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EDITORIAL

Reggie Siriwardena's article (first published in 1992), which offers an insightful reading of education, ideology and ethnic relations in Sri Lanka, not only serves as a valuable frame for many of the essays in this issue of *Nethra Review*, but also highlights, in some senses, the need for *Nethra Review* to be mindful of its own objectives. Siriwardena is absolutely right in pointing out that foregrounding English as a link language that transcends ethnic differences often tends to ignore the simple truth that class solidarity has, in the past, often masqueraded as liberal acceptance of ethnic difference. The notion that the adoption of English would eventually erase "ethnic thinking" is clearly simplistic. Of course, as Siriwardena goes on to point out, the use of English is only part of a larger problem of education and ideology. Nonetheless, the use of English continues to be a complex question, particularly in Sri Lanka where globalisation and ethnic difference continue to be areas of interest.

The value of English will continue to grow as Sri Lanka becomes increasingly a significant player in a highly competitive globalised world in which a sound knowledge of English is almost essential to success. Regardless of state policy about the language of instruction in schools, English will have to be included in the curriculum as a constitutive element in education. Inevitably, the relation between class and fluency in English will continue to remain, although the boundaries that frame the elite may well become much more fluid. Assuming that the widespread use of English would ultimately erase ethnic difference and lead to greater national unity might be as idealistic today as it probably was when Siriwardena wrote his essay.

A more pertinent question might be what we do with English apart from using it as a tool to navigate our way through a globalised world. This is where a measure of self-reflexivity is needed for journals such as *Nethra Review* which continue to function in English. Would it be different if *Nethra Review* were to be published in Sinhala and Tamil and not in English? A simple answer might be that we seek not only a national but also an international readership. How we project ourselves takes on a particular urgency when we know that we are being appraised by both insiders and outsiders. In the process of publishing in English, we may not be accessible to all, but we certainly make a statement to those who read us about how we wish to position ourselves.

In the last two issues of *Nethra Review* - and in the current issue - a recurring motif has been reconciliation. It was pure coincidence that many of the essays we received were, in very different ways, connected with the idea of reconciliation. Whether it is creative writing or scholarly analyses, the essays, in the process of grappling with the urgent need for reconciliation and progress, do not reflect a naïve liberal posturing. Instead, the essays appear to endorse a position of critical reflection, of sober acknowledgment, of addressing the present by understanding the past. There is no easy consensus among the essays, but there is a willingness to shed ideological biases and move forward. In a small way, *Nethra Review* seeks to achieve what Siriwardena appears to espouse as the goal of meaningful education – foster intellectual honesty through critical, well-informed, and rigorous discussion.

Chelva Kanaganayakam

Balancing in Silence

Aparna Halpé

Enough to be Mortal Now
by Rienzi Crusz
TSAR Publications, 2009; 140 pp., $17.95

I have a bad habit. I like to take publicity blurbs on dust-jackets seriously. After all, they are distilled critical words of wisdom that should, ideally, make us race to the checkout-counter with a brand-spanking new book. I must confess that I haven't raced to the counter with Rienzi Crusz's new collection of poems, *Enough to be Mortal Now* (2009). It has arrived, as it were, through fortunate fate. However, I am arrested by the words on the book's dust-jacket, in particular, Michael Thorpe's assertion that Crusz "belongs to the older postcolonial generation, including such writers as Walcott and Soyinka, prepared to appropriate the colonial legacy of Shakespeare and English". The quote comes from Thorpe's early review of Crusz's *The Rain Doesn't Know Me Anymore* (1992), a piece that oscillates between a curious critical polarity in which the author simultaneously vaunts Crusz as the "best living Sri Lankan poet in English," and subtly destabilises this assertion by suggesting that his poetry is, in some way, outdated. I find myself fascinated with Thorpe's notion that poetry is, somehow, a thing of generations; intrigued by the critical premise that his approach implies.

