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The Politics of Kandyan Dance
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International Centre for Ethnic Studies

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Founding Editor: Regi Siriwardena
Conceptualisation: Nishan de Mel
Editor: Chelva Kanaganayakam
Managing Editor: Lakmali Jayasinghe
Cover: Shamanthi Rajasingham

Advisory Board: Neloufer de Mel, Ranjini Obeyesekere, Nihal Fernando, Selvy Thiruchandran, M.A. Nuhuman

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EDITORIAL

In his own enigmatic way, Christopher Okigbo, in a well-known poem, claims that the "eye that looks down will surely see the nose; / The finger that fits should be used to pick the nose". His concern had much to do with the Biafran war, the conflict between tribes, secessionist struggles, and the possibility of a unified Nigeria. In many ways, the situation in Sri Lanka is different, but we too are in the process of assessing the past and charting ways in which the future will ensure that the tragedies of the past will not be repeated.

Almost seventeen months have passed since the defeat of the LTTE, and the triumphalism that inevitably followed the victory has given way to sober reflection. It is hardly surprising that many of the essays and short stories in this issue are, in one form or another, about finding ways to understand the past, review the present, and plan for the future. In some essays, the connection is implicit, and in others it is more direct. The fact is that if conflict remained a dominant motif in the past two decades, reconciliation is a constant theme in the present. The model of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission offers itself as a possible paradigm, although the historical trajectory of South Africa is a far cry from the history of Sri Lanka.

The essays seem to imply that ultimately the central concern is not, or should not be, about peeling away layers of history until some kernel of truth is found. Such truths, even if they do exist, often lead to a politics of blame. They perpetuate a cycle of incompatible and mutually exclusive stances. Since we cannot understand the past with any degree of certainty, we construct them to complement our own perspectives. Instead, what is needed is the capacity to understand the narratives of the past in order to shape the present. Whether the essays are about those who stood firm in their convictions or about economic choices, the major concern is about transcending an ultimately futile identity politics and adopting a vision that accommodates all and alienates none.

Nethra Review believes in multiplicity, and encourages rigorous discussion. It is, however, reassuring that the submissions appear to endorse a fundamental vision of unity and progress.

Chelva Kanaganayakam

The Australian War Memorial and Fabrications of History: A Cautionary Tale

Rohan Bastin

Canberra, the Australian capital, is a state-designed city built on farmland based on a plan submitted to an international competition in 1911 by an American modernist architect, Walter Burley Griffin (Reid, 2002). Griffin learned his art in Chicago where he worked with Frank Lloyd Wright and other members of what became known as the Prairie School. He and his wife Marion Mahony, another Prairie School member, won the tender to design Canberra with a plan for what Griffin called a "city not like any other city in the world, not just a new city for a new nation – a democratic city for a democratic nation" (Weirick, 1998: 63); a city of the future. That city would form the administrative centre of the newly created federation of Australian states founded in 1901.

In the end, the realisation of the Griffin vision was incomplete, as virtually from the outset relations between Griffin and the Canberra planning bureaucrats soured. Nevertheless, the Griffins left their mark on the capital city of Australia with a spatial representation of a modernist conception of political theory that essays the separation between the State and civil society. The relationship is mapped out in the two principal hubs of the city – Capital Hill and "Civic" (officially called "City Centre" or "City"). The New Australian Parliament building, opened in 1988, is located on (actually *in*) the former, while the latter is the commercial centre. Both the Parliament and Civic form radial hubs with ring roads and axial links to other minor residential hubs. The hubs are centres that thus stand in space rather than face it, but at the same time the two key centres are separated as the two sides of the same coin. Between them and thoroughly affirming their separation is the water of the artificial lake that was the other key element in the Griffin vision. In 1964, when the Molonglo River was damm-ed to create the lake, it was named Lake Burley Griffin after the city's ar-chitect; Marion Mahony's role, as it were, submerged, in keeping with the sexist mores of the time (Birmingham, 2006).

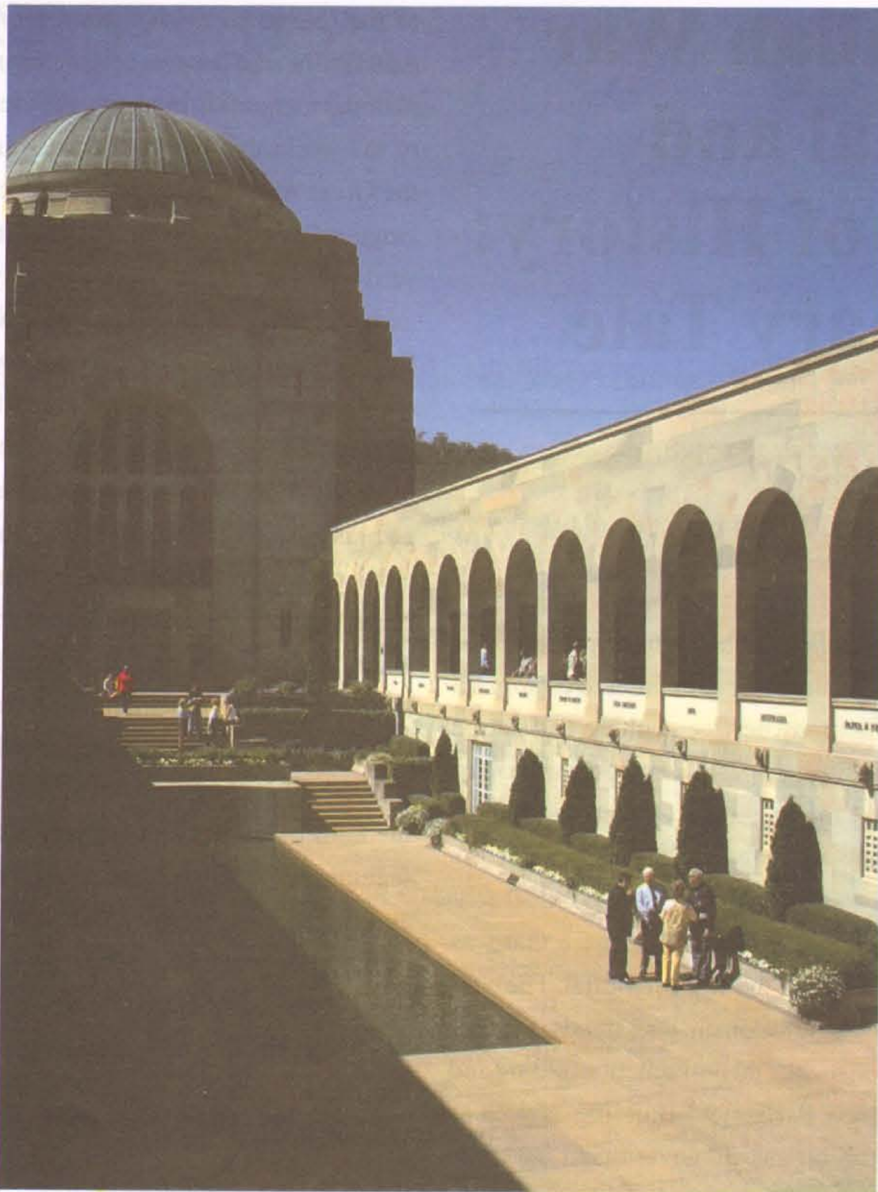
Missing from the Griffin vision was a war memorial, for the Griffins saw no need to commemorate bloodshed in their city of the future. However, they had not countenanced the World War I that began shortly after they won the design competition in 1913. Australia leapt into that imperial war becoming renowned as storm troopers in the European trenches and, according to Robert Graves (1995: 168–169), developing, after the Canadians, a reputation for the brutal mistreatment and summary execution of prisoners. Of course, this is not the official version of the history of Australians at war. Highlighted instead is their courage and sacrifice and, above all, the camaraderie of mateship, the deep sense of equality, and irreverent anti-authoritarianism towards anyone or anything displaying the traits of snobbery and aloofness. And such was the loss of life in the First World War that a memorial was demanded, albeit a memorial that did not celebrate war. All over the country memorials were erected and the tradition of the Anzac Day March began (Inglis, 1998).

The Australian War Memorial had to be accommodated with the city plan. A key axial line in the Griffin plan running north-east from Capital Hill to Mt. Ainslie was used. The Griffins set on this line the temporary parliament building in the midst of a triangular wedge for government departments. At the end of the line was Mt. Ainslie which was to be preserved as a nature reserve in order to establish a harmony between culture and nature befitting a garden city. At the base of the mountain, the Griffins had left space for a federal monument for the people to celebrate their political achievement. It was this space that was taken for the War Memorial. The base of Mount Ainslie thus stands in relation to the Old Parliament Building and New Parliament Building as well as the organs of government as Civic stands in relation to Parliament Hill. The lake remains prominent, affirming the separation between state and civil society. Strikingly, it matches the spatial arrangement in New Delhi where the All-India War Memorial Arch was placed at the end of an avenue facing the Viceroy's Palace (Inglis, 1998: 337). It was, in other words, the hegemonic concept of the modern secular state fitting just as easily into Edwin Lutyens' contemporaneous plan for the new capital of British India as it did for the Griffins' plan of Canberra.

More than simply a memorial, the Australian War Memorial is a museum started initially from a travelling road show of military memorabilia brought home by soldiers returned from war, and which included diorama models made by ex-servicemen. The museum thus not only celebrates the ordinary man, it also creates, in its own way, a therapeutic space for the surviving victims and relatives from that distant and dreadful conflict to construct narratives of their experience. Next to the museum is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the everyman victim who became celebrated in national memorials in most countries of the world that had participated in the Great War. In front, is a long rectangular Pool of Reflection in a courtyard with a small number of carefully maintained plants. A permanent gas flame burns at one end of the pool. On each side of the pool and well above it are cloister galleries with the names of all the Australian-war dead on large brass shingles. In keeping with the egalitarian civil society ideal, military rank is not included. The entire space of the galleries and courtyard is known as the Commemorative Area. Rosemary grows among the plants because of its strong association as the herb of memory. Rosemary also features in Christian Marian worship and establishes thereby a connection between the war dead and martyrdom – the imitation of Christ. I stress, though, that specific religious parallels are muted in this ostensibly secular memorial.

Twenty-six art-deco base relief tiles, described in one Memorial guide as the "gargoyles", look out from the walls to the Pool of Reflection. Each one has the form of the head of a native animal – a kangaroo, a koala, a wombat, a platypus, etc. They bear witness, representing the order of Nature and establishing thereby an identity between the war dead and Nature (and the War Memorial and the Griffin city plan). Engraved above them in black letters are the names of the theatres of war in which Australians fought in the two World Wars. For by the time the Memorial was completed in 1941, Australia was once again at war.

The use of animals follows a dominant theme of the unity of the war victim with nature found in European contemporaries of the Australian War Memorial, most notably the German war memorials that began with German unification in the 1870s, but grew dramatically in number after World War I. Historian George Mosse describes the relation:



The Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial with the entrance to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*

Everywhere nature became associated with the cult of the fallen soldier. The reactionary, backward-looking character of modern nationalism was strengthened through this myth, and the closeness of wartime soldiers to nature—their own human nature and that which surrounded them—was seen, at least in retros-pect, as genuine (Mosse, 1990: 110).

Civil society is thus natural society and the State, which makes war, an artificial creation. The sentiment is captured in the following description of the Melbourne war memorial (the Shrine of Remembrance) by its official chronicler who declares on the first page of his history, "The City raises its eyes to the Shrine..." and concludes on the final page with "Decade after decade The Shrine maintains its watch over the City" (Russell, 1991). Where "City" in Canberra is civil society, in Melbourne – a more spontaneous urban formation where the government buildings are nestled in the commercial centre – "City" stands for State. The Shrine is Civil Society. The description declares the State to be enthralled by Civil Society, by the human sacrifice made by the People in war. But it also underlines the vigil that Civil Society must maintain over the State lest its excesses once again engulf the people with war.

The carved animals looking onto the Pool of Reflection at the Australian War Memorial caught my attention first in 1997. Their art deco features effectively date the building, giving a modernist hue to the deliberately Byzantine dome of the Tomb and simultaneously evoking the Australian landscape within the Ottoman feel of the built structure. The sense of a captured space, of territories of the world, now marked by the Australian war dead, of Australia having been "put on the map", is very strong. It bears a profound sense of muted triumph, of pride mingled with regret, a monument to the post-imperial.

Placed about two and a half metres above the courtyard, the images are evenly spaced along the walls on both sides of the area and continue past the first two flights of stairs leading to the Tomb. Consequently, the final carvings, one on each side, are much closer to the ground (roughly thirty cetimetres above the level of the second landing). In 1997, I found I couldn't see the final animal due to the shrubs that, while fully manicured, had grown in front of it. I had to peer behind the shrub to find the last animal and was shocked to discover that it was a man – an Aboriginal man judging from the carving's exaggerated features of nose, hair and lips. I looked on the other side and, again hidden by shrubbery, an Aboriginal woman. What is the meaning of this I wondered? Why are they there and, more than that, why are they hidden?

The Aborigines' inclusion amongst the War Memorial animal carvings expresses the primitivism dominant in Western art in the first half of the twentieth century. They are the children of Nature who along with the animals bear witness to the true Natural Man – the sacrificial Common Man – the White Man. By the 1990s, however, amidst a growing assertiveness by Indigenous Australians (Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders), the carvings were an embarrassment. Better to hide them behind a (memory) shrub and keep them away from all but the most prying eyes. History is erased and the eraser is the state.

I returned to Canberra and its War Memorial in 2002 to photograph the carvings to use in undergraduate classes on Australian nationalism and racism. I was especially keen to photograph the hidden Aboriginal couple, primordial Man and Woman whose presence had become an embarrassment. My new surprise was to find that the pruning had been done. Aboriginal Adam and Eve were back in full view, just as they had been in 1941 when the Memorial was opened. I had to stop and think again about these latest machinations in the manipulation of political symbols. I imagined a committee (it would have to be a committee!) deciding they had no option but to be bold.

But it was even better than that! The official brochure guide published that year declared: "The gargoyles lining the walls represent the native flora and fauna of the Canberra region; also represented are the indigenous people of the area".

The what? The flora and fauna? Surely they mean the *fauna* don't they? Or have they perhaps fallen into the reasoning of Federation when Aborigines were defined as part of the flora and fauna of the country, to be

* Photos by Rohan Bastin

Head of an Aboriginal Man – Part of the fauna and flora!

Head of a kangaroo. "North Africa" refers to a war theatre where Australians served in World War 1 and World War 2

managed by the Commonwealth in hand with the management of National Parks; a neat Freudian slip that quite gives their game away.

But what's all this stuff about Canberra? Do they really think that the designers of the Australian War Memorial in the 1930s were sparing any thought for the regional wildlife of Canberra – a stretch of sheep-grazing country acquired by the Commonwealth in 1901 to be the blank canvas on which the Griffins could map their city of the future?

The frill-necked lizard completely undermines the spin. While one certainly finds kangaroos, koalas, wombats and the platypus locally, the frill-necked lizard is a creature of the deserts way away to the north and the west. The Tasmanian devil is from, well, Tasmania, the separate island state to the south. Quite simply, the animals do not represent the local fauna let alone flora of the Canberra region.

I'm told that one can still hear the volunteer guides who show visitors around the Australian War Memorial uttering the local Canberra spin while the visitor, too hushed by the sanctity of the site, won't dare to argue. It is an interesting idea revealing in its own way the localism that many social commentators have identified as the form of the global – an instance of "glocalization" (Wellman, 1999).

What, though, are the implications of such fabrication and the rewriting of history? Well, for one thing, it opens another can of worms, because the question of the authentic Indigenous custodians of Canberra is contested. To explain this situation, let me digress briefly, and discuss the recognition of Indigenous Australian land rights.

Unlike Sri Lanka, whose colonisation the British acknowledged to have been a conquest, Australia was deemed to have been *settled into*. The legal distinction is critical, because a settled colony was classed as a land devoid of law – a *terra nullius* ("empty land") – and its native population was defined as having no traditional laws and thus no property rights. In 1992, *terra nullius* was finally overturned by the High Court, prompting the Australian Government to promulgate the Native Title Act. Increasingly, Australians began to acknowledge the traditional custodians of that area and official gatherings would commence with a Welcome to Country usually involving a local Aboriginal Elder who would speak at a short ceremony. Ownership did not, however, imply property rights unless a full Native Title claim was lodged in the courts. Critical to its success were the determination of the relevant stakeholders and their demonstration of continuous connection to Country. For a people for the most part alienated from their country, this has proven to be difficult, often throwing a wedge between people who contest each other's rights. Critically, however, when someone says "Country" do they mean *territory* in the conventional sense?

Anthropologist Norman Tindale mapped Australia according to its traditional Indigenous territories in 1974. This famous Tindale Map (Tindale, 1974) shows Australia to be a quilt of hundreds of territories associated with tribes who are better thought of as Nations sharing common language and dialects. While doing wonders to dispel the mainstream view of Aborigines as pure nomads with no idea of property, the Tindale Map is flawed because it presumes that a territory can be marked by its boundaries rather than by the sites within it. Moreover, the boundaries form strict lines of separation between groups when often the movement of people included the movement in and out of each other's Country, albeit with the full acknowledgement that there were sites on the country, ancestral sites, that had traditional custodians. Movement into and out of Country wasn't always harmonious, as several early colonial accounts of tribal warfare attest, but that does not mean that the territories were homogeneous spaces defined by lines on a map.

The site of Canberra, a site marked on a map by an urban plan and a site then modified by an artificial lake, can be likened to what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call "deterritorialization": the changing relationship between forms of life and their mutually constitutive orientation to space. The apparatus of the State is territorial, but more than that, it proceeds via a radical deterritorialization of an existing situation and a subsequent reterritorialization or spatial re-inscription of a life form now totalised across an entire domain and rendered sovereign. Conquest and colonization are obvious examples, but so is planting a tree or building a monument. Australia's Native Title legislation is yet another example. It is not about restoration, but about a new deterritorialization and reterritorialization of a minority people who have already been subjected to violent dislocation. That's what the Tindale Map was. In describing a patchwork of territories defined from the outside, it was not describing a traditional pattern, but a new pattern, a pattern in keeping with the logic of the modern bureaucratic state. The Native Title Act, which demands from people their demonstration to the satisfaction of a court their continuous linkage amidst 200 years of invasion, continues the process.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the issue of Canberra's traditional custodians is disputed. In April 2010, signs on the access roads to Canberra welcoming people to "Ngunnawal Country" were artfully and anonymusly defaced by neat transfers that covered "Ngunnawal" with "Ngamberri". According to members of the former group, the Ngamberri are simply an off-shoot of the neighbouring Wiradjuri people and thus not really a Nation at all, let alone a group with a claim to this particular patch of land.

The deeply conservative media figure Andrew Bolt leapt onto his blogsite with the road sign story to create space for conservative Australians to shout that the Aborigines were once again demonstrating their inability to govern themselves due to their innate desire for tribal conflict – their basic primitive mentality. It's nothing of the sort. *The territorial dispute is all about negotiating modern constructs that purport to celebrate traditional ties based on fundamentally flawed concepts such as the lines on a map. They are flawed in the sense that they give the impression of being non-modern, when, like Canberra itself, they are thoroughly modern.* To avoid civil war within the Aboriginal community, let alone between Aborigines and non-Aborigines, a basic but modern bureaucratic reterritorialization is needed. Appeals to the past must be muted, although a history of conquest must be acknowledged. Sites and lines between sites must be acknowl-

edged rather than exclusive territories.

Meanwhile, back at the War Memorial, the national ideologues strive to negotiate their desire to localise those embarrassing carved Aboriginal heads with, first, a basic geography lesson about where one finds frill-necked lizards and Tasmanian devils, and second, a dispute about traditional custodians to the area. Their solution has been to re-nationalise them, declaring the following on the Australian War Memorial website:

> Stepping through the front entrance to the Memorial, your attention is immediately captured by the Commemorative Courtyard. Straight ahead are the Pool of Reflection and the Eternal Flame. Above are 26 sculptures carved in sandstone, representing the people and animals inhabiting Australia. Light and shade, flowers and stone, flame and water: all the elements here are designed to evoke a mood of calm contemplation. (http://www.awm.gov.au/visit/visit-special-entrance.asp)

The what? People inhabiting Australia? So, let me get this straight. That Aboriginal couple have now come to represent everyone? This is really beginning to resemble a *bhumiputra* movement!

So what's going on now? Put very, very simply, "Boat People". Australians have rediscovered their fear of the foreigner. They have rioted on Sydney beaches in 2005 attacking anyone they deemed to be Lebanese, and they have physically and verbally attacked people of South Asian background while loudly declaring "Australia – If you don't love it, leave". In 2001, a Federal Election was scarred by the story of a group of illegal asylum seekers who were wrongly accused of throwing their children overboard when an Australian naval vessel stopped them in Australian territorial waters. The liars on this occasion were right at the top of politics, but the bigger concern is not that the politicians lie (for we know *that*) but that large sections of the public believed them. They do so because they are thoroughly captured by the larger apparatus that is the Australian nationalist ideal. This apparatus works through the little truths that hide the larger lie. It is embedded in such cultural apparatuses as the Australian War Memorial and the entire design of the national capital, informing above all the secondary elaborations of meanings such as how to spin a web of nonsense about a carved head, and the fact that this head narrates a now embarrassing history of conquest and abuse.

When it comes to heritage, people (Australians and otherwise) can learn a lot from the Aboriginal identification with Country. Sites do not make borders, and movement through spaces can be shared with a thoroughgoing respect for heritage. For a site does not necessarily make a territory, while a territory can make a civil war when a State chooses triumphant fabrication instead of careful self-reflexion and sensitivity to human sacrifice and suffering.

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Art: An "Assuasive" Approach to Reconciliation

Giyani Venya De Silva

This article was inspired by several conversations I had during the past year with Dr. Nishan de Mel (former Executive Director, ICES), who, for many years had envisioned a "Museum of Conflict and Memory" for Sri Lanka. The ideas that arose during these conversations were later developed with the expertise of Dr. Kakoli Ray (Senior Researcher, ICES), who has experience working in post-conflict settings the world over.

Anticipation and expectation were high in Sri Lanka with the conclusion of the war in May 2009. Peace-building and reconciliation projects were activated in various parts of the island by non-governmental and civil society organisations. Yet many of these initiatives, mostly in the form of workshops, proved to be primarily "prescriptive" in their approach: strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations, instructing groups on how to resolve conflict at the local level and raising awareness on areas such as "human rights" and "pluralism". In contrast, fewer resources seem to have been devoted to what may be termed an "assuasive" approach, which may be better suited to dealing with the emotional impacts of loss, pain and suffering – the result of a nearly three-decade long war in this country.

An "assuasive" approach would go beyond the prevalent mechanisms for reconciliation and peace-building by accessing peoples' emotional responses to experiences of war, violence and displacement. Such an exercise may seem to go against the popular – and perhaps convenient? – conception at present, that it is futile to dwell on the past. However, as Paul Connerton observed, "Our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in the context which is causally connected with the past event and objects" (quoted in Bar-Tal et al, 236). Time and experience exist on the same continuum, and memory becomes the lens through which we perceive the present and anticipate the future. The exigency with which people need to respond to their memory of war and violence in Sri Lanka is revealed most tellingly in the words of this woman from Killinochchi: "We are talking about words 'accountability' and 'forgiveness', but there is a need to air things that have happened. People need to say why things happened, how they happened and then ask for forgiveness. If people have not done this, how can we move forward? The truth must be faced to release people from the past" (NPC). In her references to 'accountability' and 'forgiveness' – measures which are now universally recognized as the foundations of working towards reconciliation – the woman affirms that any gesture towards the future, or moving forward, can only occur once the formal steps of reconciliation have been set in place. Furthermore, such a process can only be initiated through dialogue, or a formal act of "truth-telling"', which acknowledges the events and experiences of the past.

Kaufmann confirms that acknowledgement of suffering and taking responsibility are crucial to peace-building, adding that state leaders "must construct, usually from existing elements of their national myth-symbol complex, a language for talking publicly about peace and reconciliation that resonates emotionally with their followers" (209). However, constructing a discourse with which to talk about peace could be problematic in Sri Lanka, where language itself has been an issue of contention for so many decades. It is hardly surprising, then, that people are wary of promoting such a "language" of peace in post-conflict Sri Lanka. However, it is also precisely such a context in which art becomes relevant, as a means of symbolic communication which is not based on the sign. Art relies on sensitivity and sensibility of the artist and the viewer to facilitate communication, and thus extends beyond the limitations of meaning imposed by the language of words.

That art is able to echo the complexity of thought and feeling in a way which mirrors emotions more closely than even language, further affirms the responsiveness of art in dealing with the experience of post-conflict societies. Cynthia Cohen, for example, noted that, "Unlike the language of everyday discourse, or the conclusions of a tribunal or commission, art symbols function on many levels at the same time, matching the ambiguity of people's memories" (31). The Sri Lankan example highlights perhaps only too well these multiple layers of experience which are encapsulated in the post-war climate. For example, men and women experience war in highly gendered ways, and this is evident in the ways in which they speak about their experiences. Men often focus on the visible acts of violence that they have encountered themselves, while women tend to focus on the harm inflicted on their families, and relate stories they have heard from others. However, as Richard Wilson observed, "Hidden in the discourses of domesticity are powerful forms of knowledge and agency that need to be recognized and sensitively understood… These have to do with experiences of family life, with expectations of time, with silence and secrecy and the location of self in stories" (378). A narrative which depends on secrecy and silence can only be partially set down in words or related at a Truth Commission – through art, however, these experiences can be given voice and the capacity to be heard.

The memory and experience of conflict is further complicated by the nature of the war in Sri Lanka, which, due to its being protracted, violent, seemingly irresolvable, and central to the everyday lives of the people (Bar-Tal, 1432-1434) may be classified as an "intractable conflict". As in the case of Sri Lanka, these conflicts are most often resolved militarily, leading to an unavoidable sense of "victimhood" among multiple groups in the aftermath of the war. A dangerous cycle is set in motion when, as identified by Staub and Bar-Tal, "Groups encode important experiences, especially extensive suffering, in their collective memory, which can maintain a sense of woundedness and past injustice through generations" (quoted in Bar-Tal et al, 236). This transposition of victimhood points to a potent source from where conflict can resume, as the memories of loss and suffering which are not addressed in the post-war climate continue to contribute towards perpetuating a culture of violence.

A shift in this cycle can be initiated through art, both in its creation as well as its appreciation. Cohen suggests that a kind of mutual respect is facilitated between the artwork and the viewer, as the latter gives meaning to the emotions that are evoked by the former. She writes, "It is by virtue of this reciprocity that aesthetic transactions are inherently other-regarding. They involve an awareness of the other, a sensitivity akin to respect" (Cohen, 8). Thus, art can facilitate acknowledgement and reflection which are crucial in initiating reconciliation between formerly conflicting parties. These changes, of course, must begin at the personal level, and this transformative process is evident in the

words of an artist who contributed to the "War we have not seen" exhibition at Colombia's Bogotá Museum of Modern Art. The artist reflected that "You accumulate so many things in this war, and I learned to let them out through the paint" (America's Quarterly, blogged Nov. 4, 2009). The weight of "so many things", which are witnessed during the war being counterpoised here by the liberation experienced through artistic expression. Interestingly, all the artists whose works were shown at this exhibition were ex-combatants; art was specifically used by the museum curators due to its capacity to facilitate self-reflection. Furthermore, Ana Tiscornia, curator of the exhibition at the Bogotá Museum of Modern Art, believes that "these testimonies would not have been possible without the mediation of art" (Americas Quarterly, blogged Nov. 4, 2009). Such an outcome may be anticipated in Sri Lanka as well, if art were to be utilised as a means of addressing the vulnerable groups in post-conflict Sri Lanka. These groups would include not only the hundreds of ex-combatants who comprise a large proportion of the nation's youth but also, for example, children, war-widows, and others who identify with the categories of "victor" and / or "victim" in the aftermath of the war.

Art exhibitions and museums play a crucial role in post-conflict societies as they provide the spaces in which people can begin to reflect on their own experiences of violence, loss and suffering, while also being exposed to how these same experiences may have been endured by others. This is, in at least some part, due to what has been identified as a unique faculty possessed by artists for experiencing and expressing a greater intensity of emotion, which contemporary moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum refers to when she writes, "Who could deny that there are some among us whose visual or auditory acuity is greater than that of others; some who have developed their faculties more finely, who can make discriminations of color and shape (or pitch and timbre) that are unavailable to the rest of us?" (51). The overwhelming public reception to museums of conflict and memory in many parts of the world further persuades us that, however traumatic their experiences and memories of the past may have been, there is a yearning for closure by people living in post-conflict contexts. Chile's Museum of Memory and Human Rights, for example, received 45,000 visitors within the first month of its opening. In post-conflict contexts, museums also become more than the mere repositories of memory and past experiences: at the Robben Island Museum in South Africa, Shearing and Kempa observed that "the exhibits are intentionally vehicles for shaping consciousness" (7), while the museum is identified as "a powerful force in cultivating a hope sensibility for a New South Africa" (14). As such, museums are identified as institutions which are symbolic of renewed hope and possibility as they provide the much needed space in which people can attempt to re-imagine their future.

While art and art museums have been under-utilised in Sri Lanka thus far in approaches to peace-building and reconciliation, experience abroad has shown that art presents people living in post-conflict contexts a means with which to come to terms with their past, while museums provide a public space in which they can do so. Art invites introspection, compels individuals to acknowledge painful experiences and take responsibility for their actions. While the existing mechanisms for promoting reconciliation in Sri Lanka serve an important function in their "prescriptive" or "preventive" capacity, it is essential that they be complemented by "assuasive" approaches – such as those made possible through art-based activities. It is in this regard that utilising art as a response to reconciliation can address the immediate needs of coming to terms with the experience of loss and suffering, while also providing the foundation for more viable peace-building mechanisms in the long term.

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Ayubowan Jaffna!

Ameena Hussein

The van shudders to a halt and a callow looking soldier saunters up to Yasodhara seated in the front seat. Looking casually at Nimal, the driver and Yaso, he asks expecting to be affirmed, "All Sinhala here?"

Taken aback and slightly shaken, Yaso nods and we are waved through. The candy striped barrier lifts and we enter the peninsula. AYUBOWAN JAFFNA, the sign welcomes us. Yaso turns back and gives us a look; her face stern and eyebrows raised, she shrugs her shoulders and says, "Lucky, he didn't check my ID".

The van crawls along the melted macadamized road. We bump up and down and feel our bones rub against our skin. The road has been bad since Medawachchiya. Mostly red dust with short bursts of tarred, potholed sections. What are people talking about good roads for?

The sun is about to set and the surroundings look abandoned and forlorn. With not a soul in sight, I begin to shift uneasily in my seat. I want to tell the others that I am scared but I don't know them well at all. They are silent for the most part. How on earth did I end up here? I wonder. Well done, Sharm, I tell myself, yet another spot you voluntarily put yourself through. What are you doing here honestly?

One week earlier

Mount Lavinia Beach on a Sunday is always crowded at sunset but it doesn't really matter if there are crowds or not. The sun always steals the show.

"Hey Sharm", Sushila protests, "how long are we going to hang out here? I need to go and wash my hair and you know it takes ages". She swings her long, straight, upper-class, un-bonded hair at my face and I swerve to avoid the well meant hair whack. I grin.

"Not too long Sush, just give me another ten minutes. Anyway I have loads of good sunsets, this was just an excuse to get to spend time with you. With the boyfriend and all, I hardly get to see you these days". Sharm and Sush. That's how it always was during school and now barely five years later, I have to engage in subterfuge to spend time with my best friend.

"It's not the boyfriend", Sush complains moodily, "it's the darn office. I mean come on, they can't seem to move a potted plant without my permission".

"That's because you dunce, you own the company", I tease shoving her shoulder out of my way.

"Not own", she says primly, "merely Executive Director".

"See! How many twenty-three year olds can say that?" I ask her teasingly.

"Shut up Sharm. You know how I feel about these family businesses. I wish I could join some big corporation where I would start at the bottom and work myself to the top. You know the Richard Branson version".

"Why?" I ask her incredulously. "Are you mad? Without you, who would feed me and subsidize my existence. No babe, you just keep on strutting your stuff in that office of yours as long as you remember that I exist".

As we drive back to my house on Hill Street, Sush says, "Listen, do you still want to go to Jaffna?"

"Yeah, duh? But with whom? Don't tell me that you have changed your mind and you want to go!"

"No, no, not me", she says quickly. "My office is organizing some care packages to be delivered to a village close to Jaffna and as you have always been talking about wanting to see Jaffna I thought you could go and take some photographs and it will help, you know". In the silence that followed, I knew what she meant. It would help with the photographic scholarship to Monash University that I had been lusting after. I look at Sush. How on earth do I have such a magnificent friend like her? She amazes me.

"Ok". I nod. "I'm interested. Let me know the details and my bags will be packed. Oh but tell them please that I want to take photographs. The last time, I went with a bunch of people, they cursed me every five minutes whenever I wanted to stop".

"No, these ones seem cool. But don't worry, I'll tell them". Sush blew me a kiss as I got down in front of my parents' house. "Bye babe!"

***

Jaffna! There was so much in that name. Jaffna. My parents hadn't been there, my grandparents had not wanted to go there—what was there to see? But now after twenty six years of war it was something almost every young person who had grown up during the conflict wanted to go and check out. It carried the magic of everything. But then we didn't care to know the whole story. For the past nine months, Sush and anyone who wanted to listen would only hear me mutter about wanting to go up North. I don't know what drove me. Was it the photographer in me? Was it the adventurer in me? Or was it simply that curiosity got the better of me? Who knows, not even I did. I am only twenty-three. We don't know these things.

Sush, had a lot of friends going up these days. But I knew I didn't want to go with them. They were the ones who thrashed up to Jaffna in six hours, driving aggressive air conditioned SUVs and boasting about their trip till kingdom come. God it made me sick! Almost like with the Tsunami or after a bomb that went off in the city. Disaster tourists.

On Tuesday, Sush calls me and says it's all organized. The van will pick me up at 4 p.m., and we come back in five days.

It's not an easy thing being a young Muslim girl, wanting to be a photographer and having somewhat conservative parents. It's damn hard actually. My parents are sweet but they live in another century. So I do what any other normal girl does, I lie. All the time. If I said Jaffna, they would tie me up and lock me in my room, especially, if I said I was going with a bunch of strangers whom they had never seen in their lives, let alone me having seen them. Sush is my alibi. They do not really like her or what she stands for – too much independence, too many boyfriends, too rich. No, scrap the too rich part. They may like that, because it helps them too. When I am with Sush, I am taken care of real nice. I get picked up and dropped at home, I get fed well, I learn how to behave in nice homes and learn how to eat nice food. Sush is way too generous with me. But about Jaffna, I first had to get through the interrogation.

"So where are you going this time? This Sush, how come she can take so much leave from work?"

"She owns the company, dad! Relax! Her parents and all are also coming".

"So, where are you going exactly?"

"Well, they said the first night we will spend in Sigiriya and then I dunno, they want to do small small trips up North". I looked at him anxiously hoping he wouldn't ask how far north or where exactly north they were thinking of going. In any case, the whole thing was ridiculous, only Sush would know my elaborate and convoluted

lie. Her parents, who would never meet my parents even if hell froze over, didn't have a clue about my serious parent manipulations. Why on earth would they? All they knew is that their daughter had been friends with me since grade school. I was almost a permanent fixture at their house while we went for tuition, tennis and rowing together. They treated me the same way they treated Sush. Kind of loving. Kind of indifferent.

"Let me talk to your mother about it".

"She said Ok, if you say Ok". Ah! The classic pit-one-parent-against-the-other ploy.

"For how long?" my dad was still suspicious.

"Please dad, it's only five days. Not long at all in the scheme of things. When you think how long a life is…" I pause, he doesn't look convinced. Ok, I need a harder push. "Even you say, life is short, dad. Please, I haven't gone on a trip for a really long time. You and mum never go anywhere".

Victory. "Ok, Ok, just be careful and behave for God's sake. We don't want these people asking from which corner of the earth you were picked up". My dad is so sweet. Ignorant and sheltered, but sweet nevertheless. After that my mum was a piece of cake.

"Dad told me to go with Sush and her family on this trip. No problem no?" Obviously my parents never talk to each other and certainly never about me. "Yeah, darling, if he is fine, then I am fine. He's the boss!" she said with a wink. "You're taking your camera?"

"Of course, mum. Wouldn't go anywhere without it". Oops, I realized that as soon as they saw the photographs they would know where I went. Never mind, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Right now, it's packing time.

***

I was the second person to be picked up by the van. Seated in front was a woman of authority. In her mid forties, she looked like a no nonsense type and clearly the leader of the pack. Not that I had seen the rest of the pack to make such a judgment. Four p.m. is a really rotten time to get on the road. After tuition traffic, government job traffic and various other busybodies on the road make sure it is clogged for hours. By the time we picked up the other three passengers and got on the Kandy road it was already 5.30 p.m.

I won't talk about the journey, it was horrid. The driver, Nihal, was good, but still I hate being driven outstation. But who am I to complain. I can't drive. The other three who clearly knew each other, got together at the back and went to sleep on top of one another, like a pack of cards. I was left alone like a leper, in front, eavesdropping on Yasodhara and Nihal's conversation. Mundane stuff. Soon the twilight landscape that flashed by the window held me transfixed. We stopped at the Sigiriya resthouse for the night. Dinner was on the wayside at a tiny kade – hoppers, lunu miris, fiery fish curry, eaten standing by the van. It was quite sad really. We ate using newspaper as our plates, balancing it trickily on one hand. Oh well! Fine dining in the countryside has a different feel to it.

