rocky Ariyaratne

Women's Studies Course (Sinhala)

**Conducted by WERC
commences September 2003**

**Please contact
Project Coordinator**

**595296 or 596826
for more details**

Understanding CEDAW



The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 is described as the

"International Bill for Rights for Women". Sri Lanka ratified the Convention in 1981, but after all these years it is felt that the document has failed to have an impact on the women whom it addresses. WERC, therefore evolved a project in an attempt to produce a simplified version of the document as a handy booklet to facilitate understanding its contents. The sixteen Articles of the convention that enumerate the 'rights' of women are now presented in simplified form, easily comprehensible to the average reader in English alongside a translation in Sinhala. The booklet is meaningfully illustrated to further the impact of the message conveyed. The outcome of the project is a neat, attractive and reader friendly hand book on CEDAW, ready for distribution among school children as well as adults.

NEWS Around

Sri Lankan Women's delegation to Myanmar

Our concern is for Aung San Suu Kyi acknowledged leader of the National league for democracy in Burma, who has been kept in detention by the Junta since May 30th. We join the international agencies requesting her release and urge that the 30 strong Sri Lankan women's delegation seeking to visit her be granted permission.

Female Empowerment

The all too familiar figure on estates of the Kangany in shorts and shirt with stick in hand, will soon go missing. The category of Kangany has traditionally been exclusively for men both on tea and rubber plantations so it comes as fresh 'aroma' to hear the news that women 'pluckers' or tappers' are now entitled to rise to the position of supervisor'. This is the result of a collective agreement signed by major plantation TU's and Estate Management companies with regard to conditions of employment.

Female empowerment has at long last been introduced to the plantations where even the woman's hard earned pay is collected by her (idle) husband at the end of the day. We are sure that many a 'plucker' will aspire to her new found position in her red green saree and flashing smile with firm steady step.

LIFE ON THE OTHER SIDE...

Under a colony of
make shift tents,
we draw our
territories.
Families of five to ten
with a bar of washing soap
cleanse their clothes and sins.
The cup of rice and dhal
little conquer
our tormenting hunger.
The children play
in the dust....
hopscotch,
a class room of make believe.
We live for each night
of brick walled, tile roofed,
dwellings of privacy
and dignity....
we wake up to our
sojourning depression.
Day after day,
year after year,
we await
the resurrection
of an era
long forgotten,
amidst a celebration
of missiles
and a display of
artillery.

SULAKSHANA

We congratulate.....

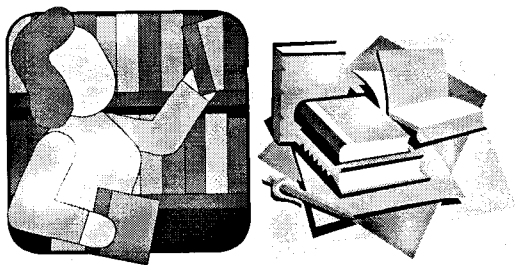
Malini Devananda

On the first ordination of women in the Church of Ceylon (Anglican) in Sri Lanka, in March 2003, Malini Devananda was ordained along with three others to the diaconate of the Anglican Church. The ordination was held at the Cathedral of The Living Saviour Colombo.

Vijitha Fernando

A one-time journalist in a national English Newspaper, Vijitha Fernando, became the winner of the prestigious Gratien Prize this year.

Excelling in Sinhala to English translation, her prize winning entry was "Out of the Darkness" a translation of two Sinhala novels within one theme by Gunadasa Amarasekera, the well known novelist.



From the Book Shelf

GOLDEN THOUGHTS ON WOMEN, by Vijay Kaushik. Jaipur, India, Book Enclave, 2001 426pp

Golden Thoughts on Women is virtually a treasure trove on the topic of women. It takes a critical look on the role of women by different personages down the ages, till the modern times. Readers will find this book useful and amusing.

GENDER AND NARRATIVE, Edited by Jasbir Jain and Supriya Agarwal. New Delhi, Rwa Publications. 2002

This is a collection of twenty-two essays which sets out to explore the limits of narrative. The subjects range from theoretical underpinnings to studies; or individual texts from writers of the 1930s to the present day contemporary writers. The work presents an interesting and insightful dialogue on gender and narrative.