It is in this vein that I begin by tracing some of the critical preoccupations with Crusz's work because, to do so, is to outline the frequent anxiety that his work produces in critics who would be more comfortable with an aesthetic and matter that were, for want of a better word, resolutely postcolonial. Why does Crusz belong to the "older postcolonial generation"? Because he is comfortable with the so-called colonial legacy of Shakespeare and English? Last I checked, the boys in Wesley College's stunning adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* (2010) were pretty comfortable with it too, their "appropriation" of Shakespeare a thing of this century, rife with our very own revisions of the paradox of otherness. Yes, perhaps we might say that our colonial education survives, intact, well into the twenty-first century. But if it has, it has done so on our terms, submitted to the trials of our histories, and multiplied within the cadence of our many nation-languages.

When Thorpe goes on to suggest that Crusz's "appropriation" of language avoids the "anguished breast-beating" that somehow characterizes later postcolonial writing, he seems to suggest a somewhat monolithic reading of self-reflexive linguistic problematics in Anglophone poetry. This mode of analysis would suppose a fundamental ideological divide (based on generational impulse) between the discourse on colonialism in, for example, Lakdasa Wikkramasinha's "Don't Talk To Me About Mattisse," and Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta's "The English Wars". And yet, any critic of Lankan poetry understands that the concerns of both poems are essentially not that different. Thorpe's analysis also suggests that the so-called younger generation of postcolonial poets eschew a certain kind of literary and linguistic tradition. By this token, my own debt to Donne, Eliot or Rilke would be anachronistic, my poetry bound by conventions that are dismissed as colonial. These observations are only seemingly rhetorical. Thorpe's evaluation of Crusz's work outlines a fundamental critical anxiety over the function of tradition and inheritance. This anxiety describes a closed circuit in which poetics and politics are determined by a referential engagement with the givens of postcolonial experience. At root, these concerns articulate a more pervasive critical problem – the assumption that writing within a mythopoetic frame invokes an aestheticized cultural metanarrative that fails the political contingencies of a more "radical" nation-language.

Thorpe recognizes that Crusz is a poet fascinated by myth because it affords him a syncretic symbolic frame which extends and interrogates the experience of exile. But Thorpe also seems to assume that Crusz's use of myth does no more than articulate the "undogmatic religion of life". One cannot help but hear the slight condescension that punctuates Thorpe's evaluation of Crusz's writing. Implicit in this evaluation is the notion that Crusz's particular phrase and form are somehow referentially colonial, his theme a rehearsal of exilic nostalgia. If we were to follow Thorpe's hyperbolic ironies, we would relegate Crusz to the annals of postcolonial literature, as a poet whose work can be read within the "set pieces" of early postcolonial discourse. To follow Thorpe, is to agree that Crusz's poetry has no force of articulation in contemporary thought or soundspace, that he is simply the "old" within the new. This is, of course, a rather unfortunate response to a writer whose non-programmatic idiom has consistently reworked the substance of lyric voice, whose response to an ever evolving struggle with the frames of identity-politics has been to find form in the vagrancies of myth.

Thorpe is not alone in his strangely polarised response to Crusz. If we return to the early critical evaluations of Cruz's work by South Asian Canadian critics like Arun Mukherjee, we find this polarism extended in various thematic and contextual dualities such as warm/cold, bucolic/post-industrial, and most specifically, Sri Lankan/Canadian. In *Oppositional Aesthetics* (1994), Mukherjee lauds Crusz for writing the South Asian immigrant experience in lyric gestures that speak to her own critical desire for "meaning", but chastises him when he forsakes this greater cause to stray into mere poesy. Writing of "Poem in Peacock Blue", she dismisses Crusz's subtly ironic capitulations on colour as images that are "cloyingly rich in their imagery and euphony and short on meaning" (104). Mukherjee hastens to add that at his best "Crusz blends his Sri Lankan and Canadian experiences to make profound comments on both societies" (104), but her assertions of profundity are based on a poem's conformity with her projected frames of reference in relation to both places. Crusz succeeds (where a poet like Michael Ondaatje fails) because he satisfies the rubric of reference that Mukherjee requires of her artist. This predetermined critical bias enables her to make the most remarkable assertions about the referential in Crusz's work. When she asserts that Crusz "subtly criticizes the packaged, programmed life in a post-industrial society and implies that life in Sri Lanka, however hard in terms of material comforts, was more authentic" (105), Mukherjee seems unaware of her own desire to rework Crusz's nostalgia as authenticity, and she misses, entirely, the complexity of Crusz's own difficult contentment with the package and program of Canadian experience.