I took in my traveling companions with interest. So there was Yasodhara, normally called Yaso. She seemed like a manager type to whom the others listened. Then there was Natalie, Anusha and Dilip. The others were all older than I was, but younger than Yasodhara, perhaps in their thirties. Natalie was the closest to me in age. Late twenties I would guess. Over dinner, Dilip the joker broke the ice and soon we were giggling and chattering like long lost friends.

On the way to Mankulam, the group discussed strategy. I was to take photographs. They were actually pleased that I was a photographer. Imagine that! They had two villages to tackle. Give out the care packages and ask the villagers how they wanted to be helped. All contact was going to be coordinated with the army. My only experience with army was at Colombo check points, where we would generally hassle them – and sometimes be hassled in turn. Yaso, a flirt of the nth degree, literally charmed the pants off the army chaps. Soon, she had them in fits of laughter, eating out of her ample hand. From brigadier to corporal, they were all agog with Yaso, leaving the three of us ignored and unattended. A new role for Natalie, I realized, who was used to commanding attention with her looks. It's not that the soldiers did not look, they did, but it was Yaso, who held them fascinated. Perhaps they were not used to older, confident, attractive women. Bumping our way through kilometers of newly-plowed red roads that had covered the trees and all other living beings for miles with an autumnal hue, we passed some of the most beautiful terrain that I have seen. Didn't they say the North was hot and dry and barren and arid? It was hot all right but there were lakes and wewas and ponds at every turn. Birds and butterflies swarmed around us. It was a photographer's dream. The team was patient with me. Very patient in fact. Sometimes, they would point out a photo op that they thought I needed to check out. Sweet really!

At the big check point in Omanthai, we parked next to a van full of women from the North. They took the checking in their stride. They chewed betel and handled their little children, as they watched their luggage being unpacked and scrutinized a million times over. The soldier sauntered over to our side. They looked at our bags cursorily. A few well placed questions and our fluent answers in Sinhala told them all they wanted to know. "Ok!" they yelled and off we went. The other van was still there.

***

"How was the trip darling?"

"Great mum. Listen, I am quite tired. I don't want dinner. I'll just go to bed now".

"Ok, sweetheart. Talk to you tomorrow".

I swung my red-dust covered bag onto my bed. I sat down exhausted beside it and rested my head on my hands. My camera bag lay on the ground beside my feet. I hadn't taken a single good photograph. Not one. I tried. But I just couldn't.

I began to cry. Psycho, I thought to myself. Why the hell am I crying? Spoiled stupid brat, I scolded myself. Yeah! That was what I was – spoiled and stupid.

The next day Sush called. "Hey, I heard that your'll had a great trip".

"Aha. Yeah, it was all right".

"What do you mean all right, Sharm? The others couldn't stop talking about it the whole morning. I heard about the Nallur temple and the Delft ponies and what a frozen in-a-time-warp kind of place it is".

Shut up! Just shut the hell up! I thought it but didn't say it. How could I? I myself didn't know why I was feeling this way. I stayed quiet. Not a word. Sush is no dumb blond.

"What's up Sharm?"

"No, no. Yeah! It was great Sush. Listen I am really, really tired. I couldn't sleep in the van and all that. So I'm going to take it easy for a couple of days. Let's catch up soon. Right?"

"Yeah! Sooner than you think. Ravi is organizing a party tomorrow night. Shall I come and pick you up?"

I paused. "Sush. Err… I am not sure that I can come. I think my parents are having a dinner at home. I just may have to stay for that". When did I start thinking on my feet? "So give my love to the Ravster! Jealous! Jealo-us!" I put the phone down, crept into my room and got into bed. What the hell was happening to me? Why was I putting on this big act with Sush?

"Dinner!" my mum came in. "What's

up pattiya? Why the long face? Why in bed? You not feeling well?".

I shook my head hoping she wouldn't see my face. "Not hungry".

"Sharm, listen, what's wrong darling? Come on, have a little bit of dinner".

I shook my head hard, turned around and faced the wall. I could feel the bed spring back when she stood up. She left the room and told my dad softly, "She is not hungry".

I wanted her to come back to me. To hug and hold me. To say it is not my fault that we bombed the North. That school girls had to study by lamplight and miss their exams. That I had nothing to do with the rapes and the toppling down of houses, the bombed out fort and the bad roads. That I was innocent of the library being burnt down. That I didn't know what was happening up there. That I could be forgiven for not caring, while I led my youthful carefree life down here in the South. But she didn't. And I knew I was responsible.

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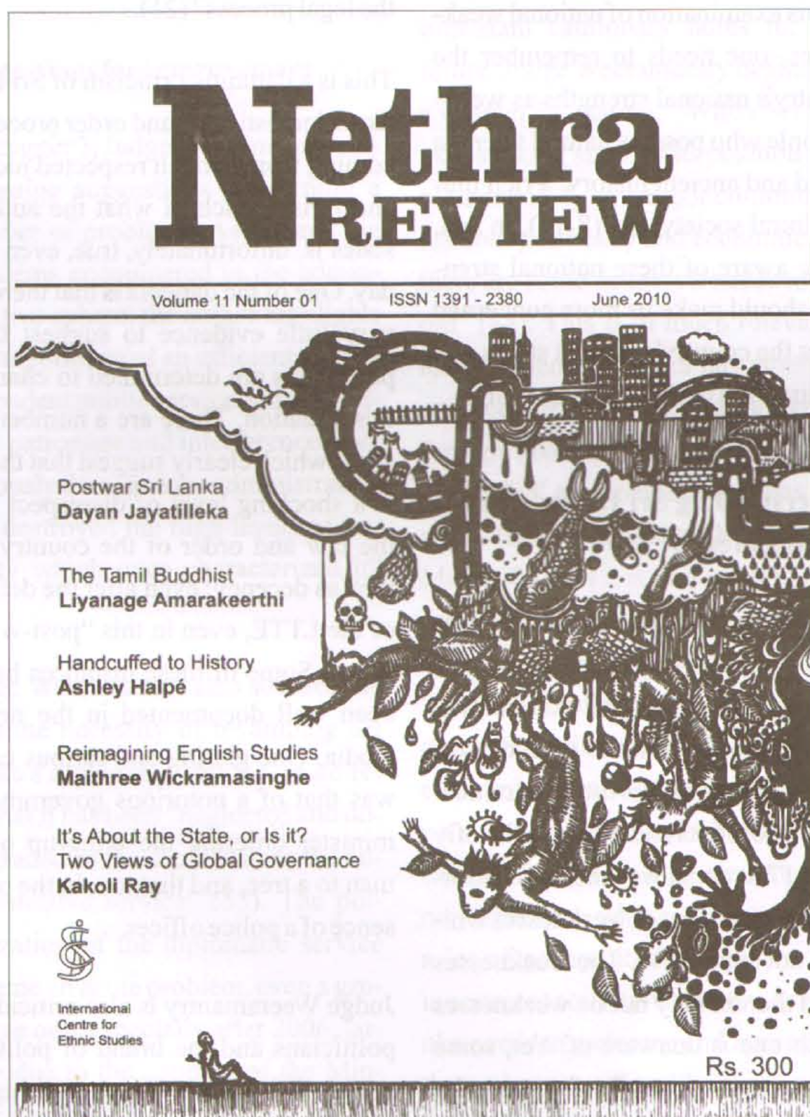

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Sri Lanka and the Importance of National Reawakening

Kalana Senaratne

A Call for National Reawakening
by C.G. Weeramantry
Stamford Lake, 2005; 170 pp.,
Rs. 280.00

Sri Lanka has just entered the "post-war" phase, after decades of bitter violence which brought immense suffering to its people. Armed violence has stopped, the "war" has ended. It is a historic and momentous phase, which calls for a truly genuine and sincere process of national reconciliation and reawakening; a reawakening of a nation and its people belonging to all ethnic, religious and linguistic communities. Given the importance of this historic moment and the overwhelming national need, it is important to visit the call for national reawakening made by one of the most eminent international jurists in the world, Judge C.G. Weeramantry, former Vice President of the International Court of Justice.

Judge Weeramantry's *A Call for National Reawakening* was written and published in 2005, just before the Presidential election which was held that year. Yet, what is contained in the book remains topical and immensely relevant to a broader understanding of the myriad problems that beset the nation, and what needs to be done to resolve them.

Sri Lanka: Hope and Despondency

In the introductory chapter, Judge Weeramantry sets out the circumstances underlying the discussion concerning the need for national reawakening and the reasons that led the author to initiate a discussion in this regard. The author points out that wherever he travels in Sri Lanka, he notices a "sense of despondency and worry that the country is in a state of irreversible decline" (1).

This was five years ago, in 2005. Yet, five years later, in 2010, have we really ceased noticing that sense of despondency and worry which Judge Weeramantry noticed then? Have we stopped asking the question, is this country still in a state of decline? Can we answer this question with an emphatic and resounding "NO"? There is much hope, certainly, now that the "war" has ended. But there is always doubt amidst hope, and it is well that one takes note of what Judge Weeramantry has to offer in his book. This is also necessary because Sri Lanka has now reached the stage where its "qualities as a nation will be tested as never before" (*ibid*).

Judge Weeramantry writes that "national stock-taking is essential to our progress as a nation", and that the principal first step towards any form of reform is an "understanding of our errors and failings" (2). The author refers to a very important factor, a step which needs to be taken especially today.

The end of the war, in particular, saw the emergence of "patriots" (some with dubious patriotic credentials). There is reluctance on the part of such "patriots" to acknowledge that there are serious errors and failings in all of us; a reluctance borne out of the fear of being labeled "unpatriotic" or "anti-Sri Lankan", in case such errors are publicly acknowledged. The author does not seem to be concerned about such labels. While the book was written before the end of the war, the boldness with which it was written is clearly discernible. To the reader, this sends a very refreshing message. It is only a person who is strongly, passionately and honestly concerned about the nation and its advancement who could question its own weaknesses and engage in a "process of self-examination".

But note; Judge Weeramantry reminds his readers that before embarking on this examination of national weaknesses, one needs to remember the country's national strengths as well – a people who possess natural talent; a proud and ancient history; a rich multicultural society, etc. (8-14). In fact, being aware of these national strengths should make us more concerned about the country's present status and the direction in which it is heading.

Understanding Sri Lanka's National Weaknesses

In Chapter 2 (titled "Seeing Ourselves As Others See Us"), Judge Weeramantry offers a critical examination of Sri Lanka's national weaknesses. The chapter, which is the most critical in the book, lists and discusses briefly some 17 national weaknesses. Unfortunately, it is a list of weaknesses which is not exhaustive. The weaknesses listed therein may not be weaknesses which one is unaware of. Yet, some weaknesses are easily forgotten by many, some ignored, and the author reminds us of them in a bold and forthright manner.

One such weakness is the "inability to run our institutions without factionalism" (18). As the author points out, Sri Lankan institutions, wherever they may be, have this remarkable tendency to be wracked by internal divisions. There is a "personality" factor – a clash of personalities – which plays an adverse role in this regard. On some occasions, this national weakness is an outcome of another weakness which the author refers to as the "envy at the success of others" (19).

Judge Weeramantry is highly critical of the lack of respect for law and order in the country; unsurprisingly, another national weakness. As he notes, at the time of writing (2005), the "Sri Lankan law and order situation seems to have reached an all time low. Respect for law and order has broken down at every level. From the humble police constable seeking to bring an offender to book for a minor violation of street rules all the way to the highest levels, there is a denigration of the authority and rigor of the law and the legal process" (21).

This is a damning criticism of Sri Lanka's domestic law and order process, coming from a much respected judge and jurist. Much of what the author states is, unfortunately, true, even today. One of the dangers is that there is very little evidence to suggest that politicians are determined to change this situation. There are a number of cases which clearly suggest that there is a shocking level of disrespect for the law and order of the country as well as decency; even after the defeat of the LTTE, even in this "post-war" phase. Some of these instances have been well documented in the news media. One glaring and serious case was that of a notorious government minister ordering the tying-up of a man to a tree, and that too, in the presence of a police officer.

Judge Weeramantry is also critical of politicians and the brand of politics practiced by them. The author highlights some enduring problems: the use of politics as a "means of personal advancement", the common practice of "making extravagant election promises", the empty and hollow "political rhetoric" and the extravagant and wasteful "political tamashas" (30-40). Quite interestingly, the author points out that instead of "shouting from political platforms", what the general public needs are "quiet, reasoned, statements of what needs to be done, how it can be achieved, what is

required of the people to achieve it" since "we are living in a more enlightened age than one where a shrieking public speaker can move a crowd to hysteria" (36). Whether our politicians would ever take that advice seriously, one does not know.

In addition to many other weaknesses, the author also reminds us of another serious weakness: the practice of "cringing before superiors" which seems to be the "obsequiousness of subordinates to their superiors in all walks of life" (40). What Judge Weeramantry is against is "undue deference" that amounts to cringing, and not so much against deference to legitimate authority (*ibid*).

Suggestions for Improvement

In Chapter 3, Judge Weeramantry offers some suggestions concerning a number of problems. As regards the problems encountered in the administrative sphere, the author highlights the importance of an efficient and independent public service, since "political patronage and interference have seriously damaged the administration and destroyed the high levels of integrity which once characterized it" (49).

Judge Weeramantry also stresses the absolute necessity of revamping Sri Lanka's diplomatic service, as he feels that it has been "neglected and downgraded in the same way as the administrative service" (53). The politicization of the diplomatic service became an acute problem, even a grotesque one, especially after 2006, largely due to the conduct of the Minister in charge of foreign affairs. This reviewer does not necessarily believe that *all* political appointments are to be condemned, since the desirability or effectiveness of such appointments depends on the person appointed. However, there should be a firm limit concerning the number of such appointments, and a thorough scrutiny of the ability of persons appointed, which was certainly lacking with regard to a number of appointments made by this particular Minister concerned.

Apart from the above, Judge Weeramantry also points out suggestions concerning certain social problems (e.g. the problem of suicide, the protection of overseas workers, child protection etc.), and offers his perspectives on some critical environmental issues such as the issue of renewable energy and sustainable development, whilst also discussing the issue of language policy and education, stressing the importance of focusing on the education of all Sri Lankan children in all three languages (78).

Sri Lanka's Future: Some Cautionary Notes

Chapter 4 of the book refers to some important cautionary notes for the future. Judge Weeramantry begins the chapter by stating, "When Sri Lanka is taking stock of its position and planning its future major commitments both politically and economically there are some dangers it needs to avoid" (82). This is of much relevance today, when Sri Lanka has emerged as a country which is attractive to foreign investors, largely due to the "peaceful" environment that has dawned after the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009. But it is important to take note of what Judge Weeramantry states next; "Foreign economic interests will seek to make the most they can out of this little country struggling for economic advancement" (*ibid*). It is no secret that Sri Lanka has become extremely attractive to a number of major powers, which are involved in a lot of economic development and investment activity. Certainly, Sri Lanka needs to welcome and appreciate the assistance offered by these powers, big or small, especially assistance rendered for the development of the much neglected areas in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. But, it is always necessary to be vigilant, to check if such assistance is extended with ulterior motives in mind, which could be harmful to the country's national interests in the long term.

Another factor highlighted by the author is that of "nuclear reactors". The author is totally opposed to them and believes that the establishment of nuclear reactors should be resisted "at all costs" (83). He warns the reader of the dangers ensuing from such reactors, the damage that can be caused to the environment due to nuclear waste and the possibility of nuclear accident as well. It is advisable to take serious note of this issue, since Judge Weeramantry has had the opportunity to contribute immensely to the body of literature concerning the broad topic of nuclear technology, scientific responsibility and nuclear weapons, and has been a pioneering advocate of the total illegality of nuclear weapons, as he most forcefully argued in his Dissenting Opinion in the case Concerning the Legality of Nuclear Weapons (ICJ, 1996).

Similarly, Judge Weeramantry reminds his readers of the problems of phosphate mining and deforestation. The latter, as the author rightly points out, is a threat to the country's national heritage and "it is imperative that this irreplaceable inheritance be preserved by constant state vigilance and public cooperation" (86). This is an aspect which needs to be borne in mind, especially at a time as this when the need for development is quintessential. But there needs to be a healthy balance between development and environmental protection. The former should not come at the expense of the latter.

Another interesting issue raised by Judge Weeramantry concerns the topic of "non-aligned foreign policy" (96-97). Judge Weeramantry considers such a policy to be vital as there are dangers of "falling into the arms of power blocs" which currently exist in the world. What is the foreign policy that Sri Lanka should adopt? Judge Weeramantry has a clear answer; "We must adopt a foreign policy with fairness to all, the determining guidelines of which are compliance with international law and the advancement of human rights regimes throughout the world. That way we retain our independence and our self respect as a nation. We cannot afford to be a client state of any power however great its role on the world scene" (*ibid*). Even five years after the publication of Judge Weeramantry's book, one feels that Sri Lanka has a very long way to go before it could be considered as a country which has adopted such a foreign policy. This is, most certainly, an imperative national need.

A Principled Solution within a Sovereign State

In a most thought provoking final chapter, Judge Weeramantry offers his preferred solution to the divisive problem in Sri Lanka, which he considers to be one that is "often referred to as the communal problem" (98).

At the outset, there arises a question – does the author believe that there is a "communal" or "ethnic" problem in Sri Lanka? Judge Weeramantry seems somewhat reluctant to attach the "communal" or "ethnic" tag to the problem. Yet, the author acknowledges problems faced by separate ethnic groups over the years, especially the Tamil people. For instance, Judge Weeramantry believes that there is a polarization of the Sinhalese and the Tamils due to "a misguided education policy" (78). He is also critical of the "rampaging mobs" which "attacked Tamil houses and killed numbers of Tamil people", which was a "total denial of human dignity" (126). The author also stresses the importance of ensuring the participation of the Tamil people in the rebuilding of the nation (a point which is of particular relevance today), and the importance of forgiveness for wrongs committed in the past by people belonging to both ethnic communities.

However, Judge Weeramantry believes that the main response to this "communal" problem should be a "fourfold response founded within four frameworks": i) a moral and religious framework, ii) a peace education and intercultural framework, iii) a domestic law framework and iv) an international law framework (104). These four frameworks form the "principl-

ed solution" suggested by Judge Weeramantry.

Firstly, Judge Weeramantry's is a unique voice in that not many writers have focused so strongly on frameworks (i) and (ii) above. He has often stressed the importance of the religious and moral dimension as well as the importance of peace education as fundamental to any resolution of divisive problems facing a nation. It is a message he has advocated universally (as discussed more fully in many of the author's other publications, such as *Universalising International Law*).

Secondly, Judge Weeramantry strongly believes that any solution should be based on a strong and efficient domestic and international legal framework. With regard to the domestic legal framework, the author writes, "It is axiomatic that any solution that is reached must comply entirely with the basic principles of law and human rights as understood and practiced in any democratic system. The domestic legal system must render justice to all without fear or favour, and every citizen of Sri Lanka whatever his or her racial background should have the confidence of equal and impartial justice before the national courts" (124). Sri Lanka, at present, faces many problems in this respect. For instance, its human rights protection mechanisms and investigative procedures have failed over the years (one of the recent cases being the "Udalagama Commission of Inquiry"). Without any progress on the issue of human rights protection, very little could be expected in terms of ensuring equality of citizens through its domestic legal framework.

Judge Weeramantry is also a strong defender of Sri Lanka's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He points out some "indispensable attributes" of sovereign integrity. There are a number of functions over which the centre should have firm control; namely, foreign relations and foreign policy, air space, territorial waters and shipping, all matters relating to national security and treaty-making, immigration, customs and import revenues, the judicial structure, etc. (134-142).

What Role for Devolution and Federalism?

Any discussion on the "political solution" to the problem in Sri Lanka necessarily involves reference to the topic of power-sharing in general, or the extent of devolution or federalism that should be guaranteed within the state. Interestingly, Judge Weeramantry does not discuss this issue. Is it because he does not believe so much in the idea of significant power-sharing? If he does, then, to what extent? It is difficult to answer these questions. For instance, Judge Weeramantry writes, "Even in a federal structure, the characteristics [of sovereignty] outlined above are an attribute of the sovereignty of the federal state which is a single and integrated centre of power. Even the slightest deviation from any one of them is highly exceptional and any such arrangement must be clearly agreed upon and defined with clarity in the Constitution. Even where this is done it should always be in such a manner as to preserve the supremacy and authority of the centre" (144-145). The important question that arises here, which would be of particular interest to those concerned about the "territorial" dimension of the problem, is whether there could be a federal structure which still preserves the sovereignty of the state in a manner articulated by the author.

Or, if Sri Lanka's sovereignty and territorial integrity could be preserved in the way pointed out by Judge Weeramantry, should the full implementation of the 13th Amendment be a problem? For instance, Judge Weeramantry notes the following; "The centre may of course delegate some aspects of the details of national security to various entities, but this needs to be under the complete control of the centre" (136). To what extent, then, could or should the central government delegate police powers to the provinces, for instance? Does the 13th Amendment, in this regard, violate Sri Lanka's sovereignty?

These are interesting, but controversial and divisive questions for which the author does not provide any clear answers in his book. Perhaps, these are questions Judge Weeramantry does not want to discuss, believing that such a discussion would cloud one's appreciation of the far more serious problems that affect the people belonging to all ethnic communities.

Conclusion

Judge Weeramantry hopes Sri Lanka would shine "once more as a multicultural, multi denominational, multiracial society that will be a beacon of hope to a world where the storm clouds are gathering dangerously and a few rays of light are desperately needed" (6). This remains a hope, a distant dream. Yet, Judge Weeramantry's contribution to the debate on national reawakening is an extremely important and thought-provoking one. Importantly, the book provides the most rational and indispensable case for those advocating equality of citizenship and human rights protection as the fundamental solutions to the "communal" problem in Sri Lanka.

The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control
By Ted Striphas
Columbia University Press, 272 pages, 2009
US $ 18.50 / £13.00

Ted Striphas argues that, although the production and propagation of books have undoubtedly entered a new phase, printed works are still very much a part of our everyday lives. With examples from trade journals, news media, films, advertisements, and a host of other commercial and scholarly materials, Striphas tells a story of modern publishing that proves, even in a rapidly digitizing world, books are anything but dead.

Memories of Lakshman Kadirgamar: The Quintessential Sri Lankan

Tissa Jayatilaka

Life is not without its tragedies and almost all of us, in the course of our human sojourn on earth, are called upon to endure our share of these tragedies. Just as much as we individually suffer indignities and ordeals, so do the countries of the world. And I am now absolutely convinced that it is Sri Lanka's enormous tragedy and misfortune that Lakshman Kadirgamar was compelled to take leave of us before he could help put Sri Lanka right after the end of the brutal reign of Velupillai Prabhakaran and his band of "Liberation" Tigers! The paragraph below taken from his interview with the Japanese National Television (NHK) on 10 September, 2004 in Tokyo will explain the point I seek to make here. Lakshman Kadirgamar had a vision for postwar Sri Lanka that is conspicuous by its absence today:

Question: You are from the Tamil Community. You try to re-build the friendship between both peoples. So could you tell me your intention? What is it going to be?

Minister: I am first and foremost a citizen of Sri Lanka. I don't carry labels of race or religion, or any other label. I would say quite simply that I have grown up with the philosophy that I am probably a kind of citizen of the world. I don't subscribe to any particular philosophy; I have no fanaticism. I am not impressed by anybody's claim to a particular race. All right, you are born to a family; you are given a label but that label does not determine, in my case, what my outlook on life is. I believe there should be a united Sri Lanka. I believe that all our peoples can live together, they did live together. I think they must in future learn to live together after this trauma is over. We have four major religions in the country: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity. All these religions co-exist peacefully. The various adherents of these religions get on well with one another. I see no reason why the two major ethnic groups in the country the Tamils and the Sinhalese cannot again build a relationship of confidence and trust. That is my belief. That is what I wish for and in working towards that goal I will not be deterred by having labels pinned on me.

I recall vividly the last hours of 12 August, 2005, the day Lakshman Kadirgamar died at the hands of a suspected LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) assassin. Amidst his crowded life as Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister and Senior Advisor to the President on International Affairs (the latter post he held in the brief period of his political career when he did not hold the portfolio of foreign affairs), Kadirgamar found the time to give exemplary leadership to the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS) by serving as Chairman of the Centre's Council of Management. In the latter capacity, the late Minister added immeasurable value to the BCIS's traditional offerings and initiated several new ones. Among the noteworthy fresh offerings were two that were especially dear to his heart and by means of the completion of which he anticipated giving to Sri Lanka and the world something all of us could be proud of: the first of these was the establishment of a quality new journal under the BCIS auspices and the other, the commissioning of a classic study of the art of Stanley Kirinde, Kadirgamar's contemporary at Trinity College, Kandy and at the University of Ceylon.

The primary objective of these twin endeavours, Kadirgamar told us, was to tell the world that there was more to contemporary Sri Lanka than tea, tourism and terrorism. He lived to see the completion of the first project, but, sadly, not the second. He was able to take a cursory glance, on the afternoon of the day he died, at the final proof copy of *The World of Stanley Kirinde*, a magnificent volume felicitating the renowned painter on the occasion of his reaching the milestone of fifty years as a painter. The volume was conceived to felicitate Kirinde as much as to project an image of Sri Lanka through the eyes of the famed artist. What Kadirgamar and the Committee he put together to accomplish this task found particularly attractive was the fact that the entirety of Kirinde's work was rooted in, and inspired by Sri Lanka, its villages, its mountains, its people, its literature, while his vision was inspired by classical painting of both east and west. In other words, Kirinde's art was imbued with the best of both worlds. He was rooted in the "particular" but was inspired by the "universal", much as Kadirgamar himself. As he once told his audience at Oxford University, and all of us, Oxford was the icing on the cake that was baked at home.

Lakshman Kadirgamar presided over the function organized to release the maiden volume of *International Relations in a Globalizing World*, the brand spanking new journal of the BCIS (the first of the special twin projects of Kadirgamar referred to above), on the day of his passing. Immediately prior to releasing the journal, he was invited by the BCIS director to launch the Centre's newly designed website. As he pressed the button to accomplish the task, the lights of the BCIS auditorium went out due to a technical glitch. The superstitious among those present held their breath, while some even expressed fear and anxiety. If Kadirgamar's equanimity was disturbed by the turn of events, he certainly did not reveal any trace of such disturbance. As ever, on that August 2005 evening too, he displayed admirable calm and grace under pressure. He was always philosophical about death, having schooled himself to live in its shadow ever since he decided on first becoming the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, to intellectually and ideologically take on the misguided and disingenuous architects of the LTTE. Let me illustrate Minister Kadirgamar's resolute opposition to terrorism and violence of the LTTE with extracts from two of his key speeches:

> Continued fund-raising abroad, through which terrorist activities in Sri Lanka are being sustained by the LTTE, has become a major factor militating against the Government's search for a political solution on the basis of devolution of power. The activities of the LTTE abroad have also received considerable publicity in Sri Lanka. There is, therefore, a growing public opinion against the seeming impunity with which the LTTE conducts its fund-raising activities and their propaganda work directed at sustaining terrorism in Sri Lanka.
>
> (From a speech made in Parliament on 9 February, 1996)

On a later occasion, contributing to the debate on terrorism, he addressed the UN General Assembly on the 1st of October, 2001, and observed:

> The horrors of the morning of Tuesday the eleventh of September, the spectacle of International terrorism in action viewed live on television screens the world over, have cast a heavy pall of gloom on all of us and on humanity as a whole. The terrorism of the eleventh of September, so shocking as it was, gave rise to a coming together of the people of this great city of New York in the finest traditions of humanity. Let us hope that

such a deep sense of togetherness of all of humanity at times of great crises will continue to be pervasive.

Those bullets, fired from unused upper reaches of what was once the home of my now also departed bosom pal, Lakshman Thalaysingham, snuffed out the life of one of the finest Sri Lankans I am privileged to call my friend and collaborator. Born on 12 April, 1932, he died on 12 August, 2005. Ours was a brief but glorious friendship. Fittingly so, for in most matters, the Lakshman Kadirgamar I know preferred quality to quantity. It was another civilized Sri Lankan, and yet another victim of the savage LTTE, Neelan Tiruchelvam, who introduced me to Lakshman Kadirgamar, a little over a decade ago. I had applied for a senior position at The Commonwealth Secretariat in London, U.K., and was keen to have a letter of recommendation from the distinguished Foreign Minister. Consequent to a meeting I had with him, kindly arranged by Neelan, Lakshman Kadirgamar, generous as ever, unhesitatingly gave me the invaluable piece of paper I had sought.

Years passed by, and during the ensuing period, from the sidelines I watched with great admiration Kadirgamar's brilliant and spellbinding performance as our Foreign Minister. In particular, I relished the finesse with which he handled the challenge of LTTE terrorism. To say that it was primarily his powers of persuasion and skillful handling of sensitive domestic and international issues that redeemed Sri Lanka's sullied image, is surely no exaggeration. Needless to say, then President Kumaratunga, the Leader of the Opposition Ranil Wickremasinghe, and several dedicated and effective Sri Lankan diplomats not given to "megaphone diplomacy", played their quiet and crucial behind-the-scenes role in this restoration process, but the helmsman was clearly Lakshman Kadirgamar. How vastly differently and infinitely more sophisticatedly he would have handled our "post-war" international relations today had he lived! We would never have been kicked around like a political football or treated like a *pariah* state by either the UN or the international community if he were yet our Foreign Minister. He would have played an invaluable role to prevent us from losing the peace after accomplishing the daunting task of winning the "unwinnable" war. Kadirgamar would surely have advocated and seen to it that Sri Lanka heeded the message instead of seeking to shoot the messenger! As evidence of my assertion, I would like to cite his brilliant BBC *Hardtalk* interview with Zeinab Badawi on 16 March, 2005. Many were the provocative and penetrating questions hurled at him as is the established style of interviewers on this particular BBC programme. Lakshman Kadirgamar was firm, resolute and unwavering in the stand that he took in the defence of his country throughout the interview without once losing his composure. I would sincerely recommend this particular interview be used as a model by any Sri Lankan politician or public servant when facing all such interviews.

It was my friend and Kadirgamar's colleague Nanda Godage who paved the way for me to get close to his Minister. Nanda encouraged me to get to know Kadirgamar, observing that any and all encounters with the gentleman should prove both congenial and wholesome. To my immense gratification, Kadirgamar responded graciously and warmly to my overtures of friendship. The memories of my subsequent close association with Lakshman Kadirgamar I shall cherish for the rest of my life. The "mellow tones" of Kadirgamar that his Oxford contemporary Peter Jay has spoken about, I shall always hear in my mind's ear. Ranil Wickremasinghe, in the course of his tribute to Kadirgamar in Parliament, noted that a meal with the Minister offered food for the body as well as for the mind. On most occasions, I found that a mere telephone conversation with him provided such nourishment for the soul.

In my many encounters with Kadirgamar, I was able to discover what an exceptional human being he truly was. He was an exemplary citizen of Sri Lanka. There was in him not a trace of racism. He was Sri Lankan to the core. And, great and irreparable as the loss of Lakshman Kadirgamar is, the greater tragedy I find is that neither the zealots amongst the Sinhalese who mourned his death, nor their counterparts within the Tamil community who gorily rejoiced over it, understood, nor yet truly understand, Lakshman Kadirgamar the human being. Both groups have missed the wood for the trees. The zealots among the Sinhalese mistook his principled and resolute opposition to the separatist extremism of the LTTE as a sign of his pro-Sinhalaness. Their moral inadequacy, from which arose their failure and inability to understand Kadirgamar's heartfelt aversion to ethnic and religious labels, made the zealots among the Tamils conclude that his championing of an overarching Sri Lankan identity was an act of political expediency at best, and a manifestation of anti-Tamilness at worst. It is ultimately the tragedy of Sri Lanka that neither zealot will ever know the essential goodness of the man whose passing in 2005 all true Sri Lankans will continue to mourn sincerely today and in the years to come.

My abiding memory of Lakshman Kadirgamar will be his innate Sri Lankanness. He desperately and tirelessly strove to make all Sri Lankans – Muslim, Tamil, Malay, Burgher, Sinhala – realize the value of living together in one united country. He put Sri Lanka on the map of the world as few of his fellow Sri Lankans have been able to do. As noted above, his last public act on the evening of 12 August, 2005, before his time on earth ran out, was to preside over a ceremony to mark the release of the inaugural issue of *International Relations in a Globalizing World (IRGW)*, the journal of the BCIS. The release of *IRGW*, as Adam Roberts, another Balliol man has observed, was a key part of Lakshman Kadirgamar's long term plan to raise the level of Sri Lanka's contribution to international diplomacy. In similar vein, his decision to bring out that felicitation volume for Stanley Kirinde, I am personally aware, was part of his long-term plan to raise the level of Sri Lanka's contribution to the world of culture and the arts.

All in all, Lakshman Kadirgamar was a peerless fellow-traveller, a man of the utmost refinement of word, thought and deed. Sri Lanka could not at the time of his death by assassination, and cannot today, afford to lose sons of his calibre. But then, it is the tall trees that catch the wind. He is being missed, and will continue to be missed, by every decent Sri Lankan in the years ahead amidst the encircling gloom and doom.

12 August, 2010

Colonial Cousins: Mohandas Gandhi, Leonard Woolf, and the Place of the Rural

Anupama Mohan

I.

> If we want freedom . . . we will have to give the villages their *proper place* (Mohandas Gandhi, *Harijan,* 1940; my emphasis).

Gandhi called on India to accord villages their proper place but what *is* the proper place for villages in the twenty-first century? In the early decades of the twentieth century, a heady political climate ruled the Indian subcontinent: the anticolonial movement in India and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) provided a volatile field for competing discourses of nationalism, modernity, and collective living. It is in the light of such momentous times that Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* need to be revisited. Woolf's quasi-anthropological novel and Gandhi's fictionalized manifesto may seem to be an unlikely (albeit, as I will argue, a rather heroic) pair to study together, but it is revealing how much the two share in terms of a critique of colonial modernity. Gandhi's Gujarati original was published in 1909 and was promptly banned by the British government for fear of sedition, after which Gandhi himself translated the book into English in 1910. Woolf's novel came out in 1913, after a seven-year long stay in Ceylon, where he served as a colonial administrator for the Empire. Written, then, a few years apart, both works are centrally concerned with notions of colonial collectivity, and especially with the village as a unit of social organization in South Asia.

Gandhi's manifesto *Hind Swaraj* was written during an inspired ten-day period between 13 and 22 November 1909, on board the ship *Kildonan Castle*, when he was returning from England to South Africa "after what proved to be an abortive lobbying mission to London" (Parel, xiv). The epiphanic nature of *Hind Swaraj* was important to Gandhi, who consistently reiterated the salience of his treatise to the Indian nationalistic project and to his larger vision of collective living centred in the rural. In a letter to Nehru dated October 5, 1945, Gandhi affirms unequivocally:

> I have said that I still stand by the system of Government envisaged in *Hind Swaraj*. These are not mere words. All the experience gained by me since 1908 [*sic*] when I wrote the booklet has confirmed the truth of my belief... I am convinced if India is to attain true freedom, and through India the world also, then sooner or later, the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* [*CW*] 81: 319).

An incredulous Nehru – arch-opponent and arch-admirer of Gandhi to his last days – wrote back, quite outraged:

> I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and nonviolence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent (October 9, 1945, qtd. in appendix to *Hind Swaraj,* 153).

While the salvos exchanged between India's two most charismatic leaders make for a fascinating study in themselves, I am more interested in tracing lines of intersection between Gandhi's critique of modernity, based on the bedrock of his vision of the village in India, and Leonard Woolf's critique of imperialism, emerging from his vision of the Ceylonese village, both spawning important trajectories of intellectual thought within the subcontinent regarding nationality, citizenship and the formation of individual and collective subjectivity.

Woolf's role as a colonial officer intimately informed his vision of the Ceylonese village and his debut novel, *The Village in the Jungle*, is a remarkable document of the times; extraordinary when one considers th-at Woolf was only 24 when he first enrolled as a cadet in the Ceylon Civil Service, spending a formative seven years in Kandy, Colombo, and finally in Hambantota in the south of Ceylon. It is from this experience that he fashioned his vision of rural coloniality, that forms the backdrop of *The Village in the Jungle* and *Stories from the East*, a collection of three stories based on his Ceylon days. These were published after his return to England, his marriage to Virginia Stephen and resignation from the Civil Service, marking an eventful time in Woolf's life. At this point, he was just 32 years old. To this "set" of writings also belong the letters Woolf exchanged with close friend, fellow-Apostle, and later luminary of the Bloomsbury group, Lytton Strachey, the meticulously annotated journal he kept (under orders of the then Governor-General as part of imperial policy) while serving between 1908 and 1911 as Assistant Government Agent in the Hambantota district (published in 1963 as *Ceylon Diaries*), and his personal diary entries that would eventually become *Growing* (1961), a part of his five-volume autobiography.

In Sri Lanka, the impact of Woolf's novel has been vast and significant. Yasmine Gooneratne posits that "the novel holds a central place in the English literature of Ceylon as the first great (if not quite the first) work of creative art to emerge in modern times from the experience of local living" (3). Regi Siriwardena notes in his 1979 essay on Woolf that "it was a novel unique in the English literature of the colonial era, since Woolf had succeeded in doing what none of his contemporaries, not even Kipling or Conrad or Forster, had attempted – to get inside the skins of Asian peasants (qtd. in Gooneratne, 253).

Woolf's work also set the tone, in many ways, for much of the writing in English that was to follow in Sri Lanka. It was anti-canonical and counter-discursive in how it would not quite fit in with the Bloomsbury brand of intellectualism and models of aesthetic angst, and even while employing several of the themes and methods of what would come to characterize high British Modernist writing, with its discomfiting gaze on the colonial, and an emphasis on a *Weltanschauung* alternate in power and purpose to the modern/English, it remained rather on the peripheries of the fashionable writing of its time. At the same time, it acquired a new-canonical status within Sri Lanka, and became exemplary in the way in which it presented, with empathy and sympathy, a micro-narrative of the colonial presence in Sri Lanka. Like Forster's *Passage to India,* the novel was a grim reminder of the dangers of the orientalizing gaze, even as it presented, differently from the meta-physical and quasi-nihilistic vision of the *Passage*, possibilities for real encounters of affirmative mutual understanding.