WOMEN AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA; Re-imagining the State, edited by Yasmin Tambiah. Colombo, ICES. 2002 497pp

This volume brings together six studies conducted under this project, carried out by six organizations. The research draws on archives, interviews, a survey and focus group discussion to address two sets of issues; women's engagement with formal political processes and women's experiences and visions of the State. It is intended to inform initiative that will promote women's active engagement in governance at the local, national and regional levels.

MEMSAHIBS ABROAD: Writings by Women Travellers in 19th Century, edited by Indra Ghose. Delhi, Oxford University Press. 1998

The most exciting aspect of this book is that it salvages long-forgotten writings by English woman travellers in India – writings that are perceptive, amusing and of historical value – and which have long been out of print.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN'S MARRIAGE AND VIOLENCE, by Veena Pani Pandey. New Delhi, Mohil Publications 2002

This book discusses myriad aspects of social and domestic violence against women. This will prove useful to

feminists, women's activists, sociologists and academic researches.

A NEW FACE OF DURGA: RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SRI LANKA, by Nagalingam Shanmugalingam. Univ. of Jaffna. Delhi, Kallina Publications. 2002 199pp

Tellipalai is a small village in Jaffna, the northern part of war-torn Sri Lanka is, the cynosure of Durga worship. The author's study reflects an excellent sense of what constitutes an intriguing anthropological problem and the study also examines this symbolic change in relation to the present day socio-cultural changes of Jaffna.

THINKING SOCIAL SCIENCE IN INDIA; Essays in honour of Alice Thorner, edited by Sujatha Patel, Jasodhara Bagchi and Krishna Raj. New Delhi, Publications. 2002 456pp.

This collection of original essays by prominent scholars concerned as a festschrift in honour of Alice Thorner, binds this volume together that all the contributors reflect on diverse issues which are seminal to the thinking of social science in India. Among the many unique features of this volume is that it brings together economist, historians, political scientist, anthropologist, sociologists and those who specialise in gender issues and cultural studies.

PERSPECTIVES ON POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE, Edited by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke. London, Skoob Books Ltd. 2001, 202pp

This important collection of essays assesses the harvest of the post-colonial project. It spans an impressive range, from stimulating sceptical analysis by distinguished novelists Nayantara Sahgal and Dan Jacobson on the forces that underlie much post-colonial literature and Yasmine Gooneratne on issues of gender to original essays by eminent critics. In sum, this book with its international team of contributors, offers the kind of periodical assessment which post-colonial literature needs and is valuable to the student, several readers and scholar alike.

HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY: THE KHALSA OVER 300 YEARS, by Prof. J. S. Grewal and Indu Banga. New Delhi. Tulika. 2001

This book commemorates the tercentenary of the Khalsa by focusing on the history of the Sikh Panth, setting it in the content of the general history of India. The papers cover a large ground and provide valuable insights into the history of the Sikhs from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.

GLOBALISATION: THE IMPERIAL THRUST OF MODERNITY, edited by Ninan Koshy. Mumbai. Vikas. 2002 117pp

This volume of essays makes an original and stimulating contribution to the discourse on globalization conceptualising it as the highest expression of modernity.

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A Warm Welcome to WERC

Ms. Gayathri Puvimanasingham - Auditorium Assistant
Ms. Bhagya de Silva, - Sinhala Publications
Ms. Indika Bulankulame, - Senior Executive: Publication & Research
Mr. Rohan Sahayam - Tamil Publication Assistant- On short as
signment to help with Tamil Publication

Our best wishes go out to Mallika Manoharan who left WERC to join her family in Singapore, Mallika was an efficient staff member. Her enthusiasm and flair for Public Relation made her a successful book sales officer and auditorium assistant. WERC appreciated her commitment to duty and her pleasant manner.

UNIFEM Press Release 25 June 2003

Women's Role in Post Conflict Iraq

As post-conflict operations get underway in Iraq, UNIFEM has worked within the UNDG to prepare guidelines for carrying out gender sensitive needs assessments. UNIFEM will report on its recent mission to Iraq, consisting of consultations with women and UN partners towards ensuring a fully representative political process. UNIFEM will also discuss upcoming initiatives in Iraq, including the organization of a national symposium and the establishment of a national network of women groups.

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