Both Thorpe and Mukherjee share an anxiety over Crusz's depictions of Sri Lanka. But, unable to dismiss Crusz's Lankan poetics, they struggle to find a critical language that evaluates his phrase and figure. Interestingly enough, both critics also displace their anxiety onto a pseudo-critical evocation of the mythical, suggesting that Crusz's symbolism requires no more than a superficial understanding of myth in order to reveal its true form. Thus, Thorpe casually describes Crusz's theriomorphic symbol of the raven as a "native myth", invoking some vague idea of a Lankan myth that somehow incorporates a tricksterish, deistic raven: "Crusz returns sharply to reanimate memory, of childhood, as in the nostalgic emotion of "waif", or to tap native myth and legend as in "he who talks to the raven", the bird that in his previous volume symbolises the life force, yet with the darker overtone the poet, now confronting encroaching age, holds in sharp duality". Thorpe does not think to question the figure of the raven as "native myth", and, as a result, misses the weight of Crusz's chosen allusion.

Mukherjee appears to grasp the fact that Crusz draws on a sense of mythopoetics similar to Yeats: "His [Crusz's] poetry is an assertion of his difference. Like Yeats, he has created his own mythology and rhetoric because the available conventions of Anglo-Canadian poetry do not serve his needs. It is this act of self-creation that makes his poetry so interesting" (133). However, while Mukherjee readily understands Crusz's mythopoetic impulse, she nonetheless fails to recognise it in the symbolism of the raven in poems from *Elephant and Ice* (1980) remarking merely that "...he [Crusz] calls himself a 'crow' (EAI 53), a black bird whose frequent recurrence in Crusz reminds one of several West Indian poets" (134). The blind assumption of syncretism, drawn tangentially from West Indian symbolism, is unfortunate, and misses the very point of her earlier assertions about Crusz's generative mythologies.

We might say that Mukehrjee falls into the trap of reading Crusz's symbolism within an easy poetics drawn from her own assumptions on the discourse of identity and racial narrative. Apart from her early acknowledgement of a self-mythologizing impulse in Crusz's work, there is no sustained interrogation of the form, nuance or ideological persuasion of Crusz's mythical lyricism.

If we take Thorpe's reading of the raven as "native myth" and Mukherjee's likewise problematic reading of the bird as reminiscent of a West Indian "black bird," and use them as frames of reference in a poem from *Still Close to the Raven* (1989), we might start to unravel one of the many misreadings of Crusz's tricksterish mythicism:

> I'm being watched.
> Blue eyes suddenly a torment,
> a torrent of waterfall,
> beauty with a knife between its teeth.
> So once again,
> I must close my black eyes,
> feel my legs
> climbing
> towards the sun.
> Each crag, jutting root,
> now a rung of mercy.
>
> I must move, move
> away from this darkness unasked for,
> or make that second discovery
> of fire: love
> for the tall man with thrusting blue eyes
> seeing nothing
> but a blur of shadowed skin
> a spot on his morning sun. (13)

To be sure, the situation of the poem is simple enough. The casual encounter of racism in the less-than-curious stare of a fellow customer at a coffee shop. However, in the second stanza, the poet suddenly shifts the narrative of darkness, and its invocation of a politics of identity and displacement, into the realm of the mythical. We can only understand that "second discovery" if we understand Crusz's allusive mythography of the raven. And, contrary to what Thorpe might think, this is no myth "native" to Sri Lanka. Neither, I suspect, is it native (except perhaps in the fact that one may find crows in the West Indies as in Sri Lanka) to a particularly West Indian mythography.