Both Gandhi and Woolf proved influential, albeit in different ways, for other South Asian writers of the twentieth-century who engaged with the village as a literary trope and fashioned the rural as a site for social transformation. In Woolf's novel, the anti-imperialist critique paves way for the recognition of a more universal, more fundamental existential human condition, and when the jungle finally consumes the village at the close of the novel, the narrative points tow-

ards an elemental isolation that connects Woolf precociously with the Modernist literary movement of which his wife would prove to be a shaping force. Where Woolf's artistic vision, at once empathetic and pessimistic, fails to provide for the Ceylonese village, in the grand march of modern time, a future, Gandhi insists on modernity's transience, presenting the village as a unit of collective survival, from out of the apocalyptic *telos* of urban progress. That these two thinkers chose to place their emphasis on the village, albeit in dialectical ways, itself points to the crucial need for a re-reading of the village as a central trope in twentieth-century critiques of modernity, colonialism, and nationalism.

II.

It is by now a cliché that Gandhi's vision of village economics and rural living was a romanticized and idealized version whose impracticability in a modern age created its own demise. This may appear, in theory, to be true, given the boom in electronic technology, the proliferation of cities and megapolises, and the complex trends of labour migration from villages to cities. And yet the figures of the 2001 census of India testify to the continuing survival of the village; according to the census, 74% of Indians live in 638,365 different villages whose sizes vary remarkably. 236,004 Indian villages have a population less than 500, while 3976 villages have a population of 10,000 and more[1]. The success of the *Panchayati Raj* system of governance advocated by Gandhi (that he called *Gram Swaraj* or village selfgovernance) tells a different story. Adopted as the system of local administration by Indian state governments during the 1950s and 60s, and constitutionally granted politico-legal status in 1992, the development of *Gram Panchayats* as agents of rural transformation, attests to the need for a revisiting of Gandhian ideas regarding village collectivity. This is significant not because the village as a unit of collectivisation has *not* become, in the great march of urban progress, a moribund entity, but because to resuscitate Gandhi's village is to also glean insights into the processes of nation-building and nationalism by which we have come to accept the organization of civil society, and then to perhaps breathe life into paradigms and technologies far too easily considered outmoded.

Hind Swaraj is Gandhi's central treatise on government, modernity, and "Indianness", and at various points in his life, Gandhi emphasized its salience. Gandhi perceived that the homogenizing forces of a cobbled-together nationalism, that sought to play down, indeed sublate, difference in the name of a common, external enemy, helped constitute solidarity in problematic ways. Invariably therefore, he emphasized the village as the locus for Indian collectivity and by creating within his ashrams a prototype of the kind of progressive village he had in mind in his construction of "India", Gandhi sought to present an alternative to "national" politics. When Nehru and Gandhi argued over their different visions of the village, there was more at work than just semantics. But there was also that. Nehru's harkening to conventional definitions of village was an attempt to align himself with that representational scale of ideas in which the village stood for everything that was opposed to the city, which was the new hub of economic and social progress. A village, in this sense, was all that was "backward intellectually and culturally", a place that foreclosed all possibility of progress. Gandhi's definition of the village eschewed its place within such a discourse of representation by which the village is already marked as the epistemological other of the city. In arguing for responsible technology, communal accountability, and social and economic sharing, Gandhi was at once challenging Nehru's semantic conflation of village and primitivism, as well as outlining his vision of the village as a site for social change and as the arena for a new civil order. In recalibrating the definition of a village within a matrix of the indigenous / agrarian / communal as opposed to the colonial / industrial / individual model, Gandhi was tapping into a mode of collectivity he perceived as ancient, time-tested, and appropriate for the Indian cultural milieu.

In questioning the very discourse of English civility as the sociocultural edifice of its civilization and its colonialism, Gandhi was also foregrounding a nuanced reading of British social organization and by corollary, calling for alternative, indigenous models of local self-government. His ambitious program of *swaraj* was such a plan and his various experiments with village collectivity in the form of *Panchayati Raj* and various ashrams[2] – the Phoenix settlement and the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa and more famously, Sabarmati in India – provided the space wherein Gandhi attempted to develop an alternative to the hegemonic notion of modern/nationalist/industrial society. An ethos such as the one Gandhi attempted to forge in these settlements challenged, as many scholars have argued, notions of a bourgeois, quasi-capitalist, fervidly nationalistic society whose underpinnings within the politics of colonial civility made it difficult to fully disengage from colonial *Realpolitik* and that in many ways, did not fully represent the interests of the teeming non-literate millions of India. It is to these millions Gandhi reached out, in imaginative but often contradictory and politically ambivalent ways, and from a vantage-point within the surge of the nationalist movement, Gandhi attempted to steer protest away, as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph point, from the public statist domain of *swantantrata* or political independence towards the more private but also collective space of *swaraj* or self-government, a movement that Gandhi perceived would be the more lasting or enduring form of freedom (144-146). For Gandhi, the rural could prove to be the fulcrum of an organic collective capable of vision and a self-evolved modernity:

> The village of my dreams is still in my mind. After all, every man lives in the world of his dreams. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against any one in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera nor smallpox; no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour… it is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph offices etc. For me it is material to obtain the real article and the rest will fit into the picture afterwards. If I let go of the real thing, all else goes (Letter to Nehru, 5 October 1945, qtd. in Parekh, 150-151).

III.

Interestingly, at about the same time as *Hind Swaraj* was written, Leonard Woolf, a British colonial officer in Ceylon, was coming to some of his own insights into the nature of rural living and the politics of coloniality vis-à-vis the Ceylonese village. The decision to join the Ceylon Civil Service at the end of five years at Cambridge also set Woolf apart from his fellow Apostles and proved life-changing. As Selma Meyerowitz writes, "the sense of being an outsider… because of religion and class position" helped him forge "[a] synthesis of intellectual and aesthetic theory with political practice [that] was the beginning of a commitment to practical politics which Woolf maintained throughout his life" (4). The time Woolf spent in Ceylon was a formative period; many of his convictions regarding

[1] http://www.censusindia.net/results/2001 census_data_index.html

[2] From the Sanskrit *ashraya* which means shelter or haven; hence, *ashram* is the place of shelter. In all, Gandhi founded seven ashrams, two in South Africa and five in India. Interestingly, the four ages of man in Hindu philosophy are also characterized as the four "ashrams" of life: *brahmacharya* (the student stage), *grihastha* (the householder stage), *vanaprastha* (the hermit stage), and *sanyasa* (the ascetic stage). Gandhian ashrams could, in this sense, also be seen as comprising a stage in forging civil society, as experiments in rural collective living.

the Empire, the fissures between its rhetoric and politics, and the need for an internationalism that did not become exploitative, were formed and reinforced by the work he did in Jaffna (1905-1907), Kandy (1907-1908), and Hambantota (1908-1911). While in Ceylon, Woolf learned Tamil and Sinhala and kept a record of his final stint in Hambantota in scrupulous detail. These records were presented to him as *Diaries in Ceylon* when he revisited Sri Lanka in 1960, and along with his letters to Strachey and others, comprise a fascinating document of the times. The diaries and the letters present rivalling sides of Woolf in Ceylon; while the former outline in meticulous detail Woolf's constant involvement in "essential aspects of village life: health and sanitation of the villagers and livestock, methods of salt collection, agriculture and irrigation, and education", the letters to Strachey and others suggest a fascinating personal commentary on "the cognitive slippages and Conradian misrecognitions concerning what colonial reality really involves" (Boehmer, 188).

Elsewhere[3] I have argued for the ways in which Woolf's novel can be seen as a complex meditation upon the nature of colonial modernity and a trenchant critique of Bloomsbury radicalism that Woolf could never completely be a part of. Through a comparative and contextual reading of Woolf's letters to his Bloomsbury friends (particularly Lytton Strachey), his official logbooks while serving as officer in various districts of Ceylon, and his personal diary entries that eventually provided the stuffing for *Growing*, I make the point that there is in the novel a very deliberate essentializing of the Ceylonese village which allows Woolf to craft his critique of colonialist and modernist premises. It is important to understand this essentializing as one of the working impulses of the novel whose real strength lies not so much in the sensitivity with which Woolf portrays the horrors of colonialism, remarkable as that may be, but in providing a searching exploration of the grim underbelly of twentiethcentury liberalism and the limits of the radicalism of early metropolitan English literary modernism. In this essay, I want to suggest some ways in which Woolf's novel was responding to contemporary nationalism in Ceylon and how it came to provide a template in Sri Lanka, as Gandhi's ideas did in India (albeit oppositely – the rural as utopia), for imagining the colonial village as a dystopian space. This was a vision that enabled Woolf to mount a critique of the Empire and the sweeping changes it had entailed even in a remote corner of the world seemingly unconnected to the metropolises of Europe; it was also a template that was to prove influential within Sri Lanka for a number of writers in the twentieth century who wrote against this first portrayal of Ceylon in English by a member (albeit liminally so) of the Bloomsbury.

Woolf's attitude toward religion of all kinds was, in many ways, shaped by his own experience as a non-practising Jew, and indeed, as has been ably shown in Victoria Glendinning's biography of Woolf, his general mood of detachment towards life and its pressing problems ("a kind of fatalistic and half-amused resignation", as he himself put it) (*Sowing*, 12) stemmed, in large part, from his sense of being an "outsider" – religious and social – to (Christian) English society in general and to the more immediate intellectual society of the cultivated, privileged Cambridge Apostles and his Bloomsbury friends. Despite this or possibly because of his "outsiderliness", in his memoirs, Woolf documents a fondness for Buddhism's philosophical uncertainties and a personal admiration for the contemplative life as enshrined in the Buddha's teachings. Such a fondness, however, was very different from the deep interest shown by American military officer Henry Olcott, who founded the Buddhist Theosophical Society in Colombo, or Madame Blavatsky whose interest in Hindu and Buddhist revivalism in India and Ceylon respectively were to profoundly influence Anagarika Dharmapala and his credo of Buddhist nationalism[4]. During the time that Woolf served as a colonial officer (1904-1911), Dharmapala's writings and teachings were at a zenith of popularity, and Buddhism in Ceylon was, as George D. Bond notes, being reasserted by at least three groups: "the Kandyan élite who sought to regain their traditional position; the militant reformists who followed Dharmapala completely in his attempt to revive Buddhism and nationalism; and a more moderate group that might be called neotraditionalists who, while admiring Dharmapala's high ideals, sought more political and less radical ways of restoring Buddhism in the modern context" (61-62). It is with this last group that one might speculate Woolf's own affinities lay. D. B. Jayatilaka, who was a leading politician in the Ceylonese liberation movement as well as a senior statesman of the Buddhist laity movement (Dharmapala was a monk), published in 1901 in *The Buddhist* an article significantly entitled "Practical Buddhism", that adumbrated the precepts for the theory and practice of a layman's Buddhism in contradistinction to Dharmapala's militant nationalistic form of Buddhist revival. The central tenets of Jayatilaka's Practical Buddhism emphasised a traditional belief in renunciation, non-violence, and the pious life contingent upon a threefold task: "to observe the precepts, to support one's family by right livelihood, and to 'do good in the world'" (Bond, 65). Such an approach departed greatly from Olcott's and Dharmapala's insistence upon a "this-worldly asceticism for the laity" (Bond, 64), and the militant, even violent, connections they sought to make between British colonial policy and the decline of Buddhism in Ceylon.

A close reading of Woolf's novel provides some evidence of his distance from Dharmapala's aggressively militant kind of Buddhist nationalism and an affinity for Jayatilaka's less glamorous and more pacifist form of Buddhist belief[5]. Such distance also meant that Woolf could not bring himself to share the vision of a rural utopia that Dharmapala and his followers championed. Through the focus on Silindu and the *veddah* people (an indigenous, forest-dependent community in Sri Lanka that follow a mix of animist and nominally Buddhist beliefs), the novel looks at a demographic that within Ceylon had for centuries been marginalized, and to whom reached neither the tenets of Protestant Buddhism nor the limited benefits of colonial organization. Indeed, Silindu's life can be seen as emblematising the crisis brought on by the compulsions of coloniality upon that Practical Buddhist directive "to observe the precepts, to support one's family by right livelihood, and to 'do good in the world'". The novel's centre is occupied by a ritual pilgrimage Silindu undertakes, ostensibly to rid himself of a physical and spiritual sense of unease stemming from his intuitive knowledge of the malefic designs of Babehami and Fernando. The pilgrimage and its ritualistic importance allow Woolf the space to expand upon the highly syncretic nature of village life and to emphasize precisely those aspects of an intercultural, rural fabric that did not quite fit into (and indeed, defied the parameters of) the exclusivist and narrowly nationalist vision of the Sinhala nation as championed

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[3] This is a forthcoming article entitled "Bloomsbury and Beddagama: Leonard Woolf and Narrating the Village" where I closely examine Woolf's novel, traditionally read either as an Orientalist fantasy or dismissed as inferior to the work of other modernists, especially that of his iconic wife Virginia, as implicitly concerned with the equivocal radicalism of Bloomsbury's politics. I suggest that through sleights of narrative and the rhetorical trope of an essentialized village, Woolf crafts a powerful counter-discourse of the colonial Other, and brings together in his novel the multiple co-ordinates of race, class, and empire to pose searching questions about the possibilities of ethical choice and action for a subaltern in a modern world where the legacies of colonialism have come home.

[4] See George D. Bond (53-57) for a fuller analysis of the influence of Olcott and Blavatsky upon a young Dharmapala.

[5] Woolf records his fascination for the contemplative and meditative aspect of Buddhist philosophy, all the more remarkable to him because he was sensitive to the ways in which it provided a stay to its followers who were among the most impoverished people he had ever met (*Growing*, 159). In the novel too this interest in Buddhism emerges in the descriptions of Buddhist ceremonies that perform a primarily communal function – of bringing people together in a mood of quiet contemplation, of allowing them to recast their struggles and hardships within a larger, cosmic order (162-163).

by Dharmapala and his followers. Such representation is conceivably also a throwback to those pre-colonial structures of communal interaction that, Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez argues, existed at the village level in Ceylon (409), having survived successive colonizations by the Europeans. Beddagama can, thus, be read as a vehicle for Woolf's dystopian allegory of colonial malfeasance, but also an early, provocative riposte to contemporary visions of rural utopia that were rife in the discourse of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism of the times. Woolf's alienation from such a narrowly imagined collectivity was, indeed, part of what Leventhal argues was a general "dislike for capitalism, nationalism, and communism . . . [and] a suspicion of any form of militant ideology . . ." (165)[6]. But it was more. When proposals for Indian independence were being discussed in London, Woolf, then an influential member of the Labour Party, lobbied strongly lest Ceylon be left out just because it did not have a freedom movement as organized as the one in India: "If a large measure of responsible government be granted to India and not to Ceylon", he argued, "the position will be grotesque and impossible" (qtd. in Clarance)[7]. Again, as early as 1938, long before federalism was an option on the Tamil political agenda, Woolf sensed and knew that the general drift of the Sinhala nationalist form of anticolonialism needed to be checked early or it would create a civil crisis within the unformed nation; "Consideration should be given to the possibility of ensuring a large measure of devolution or even of introducing a federal system on the Swiss model", he wrote in a memorandum for the Labour party in 1938 (qtd. in Steele). Given that the Swiss model is broadly tripartite and regionally cantonal, Woolf's recommendation presented the perspicacious view that Ceylon's minorities – the Tamils, the Muslims, the Burghers, and the *veddahs* – also deserved to be part of a new citizenry. Some of this ecumenical Fabian spirit also steals into Woolf's novel, where the focus on the *veddah* community and the central space accorded to Silindu's pilgrimage to a Tamil shrine in Beragama become the space for adumbrating, in an overwhelmingly bleak narrative, a vision of real communality and inter-cultural solidarity that was, indeed, a far cry from the bounded, exclusivist Sinhala-Buddhist community of Dharmapala's imagining.

In a fuller, book-length study, I have argued that, as Gandhi's ideas of utopian village collectivisation influenced writers like Raja Rao, Premchand, and O. V. Vijayan, Woolf's dystopian vision proved to be the implicit muse for the early nationalist and anticolonial writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy, Martin Wickramasinghe, and Piyadasa Sirisena that became an integral part of the popular idiom of Sinhala nationalist discourse where "images of the village community that inspired [a] nationalist vision" attempted to create and make normative what Stanley J. Tambiah has called "the lost utopia" of past ages (*Buddhism Betrayed*, 109). Here, I will adumbrate a suggestive comparative reading of Woolf and Wickramasinghe that provides a clue to understanding the ways in which *The Village in the Jungle* proved in the twentieth century to be an iconic work in Ceylon.

When Wickramasinghe wrote *Gamperaliya*, just four years before Ceylon's independence in 1948, the emphasis on the rural and the indigenous provided a powerful evocation of a precolonial identity, all the more precious given that, unlike India at the same time, Ceylon did not go through an intense anticolonial movement against British rule (Goonetilleke, 11). Leonard Woolf's rather unflattering picture of a Ceylonese village was the only (in)famous portrayal of Ceylon in the imperial literary market-place, and *Gamperaliya* is impelled, at least in its design, by Wickramasinghe's desire, to present a different Ceylon, a more "authentic" Ceylon. Through Nanda (and her mother Matara Haminé before her), Wickramasinghe is able to demarcate a threshold of inviolable morality that is tied intimately to his utopian vision of a robust rural collectivity that British colonization has touched but not quite been able to destroy. The dichotomy between the public and the private provides a vital structuring principle for understanding the novel's motives, and the allegorical links between the *walauwe* and the village, the village and the nation show the ways in which Wickramasinghe's novel was registering and responding to the colonial exigencies of its time. The public-private dichotomy allows the novel to craft an ideological framework for its representation of a Sinhala, Buddhist, rural collectivity brought under the stresses of capitalist, colonial change by British rule. At the same time, the focus away from colonial *encounter* (such as the one between Silindu and the British magistrate in Woolf's novel) and on the life of the *walauwe* itself allows for a distillation of those aspects of Sinhalese-Buddhist life that marked for Wickramasinghe what was unique, abiding, and valuable in Ceylon's history and culture. The novel's record of subtle changes in class structures brought on by colonial social transition paves the way for a re-siting of moral and cultural order in the vision of a fading utopia of rural unity. Invariably, such a vision found its most potent representation in the policing of women's social and sexual lives, a process whose ruptures become evident in the conflicts between women's public and private selves. In and through such conflicts, the novel hints at the fraught underside of Ceylon's rural paradise in the new century, but unlike the shocking denouement of Woolf's novel, the close of *Gamperaliya* projects in the reconciliation of Nanda and Piyal a rapprochement between the changing faces of rural and urban Ceylon, a rapprochement that provided for the nationalist discourse of his time (and for that of later decades) a symbol and a topos for a unified Sinhala identity.

Read together, *Gamperaliya*'s ideological debt to Woolf's novel becomes an interesting new way to understand colonial Ceylon's two most important fictional works of the first half of the twentieth century and their different templates and modes of representational realism. In both Woolf's and Wickramasinghe's novels, the play between the public and private realms[8] constitutes an interesting experiment in representing subaltern consciousness. Given the imperial times the novels were written in (and in Woolf's case, he was also a colonial officer), neither novel is too far from the Manichean logic of colonial categories. While Woolf's delineation of caste transgression becomes more manifestly subsumed into the positions of Orientalist and Other (given his outsider position as a white colonial officer), Wickramasinghe's portrayal of the loosening of social taboos pertaining to class is more explicitly encoded within the novel's central dichotomy of the public and private. But both novels, in their own ways, were responding to the pressures of the colonial, and in delineating the rural, they project opposite visions of the Ceylonese village: in Woolf, rural Ceylon as the last outpost of the Empire becomes compressed into a dystopian setting of brutish existence at the brink of extin-

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[6]In his belief in the necessity for emphasizing means as well as ends, Woolf is almost Gandhian: in one of his letters, he writes to Kingsley Martin that "I cannot pretend to believe what you believe or that any one, individual or government, Jew, Arab, capitalist, or communist, is justified in doing immense evil immediately on the excuse that he thinks it will hypothetically in the distant future prevent a greater evil or produce a very great absolute good" (qtd. in Leventhal, 164).

[7]Woolf's interest in Ceylon's welfare is well discussed in William Clarance's essay "The Ironies of Federalism". Clarance, a former UNCHR representative in Sri Lanka, calls Woolf a "firm friend of Ceylon" (21). In an article in *The Guardian* dated 27 October 2006, "Failure can aid the science of comparative peace", Jonathan Steele writes of Leonard Woolf's precocious and far-sighted "view that only federalism could solve the conflict between the island's two main population groups".

[8]Stylistically, as well, both novels mix omniscient third-person narration with ethnographic, quasi-digressive commentary, simulating the fraught circuits of authority and authenticity in representation. In Woolf, even when he speaks in the voice of the subaltern, such authenticity is undermined by the very office of power he inhabited where the mechanisms of colonial control (of which Woolf was himself well aware) allowed for his Orientalizing narrative. In *Gamperaliya*, the modalities of "realism" are very distinct from the representational conventions in the Sinhalese Jatakas that Wickramasinghe extolled in his critical writing; instead, what we find in the novel is a form of realism "borrowed from the West" (as Sarachchandra extolled it) as well as determined by a complex interplay of nostalgia, memory, and desire.

ction, while in Wickramasinghe, the record of the passing of a way of life in a small Ceylonese village provides the space for a tribute to "a lost utopia".

The ideological history of the rural in India and Sri Lanka intimately connects Gandhi and Woolf and later writers who wrote under/against the influence of their ideas. In this article, I have tried to suggest that at the beginning of the twentieth century, notions of utopia and dystopia circulated in the literary (and political) imaginaries of South Asia in ways that tied the rural to the incipiently national and the visionary collective. The dystopian vision in Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* and the utopian vision in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* are uncannily aligned in terms of their purpose: both works subvert the dominant narratives of modernism/modernity, question the performance of English civility within the ideological theatre of colonialism, and critique contemporary efforts to forge an aggressive brand of nationalism based on visions of homogenous identities. In time, Gandhi's and Woolf's pioneering (albeit opposed) ideas regarding the village and its future were to deeply influence writers in India and Sri Lanka. Both men were, in many ways, colonial cousins, connected by a shared interest in the undoing of the Empire; it is a poignant concurrence that, despite their differing political affiliations, they both chose to craft visions of the village as central to narratives of Indian and Ceylonese nationhood.

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The Portuguese in the Orient
ICES, 253 pages, 2010
Rs. 900.00 / US $ 20.00

This is the only volume which has been so far published to mark the 500th anniversary of the advent of the Portuguese on the island and the latter's first fateful contact with the West and the colonial powers. However, the publication's contents are not restricted only to the Portuguese presence in the island but include some aspects of their intervention in other parts of the *Estado da Índia* as well. The publication consists of contributions on varying aspects of the Portuguese presence made by ten scholars who have specialised in this field. The contents of the volume present an interesting and varied view of the events of the times, including two important incidents in the history of Ceylon; the Sinhala rebellion and the *Malvana* convention. The publication also discusses religious conversion as well as linguistic influence in Ceylon and India.

Intolerance: Hues and Issues

Michael Roberts

"We are a defeated people", said a middle-aged lecturer friend at the University of Jaffna when we met during my brief visit to the Jaffna Peninsula in early June 2010. "People are living freely…There is no fear, but where is the political solution?", complained the journalist Aiyathurai Satchithanandam to a fellow-journalist, Ross Tuttle, when the latter visited the Jaffna Peninsula recently. The tensions and mutterings are exacerbated by the intimidating presence of a swathe of armed personnel in the northern reaches and the oversight of critical junctions by armed men and/or fortified guard posts.

The politicized Tamil voices also claim that Sinhala colonisation is about to be unleashed on their territories, while more specific allegations assert that Buddhist shrines are sprouting in the north (as one step in the government's ulterior intentions).

On a priori reasoning rather than sociological research, I conjecture that such suspicions and claims are inspired by underlying factors that remain mostly unexamined by those presenting the grievances. Tamil nationalist pride took a massive blow when the LTTE was defeated in such a crushing manner. Pirapāharan and the LTTE had stood out for decades as an epitome of Tamil capacity and power (as indeed they were). As the LTTE slid to defeat in the early months of 2009, many Tamil bloggers went into a state of denial.

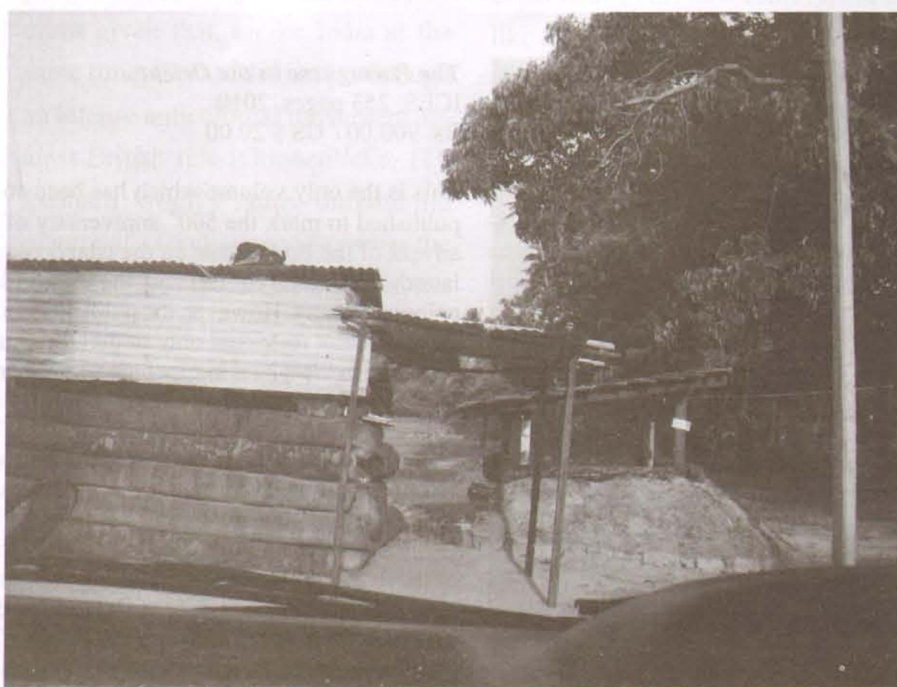
The final decisive outcome in May seems to have generated profound waves of bitterness and fury in some Tamil quarters, especially among migrants in other lands. Even Tamil dissidents and moderates who had reservations about the LTTE were pained. To judge from their comments here and there, they remain hurt. Indeed, without the LTTE threat looming beside them some Tamil dissident voices have shifted towards sour evaluations of the Sri Lankan scene. They display a readiness to accept any rumour retailed along the Tamil circuits. Since the agit-prop activities of Tiger International are still active, these leanings provide fertile conditions for all manner of grievance to take root and reside as definite fact in Tamil minds.

The tale of Buddhist temples sprouting in the north is one such complaint. Its foundations are skimpy. Recently, the PLOTE leader, Dharmalingam Siddharthan, cut the ground from under this assertion; "So far there is no evidence of new Buddhist temples being built in the north. I only see this Kilinochchi one, which has been there even when I was a boy and visited my farm in Kilinochchi. That was there for 70 odd years and now they have rebuilt it. That sort of thing can happen, which should be done. Buddhism is an offspring of Hinduism". His evidence is significant because he resides in Vavuniya and he has "travelled around very freely without any armed guards to visit almost all the resettled villages in the Vanni" since the war ended. He also added that "In the north, there is very good communication between the public and the army. If there's any problem, the people don't hesitate to tell the army, and the army tries their best to do it. I've never come across any serious complaint about the army. In certain areas, the army sends groups of soldiers and rebuilds houses for the civilians"[1].

The picture Siddharthan paints gains in value because it is placed within an explicit argument that the Tamils "want an ethno-federalist state like in Tamil Nadu or…a Tamil speaking province". Furthermore, he felt that "the Sri Lankan government has ulterior motives because the claim of our homeland must be completely destroyed. **Even if it's state land, we feel it is our land**. We want recognition, that is, demarcation of land, something like a province. Why can't we develop those areas? What happened in the Eastern Province is our fear. That is the reason we are asking for control of land power" (emphasis mine).

It is the phrase that I have highlighted, set as it is within his belief that the Tamils are "a separate nationality"[2], that requires our spotlight. Add to this the widespread belief among Tamils today that new Buddhist temples are intruding upon their space. Though Siddharthan disputed this as fact, it would seem that he himself objects to any new temples, even while he is quite happy to accept long-standing ones. It is this particular feature in contemporary Tamil grievances that I wish to highlight because it is founded on the firm belief that there is a "Tamil territory" whose people should control the installation of what, from their view, amount to "intruding alien religious edifices" (my phraseology).

This claim exists within a wider nation-state setting where Hindu *kovils* and shrines flourish in the urban areas and the hill-country regions within the south-central parts of this island. Their double standards are in force here. The backdrop to this context, of course, is not only Tamil patriotism in pain. The victor state is seen not only as Sinhala, but also as Buddhist. The Buddhist masthead is therefore deemed by some Tamils (but not Siddharthan?) to be one of the hegemonic arms endangering the Tamil people and their space.



Army guard post at road T-junction in Kayts Island, Jaffna, June 2010
Photo by Michael Roberts

Reflections via Comparison

As a sensitizing move and a means of reflection, I take the peculiar step of a comparative leap backwards to the year 1948 in the island of "Ceylon" and the situation surrounding those peoples who were identified as "Indian Tamils". Today that label generates problems, as do all other alternatives; so I adopt the term "Malaiyāha Tamils" (meaning Up-country Tamils) because that is said to be the self-appellation favoured in the plantation districts nowadays (Bass, 2001). By

[1] This line of evidence on army behaviour is confirmed quite independently in the statements of T. Sridharan of the EPRLF in his interview with De Silva-Ranasinghe (2010a).

[2] Note that I have myself argued that the SL Tamils have constituted a "nation" ever since they were explicit on this point from 1948/49 (Roberts, 1999, 2008a, 2008b).

venturing upon such a comparative project, I bring into relief those political settings that are marked by two features: (A) where one set of people enjoy numerical preponderance and believe in historical rights of occupation and (B) a temporal moment marked by a transformative triumph after a period of confrontation.

Framed thus, one is in a position to investigate the politics of grievance and the subjective sentiments impelling passionate expressions that contain threads of intolerance within what are seen as "just claims". In other words, the hues of legitimacy attached to these grievances should not preclude one from discerning the extremism threading some of the impassioned statements.

The "Indian Tamils" and the 1920s-2000s

Ceylon gained independence from British colonial rule in 1948 after four decades of pragmatic constitutional struggle that episodically involved verbal tussles across tables (Roberts 1977a). Though seemingly moderate in comparison with the Indian nationalist vocabulary, one must attend to the powerful anti-colonial and nativist sentiments coursing through the political currents of the time. These strands were interlaced with Marxist and socialist currents hostile to capitalism.

At the forefront of the capitalist order in Ceylon at that stage were the British-dominated plantation interests, both plantations proper and the agency houses at the apex of the business order (De Silva, 1982; Snodgrass, 1966). These plantations were mostly in the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka, which had been the centre for the last independent Sinhala kingdom, that of *Sihale* (identified in English as the "Kingdom of Kandy")[3]. These regions were peopled by Sinhala-speakers who had developed a measure of differentiation from the Sinhala-speakers in the lowlands of the south-west after the consolidation of colonial power in the latter regions from the mid-sixteenth century. This context resulted in some differentiation within strong commonalities – so that the twentieth century was bequeathed with the distinction between the "Kandyan Sinhalese" (*kanda-udayo*, *uda rata aya*[4]) and the "Low-Country Sinhalese" (*pāta rata aya*). This differentiation was accentuated by economic processes associated with modern capitalism that resulted in Low-Country Sinhalese outpacing the Kandyans in the economic and social avenues of advancement that produced indigenous capitalist and middle-class families (Roberts, 1973).

From the 1890s through to the 1940s and thereafter, one of the major planks in the anti-colonial rhetoric was the belief that the plantations had developed through the expropriation of lands used by the Kandyan people. The Kandyan Peasantry Commission of 1951 embodied this ideological force. This current of distaste and political hostility embraced the recent Tamil migrants from India who provided the bulk of the labour force sustaining the tea and rubber estates[5]. These workers were identified in the census data as "Indian Tamils" in distinction from the "Ceylon Tamils".

Though Leftist spokesmen championed their cause, the weight of Sinhalese opinion in the 1940s-1970s viewed the underclass Malaiyāha Tamil people as alien outsiders of low status. This was a mark of majoritarian intolerance and Sinhala nativist chauvinism.

Such strands of prejudice had a long history. Indeed, Sinhala "communalism" on this issue surfaced in the late-1920s when the Donoughmore Commission addressed the issue of voting rights in line with its advocacy of universal franchise[6]. The compromise on the rights of the Indian plantation workers engineered then in 1931, which enabled voting rights to some Malaiyāha Tamil people, was one of the issues targeted by anti-colonial nationalists of a Sinhala hue during the 1930s and 1940s. At one point in 1942, P. de S. Kularatne presented this perspective in pithy terms when he described them as having "one foot in Ceylon and both feet in India"[7]. He was identifying their propensity to sustain links with their home villages in the Madras Presidency (Tamilnadu eventually) and thus branding their political sentiments as anti-national.

As soon as independence was secured, this strand of intolerance moved quickly to exclude the vast bulk of the Indian Tamils from the political system through the Ceylon Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948 and the Indian and Pakistani Residence (Citizenship) Act No.3 of 1949. The Westernised-English speaking factions of rightwing politicians around D.S. Senanayake were at the heart of this act of deprivation. Paradoxically, they had the support of the key "Ceylon Tamil" representatives around G.G. Ponnambalam and his Tamil Congress. The "Indian Tamils" were deemed "non-Ceylonese" despite domicile in Sri Lanka for a length of time (Bass, 2001: 8-10) because of their tendency to make periodic visits to their home villages, considered *ur* (native place). The Malaiyāha Tamils had little say in the subsequent agreements between the Sri Lankan and Indian governments, which resulted in the repatriation deals of the 1960s that led to about 400,000 of this marginalized underclass moving back to "homeland India" (where they may well be identified as Sri Lankan Tamils![8]).

I cannot do justice to the complexity of the issues around this topic in a brief excursion, but note here that one can profit from a qualified comparison of the tempestuous relationship between the Malaiyāha Tamils and the host society in Sri Lanka from the 1920s to the 1980s, with the relationship between Turkish migrants and their host society in Germany between the 1950s and 2000s. Take one dimension of this comparison, highlighted by two questions to which impressionistic answers may be sought: when Sri Lanka has contested (contests) India on the cricket field in the last forty years, whom did (do) the majority of "Indian Tamils" with an interest in cricket support? Where do their hearts lie? Likewise, one can ask, when Turkey played (plays) Germany at soccer over the last 40 years, whom did (do) Turkish-Germans with an interest in soccer support? My information from one young Malaiyāha Tamil lecturer at Peradeniya (Sashi Kumar) in 2001 was that most sided with India. One of my friends in Worms, long resident in Germany, reckons that "99% [of the Turkish-Germans] would support Turkey"[9].

Any insights that emerge from such a comparison must, however, note one major geo-political difference. Turkey does not loom above Germany as a big brother-neighbour in the manner in which India and Tamilnadu together cast a "shadow" over Sri Lanka. This is one of the reasons (but not a justification) for the "long series of actions" by various Sri Lankan governments which resulted in the political marginalization of the Malaiyāha Tamils (Bass 2001: 10). Whatever the insights pro-vided by such comparisons, the further and more critical is-

[3] See *Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period* (Roberts, 2004) for this term and a whole array of synonyms.

[4] See *Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period* (Roberts, 2004) for kanda-udayo and its context.

[5] This inflow by small boats and by foot across the north-western jungles began as a trickle of seasonal labour for the coffee plantations in the 19th century. See Roberts 1966, Wesumperuma 1986 and Bass 2001 (and also the work of Ian Vandendriesen).

[6] This episode is relatively neglected in the historiography and cannot be condensed into a few words. Readers should consult Samaraweera, 1981.

[7] See Roberts, Documents, 1977; 1407 & 1484. At one time, the Principal of Ananda College, P. de S. Kularatne (1893-1976) was among those who adopted the so-called "Arya Sinhala" dress. More vitally, he was among the few that remained in the Congress Rump from1947-51 and then became an important backroom voice in the SLFP under Bandaranaike.

[8] See Bass, 2001 (11-14) for the basic details.

[9] Email from Herbert Perera (13 Oct. 2010). But guided by the last European Cup, Lucia Fetzer notes that "there were many Turkish-Germans who were going with both flags" (email, 12 Oct. 2010).

sue is whether such cross-border nationalist sentiments should have any bearing on the voting and civil rights of large migrant populations that have taken root in new countries.

For my purposes here the significant issue arising from this line of thinking is the relationship of "host society" and "migrant mass". In other words, I am marking the conceptual pertinence of the category "host". Without having any say in the enterprise, from the nineteenth century onwards, the Sinhalese people (and Kandyan Sinhalese in particular) were hosts to the influx of Indian Tamil plantation workers (and adjunct interests such as the Chettiyar and other merchant elements). The Germans have also been hosts to migrant Turks, Italians, Eritreans, Tamils, et cetera since World War II, albeit with considerable say in this process.

Mutatis mutandis this issue underlies the presence of the Sinhala-dominated armed forces in the Jaffna Peninsula and the northern Vanni today. Since the 1980s, articulate Ta-mil voices have seen the Sinhalese personnel as an "occupation army" (though it is likely that few Sinhalese would grant that claim). They also believe that they have spatial rights of domicile and majoritarian clout in these territories, even though the territories are a regional part of a long-recognised polity. With the animated hostility aroused by stories about new Buddhist shrines in these lands, they are seeking to exercise their position as "host". This line of protest, of course, derives further emotional force from the pain and shame of military defeat, and the bitterness of a minority subject to majority power.

My argument therefore seeks to highlight implicit facets associated with Tamil grievances. I go further. However heartfelt, I suggest that these Tamil spokespersons are revealing strands of intolerance that match, albeit approximately, the intolerance displayed by the host population of Sinhalese to the rights and practices of the Indian Tamils in their midst during the period of 1931-1980s. To be sure, the Indian Tamils were an underclass rather than a master-class of military personnel serving as the arm of a government that has recently vanquished an insurgent Tamil state. Once they secured the reins of power in 1948, what the political elites in Sri Lanka sought in the 1940s-to-1980s was to continue exploiting the labour power of the Indian Tamil plantation workers, while denying them voting power. Their discrimination was selective.

In the meantime, demographic trends resulted in the Indian Tamil population increasing to the point where they constituted 47.3 percent of the people in the top-country District of Nuwara Eliya in 1981. Sinhala chauvinists were quite disturbed by this phenomenon, but "the UNP-CWC entente" (K.M. de Silva's phrase) that had emerged in the late 1960s served as a considerable buffer in protecting the rights of the Malaiyāha Tamils. Indeed, guided by political expediency, the UNP under J.R. Jayewardene reversed previous policies and promised an extension of the vote to the remaining body of Indian Tamils on the eve of the 1977 elections[10].

This voting power came into force in the 1980s. The pragmatic policies pursued by the leaders of the Indian Tamil community in the context of this asset and the co-option of their factions by subsequent governments seem to have brought about a sea-change in the circumstances of the Malaiyāha Tamils. Generational time has also reshaped sentiments. The younger generations of Malaiyāha Tamils see the estate localities as their *ur* in contrast with the grey-haired cohorts: their estate spaces have been "imbued with meaning" (Bass 2001: 4, 17). Whatever their loyalties to India, they seem to be increasingly accepted now as elements within the local dispensation, aided no doubt by their ability to speak Sinhala and their range of hybrid practices in cuisine and other daily activities (Bass 2001: 17). Thus, I would emphasise the "osmosis of time-in-specific place" as one factor producing this sea-change in both the amendments by immigrant and the (qualified) acceptance by host society. The LTTE threat seems to have contributed to this process; it is arguable that in recent times the Malaiyāha Tamils have benefited (rather like the Muslims, but not exactly) from being, so to speak, in the slipstream of the LTTE cauldron.

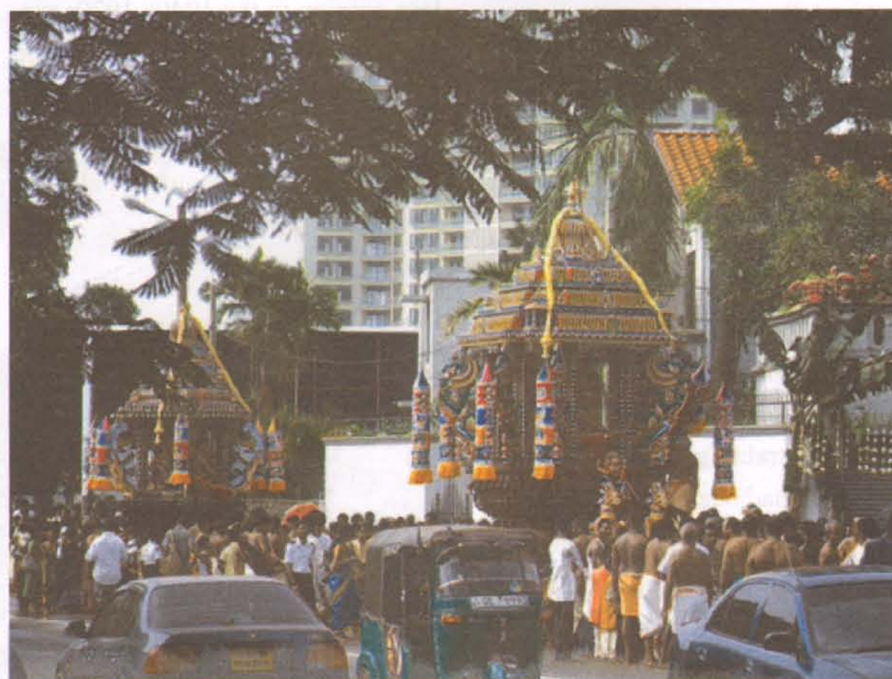
The emphasis in this article, however, is on the discrimination and intolerance towards these people displayed by the Sinhala majority in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. Yet, amidst this disfavour, the Sinhala-majority did not frown upon the establishment of Hindu shrines and *kovils* in the valleys and hillsides by the Malaiyāha Tamil people; nor did they deny the numerous Sri Lankan Tamils in the southern regions the setting up of *kovils* in the heart of urban centres.

This line of tolerance was, and remains, an outcome of the incorporative and intermingling forms of embodied religious practice in Sri Lanka and India. Deities and icons from a variety of religions are respected, feared and propitiated by most people in these lands. There is considerable cross-fertilisation across the major religions – Buddhism, Hinduism (in its various sectarian forms) and Catholicism. During specific festival days for major Hindu deities, therefore, processions and devotees dominate some of the urban streets in south-central Sri Lanka, as they drum, chant and bodily engage with the divine powers[11].

[10] De Silva, 1998. Note that the Sirima-Shastri Pact of 1964 led to the repatriation of some Malaiyāha Tamils.

[11] For my summary of the evidence that sustains this clarification, see Roberts 2005b, Divine Potency; but note that this article is

Vel Festival at Slave Island in Colombo and a devotee fulfilling a vow via penance on hooks
Photos courtesy of Namal Kamalgoda of Zero Images



Annual Chariot Festival of the Sri Mayurapathy Paththirakaali Temple moving along Havelock Road, Colombo. 26 July 2009.
Photo courtesy of Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai (http://www.flickr.com/photos/humanityashore)

Some Buddhists and Catholics participate actively in the devotional and supplicatory activities at major Hindu temples in such places as Munnesvaram and Kataragama. Such interpenetration of worshipping practices arises from popular engagements with transcendental powers in ways that are as profound as vibrant. Buddhist doctrine, moreover, does not present the Buddha and his Dhamma as a direct source of boons. This aspect of the religious philosophy has opened the path for the incorporation of all manner of deities from the Indian Hindu world into the Buddhist pantheon over time[12].

Notwithstanding the fact that some Sinhala Buddhists may describe these deities as "Hindu gods" (e.g. Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988), in this role they are in fact deities for and of the Buddhists. The meaningfulness of a specific god for Buddhist devotees does not necessarily replicate his meaningfulness for the generality of Hindus who propitiate the same god at the same temporal moment. Such deities are understood to work within the Buddha's *varama* (authority, warrant). Thus, one conventional practice is for a devotee to transfer/offer the merit s/he gains from a *pūjā* for the Buddha (immanent and alive in his icon) to a specific deity as one of the bargaining modalities of supplication.

Chaminda and Sanath make vows at St. Anthony's Church, Kotahena
Photo courtesy of Lake House

Significant caveats must be attached to this picture of religious tolerance and plurality in the southern reaches of the island where the Sinhala-speech community dominates. There are limits. Sri Lanka can never be a secular state in the Western mould (and indeed, in my view, should not be so). It is understood that a primacy attaches to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

As such, at pivotal moments, whether after a triumph at the general elections or at some point of political transformation, key state figures visit the Dalada Maligāva and pay homage to the principal Mahanāyakes. Nor did the milieu of tolerance prevent some Sinhalese assailants from attacking some *kovils* during the peak moments of political conflict that saw the outbreak of riots and pogroms against the Tamils. In one notorious instance at Panadura in 1958, the *kurukkal* was even burnt alive.

Concluding Remarks

My broad interest in this essay is in the passionate expression of grievance and the circumstances that invest the claims with legitimacy. Within these parameters I have moved by devious routes to the contention that intolerance has many hues. Sometimes even besieged minorities who protest vehemently against the oppressions of dominant majorities are guilty of a few drams of intolerance within the unexamined foundations that sustain their complaints. This appears to be a characteristic attached to the complaints pressed by a few vocal Sri Lankan Tamils today, whether pro-LTTE elements, relative moderates such as Dharmalingam Siddharthan, or those adhering to liberal constitutional theory and its secularism.

The intimidating presence of Sri Lankan military forces in the Tamil-majority regions of the north, and the overweening authoritarianism displayed so blatantly by the Rajapakse Regime do not make such threads of argument any less intolerant. The Tamil complaints aganst the alleged diffusion of Buddhist temples in the north reveal double standards in being blissfully inattentive to the widespread presence of Hindu Saivite *kovils* in many towns within Sinhala-majority regions[13], including the Central Highlands and Morowak Korale.

Two justifications may conceivably be presented for a differential yardstick for the north. One: the Tamils of the north today are a minority confronting a Sinhalese majority and believe that they suffered from discriminaion in the recent past. This situation is distict from the setting in the south where the Hindus who establish religious shrines are usually a minorty. The religious sensibilities of the northern Tamils must therefore be respected. Two: the state should be neutral and secular. Therefore, the establishment and encouragement of Buddhist temples by army units that are effectively Sinhala Buddhist is an infringement of Tamil rights.

The first of these justifications is tendentious special pleading. The second derives from liberal constitutional theory moulded in the secularised West. It rests upon an either/or epistemology that demands clear-cut boundaries and refuses to recognise anything other than the black and the white. Synagogue, mosque and church cannot mix.

Ironically, during the colonial era, Sinhala Buddhist "liberation figures" drew upon Western intellectual currents to enforce similar readings of "good Buddhist practice". One such was Don David Hewavitarne, better known as Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1934). It was because he absorbed the highly rational interpretations of Buddhism presented by Protestant Western intellectuals who were attracted to the Dhamma, such as Rhys-Davids, Paul Carus and C. T. Strauss, that Dharmapala became a fervent opponent of "all ceremonies, rituals, tomfooleries, abominations which go under the name of astrology, charms, sacrifices and beliefs in Ghosts, demons, godfathers…" (diary entry, 18 Aug. 1902). Thus, on one occasion in 1905, he intervened personally and forcefully to drive away a body of music-making Muslim Malayālis who were part of a traditional procession entering the Kālaniya Temple (diary entry, 10 Aug. 1905). This arrogant act, surely, marked his purist antipathy to religious syncretism, and was in tune with a broader sweep of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism in his time that inspired occasional violence against churches and sponsored the mini-pogrom against the Muslims in 1915 (Roberts, 1994).

In brief, Westernised foundations served as one influence directing Dharmapala's doctrinal rigidity in ways that excluded syncretism. Dharmapala, as we know, was rendered into one of the "patron saints" of the 1956 revolution and its ideology[14]. This ideology in its turn flowed into the currents embodied within the Mahinda Chinthanaya.

Sinhala Buddhist intolerance in recent years has been directed against some Pentecostal churches by shadowy elements that may be few in number, but seem to work with impunity and benefit from the inactivity of state authorities at all levels[15]. Thankfully, this strand of prejudice and the Dharmapala-type of purism have not targeted *kovils* or the embodied religious practices (trance, ecstasy, "god-dancing") of Buddhists seeking aid from deities who work within the parasol of the Buddha Dhamma.

Placed beside the qualified religious tolerance and pluralism that flourishes in the southern reaches in contemporary Lanka, the vehement hostility

based on the following anthropological works: Bastin 2002a and 2002b, Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988, Obeyesekere 1975 & 1978, Pfaffenberger 1979, Stirrat1992 and Tanaka 1991.

[12] See especially Obeyesekere, 1963 and Holt 1991 and 2004.

[13] Note Bass 2001: 17.

[14] Beside the standard literature on the electoral transformation of 1956, see *The 1956 Generations* (Roberts, 1981).

[15] For some incidents in 2009, see "Buddhist mobs attack churches," in http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/srilanka/3094/ and http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/srilanka/ 4665/

to any new Buddhist shrines voiced by some Tamils in the north appears to be a purist position that renders any new Buddhist shrine into an intruder. They press double standards, one for the northern reaches and another for the south-central regions.

Such a stance is understandable. The threats encountered in the recent past by the Tamils have emanated from forces that were both Sinhala nationalist and Buddhist, while Tamils today face a triumphant and hegemonic Sinhala dispensation. In their reactions to such a situation, however, my article suggests that these articulate Tamils should look inwards at their own premises and leanings. They should ask themselves whether they wish to tread the self-righteous path of a Saivite Dharmapala, or a secularised, constitutionalist and self-righteous avenue that is as unbending in its premises as Dharmapala. I am asking them, and their friends and critics, to examine where they are coming from.

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Reading Stiglitz in Sri Lanka: An Interpretive Essay

Sarath Rajapatirana

Abstract

Stiglitz's views on globalization and trade are interesting, provocative and Utopian. His characterization of the international trading system as inherently unfair is not valid. And he gives developing countries wide latitude to avoid reform and treats them as victims, which may not be helpful to these countries. Stiglitz's suggestions to address adjustment costs, to be wary of bio-piracy, to improve regulatory environments and to be careful about debt are valid. On the other hand, his stance towards unilateral trade liberalization, IMF programs and suspicion of multinational corporations is not grounded on good analysis. Sri Lanka is uniquely positioned to meet today's challenges given the end of the civil war; she begins with better initial conditions than most other developing countries. She has a fairly good, though inadequate, infrastructure, particularly in the North and the East, and functioning institutions. National amity is within reach, if political wisdom and commitment are there to address the issues that led to the civil war in the first place. Sri Lanka has, in the past, responded well to reforms and attempts to meet these challenges. She is at the cusp of becoming more securely placed within the middle income country category. However, this would require maintaining macroeconomic stability beyond the current IMF Standby Arrangement and undertaking structural reforms. Past experience is comforting because those reforms helped to improve efficiency. But they were not sustained. More work is needed in reforming the trade and regulatory regimes and institutional areas to increase competitiveness and to anchor reforms in sound institutions. Stiglitz's three books are a good read for policy makers and students alike. But they must be read, understood and digested with a critical eye by Sri Lankans.

1. Introduction

Economic theorist *extraordinaire*, Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz has written three books in the last eight years that speak of the issues of how developing countries should react to globalization in general, and to international trade, in particular. He has provided a general definition of globalization, as the process that leads to greater integration of goods and services markets and capital and labor markets. The three books, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002), *Fair Trade for All* (2005) and *Making Globalization Work* (2006) are provocative, and challenge orthodox views. They have their appeal for a number of reasons. First, these works look at issues mostly from a developing country's point of view. Second, they are by a Nobel Prize laureate in Economics (in 2001, prize shared with George Akerlof and A. Michael Spence) for his work on asymmetrical information and its implications for imperfect and absent markets. Third, many developing country economists have embraced these ideas since they speak to their own views on these issues. Finally, Professor Stiglitz is a quintessential Washington insider who was a member and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers to President Bill Clinton (1993-1997) and Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank (1997-2000).

His views have had wide resonance among the anti-globalizers, who have demonstrated at various gatherings of world leaders at G-7, G-20 and Doha Development Agenda meetings at various locations, from Seattle to Cancun and Gleneagles to Davos. Naturally, these views have a certain *cachet* given the credentials of the author. His style of writing in these works is non-esoteric, unlike in his academic papers, and meant to push his ideas forward in an uncompromising way. The two books on globalization contain a personal narrative of his travels to different developing countries, of meeting their leaders and discussing issues of concern with them. The book on fair trade is closer to a lengthy policy monograph on trade without the personal narrative.

There is "curb appeal" regarding his ideas on globalization and trade issues particularly among the young, the environmentalists and those on the left of the political spectrum who are disappointed with the failure of socialists' experiments around the world. He speaks as no other policy insider has done. He talks about issues from a new and unabashedly moral and ethical position, what economists in general take great pains to avoid. He is not uncomfortable about using the words "ethical" and "moral" in his policy positions. His views are more attractive to non-economists for this reason and account for his wide popularity outside the profession. He is of course highly respected within the profession for his dazzling theoretical work on information theory, public finance and insurance, and credit markets[1].

At the outset, one must note that leading Sri Lankan economists who are associated with the left of center would be more at home with Stiglitz's views[2]. Those who are at the center and to the right of the center would feel less comfortable with Stiglitz's views, even though they would not necessarily buy into the views associated with international economic institutions. However, there is a part of the policy space in which those on both sides of the political spectrum could form a workable center coalition and eschew both the end points of the right and the left. As to whether such a convergence would be sufficient to solve Sri Lanka's economic problems is another matter.

This essay is organized as follows. After this introduction, Section 2 presents Stiglitz's Core Ideas for the global economy from Sri Lanka's viewpoint. Section 3 sketches Sri Lanka's development challenges, and implications of Stiglitz's views for the country. Section 4 gives the conclusions.

2. Stiglitz's Ideas on the Global Economy from Sri Lanka's Viewpoint

Stiglitz's policy positions are derived partly from his theoretical work which holds that a free market competitive equilibrium is not optimal, given that these markets have asymmetric information between buyers and sellers, borrowers and lenders, and insurers and the insured. Hence, policies that are derived from the notions of a free market are faulty. He calls this anchoring of economic policies on free markets "market fundamentalism". He accuses the IMF (the worst villain of the piece, in his view), the World Bank and the US Treasury of practicing these flawed policies. From this position, he criticizes the so-called "Washington Consensus" or policies that emphasize macroeconomic stability based on tight fiscal and monetary policies, adherence to free market principles in incentive reforms (with respect to structural matters such as trade, regulation and privatization), and institutions created to support these policies.

Stiglitz's charge that the Bretton Woods institutions and the US Treasury are "market fundamentalists" is not correct. Far from supporting free market policies, many of their programs

[1] The present author served in the Editorial Committee of the World Bank Economic Review with Professor Stiglitz for six years and has enormous respect for him as a front-ranking theoretician and admires his interests in the well- being of developing countries.

[2] We can make a rough classification based on the published work of leading Sri Lankan economists whose revealed preferences on policy matters can be identified by their core positions on issues related to globalization and trade discussed here.

helped to support highly restrictive and market-unfriendly policies well into the 1990s. One has to look at the support the World Bank provided to India for more than four decades for its Socialist planning policies, and practiced highly restrictive trade, regulatory policies and institutional arrangements. India was, for a long time, the largest recipient of the highly subsidized International Development Agency (IDA) funds (so much so that one critic has called IDA, the Indian Development Agency!)[3]. Similarly, the World Bank and the IMF continued to support many Sub-Saharan African states that created highly protected, regulated and monopoly-ridden command economies. A large number of those programs failed, and poverty increased due to poor policies of the countries themselves. A recent expert on African development has pointed out that the economic failures of the countries were due mostly to the countries not using more market-based policies, the opposite of what Stiglitz claims[4]. Nor can the US Treasury be accused of being a market fundamentalist; it supported dictators who used old Sovietstyle *dirigisme* in their competition with the former Soviet Union to gain influence in many places including Sub-Saharan Africa (the Congo, Nigeria and Zambia are leading examples). There were other countries that these institutions supported; the World Bank with structural adjus-tment loans, and the IMF with Stand By arrangements. These programs were tried out in the Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) and in Latin America (Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela). Most of them failed in the sense there were no sustained recoveries and resumption of growth.

While the so-called "Washington Consensus" has been strongly criticized by Stiglitz, more policy oriented academics, mainstream economists and policy makers contend that the policy elements put forward in the "Washington Consensus", namely restoring macroeconomic stability through fiscal and monetary discipline, using free market policies and improving institutions to maintain policy regimes with respect to property rights, and the independence of policy making institutions, are valid. The author of the "Washington Consensus", John Williamson has defended these ideas vigorously, noting that it was not solely a Washington based idea, nor was it entirely free market based in that it did not advocate capital market liberalization[5]. Sri Lankan economists, at the center and more to the right of center of the political spectrum, would support the Williamson view as against the one put forward by Stiglitz. Where Stiglitz is right is not about the direction of these reforms, but the speed and intensity with which they were implemented, and the inadequate acknowledgment of the costs and travails of adjustment on the poor and those who became unemployed due to the reallocation of resources. In a growing economy, this adjustment becomes easier, since the surpluses created by the adjustment can pay at least part of the cost in the short term, and the entire costs and more, over the medium to the long term.

Stiglitz finds that international financial institutions are biased and non-neutral, and that in their management, they suffer from "a democratic deficit" since their governance is not representative of the poor countries. Particularly, Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and the World Bank) have executive boards that are weighted in favor of rich countries, since voting in the boards of these institutions are based on income, openness to trade and access to the international financial market that prevailed in 1944, with some marginal changes in the 1960s to accommodate new nations that emerged from colonial rule, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the early 1990s to accommodate China and Russia and other members of the former Soviet Union. While the WTO (that replaced the GATT in 1995) has better representation (since its decisions are based on consensus through negotiation and not on country quotas), it has no ability to influence country trade policies (e.g. through making loans or grants). However, it can carry out surveillance of trade developments in individual countries and appoint panels to hear dispute settlement cases among member countries. In other words, it has no power of its own. Even the penalties on countries for infringing WTO rules can be initiated only by a member country and can be imposed only with the express acceptance of those who are found to be in breach of these rules.

Stiglitz is correct when he indicates that the international financial institutions have a "democratic deficit". Those countries that hold power are not about to yield it to a well-represented board of management, and allow decisions regarding the use and allocation of the resources they have contributed to, to be taken by those who have not made substantial contributions to the resources. Nor is it clear how such an arrangement, as democratic as it seems, could become workable. The national interests of countries differ markedly in terms of their own resource endowments, economic policy frameworks, history and socio-political characteristics. One group of countries that commands a majority of votes will support a particular group of countries, while another will support its own favorites. So it is impossible to have neutral decisions. The solution rather is to give greater representation to the leading developing countries based on their present economic conditions. This would mean giving greater voting power to China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia. They represent close to seventy percent of humanity. However, those who have large quotas at present will have to yield part of their quotas to the new countries to have their quotas increased, and this would invariably mean that small countries like Sri Lanka will also need to yield part of their quotas to the general pool. Such a rebalancing of voting quotas is necessary, but it may not be sufficient to make a big difference in decision making.

In *Making Globalization Work* Stiglitz sketches out an arrangement to advance his views that "another world is possible". What he has in mind is akin to a world government with equal representation of rich and poor countries with a set of uniform regulations that can implement the will of the world majority. This is a noble principle. However, it is patently unrealistic. Like many of his suggestions, it ignores the political economy aspect of this issue (that different groups of countries have their own interests to pursue).

Perhaps one can look at the United Nations to get an idea of how things will look like if these institutions were to follow the one nation, one vote principle. Representation in the boards of the IMF and the World Bank is not based on the principle of "one country one vote" as pointed out above. It is time to change the representation, to give greater weight to emerging nations as suggested above. It is necessary to revise the allocation of quotas and hence the voting groups. The IMF and the World Bank are working on these matters, but much depends on the major powers of the day – USA, UK, Japan and the European Union. Those who contribute the larger proportion of resources should have greater say. Otherwise, these resources could be wasted. Where the "one country one vote" principle has failed is there for all to see in United Nations programs such as the United Nations Development Fund, and Regional Commissions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific. They cannot claim any success after five decades of their existence. Of course, they did not have many resources. But noting the highly interventionist and inward looking ideas they have espoused over the years, it is clear that more funds would have not been used well by these agencies.

Stiglitz notes that poverty has increased in the last two decades up to 2002, despite greater integration of trade and services, capital and even labor markets in the world[6]. By implication, he points the finger at rich

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[3] IDA is the concessional window of the World Bank.

[4] Moyo (2009)

[5] Williamson (2002)

[6] This is now contested. In fact, China saw the fastest reduction in poverty rates (head-count rate or number of persons living below the poverty line of $ 1.00 day) during the last two

countries' policies, governance issues relating to the international financial institutions, and their alleged wrong-headed policies with respect to macroeconomics, trade, multilateral corporations, intellectual property rights, regulatory and privatization policies, debt and institutional issues. It is a strong indictment (We take up these issues in the next section of the essay as they relate mostly to policies at the country level: see Section 3 below). He targets the IMF with the strongest criticism. And, he argues for a different paradigm of economic relationships in the world. Mainstream economists agree that when a country is in macroeconomic imbalance and reaches an inevitable crisis point, the IMF should work like an emergency ward in a hospital. That is, it diagnoses the problem and gives emergency assistance and helps to restore the country back to macroeconomic balance. This diagnosis is not very different for a specified number of cases. Countries seek IMF assistance when they have an unsustainable balance of payments situation, an over-valued exchange rate, rising debt at a faster rate than receipts from exports and capital inflows from other sources. The charge by Stiglitz that these institutions use a one-size-fits-all model comes from this observation that emergency assistance follows a standard approach. In most cases, this "emergency medicine" is administered to cut down aggregate demand, mostly arising from fiscal deficits, and adjust relative prices, particularly the exchange rate. This is not rocket science. It is standard well-understood text book macroeconomics. The quantities, timing and sequencing can differ for different country contexts, but the approach has to be similar. It has received much acceptance among the policy makers. If a country were to deal with this emergency problem on its own or with assistance from other countries, the approach would not be much different.

The IMF has indeed made its mistakes, even though the Stiglitz criticism is overdrawn, and he strains credibility by the stridency of his attack against it, in both books on globalization. First, he is right in saying that the IMF got it wrong in the 1997-98 East Asian financial crisis. The crisis had a tremendous adverse impact on that region, particularly on South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia. The analysis of the crisis as largely a fiscal problem, however, was wrong. It was in fact a private sector savings-investment gap problem that was associated with real estate booms financed by over-extended commercial banks, appreciated real exchange rates and fallen foreign demand. In supporting these countries to come out of the crisis, IMF went beyond its brief to insist on stringent measures outside the monetary-financial field. However, it must also be said that these reforms of the incentive structure were to stand in good stead for these countries in the more recent and severe financial crisis that began in the United States in late 2007. Second, there is no penalty for the IMF for abandoning a program which it has helped to develop. It can always say that it tried but the country failed. It will get paid first in a country's repayment crisis as it has seniority in debt obligations of member countries. Stiglitz cites the case of Argentina (in *Making Globalization Work*), in which she defaulted against private banks but not the IMF. Instead, Argentina was able to re-negotiate an easier repayment plan with the IMF and received more emergency funds to help its adjustment. Stiglitz notes that debt crises arise not only due to the mistakes of the borrower, but also due to the shortcomings of the lender, as the world has clearly noted in the recent US and European financial crisis. Third, at the same time, the IMF cannot be relied upon to support growth efforts, particularly with respect to efficiency issues. Nevertheless, it has attempted to get into this area with its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility working in tandem (or some would say in competition) with the World Bank. Another mistake that the IMF made is with its approach to Stand-by programs. In that approach, as long as the books balance, it is okay with them. But books can balance at different levels of income and rates of economic growth. The greatest support it can provide is to help countries through a balance of payments adjustment with funds and expertise. This, it has done well in most cases.

While the international financial institutions are disparaged by Stiglitz, he gives developing countries wide latitude and does not hold them ultimately responsible for their own economic fates. There is a tinge of paternalism in his stance towards these countries. Stiglitz sees them rather as victims of the rapacious rich countries and faulty policy frameworks of the international financial institutions. No wonder that he appeals to the left intellectuals in the West and the left of center economists everywhere. It comes from his credentials and probably their conjecture that he must be in the know, as a quintessential insider[7]. Ideas about the rapacious rich and the irresponsible international financial institutions are not new. What is new is that they are being articulated by a first-rate academic and an apparent Washington insider.

3. Sri Lanka's Development Challenges and Implications of Stiglitz's Views

Stiglitz's core global views provide a backdrop to national challenges. Sri Lanka's development challenges operate principally at the national level. If his global views were to be realized, it may or may not ease the task for the country to meet its national challenges. However, without a national effort, the opportunities provided by the global economy cannot be utilized. With this background, it is useful to explore what these challenges are and to ask what Stiglitz's views mean for Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is uniquely positioned to meet these challenges in today's context for several reasons. First, after the conclusion of a three decade long civil war, that held the attention of the national leadership and led to the direction of resources away from development to defense, there is now the opportunity to concentrate on meeting these challenges. Second, she begins with better initial conditions than most other developing countries, given the high level of adult education or human capital stock, fairly good but yet inadequate infrastructure particularly in the North and the East, and functioning institutions which need improvement but do not need to be started from scratch. Third, national amity is within reach, if political wisdom and commitment are there to address the issues that led to the civil war in the first place. Finally, Sri Lanka has in the past responded well to reforms and attempts to meet these challenges. She is at the cusp of being more securely placed within the middle income country category.

Relating these challenges to their specifics, one notes that the Government plans to double per capita income from $ 2000 to $ 4000 in six to ten years, depending on who speaks for the Government. The Mahinda Chintana document envisages a doubling of per capita income by 2015. This implies a real GDP growth rate of 13.2 per cent (namely 12 per cent GDP growth and a population growth of 1.2 per cent) for a six year period and 7. 2 per cent (or 6.0 per cent GDP growth and a 1.2 per cent population growth) for a ten year period[8]. An attempt to reach the doubling of income in the six year horizon carries the danger of misallocation of resources, higher inflation, higher debt and larger balance of payments deficits. In fact, the acceleration of the Mahaweli program in the early 1980s led to this situation, but it was partly ameliorated by huge inflows of concessionary assistance. Even so, the appreciation of the rupee due to these large capital inflows (sometimes called the "Dutch disease")

decades and India similarly showed reduced poverty rates with respect to its own economic history. In sum, nearly 500 million persons were lifted out of poverty – a remarkable achievement. It happened when these countries were able to raise their output growth to 9 and 6 percent respectively since the early 1990s, when they began to liberalize their economies. This is not to say that poverty does not persist in India (some 25 per cent of the world's poor still live there). When poverty rates are examined at the level of each country, they have shown dramatic reductions. So globalization did not impoverish countries when they made use of the opportunities offered by globalization. See Bhalla (2003).

[7] Fifty years ago, one heard these views from Marxist parties in Sri Lanka as one hears from the JVP more recently.

[8] These are for illustrative purposes. The two key coefficients used here, the marginal capita-output ratio and the marginal savings rate, that are assumed to determine GDP growth rate, will vary over a range. So when we present a point estimate, it is to be thought of as a central value, as is the outcome - per capita GDP growth rate.

reduced gains from the 1977 liberalization. For this reason, a ten year time horizon is more realistic to double per capita income, and poses less of a macroeconomic risk. But it would require an additional effort, compared to the economic performance of Sri Lanka in the past six years.

Assuming a capital-output ratio of 5:1 (five units of capital to produce one unit of output in one year, based on Sri Lankan GDP and investment data in the last six years), to achieve a 7.2 growth rate requires a savings rate of 36 per cent of GDP, when the present rate of savings is around 25 per cent. This means an additional effort has to be made to raise the savings rate by 11 per cent (both national savings and foreign savings; i.e. the latter from foreign aid, borrowing and foreign direct investment). A lower savings effort would be required if the capital output-ratio can be reduced to say 4:1. In this case, the savings rate required would be 29 per cent of GDP and the savings effort would be lower, to raise it by 4 per cent of GDP over the present rate.

But raising the savings rate and lowering the capital-output ratio need a substantial effort. Both are not easily amenable to short-run policy manipulation. Towards increasing the savings rate, the most important policy the Government could implement is to reduce the fiscal deficit by cutting down wasteful expenditures in the public sector and by selling off some of the public corporations that are a drain on the budget and are well-known to be inefficient. Equally, a high fiscal deficit reduces the savings and investment in the private sector. It causes uncertainty in the economy since decisions about the future in the private sector are going to be affected by it, expecting taxation to go up to meet the long term fiscal deficit. Meanwhile, the avoidance of inflation creates a strong incentive to save. With inflation, savers will find that the real value of their savings fall over time and the interest paid for their savings deposits in the banking sector turn negative in real terms. Thus, a high fiscal deficit is a signal to the private sector that their taxes will go up, interest rates will go up (as the Government bids away private savings by selling bonds) and that there is the likelihood of an appreciation of the exchange rate as was seen in the three years up to 2009. With stable prices, a budget saving of 2-3 per cent is possible in the short run.

In addition to raising savings, the reduction of the fiscal deficit will also have an effect on the capital-output ratio, since in general terms, the rate of return to private investment is higher than that of the public sector in a wide spectrum of activities, where there are no clear externalities (or where private returns are not lower than social returns). Thus, giving greater head-room to the private sector will help in raising the GDP growth rate. At the point where the returns to public investment equal the returns to private investment, the rate of investment is optimized. This is what publ-ic policy should attempt to do. Nowhere in the three books does Stiglitz refer to the proper allocation of investment between the private sector and the public sector or the rules that should determine an optimal balance.

Incentive policies determine efficiency. In order to reduce the capitaloutput ratio (a good marker of efficiency, or called the reciprocal of the marginal productivity of capital in economic jargon), it would require a strong, credible and sustained reform program[9]. In fact, there has not been a reform program of that type since the mid-1990s. This task relates to incentive reforms principally in three areas: trade, regulatory and institutional reform.

Incentive Reforms

- Trade Policy Issues:

Sri Lanka undertook a major liberalization of the trade regime in 1977 within a substantive reform program including a devaluation of the rupee. There was some back-sliding that was partially rectified in 1989 when some duty rates were reduced. But it has become more protective since then, with ad hoc measures to meet some international price changes. There has been no attempt to maintain the reform program due to a number of factors. The new Governments that came into power in 2004 and 2009 were less inclined to liberalize the trade regime, mostly due to ideological reasons, given their erroneous interpretation that the 1977 and 1989 liberalizations were failures, and that our trade regime was already more open than in Sri Lanka's neighbors[10]. Of course, the on-going civil conflict distracted Governments, since the late 1990s, from pursuing a substantive liberalization agenda.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's competitiveness lost ground due to the liberalization of competitor countries exporting similar products (India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand and many other garment manufacturers), the appreciation of the Sri Lanka rupee particularly after 2007, and reduced access to credit for exporters due to the Government taking a lion's share of funds that could have gone to the private sector during 2006-2009. There has been some respite after 2009, mostly due to the IMF Standby effort negotiated in 2009. The withdrawal of duty free access to the European Union market that was available under GSP Plus since August 2010 was a shock to the garments industry. It now faces strong competition since its competitors like Bangladesh would continue to get duty free access.

Recent analysis of the trade regime shows a greater tightening. The total protective rate has increased from 13.4 per cent in 2004 to 27.9 per cent in 2009 when both customs duties and para-tariffs (including ports and airport levies) are taken into account. Sri Lanka has at present a complex import tariff schedule with ten different taxes in addition to customs duties that can be applied to imports. This is an unnecessarily complicated system. The signing of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement has led to some decline in tariffs for specific items. However, it is not clear whether there is a net trade creation from this agreement. A broader Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that goes beyond trade to investment and regulatory harmonization is mooted with India but it is under further negotiation.

Going by *Fair Trade for All* (2005), Stiglitz is clearly not a supporter of trade liberalization, even though as an economist he sees the validity of the theory of comparative advantage. He would not have supported the 1977 Sri Lanka trade liberalization on a number of grounds. First, he does not seem to support unilateral liberalizations; others must liberalize if a country were to liberalize. Second, he would have said that the liberalization was done too fast. Third, he would have provided some cushion to those that were going to be adversely affected by the liberalization. Finally, he is for selective liberalization of the trade regime while the 1977 liberalization was neutral or across the board.

On account of Sri Lanka's 1977 liberalization and the 1989 reforms being unilateral, Stiglitz would have objected to it. It is true that if everyone else also liberalized, then the gains would be higher. But still there would be gains to unilateral liberalization even if the rest of the world does not liberalize. Stiglitz and his co-author Andrew Charlton do not see the gains from the re-allocation of domestic resources so that the same level of resources can bring higher output or returns. To say the least, their position is Mercantilist and mistaken. It is not what the East Asians did to become such successful exporters. In the period of 1960-70, they liberalized their trade regime, in the sense they provided free trade status to imports of raw materials and once the exports began to grow, they liberalized imports. Basically, they did not follow the Stiglitz-Charlton recommendation. Of course, they could have liberalized their imports at the same time they promoted exports and got even a better allocation of resources (by reducing the bias against exports arising from general import duties), but they did not. By maintaining import controls for some time, East Asian countries

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[9] A reduction of the capital-output ratio from 5:1 to 4:1 is after all a twenty percent decrease and not a small change, suggesting the need for substantial effort.

[10] The 1977 liberalization was not a failure with respect to the trade regime. But the bad management of the macroeconomic situation led to an appreciation of the exchange rate that prevented the country from realizing the full competitiveness benefit of the liberalization. See Lal and Rajapatirana (1989).

allowed a bias against the exports to continue. Also, their trade system had a highly competent, committed and incorruptible bureaucracy that had to provide various rebates, credit subsidies and depreciation allowances, firm by firm. How many countries have that kind of beauracracy to match South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore? On the other hand, there were no trade barriers in Hong Kong, and she did not use any of these promotional devices, but was able to match the success of others who used these specific interventions. Moreover, such special targeted promotion measures would be WTO illegal today; others would challenge these devices. Also, it is not clear whether these countries would have done even better without such promotion measures, and with more general non-selective measures. Today, many countries have very open and liberalized economies in the developing world such as Chile, South and East-ern parts of the Republic of China, South Korea, Uganda and Botswana. In contrast, Sri Lanka, despite the strong liberalization in 1977 and its follow up in 1989, has one of the most complicated, unpredictable and bribe-ridden import regimes today.