Crusz's dark speaker discovers in "fire" the same element of an ambiguous love and violent (if emancipatory) escape that characterises the Haida myth of the raven who steals the sun. However, Crusz integrally reverses the key mythemes to provoke a revision of the tricksterish raven, proving him powerless against the superior force of the "tall man with the thrusting blue eyes" who sees nothing but a "spot on his morning sun". Crusz's raven has not brought light to the universe; he is trapped in light, no more than a spot in the histories of displacement that make up the story of Canada. His symbol gains its strength from its syncretism, from its identification with the displacement of the First Nations people and the loss of their stories – the myths that have lost their meaning in the tremendous erasure of supremacist histories. To reduce Crusz's raven to a Lankan or West Indian "crow" would be to misread the complexity of the symbol and its palimpsestic frame of reference.

I offer this example of the inherent difficulty involved in reading Crusz's mythopoetics, because it alerts us to the complex symbolic orders that he invokes. While almost all Crusz's critics speak of his lasting engagement with myth, few develop an adequate critical vocabulary that catches the complexity of his narration of myth, and none dare question the function or purpose of myth in his work. If we return to Mukherjee's suggestion that Crusz invents his own mythology (like Yeats) because "the available conventions of Anglo-Canadian poetry do not serve his needs" (133), we encounter a very interesting, if conventional, reading of myth as a structuring principle in the lyric. Perhaps Mukherjee arrives at this reading of myth through a myth-critic like Northrop Frye who defines myth as "the structuring principle in narrative" (ix). In this understanding of myth, we assume that myth is a narrative frame that the poet invokes to achieve a certain emotional or affective cadence within a poem. Mukherjee's observation also draws our attention to the way these cadences, or mythical frames of meaning, are part of literary tradition and narrative inheritance – these are the stories that we swallow, much like the Haida raven who swallowed the sun in order to give light to the world. And like the sun, once these stories are released from the artist's grasp and thrown into the world, they gather their own momentum and meaning. They invite new stories, they become seductive and treasonous.

To suggest that Crusz needs myth because he has lost his narrative bearings in his long journey through exile, is to identify the archetypal function of literature to provide a hermetic (not hermeneutical) frame of reference for the chaos of narrative production. It is also to locate the fracture of exile in the many shadows of his narrative inheritance. Perhaps Mukherjee is right. Perhaps Crusz invents myth because the conventions of Anglo-Canadian poetry cannot frame a his/story of exile, but I would suggest that this mal-adaptation to a new poetics and politics of identity allows Crusz to remain more eclectic in his choice of mythic frames, to don renewing masks, and to trace ever more sinuous lines of imaginative belonging from the Dhammapada to the twisted Homerics of Derek Walcott. And it is perhaps in Walcott that we gather a closer approximation of what Crusz attempts in his own fragmentary tapestry of myth. When Walcott claims that you "create what you need spiritually, a god for each need" (Walcott in Burnett 93), he articulates the capacity of myth to generate new strategies of survival. These are narrative strategies that grow particular to the context in which the poet must refashion his/her craft.