Stiglitz and Charlton favor industrial policy and picking winners by the Government. There is a rich literature on industrial policy that has looked at the issue and concluded that it does not pay to pick winners. Rather, winners pick their own activities and the Government provides support. It is the more accurate interpretation of the reasons for East Asia's success in trade in the mid to late 1960s. The choice is not made by bureaucrats. Where the bureaucrats made the choices and gave subsidies, studies show that the promoted industries had low productivity compared to those not promoted[11]

Stiglitz is right when he states that some cushion could be provided to activities that are going to lose out in a trade liberalization. This could be done through adjustment assistance. The other way to undertake a trade liberalization is to announce the reform program in advance and stick to it, so that those who want to leave the activity or enter it could have a good idea as to what to do. Moreover, such adjustments become easier when the economy is growing and supply responses are facilitated with the availability of credit, access to inputs and other facilities like services for expansion of the activity. As Stiglitz and Charlton note, complementary polices are necessary to make a reform program successful. It is difficult to believe that a dynamic garment industry could have emerged in Sri Lanka without the liberalization of the economy in 1977, and a return to the path in 1989, even for a short period. Equally, the attempt to set up two hundred garment factories under Government auspices by President Premadasa had to fail. It was not based on entrepreneur choice but was an attempt to create an industry by the Government in a highly competitive world garments market.

- Regulatory Reforms:

These reforms must enable firms to operate efficiently by facing competitive input and output markets. If they operate in the tradable sector, a trade opening supports the regulatory environment to promote efficiency and competitiveness. In the non-tradable sector, where firms do not directly face competition, an additional effort has to be made to prevent the growth of monopolies that will raise costs and damage competitiveness. In Sri Lanka, the regulatory environment is not well developed because of the large size of public corporations in the economy who receive budget subsidies; easier access to credit compared to the private sector and they have become repositories of political patronage. Despite the 1977 reforms of the economy, public corporations continue to function as before, by and large. Later, they assumed greater support from the newly elected governments due to the ideological difference from the past, and even greater politicization by appointing managers from the winning political party. The Governments that came into power in 2004 were not well disposed towards privatization for the reason that earlier privatizations had not been well conducted.

Reform of the regulatory environment, to make possible free entry and exit from activities and to promote competitive behavior to create a level playing field, is essential for efficiency. Otherwise, Sri Lanka will be at a disadvantage with respect to her competitors and also the resultant inefficiency will lead to high prices and reduce both consumer welfare and profitability of enterprises that use products and services of these firms' inputs. Public sector reform to bring this about is long overdue. It is not clear, however, whether this issue would be resolved in the near future, given recent amendments to the constitution that could reduce the independence of bodies that oversee these corporations.

Reading Stiglitz's three works gives one the impression that he is better disposed towards public rather than private ownership. He has expressed concern about the rush with which public enterprises were privatized in some countries. That is a genuine concern. However, one cannot object to privatization under a well-designed and functioning regulatory regime. As shown above, an over-extended public sector can be inefficient for a number of reasons. First, incentives to maximize profits take a back seat to the security of public ownership. Second, most of these enterprises in Sri Lanka have become politicized and their management is given to political appointees who have neither the expertise nor the interest in the efficient running of these enterprises. Finally, Stiglitz seems to ignore the large amount of empirical work done in South Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa where public enterprises have performed very poorly and have been a drain on Government budgets. As shown above, even reforming governments (such as the UNP Government in 1977) have been reluctant to reduce their size in the economy as they provide sinecure for parking political supporters, who most of the time have no idea of running a business. Even if competent managers are appointed they will find it hard to turn around a culture of inefficiency and lethargy so characteristic of public enterprises in Sri Lanka. It is hard to imagine that Stiglitz could support such a situation despite his disposition towards public ownership.

Another aspect of regulatory reform that Stiglitz deals with in the two books on globalization is the treatment of multinational corporations. He is very critical of them. His main complaint is that they operate with impunity in the developing world and that they locate themselves in countries that have loose labor and environmental standards that cause a race to the bottom in international investment. His views show a stark contrast between publicly owned corporations and privately owned ones. He feels that multinational corporations promote corruption and influence host government policies to a very great extent. This is expressed by Stiglitz in no uncertain terms. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, it is hard to contend that multinational corporations have so much power in this country. With the departure of agency houses in the 1970s, the power of multinational corporations has declined, even if they had any power before. The same agency houses were responsible for leaving behind one of the best run and profitable plantation enterprises in the developing world.

Contrary to what Stiglitz contends, multinational corporations could be useful to Sri Lanka in a number of ways. They can provide additional resources needed to increase overall savings and investment rates (more preferable to foreign borrowing); they can act as a conduit for foreign technology and management know-how, and give access to foreign markets. Sri Lanka needs to look to them and actively seek them out in order to increase benefit from foreign direct investments. Ideally, they should have national status, namely face the same regulatory and tax regimes as the national enterprises. Most of the successful developing countries have depended on them to support their development. China has received the largest amount of foreign investment for any developing country in the world. Others like Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines are activ-

[11] Beeson and Wienstein (1996), Rajapatirana (2003).

ely looking for these corporations to expand their operations in their countries. These corporations have been the vehicles that have spread the effects of globalization. On balance, they provide net benefits, contrary to what Stiglitz claims. Developing countries need to have sound regulatory environments to avoid some harmful effects that Stiglitz talks about. This could be done by instilling corporate responsibility, limiting their power to pursue anti-competitive behavior and adopting global laws that Stiglitz says must be put in place. If such laws are promulgated, Sri Lanka should also adopt them to the extent that they become universal, but not otherwise.

- Institutional Change:

In a modern economy like Sri Lanka, institutions must be robust, neutral and be the anchor to which reforms are attached to provide continuity and credibility. A modern competitive market cannot function well without these anchors. Among them, the rule of law, commercial codes, and a clear definition of rights and duties of contracting parties have to be specified and enforced for efficient transactions to take place. These property rights or the rules of the game that determine the transactions are costs which firms have to bear in conducting their businesses. The less clear these rules are, the higher the transaction costs and lower the efficiency.

Among important property rights that Stiglitz discusses in the three books are those relating to patent law and intellectual property. Industrial countries are pushing for trade related intellectual property rights (TRIPs) to protect patents particularly in the areas of pharmaceuticals, information technology and similar patent-protected products. Their negotiations on trade emphasize these aspects in exchange for reducing their own barriers on agriculture and traditional manufactures of interest to developing countries. More recently, there have been attempts by these countries and their corporations to appropriate intellectual property rights with respect to traditional medicine from developing countries. These attempts need to be resisted. Such cases have come up when some United States' firms tried to get patents for turmeric, basmati rice and indigenous medicines. Patents create monopolies over and above what is needed to create incentives for innovation and invention. Stiglitz warns developing countries to be careful about protecting their traditional medicines and practices from encroachment by foreign firms which would like to appropriate these rights for themselves and hold monopoly over them.

Together with the regulatory environment, institutions define the business environment. Sri Lanka has a low ranking in global studies done on the business environment or the cost of doing business in the country. Out of some 181 countries, Sri Lanka has the rank of 102nd, a position it cannot afford if it hopes to grow rapidly and reach the doubling of per capita income in ten years. These high costs would discourage both domestic and foreign investors who are looking for business friendly and conducive environments.

Among the institutions in the country, the Central Bank assumes a key role. This is not only because of its role in formulating monetary policy, but also because it is the economic adviser to the Government, and the institution charged with the responsibility of maintaining price stability, and competitive and stable exchange rates. It has been the interlocutor for the Stand-by Agreement with the IMF since July 2009, and has now (September 2010) been instrumental in meeting performance criteria to get the third tranche out of the eight tranches of the Stand-by agreement. After a period of nearly three years of poor exchange rates, foreign borrowing and monetary policies, it went to the IMF reluctantly, but has since maintained good standing up to now. Due to more restrictive and appropriate monetary policy, and with the decline in international prices, the inflation rate has fallen to around five per cent. It would be very important to maintain this stability beyond the IMF Stand-By, that will be effective until 2011, if nothing untoward happens to suspend it as was the case in the 1974 Stand-by. Given his strong criticism of the IMF, it is clear that Stiglitz would not have favored Sri Lanka seeking support from it. But events and developments have shown that it was a wise decision to have gone to the IMF. Without it, Sri Lanka would have been in dire straits in 2009 with an unsustainable balance of payments, the highest inflation rate in the region and large debt service obligations (Sri Lanka was downgraded by two sovereign debt rating agencies). Meanwhile, world demand has fallen and Sri Lanka lost its duty-free access to the European market when the European Union withdrew the GSP Plus concession. The conditions of the Stand-by are not onerous and the IMF has revised its fiscal deficits and other performance criteria to accommodate developments in the country from the national elections to the need to build infrastructure and facilities in the North and the East. One wonders, what Stiglitz's advice would have led to, if Sri Lanka did not have the Stand-by Agreement.

4. Conclusions

While Stiglitz's views on globalization and trade are interesting and provocative, they would not be easily adopted by the world community, particularly not by industrial countries and large developing countries. To the extent that they are not, they are Utopian. But some of the ideas he has espoused have already been worked upon, such as reforming the governance of international financial institutions albeit at the margin, to give larger quotas to three or four large developing countries such as China, India, Brazil, and probably South Africa, the leading countries in their own regions. But others have proposed these reforms, even earlier. Sri Lanka should support this effort in the various international forums. However, it is unlikely that the governance of these institutions would follow a "one country one vote" principle. Nor would that be beneficial to separate the power of decision making from financial contributions. The United Nations provides a good example of the need to avoid that principle as it bestows power without responsibility, which is particularly harmful to small countries.

As far as his criticisms of "market fundamentalism" and the "Washington consensus" are concerned, they are not an issue of concern to Sri Lanka as she must follow her own interests in using ideas that are market friendly, and that is a choice only this country could make. First, his criticisms of these institutions and the US Treasury are over-drawn and unnecessarily strident. Going to the IMF was not a bad thing for Sri Lanka. Things would have been much worse if Sri Lanka had tried to do it alone with the high level of debt, large external deficits and the need to have fiscal discipline. The macroeconomic situation was becoming increasingly unsustainable, despite the views expressed by the Government and the Central Bank in 2006 and 2007, that Sri Lanka would not seek assistance from the IMF. Of course, one must face up to the fact that if the Stand-by were to fail (there is no reason it should, with correct policies), there is no penalty to the IMF.

With respect to more specific country issues that Stiglitz discusses, Sri Lanka did well with trade reform in the past. His views on trade liberalization are somewhat discouraging and need not be taken to heart. When one looks around the world, faster growth is in countries that have more open economies and trade regimes. Without reform of the trade regime, it would be difficult to achieve the doubling of per capita income and raise welfare of the people across the board. One word that seems to be conspicuously understated in the three books is "reform". And, that is a disservice to poor countries. One agrees with Stig-litz that trade reforms must be accom-panied by complementary policies relating to the regulation and the reform of institutions.

One must also heed his warning about "bio-piracy" to protect Sri Lanka's property rights from those firms that attempt to acquire property rights on traditional medicines, and restrict others from using them by charging a licensing fee. Imagine if basmati rice were given a US patent; those Pakistani and Indian farmers would have to pay licensing fees to the US patent holder! His suggestion that foreign drug

companies should sell their drugs at low prices in the developing world and practice price discrimination is not an unsound idea. But from a world welfare point of view, if drug companies should not be encouraged to do research on new drugs, everybody, everywhere, will lose.

There are three areas in which Stiglitz's views are particularly deficient and questionable. First, his characterization of the international trading system as inherently unfair is not valid, because under the "Escape Clause" introduced in 1979 in GATT, developing countries can seek and receive "special and differential treatment", so that they have an exemption from reciprocity. However, that is a two-edged sword. By using this clause, developing countries can keep their countries protected and pay a price for it in low growth and welfare in general. Second, his criticism of multinational corporations is over-drawn. On balance, they do much good than harm, which is why developing countries go out of their way to invite them to locate themselves in their countries. Besides, by having a good regulatory regime, developing countries can avoid and minimize any adverse effects of these corporations. Finally, and importantly, he gives developing countries wide latitude to avoid reform, and treats them as victims of the international economic arrangements. However, there were many factors which led to the poor performance of developing countries; they range from sheer neglect of the economy by non-democratic governments who are not dependent on votes of the public, economic uncertainty that discourages investment, to corruption and very poor initial conditions, prominently found in low income countries.

Stiglitz could have underscored more the political economy factors operating at the global and the country level. At the global level, rich countries want to hold on to the status quo and avoid reform of international institutions. But centers of world power are changing, and these reforms will have to come about when powerful coalitions are formed among the richer developing countries. He favors world government over national states when he writes about world regulatory regimes, and world bodies to monitor international institutions. Such arrangements would be unnecessarily intrusive in the case of developing countries including Sri Lanka, as it has recently discovered. At the country level, it must have coalitions that support reforms in different aspects of the economy and are prepared to take risks to move forward with reform.

Nevertheless, Stiglitz's work is a good read for policy makers and students alike. But it must be read, understood and digested with a critical eye. As brilliant as Einstein was, he could not have run the tram system in Berne where he lived before emigrating to the United States. Stiglitz should stick to his theoretical work. All can benefit from that effort.

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Democracy in What State?

By Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Daniel Bensaid, Wendy Brown, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Ranciere, Kristin Ross, and Slavoj Zizek
Columbia University Press, 144 pages, 2011
US $ 22.50 / £15.50

"Is it meaningful to call oneself a democrat? And if so, how do you interpret the word?" In responding to this question, eight iconoclastic thinkers prove the rich potential of democracy, along with its critical weaknesses, and reconceive the practice to accommodate new political and cultural realities. Giorgio Agamben traces the tense history of constitutions and their coexistence with various governments. Alain Badiou contrasts current democratic practice with democratic communism. Daniel Bensaid ponders the institutionalization of democracy, while Wendy Brown discusses the democratization of society under neoliberalism. Jean-Luc Nancy measures the difference between democracy as a form of rule and as a human end, and Jacques Rancière highlights its egalitarian nature. Kristin Ross identifies hierarchical relationships within democratic practice, and Slavoj Zizek complicates the distinction between those who desire to own the state and those who wish to do without it.

The Politics of Kandyan Dance: Transformation of Dance from a Hereditary Low-Caste Service to a State-Sponsored Performing Art

Kalinga Tudor Silva

Dance and the Nation: Performance, Ritual and Politics in Sri Lanka
by Susan A. Reed
University of Wisconsin Press, 2010; 280 pp., $29.95

Kandyan dance has been of central importance in rituals like the *Kohomba Kankariya*, Bali and the Kandy Eslala Perahera, and it has been a side show in a range of events including political rallies, wedding ceremonies, performances for tourists and the like. The term "Kandyan dance" itself was coined as a colonial construct, used for the mapping of local cultures, in characterizing Kandyan social formation and Sri Lankan culture in a broader sense. A dance form that began as a ritual act performed by drummers and dancers representing a particular caste (*Berava / Nakati*) in Sinhala society became identified as a distinctive marker of Sinhala Buddhist culture during the nationalist upsurge from the 19th century onwards. The value of Kandyan dance from the angle of cultural heritage has been highlighted in a number of writings on art and culture (Sederaman 1968, Makulloluwa 1976). There are references to Kandyan dance in important anthropological work on Sri Lanka such as *Precept and Practice* by Richard Gombrich (1971) *Rituals of the Kandyan State* by H.L. Seneviratne (1978), and *The Cult of Goddess Pattini* by Gananath Obeyesekere (1984). In this context, *Dance and the Nation: Performance, Ritual and Politics in Sri Lanka* by Susan A. Reed (2010) can be considered as the first full scale ethnographic and historical account of Kandyan dance.

As an ethnographic research of very high quality conducted over 13 years (1984 to 1997), Reed's work is largely based on participant observation of rituals and dance displays, comb-ined with in-depth interviews with leading Kandyan dancers and their aristocratic (*radala*) patrons, and perusal of historical records. She also learned Kandyan dance as part of her long engagement with Kandyan dance. One of the special features of this publication is that a video production of a number of dance performances she witnessed is included in a CD that accompanies the publication. This video production has much historical value as well since some of the rituals she has observed are not performed at all at present. The author describes this publication as "a historical ethnography of Kandyan dance" (4). In explaining her objective, the author states that "In this book…I explore how a local ritual-based dance form was transformed into an ethnic and national symbol and the consequences this transformation had for the community of traditional dancers as well as for new groups of performers, especially women" (4).

Kohomba Kankariya

Reed identifies *Kohomba Kankariya*, a village-level prosperity / thanksgiving ritual addressed to certain local deities collectively referred to as *Dolaha Deiyo* (Twelve Gods), and with an origin myth closely connected to the origin myth of the Sinhalese, as the bedrock of origin and growth of Kandyan dance in pre-colonial as well as colonial times. It appears that Kandyan dance came to be introduced to the Kandy Esala Perahera, which is currently seen as a Kandyan dance pageantry, in a later period as an innovation in this "ritual of the Kandyan state":

> Dancing is so central to the kankariya that yakdessas – who also recite texts, sing and perform dramas in the ritual typically speak of their performance as "dancing a kankariya" (Kankariyak natanava). The success of kankariya is judged largely by the aesthetic quality of the performance of dancers as well as drummers. Since the goal of kankariya is to please the gods and human audience, performers try to dance beautifully (Reed, 35).

The dancers necessarily came from the relevant dance lineages (*parampara*) in the drummer (*berava*) caste, and the aristocratic layer (*radala*) of the highest caste in Sinhala society comprised of the primary patrons and sponsors of this ritual, giving it a strong foundation in the caste system of the Sinhalese. In the caste hierarchy and in the ritual context that legitimized this caste hierarchy, the Kandyan dancer was expected to be deferential to and of service to both the pantheon of gods as well as to the secular hierarchy patronizing the rituals, the *radala* in particular. The *kankariya* performer, however, was cast in a royal costume and a royal posture:

> The character of the kankariya dances is regal and heroic, a characterization that is heightened by the splendor of the elaborate ves costume, said to be composed of half of the ornaments of the healer-king Malaya. The performer's identity as heir to the healing powers of King Malaya is critical to the aesthetic qualities of nobility, dignity and majesty valued in a performer. The proud and stately bearing of a king is made manifest in the erect carriage of the body, the upturned position of the head, and the downward gaze of the dancer (Reed, 35)

Position of the *Berava* Caste in Sinhala Society

This, in turn, raises the question as to why the *berava* caste was endowed with hereditary expert knowledge,

Photo by Susan A. Reed, 43

given that it is one of the lowest castes in the Sinhala caste hierarchy, even below those engaged in seemingly polluting hereditary trades such as the washing of clothes and the making of pottery. The work under review is replete with references to the demeaning status of *berava* drummers and dancers; "…many of the sons of ritual performers did not wish to suffer the injustices and humiliation their fathers had undergone" (82), "…the *berava* suffered countless injustices due to their caste position" (94), "Many *berava* took great pains to obscure their caste identity for fear of caste prejudice" (160), "Among the traditional Kandyan dancers a story circulates about the son of Nittawela Gunaya, the nation's famed dancer of 1940s and 1950s. After Gunaya's death, it is said, the son destroyed all evidence of his father's profession, even burning in an act of desecration, the most prized possession, the sacred ves headdress, that had been conferred on Gunaya at his initiation ceremony. Dancers recount this story to illustrate the shame and the suffering that even the most publicly esteemed of traditional dancers have experienced for more than fifty years" (151), "The stories of many traditional dancers are stories of pain and humiliation" (170). In Reed's work as well as in many other works on Kandyan dance and the Sinhala caste system, there is no clear ritualistic or secular explanation regarding the so-called demeaning status attributed to the *berava* caste. There are passing references to the polluted nature of the drum, as it is made of leather which is considered polluting in a ritual sense, and to the fact that the ritual roles of the *berava* sometimes bring them in contact with malevolent as well as benevolent spirits. But these cannot fully explain why the *berava* caste is ranked so low in the caste hierarchy. In describing Kandyan dance performance in the Esala Perahera, Seneviratne (1978) however, noted that Kandyan dance is primarily deferential in nature:

> The very act of dancing in front of someone in certain contexts, of which the Perahera is one, places the dancers in a low position and the recipient of dance in a high position. This inequality is enhanced by the dancers worshipping the radala authorities every now and then in the moving Perahera, throughout its entire course. Further, during most of this course, the dancers also perform the remarkable feat of walking backwards from time to time, as much as they could while doing their dance too, another sign of honour accorded to a high status person to whom one does not turn one's back (Seneviratne, 151).

This formal and exaggerated display of deference is an intrinsic part of the caste system that perhaps explains why the *berava* should be placed close to the bottom of the caste hierarchy.

On the other hand, as I discovered in my own ethnographic research in a predominantly drummer caste village from 1977 to 1980, many members of the caste who had become politically mobilized during the 1956 political change resented and boycotted what they identified as demeaning caste services (*baaldu wada*) expected of them in ritual and non-ritual contexts by high caste landlords in the area (Silva, 1992).

Transformation of Kandyan Dance

Susan Reed argues that the Kandyan dance underwent a number of radical transformations in the colonial and post-colonial periods. One of the early changes was its transformation from a purely ritual act to a performing art. As a performing art, it was used to please the traditional *radala* elite and the colonial masters, while it has become a means of entertaining tourists, local audiences and foreign audiences encountered in "overseas dance tours". This shift of Kandyan dance from the ritual arena to the stage required a number of modifications in style, presentation and adaptability. Far more important was the recognition of Kandyan dance as "a symbol of Sinhala pride, taking its place as the national dance of Sri Lanka" and "the emergence of Kandyan dance as the central symbol of Sinhala cultural identity" in the aftermath of the 1956 political changes at the national level (Reed, 128). Like the Sinhala language, *ayurveda* and Buddhism, Kandyan dance received a new importance as "a tangible sign of a revitalized "national culture"" (Reed, 136). This led to much needed state patronage for Kandyan dance, and its introduction to the curriculum in state schools, institutes of Aesthetic Studies and the universities since the 1950s. This, in turn, opened up employment avenues for those with Kandyan dance knowledge and necessary educational qualifications through teaching positions in state institutions. "In the 1940s and 1950s, many of the impoverished *berava* dancers and drummers appear to have eagerly embraced their new found status as prime bearers of Sinhala culture. For many of these dancers, becoming a teacher in a public school…was an enormous boost for their esteem and status" (156).

There were also other parallel and sometimes contradictory developments. One was the entry of members of the higher castes, including some representatives of the Sinhala elite, into Kandyan dance hitherto monopolized by the *berava*. Mass production of Kandyan dancers through institutes of Aesthetic Studies and universities served to disempower and marginalize the hereditary Kandyan dancers who did not possess paper qualifications. With the classicization of Kandyan dance, an effort was made to refine the dance, and at the same time, to make the dance respectable. The state became directly involved in dance training and in the setting of standards for dance training. The performing art of dance was perfected by high caste and upper class elite performers like Chitrasena and Vajira who became recognized as key performers of national dance. Reed refers to this change as a process of "elite appropriation of Kandyan dance". The end result, however, was further marginalization of the *berava* dancers whose traditions were increasingly identified as rustic, unrefined and considerably below the standards set by the elite dancers. The tensions between the elite dancers and the subaltern *berava* dancers, who, despite having the necessary artistic skills do not have paper qualifications, and the ill treatment received by *berava* dance teachers in public schools are some of the sites of tension identified by Reed. One of the veteran *berava* dancers interviewed by Reed has sarcastically made the following observation:

> "Now every one descends (*bahinava*) into pants. Every artist wears pants, dance is now a pants-wearing art (*kalisam natum kalava*). The people who are stranded (*ataraman vela*) are the people who preserve the art. They still wear the *vetti* and the *baniam* unpretentiously (*ahinsaka vidihata*)...They are the ones who preserve the art… Now it is hard to foresee the future of dance" (163-164).

In the meantime, the efforts taken to demarcate and redefine Kandyan dance as an ingredient of a pure Sinhalese culture have served to undermine the multicultural setting in which Kandyan dance has evolved. In reality, Kandyan dance has benefited from cross-fertilization with other forms of dance, as manifested in the possible incorporation of *vannam* from South India. The moves to assert Kandyan dance as a Sinhala dance, as against *bharata natyam* that is identified and promoted as a Tamil dance by certain Tamil nationalists, have served to create artificial barriers between these related dance forms, preventing their possible cross-fertilization, particularly at the level of traditional practitioners. On the whole, the upsurge of Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms as rival ideologies contesting each other has served to reverse the trends in multiculturalism and hybridity, which had been well established in Sri Lanka for many centuries.

Women and Kandyan Dance

Reed's book has considerable focus on women dancers as well. The concluding chapter of the book "Between Purity and Respectability: Sinhala Women and Kandyan Dance" treats the feminization of Kandyan dance as an important transformation associated with other recent developments such as the introduction of Kandyan dance into the school curriculum. Quoting Ma-kulloluwa (1976), the book argues that "Prior to 1940s, Sinhala women, with the exception of the performance of *digge natum*... did not dance. Dancing as a profession was considered immoral, "a trade fit for harlots"" (Reed, 198). Further, it is claimed that "The public display of their bodies and the confidence and assertiveness they show on stage clash with the Sinhala ideals of demure and modest womanhood" (200). While it is true that Kandyan dance has been primarily masculine in character, Sigiri frescos and temple paintings at a number of sites clearly indicate that portrayal of the female body in seductive / sensual artistic forms was well established in Sri Lanka for many centuries. On the other hand, *Sandesa* literature of the Kotte period is replete with references to female dancers, as evident in the following verses from the *Salalihini Sandesa* by Rev. Thotagamuwa Sri Rahula (translation by K.W. de A. Wijesinghe):

Verse 73

පුලා සුවඳ මලවුල් කැරැ වරල් බැඳ
දුලා රන් පතින් සරසා සවන් සොඳ
නිලා දිගු නුවන් රසඳුන් තනා ඇඳ
බලා සිටු රඟන රඟ මඬල කල්බඳ

(Remain gazing at the pretty girls dancing on the dancing stage with their hair dressed interspersed with fragrant full-blown flowers, their beautiful ears decked with shining plates of gold, and their long blue eyes streaked with collyrium richly made)

Verse 74

විදෙන ලෙලෙන තරු බර පුළුලුකුළැ රැදි
හෙළන නහන අත නුවනඟ බැලුම් දිදි
රුවින දිලෙන අබරණ කැලුම ගත යෙදි
සැලෙන පහන සිර වැනි රඟන ලිය සැදි

(Like flickering lamp-flames are the dancing girls duly arrayed, whose spreading and waving heavy girdle-folds rest on their broad hips, who raise and lower their hands casting sidelong looks (at them), and whose bodies shine in the reflected luster of their ornaments)

Verse 75

ලකළ පුළුලුකුළ බඳ මිණි මෙ වුල්ලා
සමග රන් සලඹ රැඳු දී වෙවුල්ලා
වයන පදව තඹමින් පද කමල්ලා
රඟන ළඳුන් බල රුසිරු සියල්ලා

(See all the graces of the women who dance by placing their lotus-like feet (on the ground) to the tune of tambours etc.? and produce by the movements of the body, at the same time, the tinkling sound of their gold anklets and of the zones worn round their charming broad hips)

This, in turn, raises the question whether Reed was correct when she argues that Sinhala women did not widely participate in dance performances prior to recent developments in Kandyan dance. Further, the negative public attitude towards female dancers that Reed discovered in Sinhala society may well have been an outcome of puritanical Victorian values introduced to Sri Lanka through the colonial encounter, and through the adoption and wider dissemination of such values by the Sinhala nationalist movement, contrary to and contradictory with its self-proclaimed anti-colonial stance. From this viewpoint, while some of the restrictions on female dancers such as the prohibition on the wearing of the sacred *ves* costume by women dancers may be of pre-colonial origin, others such as the public gaze on the female body and new ideas about feminine domesticity and respectability may have more to do with contradictory processes associated with westernization, the nationalist upsurge and the efforts to revitalize an assumed pure Sinhala culture. On the whole, this suggests that a more nuanced analysis of the history of dance in Sri Lanka that also pays closer attention to Sinhala literature, oral sources and colonial records is necessary.

In spite of its certain limitations noted above, on the whole, Reed's *Dance and the Nation: Performance, Ritual and Politics in Sri Lanka* makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the politics and poetics of Kandyan dance in contemporary Sri Lanka. The work is well founded in theory and prior work on the subject, and, by and large, free of any biases in reporting, analysis and interpretation. The overarching emphasis on the subaltern perspective that privileges the views and opinions of hereditary Kandyan dancers, whose voices are rarely heard in scholarly writings on Kandyan dance, can be considered as a distinctive strength of this work. A Sinhala translation of this work can certainly enhance its potential benefit for interested Sri Lankan readers and performing artists.

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There's an Island in the Bone

Laban Carrick Hill

There's an Island in the Bone
by Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe
Yara Press, 2010; 80 pp. Rs.1,450.00

The title of Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe's first book of poems *There's an Island in the Bone* is a play on the idiom of feeling something deep within one's bones. Like the island of Sri Lanka, for Jirasinghe, there is a place – an island – deep inside her, so deep that it is buried within her bones, and this is where her soul resides. Jirasinghe's remarkable collection of poems searches, probes, and explores a landscape that is at crossroads:

> We followed a footpath fading like old ink
> on an ancient map
> through a crowded forest of trees straining
> up, sun-searching… ("The Moon at *Seenukgala*")

And in this traditional space where past and future intersect in the present, she finds an astonishing lyricism:

> Butterflies rose from the ground like
> crystallised dust
> settling, clustered, helter-skelter everywhere… ("The Moon at *Seenukgala*")

Jirasinghe's poems struggle with the double consciousness of a person who writes in English but lives in a non-Western culture:

> I hear the maid tell my daughter,
> three years old and just able to make out
> red from pink and even blue from purple,
> as they sat on the verandah
> that she is *fair*. ("Learning Colours")

In this poem she describes how the horrible anguish that she feels has seeped almost like sewage into the consciousness of her people:

> If it had been someone else, I would have
> stomped up, red in the face, and given my spiel:
> "When the *one* real line is drawn,
> even the fairest here is black!"
> But this is a woman from a highland village.
> She will look at the child's dark mother and laugh… ("Learning Colours")

Unlike most first books of poetry, Jirasinghe's work does not limit itself to the theme of a poet trying to place herself in both literature and the world. This collection, the result of twelve years of work, offers readers a much more complex vision of a subtle observer who passes back and forth between Asian and Western culture. In her poem "Three Cities" she begins with a description of the Anne Frank house:

> In Amsterdam
> a bookcase reveals a staircase into
> the recess of a girl's heart. ("Three Cities")

Then she surprises the reader with her turn away from Frank's actual suffering to the way in which the world mediates and trivializes these kinds of horrors:

> In places like these, let us remain
> eternally grateful for the white cords
> in museums
> that safely separate
> us
> from
> them. ("Three Cities")

Reading these lines in the context of the end of Sri Lanka's nearly thirty-year old civil war, one cannot help but wonder how these past atrocities will be perceived and recorded.

In the next two sections of the poem, she takes us to Lisboa and its "dry salinated heat," and onto London where she,

> redder than pink,
> smile brightly
> into a belching,
> context-clueless face. ("Three Cities")

The Sri Lankan cultural historian and writer Sinharaja Tammita-Delgoda has called Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe the most important Sri Lankan writer of her generation. Though I cannot speak to her place in the canon, I can confidently attest that *There's an Island in the Bone* introduces a remarkable and original voice to the global literary scene.

The Moon at *Seenukgala*

Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe

We followed a footpath fading like old ink
on an ancient map
through a crowded forest of trees straining
up, sun-searching;
branches, boughs, pushing leaves lightwards.
Birds, dumbstruck by the morning-dusk of this shade,
flew noteless from nest to fruit to open mouth.
Butterflies rose from the ground like crystallised dust
settling, clustered, helter-skelter everywhere.
The forest, all wilderness,
drank our walking sounds and turned footsteps
into leaf-mulch thuds, cracking dry vines
back into earth fodder, when suddenly
it stopped.
The forest pulled its denseness behind us and pushed us on
to open land, dry grass, where a river thundered somewhere
everywhere ahead of us.
We stood, shielding ourselves, sun-shocked-sound-struck.

The river, mad, impatient drove over its bed, a half
bared back, a skinless spine of disparate boulders.
We stepped across this humped liquid ground,
like mariners navigating through exposed icebergs,
but this was tropical journeying,
beneath us the water foamed, plunged, fell,
and unexpectedly, pooled completely still
within a ring of stones.

Night came as suddenly as we had upon the river.
Above us, a full moon touched our heads
and a Scorpio twisted its stingless tail northwards,
pointing us to places we no longer sought.
Someone stoked a small fire and wood-smoke
filled the crystal air, a thin strand, rising
like the desperate signal of the lost traveller.

We stepped into the still water surrounded by a river
determined to leave as we shuddered,
shocked by the discovery that our roots
grow lush, full, tunnel deep into the earth's core
at times and places like these.
Every road ever travelled,
every timeless quest for gold, ambrosia,
love, ends here, where our skins become
the scales of fish, our bones crisp boughs of driftwood, our hair our teeth,
every element every tree every water and every stone.
Knowing we had to return to where we had come from,
we reached up, plucked out the moon and put it into our pockets.

Each day, now, as we grope our way through cities
of wide tarred roads, name-boards marked indelibly,
directions signposted,
we pull out this moon, a white-disk compass,
hold it to our ears and listen to the sound of the river rushing home,
or twist it, a dial on our palm, and watch the wood-smoke tumble out,
and singing, laughing, throw this moon back up into the sky,
and watch the water crash through every concrete building;
washing our hardened walls, filling our closed rooms
with lunar rivers boulder forests liquid fires.

This, is the way home.

Burning on the A-9

Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe

There is a place
of burning.

A land where the Vanni-sun flares,
licking shelled palm trees that dot the horizon,
straggling into the sky without
a crown of leaves; headless, charred;
where the ground is covered in scrub,
swathed in fine sienna dust,
and houses roofless, walls bullet-ridden,
rice fields scorched by the sun burnt by armies,
stand voiceless,
and dogs three-legged, maimed by landmines,
wander scratching shelled houses for food.

(Through this land, a hobbled road;
with places to step off on to,
meeting points and other pathways;
that no longer exists,
ran.)

Now on this no-longer-road,
wind-pro
pelled, the fire lifts,
swooshing into the air;
inflaming
kerosene slathered
burnt scrub wood, skeleton leaves,
bone cinders, bigot sparks;
travelling in every direction,
to burn everywhere.

No longer one place.

Drinks on the Lawn
Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe

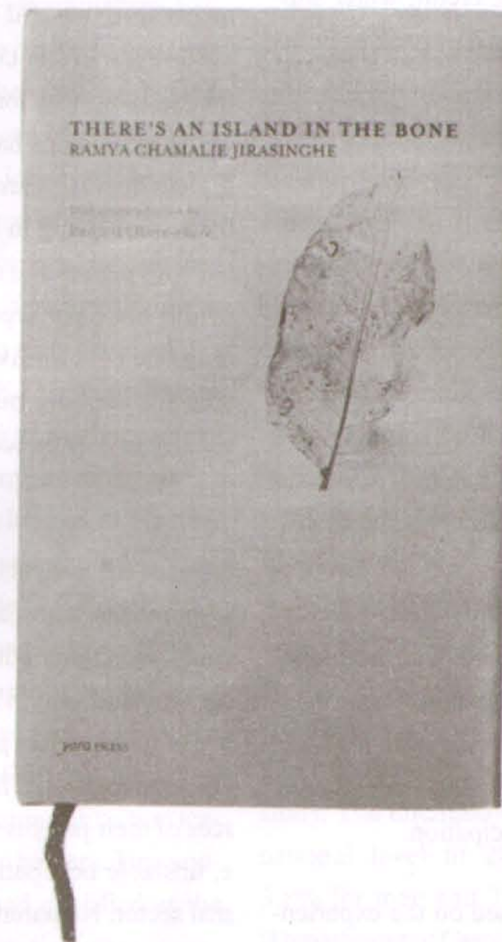
Emerald green, edged by white verandahs
and still ponds,
holds the group together:
their dew-drop laughter.
Those frangipani smiles.

A half-moon and fairy-lights
guide waiters towards
hands reaching nonchalantly for tid-bits:
Egg boats. Prawns on toast. Impaled fowl. Grilled lamb.

Two hours on the lawn.

A glass shatters against the pond's edge.
Listening ears hear nothing.
Tid-bits are passed from mouth to mouth,
wrecked boats bob to the surface.
The grilling and the stabbing leave
the hands of the caterers
to be done better by the guests.

At the end of the night
when the hosts kiss goodbye,
the frangipani drops on the lawn
heavy with the acid rain of the conversations
it picked-up on the way.
The pool overflows and the hedges no longer contain
the icy laughter grating against the glasses,
grilled fowl taking wing,
prawns swimming against the tide,
and lambs, destined for slaughter, bucking at the door.
These creep onto the streets of Colombo,
cackle past the army barricades,
crawl under the doorways,
climb between the bed coverlets
and snuggle up to soft bodies.
And their dreams will not be raided
even when the electricity grid is cut-off
and Sri Lanka goes black,
as the night rains fire and steel.



Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War
By Hugo Slim
Columbia University Press, 304 pages, 2008
US $ 22.50

When civilians suffer in war, it is often a deliberate act. Massacres, rape, displacement, famine, and disease are the strategic decisions of political and military leaders who make civilians their targets in order to gain the upper hand in battle. Yet there still exists the precious and fragile belief-ingrained in modern international law-that unarmed and innocent people should be protected in war, even if, in practice, the principle of civil immunity is often ignored or rejected.

Trends in Youth Employment in Urban Low Income Families[1]

Indika Edirisinghe

In an open economy, money or income plays a major role in one's life because it allows a person to develop his or her capabilities, and provides a means of living. Poverty is a condition with many interdependent and closely related dimensions which can be summarized under three broad categories: (i) Lack of regular income and employment, productive assets such as land and housing, access to social safety nets; (ii) Lack of access to services such as education, health care, information, credit, water supply and sanitation; (iii) Lack of political power, participation, dignity and respect. In this article, the many facets of employment of young men and women in low income families are discussed with special reference to urban poverty. In general, these low income settlements are popularly known as slums and shanties or *Watta* settlements, and are officially known as underserved settlements or substandard housing units. The article also discusses, from a gendered perspective, not only employment, but other attributes associated with employability such as educational qualifications, vocational skills, attitudes and perceptions with special reference to labour force participation.