Unlike critics like Thorpe or Mukherjee, Chelva Kanaganayakam has produced a consistent and nuanced critical reading of the poetry that demonstrates, for the first time, the complexity of reading syncretic traditions analytically in Crusz's writing. Significantly, it is Kanaganayakam who draws our attention to a quote by Robert Crusz that describes the poet as "having a cultural identity which is an ongoing process of becoming, never finally arriving" ("Dark Antonyms" 10). This sense of "becoming" forms a thematic rhythm through the many volumes and, I would argue, provokes the mythopoetic impulse in Crusz's work. In his introduction to *Insurgent Rain*, Kanaganayakam traces a pattern of formal evolution that punctuates Crusz's volumes of poetry from 1975 onwards. Beginning with *Flesh and Thorn* (1975) and *Elephant and Ice* (1980), Kanaganayakam demonstrates the raw power of the early volumes and outlines the concern with loss and private sorrow, and the introduction of the Sri Lanka / Canada polarity in narratives of exile ("Insurgent Rain" xx). He goes on to trace tropes of resistance as they appear in *Singing Against The Wind* (1985) and the subsequent volumes, and concludes with the fruition of the difficult processes of adaptation to a new place and politics in *Beatitudes* (1995). Although uncomfortable with the teleological frame invoked in this kind of approach, Kanaganayakam demonstrates the presence of a thematic continuum in Crusz's work, and argues for a critical evaluation that recognises the subtle shifts, and echoes, of form that each new volume affords. However, Kanaganayakam also warns against assuming a linear programmatic reading that schematises Crusz's creative output, suggesting rather a cyclical critical approach that reads centrifugally as well as centripetally:

> Such an evolutionary scheme [the practice of reading Crusz according to a thematic schema] serves as a defense against the notion that the poet's career has hardly evolved in the last two decades. It reveals a certain change of thematic emphasis in his writing. The taxonomy is convenient but it suggests a trajectory of growth and evolution that is hardly accurate. In fact something of the raw power of his early poetry is hardly ever captured in the more mellow and meditative later work. And there is a cyclical pattern in his poetry, a tendency to go back to themes that need to be expressed again. If a linear pattern is a route for the reader, so is a synchronic one that draws attention to repetitive structures that inform his work. (Kanaganayakam xx)

As Kanaganayakam suggests, tracking the changing thematic spectacle of Crusz's work does not necessarily build an encounter with resonance, but when we allow ourselves the luxury of repetition and recapitulation, we begin to hear the cadence of his symbolism. I would venture to add that such a synchronic frame of thematic reference speaks directly to the mythic element in Crusz's work. It is the Janus-faced aspect that returns to the moment of conception even as it gazes forward to the final abyss.

Enough to be Mortal Now is a passionate conversation with a source. Unlike the previous volumes, Crusz's focus returns time and again to the presence of the Godhead in his torturous, all-consuming Muse. Thus, while we encounter the familiar tropes of raven and elephant, and the themes of identity and exile, the questioning voice of the poet turns ever inward to the growing silence of the numinous within himself. And it is this metaphysical struggle, this grappling with season and choice, that makes this collection of poems perhaps the most concerned with the function of the mythic within the poet's individuated symbolic order. A poem like "By the Edge of the Mahaveli at High Noon" (4) obliquely introduces the central issue, the big question, the existential "why?" that punctuates the silence of most poems in this collection. At first glance, the poem may seem no more than a Lankan pastoral, a piece that captures what Mukherjee calls "the beautiful evocations of Sri Lanka" (134).

But if we read with an awareness of Crusz's particular mythic order, we recognise the function of theriomorphism within the landscape, and the translation of nature in her manifest aspect, into the divine:

> nothing breaks
> the sentinel mood of the great river,
> how sun-fish and minnow,
> crow and heron,
> high noon's lancing glare
> the river's adamant quest
> fashioning this uncompromising story
> with a happy ending:
> the mighty river tumbling at last
> into the ample arms of the Indian Sea.
>
> So why am I here alone
> by the edge of this great river?
>
> Searching for God
> in this patch of green Eden?
> Answers in the baptism of waters,
> silences to match
> and empty cathedral?
> Realities of life and death
> in the heron's beak,
> faith, like the river,
> at journey's end? (4-5)

Even if the cadence of life is captured in a heron's beak, the poet refuses the comfort of the proffered happy ending. As Adam, alone in Eden, still seeking God, the poet outlines a postlapsarian exile, not just of the paradisical Lanka to which he always returns, but the spiritual exile of the soul now faced with dissolution. If the two great existential questions of this poem are one and the same, they remain untouched by "faith", their syncretic answer, a glimpse of pure form, an archetype before the frames of myth can give us the comfort of meaning.