The article is based on the experiences, attitudes and perceptions revealed by a representative random sample of 56 young men and 44 young women in the age group of 15–29 years from two selected underserved settlements in the Thimbirigasyaya Divisional Secretary's Division in the Colombo Municipal Council area. Of the total sample, 38% were in the 15–19 age group, another 38% in the 20–24 age group and 24% in the 25–29 age group. They were heterogeneous with regard to ethnicity and religion. Three fourths of the men and just over half of the women in the sample were unmarried. The data was collected during the period of May to June 2009.

Socio Economic Background

Over half of the men and women in this sample were born in the two selected low income settlements, while the others have moved to these settlements from several other disadvantaged areas in the country including the plantation sector. Over one third of the individuals have lived in them for less than 10 years. The majority of them were living in houses constructed with planks and metal sheets. They did not have separate rooms, but only one area for living, and another area for cooking purposes, and had usually two or three chairs and a bed as furniture.

None of the fathers or mothers of the respondents who participated in the study had higher educational qualifications, and only 8% of fathers and 5% of mothers had passed the G.C.E. O/L examination. The livelihood sources of their parents were low income, unstable occupations in the informal sector. No parent belonged to the professional, sub-professional or technical categories in the employment structure, and nearly half of the fathers and the majority of mothers were engaged in elementary occupations such as manual labour. This situation has compelled the youth in the family to seek a livelihood at a very young age in order to meet their basic needs.

Access to School Education and Educational Qualifications

Obtaining a formal education is one of the important attributes that facilitate access to employment. Sri Lanka has had a system of free, state-sponsored primary, secondary and tertiary (including university) education since 1945. This policy enables both girls and boys to have access to education up to any level irrespective of their socio-economic background. Nevertheless, more than one fourth of the sample had not completed the requirement of compulsory education from 5-14 years. However, the positive feature observed was that all the respondents in the sample had been enrolled in school. This appeared to be an improvement as two fathers and 13 mothers of the respondents had never been to school.

The highest educational attainment of both men and women in the sample was low compared to the national figures. Three women and two men were primary school dropouts, while just over 80% of men and women were secondary school dropouts. Among them, more men than women had left school when they were in Year/s 6-9, while more women than men had left school when they were in Year/s 10-11 unlike in macro-level data. Only nine men and five women in the sample had passed the G.C.E. O/L examination. Half of them (four men and three women) had continued to the A/L classes, but only two men and two women had qualified at the G.C.E. A/L examination, while no one had qualified up to a level to be admitted to the university. The majority of men and women have had their education in a school located near the settlement which had limited human resources and physical facilities.

It was observed therefore, that the educational qualifications of youth in urban low income settlements were low compared to the national level. According to the perceptions of the youth, the main reasons for early school dropouts in the community were poverty, absence of a conducive environment for education, lack of interest of parents and children in education, love affairs and early marriages. Thus, most of the youth in these communities, both men and women, were entering the labour market with low educational qualifications.

Access to Vocational Skills

An important factor which enables access to employment, especially for youth who did not have higher educational qualifications, is acquiring a vocational skill. The survey found that some of the respondents had participated in vocational training while they were in school and after leaving school. However, only one fourth of the youth in the sample had participated in at least one vocational skills related training programme while they were in school. Even though an approximately equal percentage of men and women had participated in vocational training programmes, there was a significant difference in the field of training chosen by these two groups. Men had received some form of training in motor mechanics, house wiring, electrical repairing and three-wheeler repairing, while women had some training in sewing, the St. John's ambulance first-aid programme and drama. Both women and men had participated in computer skills training programmes and had received training in health care activities. However, more men than women were trained in computer skills, while more women than men were trained in health care activities. These differences reflect the influence of the impact of gender role stereotypes seen widely in most societies.

Twenty men (36%) and 24 women (54%) had followed or were following at least one vocational training programme after schooling. Overall,

[1] This article is based on the paper "Gender Differences in Access to Employment: A Case Study of Young Men and Women in Urban Underserved Settlements" presented by the author at the Gender and Economy Session of the 12th National Convention on Women's Studies organized by the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) Colombo on 02/07/2010.

the youth who have followed or were following training had participated in one to three types of training programmes. Gender differences were observable in the programmes followed by men and women after leaving school. The most popular training programme for men was masonry followed by computer skills and motor mechanics; for women it was dressmaking, computer skills, operating machines in factories such as in the garment industry, cookery and beauty culture. Only women had followed training programmes in dress making or sewing, beauty culture, making soft toys, fabric painting, and other domestic activities, while only men had trained in masonry, motor mechanics, accountancy, pharmacy, photography, announcing, hotel services, driving, electrical mechanism, carpentry, welding, and three-wheeler repairing. It was therefore clear that there was a gender based difference with regard to participation in vocational training programmes. Established stereotypes continued to operate in choosing a training programme, and more choices were available for men than for women.

The major training providers were non-formal institutions such as private institutions, followed by informal institutions such as relatives or known individuals, and formal institutions such as government institutions and religious institutions (mosque and temple). It was noted that more women than men have participated in programmes conducted by formal and religious institutions, while it was the reverse in non-formal and informal institutions. Of the youth who have participated in a vocational training programme, only one third of the women and 80% of the men said that these programmes equipped them for their working life.

However, more than half the youth in these settlements had not participated in any vocational training programme. The reasons for not participating in vocational training were lack of interest, poverty, desire to earn and not to learn, lack of guidance or motivation for vocational training, and in the case of women, early marriages or love affairs. The inability of parents to handle adolescents and to offer guidance and support, too, has affected the participation of the youth in vocational education. A few said that the stigma attached to *Watta* dwellers affects the participation of youth in formal vocational training programs. The other disadvantaging characteristic observed was that only less than a quarter of programmes had been offered by formal institutions. The majority participated in short courses provided by non-formal or informal training providers. As the demand in the labour market for the skills acquired in such courses is limited, it is difficult for these youth to get formal sector jobs or jobs with good prospects.

Access to Employment

In the overall sample, 96% of the men and 84% of the women had engaged in at least one income generating activity or job at the time of conducting the survey. In Sri Lanka, it is illegal to employ a child below 14 years of age and to involve children of 15–18 years of age in hazardous occupations. However, among the employed, 22% of the men and 5% of the women had started earning when they were 10–14 years of age, and 33% of the men and 30% of the women when they were 15–16 years of age. Two boys had started earning while they were in school at the age of 12 and 13. Therefore, child labour was a significant problem in these low income settlements, particularly among boys, although it is almost invisible in macro data. These children had worked as assistants to masons, mechanics and chefs, as salespersons in sales outlets, as helpers in sales outlets, as street vendors, and as domestic helpers.

Nearly half of the men and 54% of the women had started earning when they were 17–20 years of age. Only women have started earning when they were 21–24 years of age. It was observed therefore that more men than women had entered the labour market before the age of 17. With regard to their first job, almost all the youth in the sample had been in low income occupations, such as service workers in companies, factory workers, workers in sales outlets, craft and related workers and elementary workers.

As in national level labour force data, there was a higher incidence of unemployment among young women than among young men, particularly among the secondary educated. All the men who had qualified at the G.C.E. O/L (7) and A/L (2) examinations had found jobs within a period of one year after schooling. The women who had similar qualifications had to wait for several years for a job. The jobs to which these youth had access were not considered to be compatible with their educational qualifications and aspirations. The young men who had qualified at the G.C.E. O/L examination had started earning as cleaning supervisors in a company, as salespersons in a sales outlet, as helpers in a factory, as helpers in a sales outlet, and as ceiling makers. The G.C.E. A/L qualified young men had been sales representatives and peons in private companies. The young women who had qualified at the G.C.E. O/L examination had started earning as tuition teachers and domestic helpers. Two young women who had qualified at the G.C.E. A/L examination were unemployed for a period of one to four years after schooling. It was observed therefore that there was no relationship between educational qualifications, unemployment and level and nature of the job.

The ever employed youth in the sample were engaged in one to six jobs during their working life of less than one to 19 years. It was observed therefore that the youth in these low income settlements have changed their jobs frequently, indicating a high degree of instability in employment. The degree of instability was higher among men. Though the youth had changed their jobs frequently, there was not much change in the occupational groups except in the case of a few who had joined the Sri Lanka Army. The nature of the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth jobs of the youth also were similar to the jobs listed as the first jobs, except in a few cases. It was observed therefore that the youth have stagnated at the same level, and have had mobility only to a limited degree, given that the range of available jobs was quite narrow. Gender differences in access to employ-ment and the disadvantaged status of women are reflected clearly in the experiences of the women in the sample.

Current Employment Status

At the time of the study, the majority of the youth in the sample were employed, while 19% were unemployed (1% men and 29% women). The labour force participation rates for men and women were 98.2% and 79.5% respectively. As in the national level data, the labour force participation rate was higher for men. In the study sample, it was 1.2 times than that of women for the age group 20–24 years, while it was 1.4 for the age group 25–29 years. The unemployment rate in the overall sample was 21.1% (10.9% for men and 37.1% for women) at the time of conducting the study. The unemployment rate at the national level in 2008 was 5.2%; 3.8% for men and 7.7% for women (Department of Census and Statistics, 2009[2]). Therefore, it was clear that the youth living in these urban low income settlements have faced severe constraints in finding jobs. Unemployment rates were significantly higher among women than men in these settlements, comparable to the national level data. The unemployment rate of women at the national level was twice than that of men, while unemployment rate of women in the study sample was more than three times higher than that of men.

The youth in the sample were employed in the formal and the informal sectors. Just over half of the youth were

[2] Department of Census and Statistics. *Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey - 2008*. Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 2009.

in the informal sector, and the majority of them were men. More women in the study sample worked in the formal sector. Nearly half of the women and 14% of the men were employees in factories such as in the garment industry. Of the factory workers, more than half of them had worked as machine operators and 23% as helpers. The second highest employment provider for youth was private companies. The public sector was not a significant employment provider for the youth in these urban low income settlements, and there were only two public sector employees – two men in the Sri Lanka Army. A considerable amount of youth had worked as elementary workers such as labourers, and as craft and related workers such as masons, electricians, mechanics, and dress makers. The sales outlets mainly located at Pettah had provided 7% of the jobs for youth as sales workers and all of them were men. Very few were running their own businesses (small boutiques, restaurants and textile shops). The majority of youth were casual workers and only four men had permanent jobs – two army personnel and two service workers in companies (clerk and operational assistant). It can be concluded therefore that the majority of men and women in the overall sample were confined to unstable occupations with minimum remuneration. It was interesting to note that the division in the labour force was influenced by gender role stereotyping.

Regarding economic rewards, the highest income earners (> Rs. 25,000.00) were all men, while all the lowest income earners (Rs. 500.00–2,500.00) were women. The highest percentage of women were in the income group Rs. 2,500.00–7,500,00, while the higest percentage of men were in the income group Rs. 10,001.00–15,000.00. In the overall sample, more men were among comparatively high income earners than women reflecting gender differences in earning potential as well.

Though they were engaged in unstable, low income occupations, surprisingly, the majority of employed youth were happy and satisfied with their occupations. The majority said that their occupations were accepted or recognized by the society in which they lived. In general, the findings revealed that the majority of youth in urban low income settlements were in the labour force, but not in productive employment.

Attitudes and Perceptions

More than half the men and half the women said that they were satisfied with the job opportunities that were available to them. The main job hubs mentioned by them were garment factories, other factories, shops located close to their residences, sales outlets in the Colombo city, and jobs which required physical strength. One individual said that if the youth are interested they can earn even by working as a *nattami*, and therefore that it was not true that youth in low income settlements do not have job opportunities. However, he was not sensitive to the quality of the occupations.

The youth were asked about their perceptions regarding the right to employment as compared with that of the rest of the youth in the country. Just over two thirds of men and 57% of the women in the sample said that they have the same rights as the others in the country to employment. Most of them claimed that there will be no discrimination, if they have educational and vocational qualifications. However, they have fewer opportunities because they do not have adequate educational qualifications. On the other hand, most of the youth were not able to compare their situation with that of the youth in other areas of the country, but could only compare with that of the youth in their neighboring communities, which too have been identified as disadvantaged areas. The others claimed that they have less opportunities and rights to employment compared to the rest of the youth in the country, mainly because of low recognition given to youth in the low income settlements and the limited interest shown by politicians in their problems.

The youth were asked also whether the young men and women in their locality have the same rights and opportunities to employment. The highest percentage of youth claimed that there were more employment opportunities for women in their locality. Women said that men are lazy, not interested in earning, prefer to loiter with friends, get involved in conflicts at the work places most of the time, and look for more prestigious occupations without accepting what is available. Men said that there are more garment factories, that employers prefer to recruit women as they create fewer problems, that women actively look for jobs, and that they are willing to accept lower salaries. More than one third of the men and 41% of the women claimed that both men and women have the same opportunities and rights to employment. Only 14% of the respondents said that there were more opportunities and rights for employment for men than for women.

The views of the youth in the sample were ascertained regarding the best strategy available for them to get a job with good prospects. Just over half of the men and 68% of the women said that the best strategy available for them to get a good job was acquiring educational and vocational qualifications. However, according to the findings of the study, most of them had not equipped themselves with such qualifications, and they had only realized and regretted their limitations when it was too late to obtain these qualifications. The second highest percentage of the youth depended on political assistance to get good jobs. Others believed in relying on their personal qualities such as effort, commitment, good character, dedication and determination.

Conclusion

The youth in these settlements were from families embedded in poverty and educational deprivation for generations, and, as a result, these youth too, were denied access and opportunity to acquire either higher educational qualifications or recognized formal vocational skills. Their disadvantaged circumstances and lack of ambition reinforced their low status in the employment structure, which, in turn, perpetuated their poverty status. This is a vicious cycle and strong affirmative actions are needed in order to uplift their living conditions.

"Formless" and "A Silent Moon"

Sasanka Perera

Translated into English by Samudrika Sylva[1]

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Formless

Thoughts, struggling for release,
Vivid, turbulent images in the mind,
Mutating soft emotions,
Tire me!
Yet,
Unable to scream
for the world to hear,
Or at least to be heard by a few
compassionate ones,
The mind does not allow
to address,
and tell!

To tell just one who understands,
Thoughts that defy comprehension,
Chaotic formless forms,
Soundless soft emotions –
If the mind feels compelled to speak,
To be heard and erased in an instant,
This boundless weight would lift
like wispy clouds
that float in the springtime skies of bygone youth.

[It is not to be!]
In this never-ending moment of present reality
this mind and I
remain,
Constantly unmoved.

එකම හඳක්; වෙනස් දසුන්

වැලි කතර දවාලූ
හිරු බැස ගිය නිසල රාත්‍රියේ
හරිත වර්ණ මිලින වුනු
ගිරි ශිඛර වලල්ලට ඔබ්බෙන්
නැග ආ සඳුගේ කැන්
තරුවල සිසිලස
ඔබට දැනෙන්නැති; ඔබට පෙනෙන්නැති
මට දැනුනා සේ; මට පෙනුනා සේ.

පෙනුනත් එකම හඳක් අපි දෙදෙනාටම
දැනුනත් තරු සිසිලස අපි දෙදෙනාටම
සිටියදි තනිවී දෙතැනක
දෙනෝදහක් මැද
දෙනෙත දුටුව දසුන් මා
මසිත මැවුණු රූ රටා
නැත ඔබට පෙනුනේ
මට පෙනුනු ලෙසින්
මසිත විකසිත වූ ලෙසින්.

නැගී ඇවිත් බැස ගියත්
හිරු, සඳු, තරු සදාතනිකවම
සිරගත වූයෙමි ස්ව-කැමැත්තෙන්
ඉපැරණි රජ දරුවෙකුගේ
අහස් මාලිගයක
නැගී ගිය ගගන තලයට
කුළු පව් අතරින්
ඉතිහාසය නැවතුන
ව්‍යාපිදේශිත
ගෞරවාරෝපිත කෙටි මොහොතක.
දකින්නැති මේ හිරු, සඳු, තරු
ගිරි ශිඛර
සුවිසල් ප්‍රාකාර අහස් මාලිගයේ
ගලා ගිය ඉතිහාසය
සියවස් ගණනක් පුරා
නවතින්නට පෙර
සංසක්ත නොවූ එක් නිමේශයක
මෑත අතීතයේ.

වස් දඬු රාවය අමතන්නැති
දෙව් රජුන් නරපතීන්.
අනන්ත ගීතිකා මායාවී හඬින්
එක්වෙන්නැති නිසසල අහසට
යාතිකා සමඟින් නෙක පා සළඹේ.
මිම්නු සහස් වදන් එදා
මිලින වී ඈත
ඉතිහාසය නැවතුන අද දවසේ.

දැක්කද ඔබ මා
සිතේ ඇඳුනු දූරාතීතයේ නිමේශයන්
සඳකැන් ඉතිරුණු
තරු සිසිලස ලත්
දුරස් වී සිටි ඒ රාත්‍රියේ?

[1] Samudrika Sylva studied English at University of Colombo and works in the development sector in Sri Lanka.

දිදුලන්නැති එසවුනු
අසිපත්, තෝමර හිරුගේ කිරණින්
දිව එන විට රුපුසෙන්
තරණය කර ගිරි ශිඛර.
මරු කතර සිසාරා
අස්, ඔටු, රිය සේනා
අරා සිටින්නැති පහත නිම්නය.
නවතින්නැති වස්දඬු රාවය.
නිසල වෙන්නැති පා බැඳුනු ඒ සළඹ
ඉතිහාසය නැවතුන ඒ මොහොතේ.
ඒ කතා කව්රු කියන්නද
හිරු, සඳු, තරු ගොලු වූ නිසා;
විසල් වූ ප්‍රාකාර ඒ විමනේ
මුනිවත රකිනා නිසා?

ඇසෙනවා අදත්, දකිනවා හෙටත්
ගැයුම්, රැඟුම්, නැටුම්
උතුරා යන මීවිත අතරින්
ලොව නන් දෙසින් පැමිණි
නන්නාදුනනා දන
උදම් අනන විට
අගය කරන විට
නොදන්නා ඉතිහාසයක්
නිසසල වූ අතීතයක
සෙවනැල්ලේ සිට.
යතාවේ මායාවේ
අහස් මාළිගා ප්‍රාකාර මත
තනිවූ රජ දරුවන්
ඉපැරණි රුපු සෙන්පතීන්
මතකයෙන් ගිලිහුණු
සේයා රූ පමණි
මිලින වී ගිය.

ඉතිහාසය නැවතුණු
යතාවේ මේ මායා නිමේශයේ
ලබන්න තරුවල සිසිලස
විඳින්න සඳුගේ සෙනෙහස
නොදුක්කත් ඔබ
මා සිතේ ඇඳුනු රූ රටා.

A Silent Moon

This gentle night,
You may have seen -
    [you] may have felt,
These sparkling stars
    and moonbeams that peeped
    from beyond the ring of mighty mountains,
Where the green had withered
    with the setting of the sun
    that scorched the undulating sands –
Just as I saw;
    Just as I felt.

Amidst crowds we remain,
    alone, apart:
Witness to the same moon,
    Absorbing the serenity of the stars.

Yet,
You did not see
the sights I saw,
Those drawn in my mind's eye,
    like I did!
    Like they blossomed in my mind!

Though sun, moon and stars
    wax and wane forever,
I remain, self-imprisoned
    in the celestial abode of an ancient king
    that rises into the skies among these mighty domes,
Arrested
In a simulated glorified moment
    when history
    ceased…

This sun, this moon,
These stars and mighty mountains
    would have witnessed
    for centuries
the passing of history
within these giant celestial walls,
Before it stopped,
    in a second
    of incoherence
    in recent times.

Melodious flutes would have
    called out to gods and kings,
Endless illusory songs mingling with the hymns of lyrical anklets
    reaching out to serene skies!
Those endless words whispered
    have ceased today
    when history
    is stilled.
Did you behold those ancient moments
    painted in my mind,
That night we remained apart,
    under the flickering stars
    and the sparkling moonbeam?

Those raised swords and spears would have
    glittered bright in the [noonday] sun,
when enemy forces charged across the hills,
the lower plain filled with cavalry;
The melodious flute would have ceased,
    the anklets stilled,
    in this moment of arrested history.
Who is to recount that tale,
When sun, moon and stars
    are determined to be silent
    and the ramparts of this palace
    hold their tongue?

Song and dance are heard today,
    and will be tomorrow,
Amidst the flow of wine
When these throngs of strangers admire and honor
    an unknown history
    standing
    in the shadows of the past.
The royal children and their enemies
are but lonely figures
on these celestial ramparts,
    silhouettes,
    faded, and forgotten.

In this illusory moment
    of reality
    when history stops,
Drink in these stars!
Embrace the devotional moon!
Though you do not see
    these images etched in my mind!

Cinderellas of Chulipuram

Capt. Elmo Jayawardena

The hamlet sleeps under a clear blue sky. The place and the people in this almost desolate corner of northern Sri Lanka have seen and suffered decades of turmoil and had accepted the devastation of the thirty year war as a way of life. Even in peace, the scars of strife clearly remain. The recollections of the people are sad and are common, of the young going to fight and returning in coffins. Many of their loved ones are buried in shallow graves in makeshift cemeteries. Seldom are they marked with name and place for remembrance. This is what insignificance and down-right poverty do to the departed. Many have gone simply missing, expendable innocents of the battles that took place in the name of ethnic divisions. A lot died at tender ages, fighting a war that was not theirs to fight, dragged into a conflict they knew little about except that they were born to a different race, in a country they rightfully called home.

Such is the sad legacy of war. Chulipuram today is inhabited mainly by the old, the widowed and the children, the rest of the inhabitants are missing, never to return again, almost looking like an unfinished jigsaw.

If there is to be peace, the seeds need to be sowed in the minds of the innocent. That is an unarguable sentiment. The war is over, the last corpse with bullet wounds had been lifted from the mud splattered banks of the Nandikadal Lagoon which marked a different dawn for different people, some to celebrate as victors and some to lament as the vanquished. Thirty years of a battle cry cannot be silenced and forgotten and erased from memory in a short time span. It applies equally to both sides. Seedlings of peace need to be planted and cared for to reap a harvest on a distant day when people of this blessed land could walk hand in hand as brothers and sisters. Such farming should reach places like Chulipuram, where the distant and the almost forgotten survivors of the terrible war that we all suffered from languish in uncertainty.

The newspapers and the television often splash plans of reconciliation and paths to progress, which to people in places like Chulipuram is pure mythology. They do not have televisions nor do they read newspapers. Their day is from dawn to dusk, and hours of light where they irk a living from the land and the surroundings, a

mere existence from hand to mouth, true to the expression. What would they know of a luxury bus service that travels on the A-9? Or of International aid and elaborate plans to develop the north? What are visions of peace to children who walk to school barefooted on empty stomachs wearing a crumpled uniform and a rag-tag piece of cloth hanging from the neck with a safety pin that is called a school tie?

These are children who had heard the sounds of gunfire instead of nursery rhymes, and seen death paraded constantly in their day to day life. I wonder what has remained in their memory as the remnants of the war to which they were born through no fault of theirs.

The Cinderellas of Chulipuram are just one of a lot that represents a different generation from Jaffna to Batticaloa. The ones in need of a little kindness, a little friendship and a little bridge built across racial divisions which would be the seedlings of peace I spoke about.

Thiruvadanilai Saiva Tamil Mixed School has one hundred and seven students. One hundred and seven little minds that need to be rescued from the dilemma of ethnic disharmony, of which they are incidental share holders. Mr. Kadampanathan is the Principal of this tumbledown semi-building, ploughing a hard furrow, running a school in the shade of "*takaran*" sheets and partitions of "this and that" to section the class rooms. A few teachers make up the staff, a deep-dug well gives drinking water and the black-boards are scratched and lined but suffice for the writing of lessons with broken pieces of chalk. That is the school.

I was there in Chulipuram in the November of 2009 to open a small library for a project named "Peace Begins with Me" organised by CandleAid Lanka. Thirty one such libraries sprang up from Jaffna to Kalmunai. Each library was sponsored mainly by the Sri Lankan Diaspora, prov-iding a chance to link with the unk-nown and the unfortunates of the war. The word "race" was replaced by something infinitely more beautiful called "us" and thirty one seeds sprouted out in the name of uniting a nation.

The project was simple and effective, nothing to reach the media headlines or a broadcasted ceremony on Rupavahini. There was no political mileage for anyone, or a peg in corporate social responsibility with glossy year-end reports or otherwise. It was just saplings of peace planted for a united future that we all fervently hope for. The intention was to participate in a search for racial harmony, by none other than us, the ordinary, the denizens of Lanka who believe in equality and peace in the real sense.

Then came the story of the Cinderellas of Chulipuram. A photograph of little girls and boys smiling for the camera, grouped together in a ramshackle school yard, reached someone's kind heart. Each child displayed a safety pin attached tie, and strange as it seemed, their feet were bare. Shoeless, they stood under the blazing Jaffna sky, a touching sight that would strike a heart with an awareness of the hardships suffered by the children of the conflict.

Inquiries came, "What can we do?" "We have children too". "Can we buy shoes for them?" So said someone in a distant land and spread the word about the Cinderellas of Chulipuram and their bare feet. Kindness is inherent; it only needs conduits to travel from distant sources to meet the deserving wants of humanity. A link was made from Singapore to Chulipuram to collect funds to provide shoes to all

the students of Thiruvadanilai Saiva Tamil Mixed School.

They went to Jaffna, CandleAid's representatives, a husband and wife combination who spearheaded the northern sector of its library project. The couple had worked tirelessly to open small libraries to link the northern children to us from the south and to the rest of the world.

It was no horse-drawn carriage that they journeyed in as in the Cinderella tale. They had no "glass-slippers" from a fairy godmother to fit the feet of the children of Chulipuram. They travelled the A-9 by bus, having ordered the shoes from a Bata store in Jaffna along with two hundred and fourteen pairs of socks. The couple carried with them a duffel bag full of used tennis balls, given by another kind person who had just returned from Oman; his gift to the future Muralitharans, a simple gesture full of meaning.

The foot sizes had been drawn on paper and sent from Chulipuram to the Bata man in Jaffna to ensure that the right sizes were purchased.

What is there to write more about all this, and the pictures tell the story. The before and after is a fairy tale by itself.

"Some of them had never worn a pair of socks, and we had to put them on their tiny feet to show how", said the shoe providers from CandleAid.

The Cinderella story of Chulipuram is now over, and the children have a pair of shoes each and socks to match. Yes, it may not be much, maybe trivial too, as some would conclude. But wasn't it the saintly Mahatma who said that "it may be very insignificant in the greater picture of things what we do in the name of humanity, but it is vitally important that we do them". Isn't it also true that between the big things we cannot do and the small things we do not do, we often end up doing nothing?

How distant are we from these war torn corners of a motherland that belongs to us all! The victory parades had been walked and celebrated, and the victors, the ones who fought, and the ones who planned, and sadly, the ones who stood nowhere in the battles but simply borrowed credit too have been heralded. Where do we go from here? Do we forget the vanquished? The easiest ones to forget are the defeated. I read the fancy rhetoric written by the learned in newspapers, and see the endless TV arguments on politics and politicians vociferously declaring who the saint is and who qualifies as the villain in this eternal argument based on the rights and wrongs of the ethnic conflict.

Kings have become prisoners and prisoners have become kings. What would the children of Chulipuram know about all this?

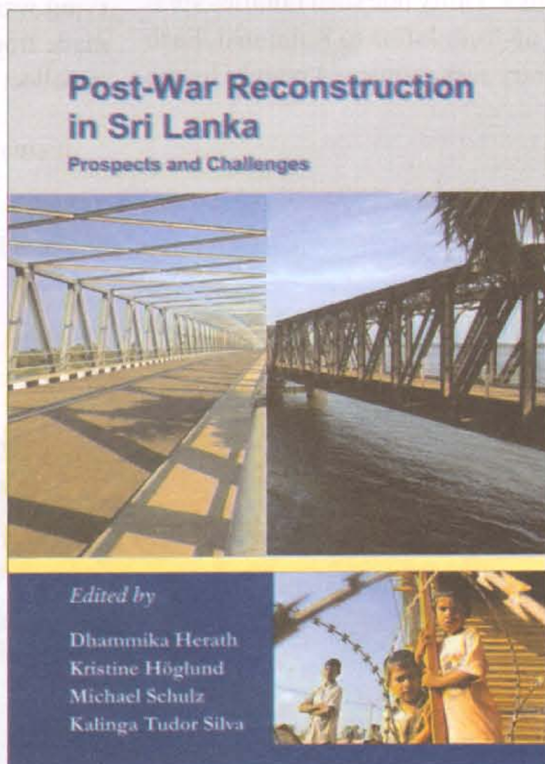
It is them we need to reach; maybe a shoe, maybe a sock, or maybe a used tennis ball. Something certainly is better than nothing, especially when "nothing" is what most of these big-talk broadcasts usually achieve. Haven't we seen so many myth-mode plans become moth-infested and fizzle out as time takes its toll on them?

Maybe it is a worthy thought to ponder on what we owe to this beautiful land in the name of peace. Isn't it time to plant saplings of harmony in children's minds and ensure that racial divisions are eradicated?

Chulipuram was just one of them; we have thirty more places to reach out to with gestures of peace.

Maybe you too would want to say "peace begins with me".

I would silently say "amen".



Post-War Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: Prospects and Challenges
Edited by Dhammika Herath, Kristine Höglund, Michael Schulz and Kalinga Tudor Silva
ICES, 296 pages, 2010
Rs. 400.00 / US $ 20.00

The northeast of Sri Lanka is currently undergoing a process of reconstruction after the end of nearly three decades of war. The Government of Sri Lanka has commenced large-scale reconstruction programs in former war-torn areas. This volume brings together scholars and practitioners who have conducted recent research on the northeast development process in relation to recovery, development and the psychological wellbeing of the people of the northeast. *Post-War Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: Prospects and Challenges* will be of interest and practical utility to academics, policy-makers and practitioners in government, non-governmental or donor institutions in their efforts at guiding the rebuilding processes in the northeast of Sri Lanka. This publication by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies follows the Sri Lanka Peace and Development Conference, which was held in August 2009, with the participation of local and international scholars and practitioners in peace and development.

Antigone: A Day like Today

Sumith Chaaminda

On May 20th 2010, Mr. Keheliya Rambukwella, Minister of Media and Information, briefing the cabinet decisions to the media announced that the Tamil people cannot be allowed to make a public campaign of the commemoration of their children and kith and kin who died in the war, though they have the right to light a candle and perform religious rites privately[1]. This announcement was made when the Government had arranged a number of ceremonies to celebrate its victory over the LTTE and to commemorate the dead soldiers on the 18th of May, a day named as *"Ranaviru Dinaya"* (war-heroes' day). It was also reported that the Army and the Police banned Tamil people in Jaffna from performing religious ceremonies in a Temple in memory of their loved ones who died in the war[2]. The message was that those who were identified as enemies or traitors of the nation/state should not be treated equally as the patriots *via* dead soldiers; the latter should deserve public tribute, while the former should not. Weeping and lamenting over the dead thus became a public issue, subjected to state regulations.

"Go your own way; I will bury my brother; and if I die for it, what happiness", cried Antigone just after about two months from the above incident, on the 16th of July 2010, in Sophocles' play *Antigone*, directed by Priyankara Ratnayake in Sinhala with the subtitle, "A Day Like Today", and staged at the Lionel Wendt theatre. It can be argued that a Greek play cannot or should not be able to explain the issues in our socio-historic present sufficiently; one can also argue that it cannot be simply adapted to a different historical context without inflicting some harm on its "universal" artistic value. But, neither of the above convictions prevents us from initiating a critical conversation with *Antigone* in order to help us re-imagine the issues arising from our contemporary socio-political relations. As Calum Neill correctly mentions, "the pertinent ethical question in *Antigone* is how we, the audience, the spectator, the reader, respond to the play and respond beyond the play. The only true act in *Antigone* is precisely not in *Antigone*; it is in response to *Antigone*[3]". Such a discursive intervention is not only permissible but also invited by the tradition of Greek tragedy. Patchen Markell argues that tragedy helps us to "reflect on the nature, sources, and consequences of the tragic characters[4]"; blind spots, which may also, in other contexts, be *ours*. In the above sense, this article aims at reflecting on the "blind spots" of our dominant socio-political imagination through a "response to and beyond *Antigone*".

Priyankara Ratnayake might also have been thinking on these lines when he used the phrase "a day like today" as the subtitle for his production of the play. He has also used some artistic techniques in order to relate his play to the Sri Lankan audience, while maintaining the original translated text of Ariyawansa Ranaweera. For instance, the costumes of the main characters are more in line with contemporary styles, the chorus plays a significant role throughout the play with performances of modern dances, and paintings like Picasso's *Guernica* is in the background, reminding the audience of the effects of war on all aspects of social life. The soldiers in the play have military helmets and their weapons are more like modern firearms. He also uses Brechtian methods that encourage maintaining a rational distance between the characters in the play and the audience[5]. For instance, the actors themselves adjust the set, giving the impression that they are just acting. The set, costumes, music or dance do not support any emotional attachment with the characters or with a spatial construction of 5th BCE Athens. Thus, the drama merely exposes what happened in the tragedy and how the characters behaved in a certain manner, rationalizing their actions in a certain way.

In *Antigone*, as in Greek tragedies in general, the main conflict is not between good and evil, but between two mutually exclusive principles of good that make different ethical claims. Antigone is driven by her conscience to perform suitable funeral rites for her dead brother Polynices, who died in battle with his own brother, Etiocles; the two brothers meeting death at each other's hands. Creon, the king, orders that the dead body of Etiocles should be buried "with all honourable observations", but that of Polynices "is not to be buried, unwept, a feast of flesh for keen-eyed carrion birds[6]". The former died fighting in defence of the city/state, whilst the latter fought against it.

> Etiocles, who fell fighting in defence of the city, fighting gallantly, is to be honored with burial, And with all the rites due to the noble dead, the other - you know whom I mean - his brother Polynices, who came back from exile intending to burn and destroy his fatherland and the gods of his fatherland, to drink the blood of his kin, to make them slaves - he is to have no grave, no burial, no mourning from anyone; it is forbidden. He is to be left unburied, left to be eaten, by dogs and vultures, a horror for all to see[7].

As the above quotation suggests, Creon justifies his unequal treatment of those who died in the war not on the basis of kinship, but on the political idea of patriotism. The term "to drink the blood of his kin and make them slaves" refers to Polynices' act of war against Thebes, the city. Throughout the play, Creon is determined to uphold the state and public order over family and kinship. For instance, in a dialogue between Creon and his own son, Haemon, the fiancé of Antigone, the two seem to talk in two different languages; Haemon inquires in a passionate language about the ethical significance of pardoning Antigone, while Creon replies in an authoritative manner emphasizing a father's/ruler's authority and a son's/subject's loyalty and obedience[8]. This aspect of authority of state power in Creon's character is finely portrayed in Priyankara Rathnayake's production of *Antigone*. However, as some others in the audience have remarked, in Priyankara's production, Creon is mostly seen as an authoritarian ruler who uses patriotism in a quite opportunistic manner. The missing point of this reading is that, in the Greek tragedy, Creon is more of a representation of the ethical claim of rightfulness of civil

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[1] "People cannot be allowed to commemorate those who died in the war in the North as a campaign – Keheliya". *Lanka-e-News*. 21 May 2010. 21 May 2010. <http://www.lankaenews.com/English/news.php?id=9568>.

[2] Fernando, Ruki. "Celebrating war victory and banning commemoration of dead civilians: this is "home grown and indigenous" reconciliation and freedom in Sri Lanka?". *Groundviews*. 18 June 2010. 18 June 2010 <http://groundviews.org/2010/06/18/celebrating-war-victory-and-banning-commemoration-of-dead-civilians-this-is-%E2%80%9Chome-grown-indigenous%E2%80%9D-reconciliation-and-freedom-in-sri-lanka/>.

[3] Neill, Calum. "An Idiotic Act: On the Non-Example of Antigone". *The Letters 34* (2005): 01-28. 12 October 2010 <http://www.discoursunit.com/publications_pages/du_members/neill_papers/An_Idiotic_Act.pdf. 28>.

[4] Markell, Patchen. *Tragic Recognition: Action and Identity in Antigone and Aristotle*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001. 2-3.

[5] In Bertolt Brecht's methods, the audience is discouraged in identifying with the characters. The idea is to facilitate people's calm, detached contemplation and rational judgment. Brecht advocates using any device to maintain the distance between characters and audience.

[6] Sophocles. *Antigone* in *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947. 127.

[7] ibid, 131.

[8] ibid, 143-147.

law than a mere embodiment of political opportunism. To be honest, it is actually difficult to conclude that Priyankara has largely contributed to make Creon a modern day opportunistic politician; on the contrary, this might also be an effect which occurs when Sinhalese viewers try to engage with *Antigone* within the current historical contingency where patriotism happens to be a justification of any decision made by the rulers.

Antigone challenges Creon's order by identifying herself with a different ethical claim – that of the law and goodness. Whilst Creon exhibits a detachment from his kin by humiliating the dead body of Polynices and punishing Antigone, the latter identifies herself with "unwritten and unalterable laws of god and heaven" that protect family values and kinship. In doing this, she remains staunch in her fervor and shows no intention in justifying her act in the language of the public. As Martha Nussbaum puts it, "if one listened only to Antigone, one would not know that a war had taken place or that anything called the 'city' was ever in danger[9]". In her exchange with Creon, she claims, "That order did not come from God. Justice that dwells with the Gods below knows no such law. I did not think your edicts strong enough, to overrule the unwritten unalterable laws, Of God and heaven, you being only a man[10]".

The conflict between Creon and Antigone has been conceptualized in different terms such as a conflict between public law and family values, human law and divine law, state and individual, pre-political and political, masculine order and femininity etc. Hegel's reading of *Antigone* in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* seems to synthesize all the above conceptualizations. Hegel's project of *Phenomenology* aims at rationalizing or conceptualizing the nature/real so that nothing remains as unconscious[11]. "To say that the rational is the real and the real is the rational is to say that only what can be conceptualized is real and that everything real can be conceptualized[12]". In this project, the family is associated with the natural and unconscious needs of the body. It is in this sense that in the Hegelian system the family and femininity are considered to be more natural and less ethical; the rational moral judgments arise out of the "ethical community", outside of the family.

For Hegel, woman is a threat to the ethical community because she is associated with nature, the unconsciousness and the needs of the body. No doubt that in a Hegelian universe, Antigone becomes a fine example of the "feminine threat" against the community. She represents the unwritten divine law, which is devoted to cultivate the inner essence of the individual within the sphere of family. For Hegel, this divine law is con-tradictory to and also interdependent with the civil law of the state, which develops a common ethical substance among citizens. For instance, the burial rites performed by the family are crucial to symbolically reinstate the dead individual in the community's culture. In this sense, Antigone, by burying her dead brother, tries to give him a social and ethical recognition[13]. However, in doing this, she threatens the dominant norms of the community, given that her brother is identified by the state as a traitor. Though she refers to divine family law when she refers to her act, it seems that justifying her act before the community is not what she intends to do. Antigone shares her inner feelings only with her sister, Ismene, at the beginning of the play, but even in that conversation she does not try to convince the other that her decision would be socially or politically significant. Her idea of duty lies in her belief in the dead family members and gods; she seems to be silent in her actions and detached from the community. However, Antigone is not the only example for this absence of communication. Rather, as Carlo Salzani correctly observes, "every character retires into a code not understandable to others… No meaningful communication takes place. Creon's questions and Antigone's answers are so inward to the two speakers[14]".

And also, the above explanation misses a significant blind spot on the part of Creon that gives the play a tragic end. The whole tragedy lies in the inability of reconciling the two conceptions of law advocated by Creon and Antigone on a shared rational ground. This prevents all possibilities of Hegelian dialectic, which should synthesize the two contradictory claims at a higher conceptual level. With regard to Antigone, such a dialectical process is unimaginable within the Hegelian system because, for Hegel, as for Creon, a woman is incapable of entering the civil political sphere. It is very clear that Creon plays a crucial role in bringing disaster to the city through his stubborn decision to punish Antigone, without considering the words of Haemon, the blind prophet Teiresias, or some of his councilors. Whenever he tries to justify his inflexible standpoint, he refers to gender differences between him and Antigone, and reiterates the importance of national patriotic values. For instance, when he summons Haemon and suggests that he forgets Antigone, he says, "I hold to the law, and will never betray it - least of all for a woman, Better be beaten, if need be, by a man, than let a woman get the better of us[15]". The woman is unfairly pushed aside because the male ruler can identify himself with the civil law, and as this law does not recognize her as a legitimate subject/citizen.

However, today, in modern democracies that have emerged within the historical horizon of enlightenment, women are supposed to be treated equally, at least in the juridical-political sphere. But, this does not necessarily mean that Creon-like claims about patriarchal rule have become history in modern democracies. On the contrary, especially within the context of post-colonial modernity, people are being bombarded with heavy ideological loads on the national, cultural traits of patriarchal relations that ascertain the so called "proper place" to women at the outside of politics and the public sphere. Against the historical background of post-colonial modernity, the typical Creon-like strategy would be not to identify with the civil law but to challenge the very gender egalitarian values of the modern law, by placing national cultural ideologies against it. At the 2010 International Women's Day celebrations, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said that his government was ready to provide the "sacred place that women should deserve in the country's national culture", other than an equal place. "Under the current legal regulations, our cultural bond has been weakening, while the legal bond has been strengthened, because we have to follow the laws of the violence against women[16]". He also argued that the current legal regulations on women's rights have largely been framed by foreign/Western norms and that sometimes they have contributed to the weakening of family bonds in Sri Lankan culture. This is an interesting example for devaluing the modern idea of gender equality through national patriotic ideologies. President Ra-

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[9] Nussbaum, Martha. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 63-64.

[10] Sophocles. *Antigone* in *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947. 138.

[11] Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

[12] Oliver, Kelly. "Antigone's Ghost: Undoing Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*". *Hypatia* 11.01 (1996): 67-90.

[13] For Hegel, woman performs this kind of duties within the pre-political sphere of family so that men are able to enter the civil political sphere. But, she herself remains within the family, nature and unconscious feelings, as "the eternal irony of history".

[14] Salzani, Carlo. "Figures of Commonality in Sophocles' *Antigone*". COLLOQUY text theory critique 11 (2006): 08-30. 12 October 2010 <*www.arts.monash.edu.au/others/colloquy/issue10/salzani.pdf*>.

[15] Sophocles. *Antigone* in *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947. 144.

[16] "Government Makes Necessary Arrangements to Give the Sacred Place Deserved by Women Other Than the Equal Place; President Mahinda Rajapaksa Says at the National Women's Day Celebrations". *Lankadeepa* 10 March 2010: 5.

japaksa's remark can be read as a response to the rising chauvinistic cry for redefining existing civil law in terms of the dominant cultural traits of the majority community. Interestingly, the president seems not to identify any incompatibility between his insistence on civil law and order and his own patriarchal review of existing law; on the contrary, the very basic values of modern democratic politics seem to be devalued in the name of law, order and social integrity itself.

As *Antigone* finely exemplifies, the betrayal of basic principles of the community in the name of the wellbeing of community paves the way for a tragic end. It is very clear that while Creon insists on the ethical rightfulness of civil law, in his conflict with Antigone, he betrays the very basic norms on which that civil law itself is based. When Haemon points out that the people of Thebes are of the opinion that Antigone's action is not dishonorable, Creon replies, "The people of Thebes! Since when do I take my orders from the people of Thebes?[17]". Furthermore, he begins to identify himself with the law and claims that "I am the king, and responsible only to myself[18]". There is no need to explain that this authoritarian claim has nothing to do with shared normative values of the community. Creon's trajectory towards authoritarianism is related to his unwillingness to tolerate or deal with Antigone's act, for his notion of patriotism is marked by a simple demarcation between friends and enemies of the state. It can also be argued that the stereotypical and static idea about the woman's role within the so called pre-political sphere of the family also has played a significant role in this tragic fate of Creon.

Judith Butler's critical reading of Hegel would be helpful in exploring the effects of gender stereotypes in the play. Butler criticizes Hegel's categorical assignment of Creon to civil law and of Antigone to the family, kinship and unconscious feelings[19]. Although Antigone's claim is incompatible with the terms of the state, it is not merely because of her unwillingness to communicate with the language of civil law, but also because, within the patriarchal order in the city, her femininity itself makes such a communication impossible. She challenges the very ethico-political foundation of the community twice, firstly by breaking the law and then by symbolically affirming her act in public. Even in the Hegelian universe, her femininity is to be suppressed so that the manliness of civil society can be maintained, and hence "women's place is outside of the community, outside of the dialectic[20]". This resembles Creon's order that the proper place for Antigone should be "a prison secret as a tomb[21]". Antigone herself pronounces the prison as "my bridal-bower, my everlasting prison[22]". In this sense, the community is threatened not only by her disobedient act, but also by her affirmation of that act; in other words, her femininity itself is a threat to the patriarchal order of the community.

The above reading not only questions the dominant patriarchal ideology but also explores the ethical-political significance of Antigone's act, especially from the perspective of radical politics. For Butler, Antigone transgresses the boundaries of state and kinship, and her act is politically significant[23]. Zizek identifies Antigone as an ideal of the ethical act, in the sense that she committed herself to her act and suspended all symbolic links with the community at the moment of her decision[24]. But, as Neill argues, this complete suspension of the symbolic should not be the proper criteria for the ethical act[25]. Although a radical act breaks with existing shared meanings of the community, it should be minimally inscribed in the symbolic so that the subject can judge its ethical significance.

It is in this sense, I would argue, that Antigone enunciates a different ethical claim of law and politics. Antigone, in her exchange with Creon, does not merely reiterate her belief in family gods and brotherhood; a closer review of her speech would imply a new way of thinking that is critical of the hegemonic patriarchal mode of doing politics:

> Antigone: There is no shame in honoring my brother.
> Creon: Was not his enemy, who died with him, your brother?
> Antigone: Yes, both were brothers, both of the same parents.
> Creon: You honor one, and so insult the other.
> Antigone: He that is dead will not accuse me of that.
> Creon: He will, if you honor him no more than the traitor.
> Antigone: It was not a slave, but his brother, that died with him.
> Creon: Attacking his country, while the other defended it.
> Antigone: Even so, we have a duty to the dead.
> Creon: Not to give equal honor to good and bad.
> Antigone: Who knows? In the country of the dead that may be the law.
> Creon: An enemy can't be a friend, even when dead.
> Antigone: My way is to share my love, not share my hate.

In this exchange, she emphasizes the equality of her brothers that should not be violated by any form of man-made law. By her act, Antigone seems to question what kind of ethical community would be possible when the state considers weeping and performing burial rites by the family members as an un-patriotic act. In the Sri Lankan context, the same question was recently raised though it was too far from public attention. Referring to the government's ban on weeping over dead family members in public in the North, Ruki Fernando wrote, "So, we Sri Lankans will have to live with a type of homegrown reconciliation in Sri Lanka that doesn't allow its citizens and especially families of those killed, to light a candle, lay a flower, say a prayer to mourn and grieve[26]". This is not to suggest that civil law should completely be done away with. On the contrary, *Antigone* as a tragedy shows us that civil law should continuously be dealt with in relation to radical ethical claims that refer to the very principles on which civil law itself is based. For instance, while Creon tries to justify his decision by referring to the wellbeing of the community, family values and gods, Antigone's act destabilizes the very constitution of those normative ideas under the rule of Creon. She identifies herself with the abstract ideal of equality and the uniqueness of individuality, whilst Creon emphasizes the importance of public law that is supposed to make practical conditions for achieving those ideals. This implies that the concept of law itself is internally split, as an abstract ideal and the practical constitution of it. The existing practical public law is not complete because there is always a gap between the ideal and the practice. This is actually not a new idea in the philosophy of law; St. Augustine identifies this as a separation between the law

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[17] Sophocles. *Antigone* in *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947. 146.

[18] ibid, 146.

[19] Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

[20] Oliver, Kelly. "Antigone's Ghost: Undoing Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*". *Hypatia* 11.01 (1996): 67-90. 80.

[21] Sophocles. *Antigone* in *The Theban Plays*. Trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin Books, 1947. 151.

[22] ibid, 150.

[23] Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

[24] Zizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso, 1999. 263.

[25] Neill, Calum. "An Idiotic Act: On the Non-Example of Antigone". *The Letters* 34 (2005): 01-28. 12 October 2010 <http://www.discourseunit.com/publications_pages/du_members/neill_papers/An_Idiotic_Act.pdf. 28>.

[26] Fernando, Ruki. "Celebrating war victory and banning commemoration of dead civilians: this is "home grown and indigenous" reconciliation and freedom in Sri Lanka?". *Groundviews*. 18 June 2010. 18 June 2010 <http://groundviews.org/2010/06/18/celebrating-war-victory-and-banning-commemoration-of-dead-civilians-this-is-%E2%80%9Chome-grown-indigenous%E2%80%9D-reconciliation-and-freedom-in-sri-lanka/>.

of the city and the law of heaven; John Locke locates the fundamental rights in nature so that individual citizens are able to oppose their rulers whenever the latter violate those rights. Creon's failure lies in his inability or unwillingness to confront this internally split and hence incomplete nature of the law. He regards public law as an unchangeable and self-contained totality, and in the latter part of the play, he tries to present himself as embodying this law. No doubt that this approach to civil law directs us towards authoritarianism and away from democracy.

Sri Lanka provides a significant case for advancing "constitutional authoritarianism[27]", through manipulating democratic institutions, procedures and constitutional apparatuses themselves. The recently approved 18th amendment to the constitution is a good example of advancing majoritarian will against the very democratic principles on which the political system is supposed to be based[28]. It seems that, in the long debate of constitutional reforms in Sri Lanka, abstract universal ideals of democracy have been significantly absent. Hence, mere majority will is considered as public law, and democratic institutions function in an undemocratic manner. To democratize this existing democracy, democratic ideals and principles should be promoted within political discourse. This is another crucial blind spot that we can confront through a closer reading of *Antigone*. By committing herself to the abstract ideal of law, Antigone makes a real opening of society possible. At this moment, the community is really threatened in the sense that the established system of law is destabilized and many openings are possible to the extent that the future becomes unpredictable.

According to many schools of contemporary radical social theory, this very contingent event is decisive in breaking with the past and constituting future symbolic coordination, presumably with a new articulation of universality. Creon responds to this destabilizing moment created by Antigone's act in a most authoritarian manner, without acknowledging its constitutive character. But the most democratic and enlightened way of responding to Antigone's act is, as Haemon would suggest, confronting the incomplete and changeable nature of public law and facing the consequent social reforms. But, to do this, Antigone's voice should be publicly heard and her claim should be considered as legitimate in rational critical debates among citizens. If Creon and/or the community in Thebes had done this, they would have faced a radical and democratic political transformation. Democracy, in this sense, can be assessed by the way in which our community deals with radical ethical acts like Antigone's. In Antigone's words, sharing love rather than hate should be the main characteristic of this politics.

[27] Dr. N.M. Perera, a prominent Sri Lankan Marxist leader, used the term "constitutional authoritarianism" to characterize the second republican constitution passed by the parliament in 1977.

[28] The 18th amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution was approved with a large majority of votes in parliament on 8th September 2010. This amendment has been widely criticized by the opposition and civil society groups as a leap towards authoritarianism because it removes the term limit of the controversial executive presidency, weakens the independent commissions established by the 17th amendment, and establishes direct control over public institutions by the executive presidency.

Feminist Research Methodology

Making meanings of meaning-making

Maithree Wickramasinghe

Routledge Research on Gender in Asia Series

Feminist Research Methodology: Making Meanings of Meaning-Making (Routledge Research on Gender in Asia Series)
By Maithree Wickramasinghe
Routledge, 213 pages, 2010
US $ 130.00

This book focuses on feminist research methodology, exploring and analysing its constituting methods, theory, ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics, and research issues relating to women, gender and feminism in Sri Lanka. The book examines ways of meaning-making for the political, ideological and ethical purposes of promoting individual and social change, and constructs an example of feminist research praxis.

Using this South Asian country as a case study, the author looks at the means by which researchers in this field inhabit, engage with and represent the multiple realities of women and society in Sri Lanka. In analysing what constitutes feminist research methodology in a transitional country, the book links local research practices with Western feminist approaches, taking into account the commonalities, distinctions and specificities of working in a South Asian context.

Engaging with and re-conceptualising three traditionally different types of research - women's studies, gender studies and feminist studies - from a methodological perspective, *Feminist Research Methodology* provides a framework for researching feminist issues. Applicable at both a local and global level, this original methodological framework will be of value to researchers working in any context.

Sri Lankan English and Indian Linguistic Expansionism

Dilshan Boange

Sri Lankans do not Speak "Queen's English"

English as a localized variant in Sri Lanka has been a topic of interest within the circles of academia for a considerable amount of time, and it seems to have gained much momentum over the past year or so, with discussion on the topic generated by experts as well as laymen. Although some may dispute the existence of a Sri Lankan variety of English, it is very clearly provable through academic findings that English as it is spoken by native Sri Lankans, is not the dialect that one would find at Oxford and Cambridge; nor is it what is called Standard (British) English.

Sri Lankans tend to think that what is called "Queen's English" is that which forms the phonological grounds of English spoken by Sri Lankans whose first language is at times English. This is a misnomer, as once pointed out by Prof. Siromi Fernando, former Head of the Department of English at the University of Colombo, when the matter was brought into discussion at a lecture during my undergraduate days. The phonological form that distinguishes the speech variant of the English monarch, and presumably the British Royals, is characterized by a number of tenets that can be easily identified as different from ours (Sri Lankans). Therefore, there is a distinct way in which English is spoken, in terms of its phonological form, by native Sri Lankans (by using the term "native" I do not by any means allude to some colonial connotation. I am using it simply to distinguish the majority of Sri Lankans who are Sri Lankan citizens by birth and of Sri Lankan parentage, as opposed to Sri Lanka citizens who may have adopted Sri Lankan citizenship after having migrated from foreign countries). Sri Lankan English (SLE), as some have conceived it, is not meant to suggest "broken English", which is the outcome when a person with inadequate English language skills speaks English with grammatical errors and pronunciation that is irregular (in that case, an Italian who produces highly Italianized English pronunciation with grammatical errors also speaks broken English!).

The Advent of the "Suddha" and the Birthing of SLE

The "English" used by Sri Lankans has very much been a Lankanized form since the time the British landed on our golden shores and propagated their language here. Prof. Manique Gunasekera has very rightly pointed out that Sri Lankans have been speaking Sri Lankan English since 1796, the year which marks the arrival of the British. This she stated at the symposium organized by the Speak English Our Way enterprise on 16th January 2010 at the auditorium of the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS), Colombo. With regard to Sri Lankan English since its emergence with the arrival of "suddhas", one thing is rather clear concerning the basic phonological tenets – a certain amount of standardization has taken place to ensure oral/verbal communicative efficacy. The "O" vowel is one such example, along with the "f" and "z" sounds, since they are certainly not within the pre-colonial phonological scheme of Sinhala. Phonology is indisputably the fundamental building block of any spoken language. Therefore, the production of English speech by those who did not get their English straight from the "suddha" and the likes of their progeny, would (one may deduce and expound) result in what is called "not-pot" English. This is a term, which, while being rather snide, also denotes how phonology is made the more significant element (over grammar), further denoting the class factor vis-à-vis Sri Lankan English. Of course, the term used to classify a "substandard" form of an English vernacular in respect to grammar would be "broken English", a term which seems more to do with grammatical aspects.

Colonial Education and Standardization of SLE

How then did such a lack of cohesion (in terms of competencies related to both phonology and grammar) come about, given that Sri Lanka got its English essentially from Britain (during the British colonial era), and not from a host of English tuition class entrepreneurs ranging from USA to Australia? This is mainly to do with the institutional setups that took place for introducing and perpetuating missionary school systems, and thereby producing a workforce efficient in working for the British colonial administration. And to this end, the colonizers needed personnel who could speak and write in English to communicate coherently with them. In my two part article titled "Towards a Cockney of Our Own?", which appeared in the *Sunday Observer* on 11th and 25th July 2010, I provided a glimpse into the socio-historical aspects that chart the trajectory of Sinhala-English bilingualism in Sri Lankan society, and how it very much reflects the educational opportunities that were/are at play. The progeny of "natural bilinguals" (going by the definitions/classifications found in Li Wei's *Bilingualism Reader*), proficient in Sinhala-English, produced a similar form/dialect of English, especially in respect to phonology. And note that this is long after the "suddha" with his colonial oppression and pomposity left our shores. Therefore, over the course of three generations (or more), the English dialect of the natural Sinhala/Tamil-English bilinguals became very much standardized, and today is the basis of Standard Sri Lankan English (SLE).

In an article titled "A Brief History of Sri Lankan English", published in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Newsletter (September, 2005), Richard Boyle charts the developments of Sri Lankan English with an approach that focuses on literary sources, and discusses how it has influenced works of creative writing. Boyle even cites how the word *dissava* was used by Daniel Defoe, which is indicative of how Sinhala has contributed to the English lexicon from a global perspective. Boyle's article claims that the first instance where a Sri Lankan variety of English was spoken resulted from British sailors being held captive in the Kandyan kingdom; "the real beginnings occurred some one hundred and fifty years earlier, when captured British sailors confined to remote villages in the island's Kandyan kingdom started using Ceylonese terms conversationally for everyday items and common fauna and flora with no English equivalent".

It needs to be emphasized that Boyle looks at the matter from a more global perspective, and considers how, vocabulary wise, the English language has been enriched by its association with Sinhala as well. He further speaks of how the indigenous people of our country did in fact "pick up" the language (prior to the island being ceded) at a very grass roots level, and arguably through such persons such as Robert Knox, as there would have been some exchange of cultural knowledge between the captive and the captors. Boyle seems to attribute standardization to the advent of the colonial schooling/educational system. As I stated earlier, this is very much the factor that created the eventual standardization of English spoken by Sri Lankans. But what needs to be noted in Boyle's observations is that he dissects it from a point of lexicographic interest, and deals with how Sinh-

ala words took root in the English language, rather than how English was adopted by the local peoples of Sri Lanka as an effective medium/tool of communication with the colonizer. Today, the English spoken by Sri Lankans has developed a number of expressions and nuances that are very much rooted in Sinhala or Tamil. These can be at times direct translations of Sinhala/Tamil phrases or idioms, or derived from the essence and idea of an expression/figure of speech originally of the Sinhala or Tamil languages, and which are grounded well within the cultural intellect of Sri Lankans. One such example that seems to have entered the stream in more recent times is "Coming colour(s) no(t) good". To any Sri Lankan who is fluent in Sinhala, this need not be explained, but of course these aren't to do with the nuts and bolts of the language. Over time, idioms/phrases may become outdated, and new ones will invariably enter the streams of any living language. Today, English literary works of Sri Lankan writers display the writers' Lankan creative identity through these elements of Sri Lankan English.

Sinhala/Tamil-English Bilingualism and Communicational Efficacy

When considering the basic communicational rudiments of a vernacular, one needs to think of how phonology is of crucial importance in determining the efficacy of a speaker (and for that matter a listener as well). The fact that the educational system introduced by the British introduced new vowels and consonants (the "f" sound is one consonant that was not within the phonological scope of Sri Lankans till then), cannot be disregarded when discussing English spoken by Sri Lankans. In "Towards a Cockney of Our Own (Part One)", I point out that it was arguably achieved with practice over three generations ago when children who did not have exposure to English in their home environs acquired it from the educators from Britain.

Mix ups in pronunciation where one fails to distinguish between the use of the sounds "p" and "f", and the variants of the "O" vowel in English, to name two of the stumbling points that can be seen today in Sri Lanka, are at times a not so rare error among monolingual Sinhala speakers. My article titled "The Bowl-or-Ball Dilemma of Rubbishing English Standards" published in the *Sunday Observer* on 6th June 2010 discusses how pronunciation plays a great role in communicational efficacy, with reference to a real life example of a telephone conversation between a Sri Lankan and an Indian. It discusses to what extent communicational inefficacy came about due to issues of pronunciation, and questions why standards should be dropped when teaching English (as mooted by the Speak English Our Way enterprise), arguing that such vast divergences of "lingual diversity" in respect to Sri Lankan English would simply create more communicational inefficacy amongst Sri Lankans. My argument is related to communicational efficacy, and subsequently, to how it is linked to the larger picture of global economics and commerce. One of my contentions is that the quality of human capital Sri Lanka possesses (in terms of young Sri Lankans with much ingenuity who can form pools of human resources valuable to our country) would suffer in the long run. One such example is the demand for school teachers (to teach English and other subject) in the Maldives, where a significant amount of teaching posts are filled by Sri Lankans. I came to learn through a top level corporate figure in the local telephony industry, that Sri Lankan school teachers are preferred over Indians teachers, simply due to the spoken English factor, since our pronunciation is considered to be much clearer. Thus, if the impression/notion that Sri Lankans speak English more efficiently than the average Indian is to erode, India may gain the benefit with regard to employment and in the larger context of international commerce.

The English Our Way Enterprise and Its Indian Presence

I attended the symposium on the "Speak English Our Way" enterprise held on 16th January 2010 at BCIS, which addressed an audience made up of a considerable cross-section of theoreticians and practitioners involved in English language education in Sri Lanka. What I found astonishing was the central role India has come to occupy in this enterprise that claims to spearhead a drive towards developing Sri Lankan English. Four of the six institutional partners who were backing the event (and presumably the enterprise altogether) were Indian. Another concern is that the "expertise" for the entire project seems to come from India. The "English and Foreign Languages University" of Hyderabad, India is one such institutional backer, providing "expertise", very conspicuously in the form of "resource personnel". The Indian academics who spoke at certain sessions of the symposium and took part in the panel discussions were Dr.Rajesh Sachdeva (Director General, CIIL, Mysore), Prof.Paul Gunashekar (English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad) and Prof.N.K Nihalani (English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad).

The discussants were of the opinion that Sri Lanka can opt for its own homegrown variant of English, and that it can be made the norm through and in English education, since India now has its own English language identity with regard to the "way" of speaking English (and writing too one may presume), which has supposedly been integrated into the system as the given dialect of English in India. But one may venture to suggest that the manner in which this identity of Indian English is gaining reputation the world over is not on the most flattering terms. And indeed it is no secret that the "Indian way" of speaking English has attracted a substantial amount of disdain for its over emphasis on "Indian accentuation". After all, there is a world outside of India, and a country like Sri Lanka in post-colonial "recovery" is still in the process of empowering itself with the necessary tools, one of which is English, in order to improve communication at macro and micro levels. In this process of self-empowerment, one need not spell out the pivotal role the world's widest spoken language has to and can play.

Indian English Gurus Moulding Lankan English Masters

One rather disturbing fact that I learnt at the aforementioned symposium regarding the development of Sri Lankan English and the Indian factor at play was that school textbooks for English education in Sri Lanka are being designed by Indians! Journalist Malinda Seneviratne, writing about this Indian involvement in shaping Sri Lankan educational strategies, states in his article titled "The Way-laying Way of "English Our Way"" published in *The Daily Mirror* on 7th August 2010, that a troupe of eighty English teachers from Sri Lanka are being trained in India as a cadre of "Master Trainers", who would implement the enterprise at an island wide level:

> Fernando mentions the "Indian Factor" but doesn't explain it. He strikes a strong nationalist tone in justifying his strategy but does not see any contradiction in deferring to the Indian Expert: "We trained a national cadre of 80 master trainers in spoken English – selected from all provinces – at the English and Foreign Language University (EFLU), Hyderabad, with the assistance of the Indian government". He goes on to state that assistance of the Indian government to establish nine Provincial Sri Lanka-India Centres for English Language Training (PSLICELT) had been negotiated. That's English 'OUR' way?

One of the points of this criticism is that the helmsman of this enterprise,

Sunimal Fernando, does not provide an answer, and thereby, one may suggest, a plausible rationale for the Indian factor. In his article titled "Standard SL English and the Achievements of the Presidential Initiative" published in *The Island* on 24th July 2010, Methsiri Cooray (an accountant and attorney-at-law by profession) charts the course of the English Our Way Enterprise, and lauds it as a "progressive" initiative. Cooray points out the extent of India's involvement, but provides no rationale which justifies such an involvement. Sunimal Fernando's implementation plan is presented in much detail in an article by Wilson Gnanadass titled "Let's Speak English the Asian Way" published in *The Nation* on 21st June 2009. But once again, sans explanation of the Indian factor. Neither press releases on the English Our Way enterprise, nor interviews with Fernando that reveal the strategy, the numerous institutions involved etc., provide an explanation of India's involvement in these training programmes. The article by Gnanadass does, however, provide a more ideologically grounded perspective on why Sri Lanka should opt for a homegrown variety:

> The colonial and post colonial Indian elites in contrast, did not use the English language as a gate way to the west. English was crafted by them simply as a tool of communication, as a life skill and not spoken like an Englishman. They spoke English the 'Indian way'. They had no obsession with perfect diction or perfect pronunciation.

Gnanadass seems to suggest India as a role model for postcolonial empowerment, and points out the Indian example as a possible role model to derive inspiration from. However it must be noted that the rationale that Gnanadass highlights in justifying India as a role model is based on factual inaccuracies that warrant criticism.

What Sort of English did the Indian Elite Speak?

The elites of India such as Pandit Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah can undoubtedly be considered as individuals who were thorough with their standard British English diction. It is simply absurd to suggest that one such as Jawaharlal Nehru or Ali Jinnah spoke English the "Indian Way", using the tone and diction of the common Indian. It was the tool of power, the English dialect/style of the English upper crust, which empowered them and helped them to withstand colonial rule, and aided them in playing the European at his own game, and with his own deck of cards no less! Yes of course, Indian English has developed as a variant on its own, and like Sri Lankan English, is very much reflective of the cultural factors that impel linguistic changes (both in vocabulary and phonology, and to a certain extent, in grammar as well). However, the question remains, whether even today, the crème de la crème of Indian society who opt for the best European education, speak the same English dialect that the majority of the Indians speak. If not, why is that so? It is rather reasonable to suggest that the notion of a more standard variety of English, denoting superior caliber, is still prevalent in India amongst the upper echelons of society. In the light of such realities, the notion that Indian society in its entirety has completely rejected the more standard variety of English in favour of the Indian one (which again has much diversification between the North and South of India) is a rather dubious claim.

Regional Implications

The English Our Way enterprise claims to develop a homegrown Sri Lankan English as the standard that can be taught in schools, while the larger objective is to develop an "Asian English", an aspect which Gnanadass refers to in his article. The notion of an "Asian English" is rather problematic, as it is difficult to envisage a common Asiatic variety based on the scores of Englishes used across the large number of English speaking communities in Asia. However, the move to promote an Asian variety based on the Indian one appears to suggest that in the larger context of regionalism, India should set the linguistic example for the rest of Asia. Thus, one may suggest "linguistic expansionism" as a probable motive for India's interest in taking an active role in promoting the Speak English Our Way enterprise.

In 2007, Prof. Joybrato Mukherjee, Chair of English Linguistics and President of Justus Liebig University Giessen in Germany, addressed a forum held at the University of Colombo. He suggested that what Sri Lankans perceive as "Sri Lankan English" may be an extension, or more correctly, a variant of Indian English. This hypothesis was denied and rejected by the audience, but nevertheless, the sentiments of Prof. Mukherjee (who is not alone in his views, one may assume confidently) indicate a characteristic which goes beyond mere "academic interest" in the topic. It is highly suggestive that Sri Lanka is being viewed through India's eyes as a territory that should be within the Indian ambit of power and polity. After all, what cannot be accomplished through overt coercion alone, can be achieved much more effectively through more insidious means such as entertainment, popular culture, education and, of course, language.

Non-Correction, Creating Comfort Zones, and Notions of "Naturalized" English

One of the main criticisms that can be leveled against the "Speak English Our Way" is that it advocates "non-correction" as part of its strategy. The rationale, which was expounded at the symposium, was that there needs to be a less intimidating learning method that will be conducive to the improvement of speech competency. This comfort zone creation might be laudable in theory, but it certainly is questionable with regard to the need to develop communicational efficacy in relation to pronunciation and grammar. An example case study from Jaffna for this comfort zone creating method was presented at the symposium. It was Dr. Sundareswaran (Head, English Language Teaching Unit, University of Jaffna) or Dr. Saravanabhava Iyer (Senior Lecturer, English Language Teaching Unit, University of Jaffna) who stated that a child, given the opportunity to develop English speech under the guidelines of the "Speak English Our Way" enterprise (presumably at a pilot/test level project), had said "I leet lice". The speaker said that the observers/assessors assumed that the child meant to say, "I eat rice", and therefore thought it not necessary to correct the speaker. They believed that it would di-minish the learner's morale of having confidently spoken in English.

This approach of non-correction is one of the bases on which a homegrown, "natural" English will be developed in Sri Lanka. I would imagine that the child was probably not made aware of the fact that "lice" is a word in the English lexicon that is not viewed as related to anything edible. One can deduce by this approach of "teaching" (which may even be dubbed as a "child-centered education technique" to the advantage of the "Speak English Our Way" enterprise), that sounds such as "f" and "z" will be negated, and that the rural child who does not come from Sinhala-English bilingual family backgrounds will not realize that "fish" and "piss", "zoo" and "sue" do not mean the same when they are phonetically differentiated according to Standard Sri Lankan English. To what extent this theorem of non-correction is used in India in enhancing a productive learning environment for children of any language is a matter worth probing into. After all, much of the theoreticians and the resource providers are from India. So the question arises, do they practice in India at a national level what is being advocated in Sri Lanka?

Saying it like the Indians

If the next generation of Sri Lankans (especially the rural masses who form the majority of Sri Lanka's populace), develops an English dialect that distinctly resonates with an Indian linguistic identity, in time, the world will see much less of a distinction between the cultural ethos of Sri Lanka and India, and will gradually view us as within the domain of India itself. What is mooted as a "progressive" move, that will move Sri Lanka towards a more strengthened national identity, may, in fact, pave the way for the greater erosion of our identity. In respect to "Sri Lankan English", it might submerge within the linguistic characteristics and "identity" of India and its own linguistic sphere. This is, very clearly, a well-maneuvered strategy, which reveals the power politics at play. It is, after all, well known that India is a nation that has expansionist tendencies, and views Sri Lanka as a territory that needs to be brought within the framework of Indian interests, both in terms of security and economics.

The past speaks very clearly of how historical relations between India and Sri Lanka have been steeped in contentious power tussles; Sri Lanka's very sovereignty being at stake sometimes. The 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord was presented by the then government as an overture made by India to Sri Lanka in good faith, taking into consideration the security issues that affected both countries. It was treated as a "gift" to Sri Lanka by the country's very administration of the times, and was regarded as something that would strengthen our security and help contain the LTTE. The late statesman Anura Bandaranaike, in one of the highly contentious debates that had arisen in the Sri Lankan Parliament, decried the Indo-Lanka Accord by stating that "The evidence has been proved beyond reasonable doubt, if any doubt ever existed, that the Indians are a part and parcel of the process of decimation of the country. You have brought the Trojan horse to Troy…" (Hansard, 9th October 1987, p.816).

The proponents and enforcers of the "Speak English Our Way" enterprise, which is backed by India, have spoken of this venture as a "gift" to Sri Lanka. I wish to conclude this article by evoking those immortal words of Virgil, which highlight the prudence that needs to be exercised in political realism – *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* –"I fear the Greeks, even when bringing gifts".

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Hatred and Forgiveness
By Julia Kristeva (Translated by Jeanine Herman)
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336 pages, 2011
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Julia Kristeva refracts the impulse to hate (and our attempts to subvert, sublimate, and otherwise process it) through psychoanalysis and text, exploring worlds, women, religion, portraits, and the act of writing. Her inquiry spans themes, topics, and figures central to her writing, and her paths of discovery advance the theoretical innovations that are so characteristic of her thought.

The Celebration

Frances Bulathsinghala

"Table for two Madam?"

Madam!
Madam!!! Manel and Ramya gulped down a series of explosive giggles. Their laughter choked them as if they had swallowed whole a couple of boiled potatoes.

They who addressed half the world as "Madam" were now being bestowed with the honoured title!

"What will you have Madam? There is seafood topping and special veg with baby corn. Or you can have your pizza topped with devilled chicken or curry chicken. There are also several other choices".

The waiter, very young, very thin, was dressed in a red uniform – red shirt and dark maroon trousers. He spoke in the same tone (subservience melted into thick layers of politeness) that they themselves used for the women in whose company more than half their day was spent.

"Take a look at the menu, Madam".

They were handed a thick folder each, coloured with a pageant of delicatessens. Ramya inspected the prices.

"You are looking at the dessert section", Mala hissed in Sinhala.

Mala examined the pizza section.

Seafood Special Pizza – Rs. 950
Seafood (Small) Pizza – Rs. 450
Devilled Chicken Pizza – Rs. 750
Spaghetti with Cheese Pizza – Rs. 600

The waiter was standing discreetly to a side.

Mala ordered the Seafood Special.
The waiter left. Mala wondered idly whether he would again address them as Madam.

"Terrible... terrible... Nine hundred and fifty!" Ramya burst out.

"Imagine, what you ordered cost us what we spend for a week on food. Terrible waste... Now we will have to starve ourselves for the rest of the week", she spoke in a fierce whisper, trying to keep her sandals, muddied, peeling, and with one strap threatening to separate itself from its rexine body, as out of sight as possible from the other diners.

She had never really felt ashamed of her shoes before. Shoes! Who could afford to think of something as insignificant as shoes when four sisters had to be schooled and clothed and fed? But now, now shoes were suddenly of great importance. Ramya was in direct view of a girl, hair with gold tints, lips of polished scarlet, whose feet, white and delicate, were encased in a pair of sequin-bordered sandals.

Ramya sighed. It was a mistake to come here.

"We will have to starve now to make amends", she repeated to Mala sullenly.

"What do you think we do anyway?" Mala's face contorted with anger. "Starving is what we do everyday. Counting each mouthful".

"Shh. Lower your voice!".

The girl with the sequined sandals was looking at them with curiosity.

"Anyway, don't worry about the bill. I am the one who wanted us to come here so I am paying", Mala said.

Yet she could not help thinking how the Seafood Special Pizza cost three days' earnings of her monthly salary received from the home nursing company. The firm paid them the dregs of the money it charged from rich old females who needed "looking after".

For the past eight months, both of them had been assigned to Mrs. Felicia Samarasinghe, who lived alone in a walauva in Kollupitiya, and whose daily diarrhoea was as regular as her bouts of avarice.

Mrs. Samarasinghe's two daughters were in Sweden and they paid 2,000 rupees a day for "reliable home nursing", which was what Kameron Home Nursing offered.

"One thousand rupees a day the company gets for each of us, and our salary is 9,000 a month", muttered Mala with a fierce tug at the safety pin that was poking through the space in her blouse.

It was Mala's suggestion to come here. "To celebrate", as she put it. One of her predictions about Mrs. Samarasinghe had been proven right, and in a fit of irrational euphoria, Mala had whispered, "Let's treat ourselves. For once, let's see how it is like to live like them".

That morning, Mrs. Samarasinghe had been wheeled out of her house by her best friend's niece. Her best friend had died. Mrs. Samarasinghe was taken for the funeral of Mrs. Soma Chandraratne who had died at the age of ninety one.

It was a short reprieve for Ramya and Mala, and they spent the next hour in happy idling in the kitchen with the cook Devani, a small-made woman in her fifties with a face as sharp as a machete.

"Wait and see. That old *geheni* will not even take a wreath for her friend. Wait and see", Devani thumped a blackened pot into the sink and began scrubbing.

"But Mrs. Chandraratne was her best friend. I think she will take a nice big wreath for show at least", said Ramya who was sipping a cup of ginger tea.

"No. I will take a bet on my salary, that woman will not take more than a rose, and my name is not Mala if she does not come here and grumble about it", said Mala.

They were disturbed by the ringing of the doorbell.

Mrs. Samarasinghe was struggling out of a van. Her wheelchair was at the back of the vehicle and an embarrassing smell assailed Ramya and Mala as they moved to help the old woman indoors. Mrs. Samarasinghe called out for Mala in her trembling, fretful voice.

As she moved into the house, the first words she said were, "Mage Ammo, Can you believe it, one red rose costs hundred rupees. One hundred rupees!"

For the rest of the day, Mala wore on her face a look which proclaimed that she was an authority on prophesying.

In the evening she had whispered to Ramya, "We are going to have something today at a fancy place".
"Ayyio, I can't eat anything. That old woman and her diarrhoea are capable of killing my appetite forever. Today was one of her worst days. When I think of how she smelt... Appo!"
"Don't be silly", retorted Mala, coiling up her long plait into a bun.
"We will celebrate my entry into the world of soothsaying", she said gaily.

"Madam, here is your pizza". The waiter creased his face into a smile.

Mala waited till the waiter left, then leant forward to examine the food and touched it with a hesitant finger.

"It's so hot. How are we going to eat it?"
"Wait for a while. It will cool. But why don't we try to eat with these things?" Ramya released from the confines of a white serviette a fork and a spoon.

"Don't be silly. Let's just eat with our hands", said Mala.

Half an hour later it was time for the bill.

Mala steeled herself and looked. One thousand and one hundred rupees.
How on earth did the bill bloat to this proportion?

She looked into her purse. With a helpless sigh, she placed the money between the leather folder.

"I think we have to keep something for the waiter. I think he is also like us. Let us leave him fifty rupees", said Ramya. She was sure that he was from a far off village, and even if he was from Colombo he must be from a poor family. There was something about his face, something about the manner in which he did not sneer at them.

The waiter was back quickly.

The folder was once again placed before them. Inside were two notes – a thousand and a five hundred.

Both Mala and Ramya looked at the boy. "Some mistake. You have bought the money back".

"No... No... No mistake". The waiter lowered his eyes and trying not to draw attention to himself, spoke softly.

"I had two sisters. They worked in a garment factory. One was killed – raped and killed – three years ago. She was walking alone in the night to her boarding in Katunayake. The other eloped with a bus driver. I don't know where she is. Take this money back. Please think of the meal as a gift... from a brother..."

Monção: A Literary Representation of Goa

Paul Melo e Castro

Vimala Devi was part of a wave of Goan short-story writers working in the Portuguese language at the beginning of the 1960s. Born into a Lusophone *bhatkar*, or landowning family in Britona, Goa, in 1932, Devi worked as a journalist and a civil servant after attending the Portuguese lyceum. In 1958, she left for Portugal, where she began her career as a writer. In 1961, she published a collection of poetry entitled *Súria* and two years later, in 1963, she published the short-story collection *Monção*, the subject of this article, which was republished in 2003. Devi's birth name is Teresa da Piedade de Almeida Baptista; she chose the Hindu pseudonym to reflect her Indian roots. After a spell in London in the 1960s and the 1970s, where, together with her husband Manuel de Seabra, Devi completed the key volume *A Literatura Indo-Portuguesa* of 1972, she settled in Barcelona, where she currently resides. Her later work, both poetry and prose, leave the Goa of her youth behind for more universal and metaphysical themes.

Monção is perhaps the most complete literary representation we have of the final years of Portuguese colonialism. There are several clues in *Monção* as to the time span the tales cover, roughly from 1930 to 1958. The story "A Subvenção" concerns a *mestiço* family who are reclassified as Europeans, a fact that seems to locate the narrative in the period immediately following Salazar's rise to power. In the story "O Genro-Comensal" (Son-in-Law and Boarder), the bride and groom spend their honeymoon in British India, which dates the events in the story to pre-1947. In the story "Padmini", the scene is set with a description of Hindu visitors flocking from the Indian Union to the festival of Ganesh. This detail places the story after the independence of India, but before the Indian government instigated a blockade of the *Estado da India* in 1955.

Monção was published in Lisbon, and therefore it was aimed mainly at a Portuguese audience. Of course, Devi would have liked to have reached a Goan readership – the encyclopedic *Literatura Indo-Portuguesa* is partly an effort to give Indo-Portuguese literature the institutional capacity, so to speak, to survive. In the early 1960s, however, there were no institutional ties whatsoever between India and Portugal. In conceiving and publishing these stories as a book, a textual entity with an independent existence, as opposed to a series of interventions in Goan public life, Devi created with *Monção* what the critic Forrest Ingram has termed a "short-story cycle". This is a book of short stories so linked to one another that the reader's successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his/her experience of the component parts. In *Monção*, characters, places and situations all recur, are paralleled and contrasted. The stories stand alone but their full meaning takes shape in the context of the whole. It has been argued, notably by Mary Louise Pratt, that short-story cycles, with their unity in diversity, often serve to bring an unfamiliar community and its location into the literary field. Here, as well as Vimala Devi recreating the world of her youth from afar, the short story cycle provides for the Portuguese reader what the Indo-Portuguese reader already possesses: a sense of place and community.

Monção has an almost crystalline structure, a sort of referential lattice in which many indirect connections between the fifteen stories that comprise the collection can be formed. Just to give an example, one story is called "Nâttak", the name of a popular Goan Hindu theatre, and is generally about themes drawn from Hindu mythology. Another is called "Tyâtr", the name of a certain form of Catholic light entertainment. The Konkani word is derived from the Portuguese "teatro". These stories are very different in content but, to use a cinematic metaphor, there is a sort of match on place between the two tales within the sequence of the whole. This parallel has the effect of connecting the two communities concerned in terms of the common theme of the two tales; the narrow horizons for the unprivileged in the period Devi is writing about.

The stories are evenly balanced between five stories that feature Hindus, five stories that feature Catholics and five stories that feature both. The story "A Droga" is about the forbidden love between a lower caste Hindu man and a Catholic woman. Caxinata and Rosú meet in secret and realize their affinity towards one another. Their voluntary isolation is an example of the general narrative pattern in *Monção* of isolating both an individual from a wider grouping and a crucial moment from the general flow of time. Whilst Caxinata and Rosú are alone together, away from their communities, they are happy and content in one another's company. The tale ends with them discussing their future. Caxinata suggests that if they continue to meet, they could be happy, and that "if anything happened, the *distican* (a sort of folk-healer) could give you a drug", by which Caxinata seems to mean some sort of medicine to provoke an abortion, which precipitates an outburst of despair from Rosú. In Caxinata's remark and Rosú's reaction, the tragic division of the two communities is contained. This is typical of the brief moments of epiphany in the stories, though in a sense it is a false epiphany, a realization of a reality of which the couple are already only too well aware. Caxinata replies, "I didn't want to offend you. If it was up to me, I would marry you, Rosú. But what do my wishes count for?" The story ends with Rosú agreeing to continue to meet Caxinata. If the social injunction preventing them being together in public seems immutable, the human desires behind their meeting seem equally unavoidable. The story "Padmini", on the other hand, shows the flipside of the coin. It relates the love of a Portuguese official, the resonantly named João Fidalgo, for the Hindu girl of the title; a girl to whom he is not even allowed to speak and who decorously leaves the room whenever he is present. Some divisions in colonial Goa were, it seems, ironclad.

The majority of Devi's stories feature the upper castes of Goan society, although the two longest stories concern themselves with the subaltern lower echelons. The recurrent theme of the stories, with upper-caste characters, is the decadence of the bhatkar class, and its self-regard and petty wrangling over arranging marriages. The lower caste stories are about this stratum's growing frustration over its lack of opportunities, its poverty and attachment to age-old superstitions. There is a set of stories that feature interlinked families of bhatkars and mundkars. One story, pointedly named "Decline", describes the death of the matriarch of a bhatkar family. It is told from the point of view of the youngest boy, who is given an inkling of the decline of his family's power when the mundkars, who have come to pay their last respects to the bhatkar matriarch, dare to come inside the house and take seats at the wake. The next story is called "Esperança". It tells the story of a mundkar boy, the first in the village to have attended the Portuguese lyceum. As he has no family connections, he is unable to find even the most modest government job, and so he goes to ask his local bhatkar family for help. They turn him away. The girl who answers the door reports to the rest of her family with, "he turned up here, plying me with

exaggerated compliments, as if I were on his level. I put him in his place". Both "Ocaso" and "Esperança" - notice how the names are literally poles apart - feature the same families. Between the doors that open and are entered through and the doors that are closed to deny access is a condensation of the social dynamic of late colonial Goa.

This dynamic can also be seen in "Tyâtr". The setting is a play attended by both bhatkars and mundkars. As the show progresses, the power dynamic between the bhatkars and the mundkars is revealed. The bhatkars arrive late, with the expectation that a space for them at the front would be reserved, but the room is full. The tale ends with the bhatkar pulling one of the mundkars off the stage and ordering him to go and fetch him a chair. Order is restored, although, one feels, only temporarily.

Devi's stories are particularly sensitive to the condition of women, primarily the women amongst the lower castes, exemplified in the stories "The Arms of Venus" and "Job's Children". "The Arms of Venus" is a tragic tale that ends with a husband being distraught at the death of his wife, not so much for the loss of her renowned beauty, but for being deprived of the two arms with which she helped him battle against desperate poverty. In "Job's Children", an old man named Bostião goes out to fish despite his poor health in a desperate attempt to raise a dowry for his daug-hter. Without this money, she would never be able to marry and would be condemned to a life of loneliness as well as bringing shame upon the family. Bostião overexerts himself, falls ill, and has to be taken to hospital. The story ends as his daughter Carminha stands alone, watching the fisherman depart once more from the village wharf, "stiff like a statue of resignation".

The gender dynamic in colonial Goa is dealt with very subtly. It is not only women who are deprived of agency by patriarchy. One of the most interesting tales is "Son-in-law and Boarder". The tale features a family of unwed Catholic sisters, the Fonsecas. They are wealthy but unattractive, and seem to have passed marriageable age without finding any suitors of appropriate social rank. One day, a matchmaker appears, informing them that Franjoão Barreto, a Brahmin who is equal to them in caste, has returned unmarried from Mozambique, where he has spent the last ten years unsuccessfully attempting to make his fortune. The family agrees to match the youngest sister with Franjoão. As he has no wealth, but is of the requisite caste, instead of conforming to the normal pattern of the bride joining the groom's family, the groom is taken into the bride's family as a "boarder" and the other sisters promise not to marry. Franjoão greedily assents to the union, but, once married, finds that he is allowed no control or responsibility over the family's affairs. Life within the rigid aristocratic traditions of the Fonseca family proves to be too constrictive for someone who has been used to the freedom of bachelorhood in Lourenço Marques, the principal city in colonial Mozambique. When his wife becomes pregnant, Franjoão finally realizes that he has only been taken into the family in order to produce an heir and to preserve appearances. He is summarily informed that when his son is born, and there is no question in anybody's mind that it will not be a son, the child will be given the Fonseca name. In the bastion of tradition that is the Fonseca house in Margão, "life runs on, as inalterable as a river that no obstacle can divert from its course". The patriarchal system is so strong that in order to maintain itself, it disempowers individual men in the perpetuation of its existence.

Marriage and marriage arrangements are, as "Son-in-law and Boarder" demonstrates, an important theme and have a place in at least half of the stories. There is a subset of stories which, for want of a better term, I have called the Chandracanta subcycle. The first story is told from the point of view of Chandracanta's bride Dhruva on their wedding day. In the second, Chandracanta goes to study medicine in Lisbon, and begins an affair with a Portuguese woman. Their affair ends when she asks him to leave his wife and when he replies with "You cannot understand. This is the way we Orientals are. The man can betray but the husband is always faithful". The third story finds Chandracanta back in India, finding it difficult to adjust to life in colonial Goa and perhaps considering a return to Europe. This subcycle is filled with tensions between tradition and modernity, men and women, duties and self-fulfillment.

A wide sweep of geography is covered in *Monção*; tales are set in the principal towns of Margão, Mapuçá and Panjim, in fishing villages on the north bank of the Mandovi, and on agricultural estates in Salcete. The New Conquests are absent; perhaps this absence is attributable to the simple fact that Devi may never have had occasion to go there when she lived in Goa. In *Monção*, one story takes us to Lisbon and one to São Paulo. "The Future and the Past" is about a Goan businessman who has made good in Brazil, who pauses to recall the Goa of his childhood and the family that he has not seen for decades. At that moment the telephone rings, an offer of a lucrative deal on an apartment is made, and the fleeting memory is forgotten. Other stories feature characters who have lived in East Africa or the Persian Gulf; both locations having being major destinations for Goan emigrants.

The tone of Devi's stories varies. There is one particularly satirical tale called "The Subsidy", which is about a *descendente*, or mestiço family who try to act in a more Portuguese manner to live up to the colonial allowance they had been allocated. The jocular tone is not far from the one in the British-Asian BBC comedy series *Goodness Gracious Me*. The tale ends with the father of the family exhorting his children to use toilet paper in order to appear more European. He enjoins his wife to buy toilet paper and cries "May my name cease to be Eucaristino da Sagrada Fam'lia Mascarenhas de Castro e Bragança if anyone rinses themselves in this house again". Though it falls short of the scatological, the satiric style here comes close, quite literally, to toilet humour.

On the whole, however, the general tone is one of sadness at the divisions in Goa between Catholic and Hindu, upper caste and lower, rich and poor. There is almost nothing in *Monção* that is critical of the Portuguese. In a poem published after the Indian invasion, Devi writes of "a morning of tears and hope". Tears then, for what is gone and will be forgotten, but hope for what can still be resolved under the new, Indian dispensation; resolutions for the internal problems so subtly pictured in *Monção*.

Dissecting the Personal

Dushyanthi Mendis

Stitch your Eyelids Shut
by Vivimarie VanderPoorten
Akna Publishers, 2010; 116 pp.,
Rs.450.00

Vivimarie VanderPoorten's second book of poems, *Stitch your Eyelids Shut* is, with 79 poems, a larger volume than her first collection *Nothing Prepares You*, for which she won the Gratiaen Prize. As in the case of *Nothing Prepares You*, *Stitch your Eyelids Shut* defies categorization as containing a particular "type" of poem, unless one considers that type to be poems that show a deep sensitivity to the human condition. In this second collection VanderPoorten does not hesitate to subject herself and those around her to microscopic scrutiny, dissecting thoughts, emotions and feelings with a ruthlessness that sometimes leaves the reader gasping. She also demonstrates that she is not afraid to articulate, discuss and analyze disturbing themes that other writers may avoid because they are difficult to write about – for instance, domestic violence, mental health, sexual harassment and molestation, and eating disorders. The poems "Everyday", "Analgesic", "Election Night", and "Anorexia" are cases in point.

A quality noted by the panel of judges for the Gratiaen Prize in 2007 is the accessibility of VanderPoorten's work to a wide audience. In her poe-ms, one does not find lofty ideals, didactic declamations, or patronizing advice; what you find is an openness in articulating and discussing issues of childhood, family, love, loss, war, politics, ethnic violence and personal crises, and herein lies her appeal to a general readership. The poems "Departure Lounge", "My Sister's Fish", "Grandmother Died", "Crossings", "Letter to My Sister", "The Day after Tomorrow", "Even for Summer" and "News from Home" are about family and family relationships, including parting, loss, love and death. "Paying Homage", "Vadani in our Hostel" and "Everyday" are social commentaries on the exploitation and abuse of women, while several poems deal with incidents and implications of ethnic violence such as "Love, Displaced", "Diary of Bombs", "Today", "Changing your Name", "Hibiscus on Galle Road" and "Time Heals Not".

Readers who are familiar with *Nothing Prepares You* may be somewhat disappointed with some of the poems that can be read as "love" poems, or poems about love in some form, in *Stitch your Eyelids Shut*. "Extraordinary", "Get your Ex back dot com", "Princess.bmp", "Relativity", "SMS to my X", "Unnatural", "Forgetting your Birthday" and "Artifact" lack the poignancy of "For DS" and "Decree Nisi", the tenderness of "Driving Home" and "In a Crowd", the wit of "Celebrating Love", and the conviction in "I have Today", all of which appear in *Nothing Prepares You*. Noteworthy exceptions in *Stitch your Eyelids Shut* are "A Love that Dares to Speak", "Untitled", and my personal favourite, "Cadaver".

Considering the title, one can be forgiven for expecting "Cadaver" to be a political poem, or a poem about an act of violence, of which there have been too many in the last few decades. It is, however, a love poem – of sorts. Speaking of attachments to those we have loved but who are no longer with us, VanderPoorten observes that holding on to the past,

> is like tying a corpse
> to your back and taking it along
> with you
> wherever you go
> the stench horrible

Voicing the desire to rid herself of this unhealthy burden, the poet writes:

> I should untie you
> From the back of my heart
> Dig a hole in the dark deep
> Night of my past
> And bury you
> Kisses and all.

Her attachment is a corpse that needs to be buried; it lurks at the back of her heart, not fit to be seen (or survive?) in the light of day. But when the time for closure comes, the letting go will be complete, because it will include the burial not only of the attachment, but also of that which sustained the attachment when it was alive.

This is VanderPoorten at her best, successfully developing and sustaining a metaphor from the beginning to the end of a poem. She does it again in "Drowning", which begins with "When all of your love suddenly crashes on you like a wave", and ends with:

> Do you hold on to the driftwood of
> sweet memory?
> Do you grasp at the straws of
> sympathy
> Do you ride the waves of distant
> hope
> Do you swim the seas of
> hopelessness
> Until you're too tired to stay
> adrift?
>
> Or do you simply drown?

Here, her metaphors, some of them drawn from idiomatic clichés (grasping at straws), are seamlessly woven together in a commentary on the transience and false security offered by memories, sympathy, hope and even hopelessness, leading up to her final line, stark and effective in its simplicity.

Readers of VanderPoorten's earlier collection will also recognize her trademark irony, often coupled with understatement, in *Stitch your Eyelids Shut*, particularly in poems such as "Paying Homage", "Meeting a VIP", "Big Girl", "Diplomatic", and "New Year 2008". In "Big Girl", VanderPoorten comments on the ironic situation a young girl who has reached puberty finds herself in, when the familiar world around her suddenly turns unfamiliar. She is given new clothes and jewellery to wear because she is now a "big girl", but no one speaks to her, and her cousins do not play with her as they used to. Thus, on what is supposedly a celebratory occasion, she feels "small":

> As she wandered around
> The full empty house
> She felt very
> Very small.

VanderPoorten's ability to play on words and concepts through unusual collocations is apparent here – the house is literally full of people but is empty to the young girl, who, in spite of being labeled a "big girl", in reality, feels insignificant and unloved, and therefore "very/Very small".

In "Diplomatic", VanderPoorten's irony is sharper and more complex. The poem is about meeting an ambassador's wife, who asks, according to the poet, with mild surprise, "You write in English?". VanderPoorten's reaction, to her own bafflement, is not one of anger or outrage, but an apologetic smile, representative of a return to a subaltern status of the native, who, unlike the presumably white representative of the Diplomatic Corps, could not possibly understand, let alone write, poetry in English. The final stroke of irony comes towards the end: it is the poet who displays tact and politeness, nodding "a diplomatic yes" to the insensitive, ignorant question.

VanderPoorten has the ability of seeing in an ordinary or insignificant event or observation much larger and wider implications and consequences. One has to only recall one of her better known poems from *Nothing Prepares You*, "Disappearance", which was selected to be read at the honouring of a prominent Sri Lankan human rights activist by Human Rights Watch in Los Angeles, USA. In this poem, VanderPoorten uses the abduction and killing of a baby crow by two polecats, and the mother crow's subsequent grief, to make a powerful comment on the trauma of human abductions and killings that have become a part of life and living in Sri Lanka. Similarly, in "For Mr K with Love", in *Stitch your Eyelids Shut*,

VanderPoorten begins with the death of Mr K, a baby chipmunk, "Caught in the crossfire/During an ambush by birds", and moves on to a larger canvas of deaths – as a result of war, in IDP camps, in hospitals, on the news. Reverting to the personal in the last stanza, VanderPoorten puts her finger on the universal reason for our grief when someone dies – it is not because they are in need of us, but because we need them.

In the poignant "Departure Lounge", saying goodbye to her father at the airport takes on a deeper, more significant meaning for the poet in retrospect, with her father's death occurring not very long after. It is the photograph, which she says she took of him as he saw her off that day, that that now triggers the question:

Did my camera see what I could not
That night
That the rest of your life was
Six months of time
And that you would decide to leave
suddenly
At an impossible hour.

Perhaps one of VanderPoorten's most powerful poems in *Stitch your Eyelids Shut* is the short "Random Questions". An unlikely combination of dogeared pages, Kangaroo courts, dead ends and love triangles come together in a series of four questions, each of which has implications and interpretations that go far beyond the questions themselves. Here is an example, with an intricate, complex metaphor:

Do dead ends have live means
or do they yearn to
be reborn as
cross roads?

The British Romantics, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in particular, in their theory of poetry, speak of seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary, and of the power of the imagination to transform and transport us into an unseen reality beyond what we can see or perceive. VanderPoorten's poetry by no means falls into the Romantic genre in the strictest sense, but in many of her poems, a single incident or observation is used to comment on a larger and more universal concern, either through structural parallelism, or by the use of symbolism and metaphor. In this, VanderPoorten as a writer brings to mind the following words of William Blake, which, in my opinion, sum up the power of the creative im-agination and the vast possibilities of a poet's vision.

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

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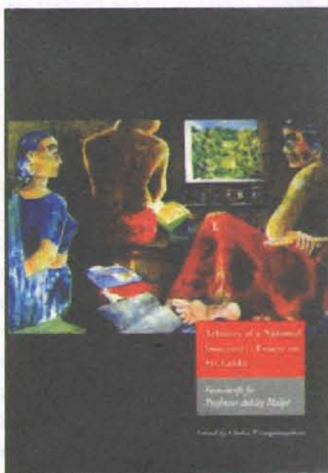

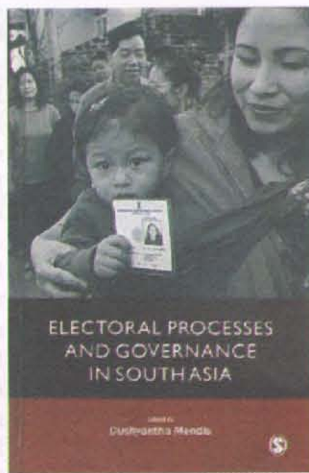

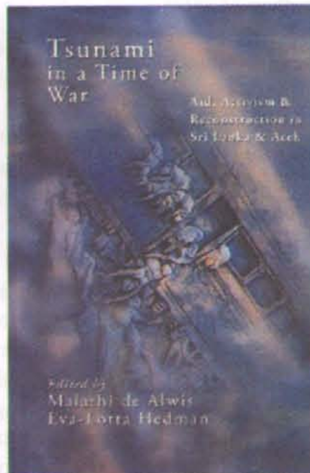

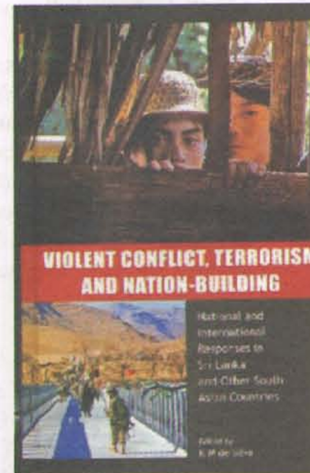

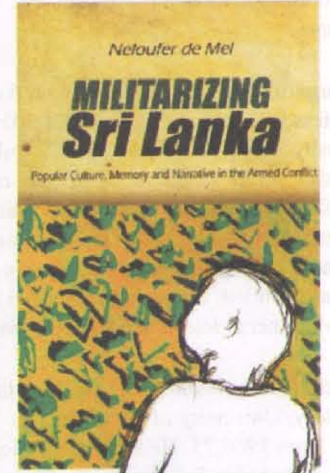

International Centre for Ethnic Studies
2, Kynsey Terrace,
Colombo 8,
Sri Lanka

+94-11-2685085 / 2679745 / 2698048

email: info@ices.lk

www.icescolombo.org

Contributors

Rohan Bastin is an Australian anthropologist who teaches at Deakin University. He has conducted research in Sri Lanka since 1984 and is the author of *The Domain of Constant Excess: Plural Worship at the Munnesvaram Temples in Sri Lanka* (Berghahn Books, 2002). In 2009 he published "Royal Science and Civil War in Sri Lanka: A Comment on S. Goonatilake" in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 443-67).

Giyani Venya De Silva worked as a Research Assistant at ICES from August 2009 to July 2010. She graduated from Yale University with a BA in Anthropology in May 2009, and is currently reading for the MPhil in Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford. Her research interests include issues of identity and ethnicity, the politics of representation, material culture and museum studies.

Ameena Hussein has written two collections of short stories and one novel. She was awarded the State Literary Prize in 2005 and her novel *The Moon in the Water* was long listed for the first ever Man Asian Literary Prize and the Dublin Impac Prize in 2010. She is the co-founder of the Perera Hussein Publishing House, which publishes cuttingedge Sri Lankan fiction.

Kalana Senaratne is currently a postgraduate-research student at the Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong. He obtained LL.B. and LL.M. degrees from the University of London, and has worked briefly at the UNDP (East Timor), the Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Peace Secretariat and the Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Education and Research (WICPER)

Tissa Jayatilaka is the Executive Director of the United States-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission and a Visiting Lecturer in English at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. He is a frequent commentator on domestic and international political and literary themes.

Anupama Mohan is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at University of Nevada, Reno. She has published articles in the broad fields of post-colonial studies, women's literature, and critical and literary theory. She is currently working on a monograph on the intersecting literary histories of twentieth century India and Sri Lanka, of which her article in *Nethra Review* is a part.

Michael Roberts taught at the Department of History, University of Peradeniya in 1961-2 and from 1966-75. He secured an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship to Germany in 1975 and subsequently joined the Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide in 1977. His major works include *Elites, Nationalisms and the Nationalist Movement in British Ceylon*, in *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress, Vol.1, Caste Conflict and Elite Formation: The Rise of a Karava Elite in Sri Lanka, 1500-1931, People in Between: The Burghers and the Middle Class in the Transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790s-1980s.Vol.1, Exploring Confrontation. Sri Lanka: Politics, Culture and History, Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period, 1590s-1818* and *Crosscurrents: Sri Lanka and Australia at Cricket.* He has also published numerous articles and edited several works.

Sarath Rajapatirana is Vice President (Research) of the Institute of Economic and Institutional Development. Previously he was with the World Bank for twenty-five years, where he was an Economic Adviser, a Division Chief for trade and industry for Latin America and the Director and Team Leader of the 1987 World Development Report. Prior to joining the World Bank, he was with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka where he was Chief of Money and Banking Research. He is the author/co-author of six books and more than forty papers published in refereed journals.

Kalinga Tudor Silva holds a BA degree from the University of Peradeniya and obtained his PhD from Monash University, Australia. Currently, he serves as the Executive Director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. He is presently on sabbatical leave from the University of Peradeniya where he held the positions of Senior Professor of Sociology and Dean, Faculty of Arts. He has published widely in Sri Lanka and abroad on various aspects of Sri Lankan society, including social stratification, poverty, health issues, social conflict and social policies.

Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe's books include *Rhythm of the Sea* and *Trinity.* She was a runner-up to the UK Guardian Orange First Words Prize of 2009 and was shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize for her manuscripts of poetry in 1998 and 2007. She won the joint prize of the English Writer's Cooperative's Short Story and Poetry Competition in 1997. Her work has been featured in the *TimesOnline* UK 2009 selection of contemporary war poetry, the *Tipton Poetry Journal, The Poetry Journal, Osprey* and *Channels.* She holds a MA in Comparative Literature from SOAS, University of London. Ramya works at the US-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission.

Laban Carrick Hill is the author of more than 30 books of fiction, nonfiction, poetry and children's books. His *Harlem Stomp!: A Cultural History of The Harlem Renaissance* was a 2004 National Book Award Finalist in the U.S. His most recent book, *Dave the Potter* was published this year by Little, Brown & Company. He is the director of the Ghana Poetry Project, a nonprofit based in Ghana and the U.S. promoting literary culture in Africa.

Indika Edirisinghe is a Project Coordinator and Researcher at the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), Colombo. A BSc. (Agriculture) graduate of the University of Peradeniya, she has completed her Masters in Development Studies at the University of Colombo. Her broad research interests include youth, employment, urban poverty and gender. She has conducted macro level and field based research on issues concerning female factory workers and women in decision making positions.

Sasanka Perera is Professor of Anthropology and Head of the Department of Sociology at University of Colombo. His research interests include politics of development, visual culture, memory and spatial politics. At present, he is working on a book on the politics of memory in Sri Lanka. He is the Editor of the *South Asia Journal for Culture* and the Sinhala language cultural studies journal, *Patitha,* and serves on the editorial board of its Tamil language counterpart, *Panuwal.* He writes poetry primarily in the Sinhala language.

Capt. Elmo Jayawardena won the Gratiaen Prize in 2001 for *Sam's Story* and the State Literary Award for *The Last Kingdom of Sinhalay* in 2005, and was short-listed for the Singapore Literary Award in 2008 for *Rainbows in Braille.* He is the Founder President of CandleAid Lanka, a humanitarian organisation working with "people in need". He has been an aviator for more than 40 years, and currently trains pilots for the Boeing company.

Sumith Chaaminda completed his Masters Degree in Political Science under an exchange program between the University of Colombo and the University of Oslo in 2009. He has worked as a lecturer in Political Science at University of Colombo, University of Ruhuna and University of Sabaragamuwa, and is currently a Research Associate at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo.

Dilshan Boange *graduated from University* of Colombo with a BA Degree in English (Honours), and holds a Diploma and a Higher Diploma in International Relations awarded by the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Colombo. His academic interests include comparative literature, inter-textual studies, modern lyrical prose/fiction, and contemporary Sri Lankan English fiction. His forthcoming publication is titled *Conciousness: The Writer's Primary Pen.*

Frances Bulathsinghala, for much of her career, was a journalist covering political and social issues, with a focus on the ethnic conflict. She has moved away from full time journalism to developmental research. She writes short stories and poetry, and has an interest in script writing.

Paul Melo e Castro is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies at the University of Leeds, where he is undertaking a project looking into the twentieth-century Goan short story in Portuguese.

Dushyanthi Mendis is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English, University of Colombo. She obtained her MA in Linguistics from Ohio University and a Phd in Linguistics from the University of Michigan. Her literature teaching is confined to her Department's first year introductory Poetry course, and a course on Sri Lankan Literature and Language taught at Justus Liebig University, Germany, while on a DAAD Fellowship. Her primary research interests are sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and corpus linguistics.

Regi Siriwardena (1922-2004), veteran journalist, literary and film critic, academic, translator, playwright, poet and novelist, was the Founding Editor of *Nethra* in 1984, the ICES journal which he edited until his demise. He read English at University College, Colombo under E. F. C. Ludowyk and Doric de Souza, graduating with a University of London degree. Regi founded the Department of English at the former Buddhist seat of higher learning, Vidyalankara University (now University of Kelaniya), and was the founder-secretary of the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka. Working with Lester James Peries, he wrote the screenplays for the ground-breaking Sinhala films, *Gamperaliya* and *Golu Hadawatha,* while he worked towards the establishment of the National Film Corporation in 1971. His publications include *Equality and the Religious Traditions of Asia* (1987), *Waiting for the Soldier* (1989), *To the Muse of Insomnia* (1990), *Poems and Selected Translations* (1993), *Octet: Collected Plays* (1995), *The Lost Lenore* (1996), *Among My Souvenirs* (1997), *Working Underground: The LSSP in Wartime* (1999), and *The Pure Water of Poetry* (1999).

Nishan de Mel, A.B. Hons. (Harvard), M.Phil (Oxon), D.Phil (Oxon), is an Economist. He has held several senior policy and research appointments in Sri Lanka. He was a Member, Presidential Task Force on Health Reforms (1997); Member, National Steering Committee on Social Security (1998-2000); Member, Presidential Committee on Tobacco and Alcohol (1997-2000); and Member, Board of Directors of the Sri Lanka Foundation (1997-2000). He was a lecturer in Economics at Oxford University (2002-2007) and a researcher at the Institute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka (1996-2000). He served as Executive Director of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (2000) and Executive Director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (2009). Currently, he serves as Executive Director of Verité Research, Sri Lanka.

Chelva Kanaganayakam is Professor of English at the University of Toronto and Director, Centre for South Asian Studies. He has published several books including *Structures of Negation: the Writings of Zulfikar Ghose, Configurations of Exile: South Asian Writers and their World, Dark Antonyms and Paradise: the Poetry of Rienzi Crusz,* and *Counterrealism and Indo-Anglian Fiction.* He is also the editor of the recent ICES publication *Arbiters of a National Imaginary: Essays on Sri Lanka - Festschrift for Profess-or Ashley Halpé.*

Lakmali Jayasinghe is a first-class English Honours graduate of University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, while she holds a Diploma in Higher Studies in French Language and Literature with Distinction awarded by the Alliance Française of Paris, and a Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations awarded by the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Sri Lanka. Lakmali is a Researcher at ICES and the Managing Editor of *Nethra Review*, and she is a Visiting Lecturer at the Department of English, University of Peradeniya. Her research interests include comparative literature, gender studies, critical theory and cultural studies.

Shamanthi Rajasingham is currently reading for a BA Degree in English (Honours) at University of Colombo, while she works as a freelance graphic designer and cartoonist. Her art, which has been exhibited at the Lionel Wendt Art Gallery in 1999, 2005 and 2006, is frequently influenced by the surrealist forms of Salvador Dali and M.C. Escher. She held her debut solo exhibition *Surreal Lines* at ICES in 2010. Shamanthi's academic interests include gender studies, cultural studies and postcolonial studies, all of which impact the surreal forms featured in her art.

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Rohan Bastin is an Australian anthropologist who teaches at Deakin University. He has conducted research in Sri Lanka since 1984 and is the author of *The Domain of Constant Excess: Plural Worship at the Munnesvaram Temples in Sri Lanka* (Berghahn Books, 2002). In 2009 he published "Royal Science and Civil War in Sri Lanka: A Comment on S. Goonatilake" in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 443-67).

Giyani Venya De Silva worked as a Research Assistant at ICES from August 2009 to July 2010. She graduated from Yale University with a BA in Anthropology in May 2009, and is currently reading for the MPhil in Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford. Her research interests include issues of identity and ethnicity, the politics of representation, material culture and museum studies.

Ameena Hussein has written two collections of short stories and one novel. She was awarded the State Literary Prize in 2005 and her novel *The Moon in the Water* was long listed for the first ever Man Asian Literary Prize and the Dublin Impac Prize in 2010. She is the co-founder of the Perera Hussein Publishing House, which publishes cuttingedge Sri Lankan fiction.

Kalana Senaratne is currently a postgraduate-research student at the Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong. He obtained LL.B. and LL.M. degrees from the University of London, and has worked briefly at the UNDP (East Timor), the Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Peace Secretariat and the Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Education and Research (WICPER)

Tissa Jayatilaka is the Executive Director of the United States-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission and a Visiting Lecturer in English at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. He is a frequent commentator on domestic and international political and literary themes.

Anupama Mohan is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at University of Nevada, Reno. She has published articles in the broad fields of post-colonial studies, women's literature, and critical and literary theory. She is currently working on a monograph on the intersecting literary histories of twentieth century India and Sri Lanka, of which her article in *Nethra Review* is a part.

Michael Roberts taught at the Department of History, University of Peradeniya in 1961-2 and from 1966-75. He secured an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship to Germany in 1975 and subsequently joined the Department of Anthropology at the University of Adelaide in 1977. His major works include *Elites, Nationalisms and the Nationalist Movement in British Ceylon*, in *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress, Vol.1, Caste Conflict and Elite Formation: The Rise of a Karava Elite in Sri Lanka, 1500-1931, People in Between: The Burghers and the Middle Class in the Transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790s-1980s.Vol.1, Exploring Confrontation. Sri Lanka: Politics, Culture and History, Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period, 1590s-1818* and *Crosscurrents: Sri Lanka and Australia at Cricket.* He has also published numerous articles and edited several works.

Sarath Rajapatirana is Vice President (Research) of the Institute of Economic and Institutional Development. Previously he was

with the World Bank for
where he was an Econom
ision Chief for trade and
America and the Director a
the 1987 World Developme
joining the World Bank, he
tral Bank of Sri Lanka whe
Money and Banking Rese
thor/co-author of six books
rty papers published in refe

Kalinga Tudor Silva holds
the University of Peradeniy
PhD from Monash Univers
rrently, he serves as the Ex
the International Centre f
He is presently on sabbati
University of Peradeniya
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and Dean, Faculty of Arts.
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ica.

Indika Edirisinghe is a P
and Researcher at the Ce
Research (CENWOR), C
(Agriculture) graduate of
Peradeniya, she has compl
Development Studies at the
lombo. Her broad researc
youth, employment, urban
er. She has conducted ma
based research on issues
factory workers and wome
ng positions.

Sasanka Perera is Profe
ology and Head of the Dep
ogy at University of Colo
interests include politics of
ual culture, memory and
present, he is working on a
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