And the poems in this collection return to silent answers. The volume's title is a tentative answer, a "vesper of an insurgent angel"[1] offered more to the poet's questioning soul, than to the silent spiritual "Lord" of the volume's concluding poem[2]. Elegiac, in keeping with the tone of his earlier work, this collection bears the insistence of an older Donne brought face to face with mortality. And like Donne, a poet who would claim the last commandment as "love"[3], Crusz remains passionately gnostic to the last. The sensuous gambol of old familiars like "Elegy for an Orange" (95) resound differently beside the "fading eyes" of "Wanted" (94) and the anguished death-dance of the fading sun man (97). As "Sunless Sequences" indicates, the anguished cadence of Crusz's "mortal" phrase must settle into phatic silence, resounding hollow against the tortuously transcendental permanence of the celestial body:

> Today I write of quagmires,
> deep fissures, of dreams
> that spill blood thick as oil,
> Vespers from the mouth of insurgent angels.
> You stagger with an exaggerated face,
> a knee bone soft as pulp.
> What whirls the blood to epilepsy,
> so darkens the skyline
> as if to frame another crucifixion?
>
> My God, the rose has waited in vain;
> the butterfly is changing its ballerina mode
> to a clumsy tumble of death.
> It is the fourth day
> and you hug your doll of flame
> like a selfish child
> to your ribcage, beyond
> our asking eyes, cold skins,
> your cumulus curtain drawn tight,
> as if for another siesta. (97)

The poet's dream begins in the context of insurgency all too familiar to the Lankan psyche. The image of blood and recalcitrant angels invoke a personal and public hell, their dreams of emancipation from nation and state echoing Satan's protest: "Here at least, we shall be free".[4] But Crusz draws this public history inwards to his own private tortures – a knee bone softened to pulp, blood staining the sky of a second crucifixion. Of course, we hear Milton and Yeats, even as images of decapitated students and suicide bombers congregate in the failing body of the poet. With such history, God is no more than a "selfish child", his sun's nourishing warmth withdrawn for yet another postlapsarian age.

Interviewed in Roshni Rustomji-Kern's collection of South Asian poets, Crusz calls out, passionately, for the freedom to speak the myth of his life: "I plead, I dream of a happy synthesis of cultures, a fashioning of a new mythology" (43). And I must ask again, why must a poet plead for the articulation of personal myth? Crusz seems to understand that the mythopoetic content of his work will be constantly subject to a critical process that reduces the multiplicity of the mythic image to the purely referential. And perhaps, it is this dream of a new mythology that makes for such uneasy attempts at sober, if nuanced, critical explorations of the mythic elements in Crusz's work. It is this area of blindness that leaves an otherwise sympathetic and able critic like Mukherjee to lapse into unfortunate universals that would tar all black birds with the same brush. Contentious as it might seem, I would assert that our postcolonial anxiety with mythopoetics has paralyzed our critical acumen to such an extent that we have no vocabulary to negotiate the sound and phrase of Crusz's "new mythology". But if we return, momentarily, to Robert Crusz's early observations on the renewing processes in the poet's journey, we might suggest that such a process of "becoming", of shaping phrase and cadence to sound a new order, requires a poetics that spins out of destruction "a song for those yet to come"[5]. The mythic element that punctuates Crusz's eternal traversal of boundary appears, in *Enough to be Mortal Now*, to unsettle our assumptions about the poet's symbolic orders. The raven and the elephant give way to the white butterfly, the classical symbol of the questing soul and the likewise tragic ephemeral creature who circumnavigates our island to die on its highest peak. The eternal journey of the sun man negotiating each crag of shadow as a "rung of mercy"[6] pauses beside the banks of the sentinel Mahaveli, but if his song shifts to silence, in "Poem for the Faltering Man" it finds that space once more, in becoming:

> I'm balancing
> on the brink
>
> death and panorama
> around and below.
>
> But faltering legs
> dangerous landscape
>
> or final decisions
> will not make the poem.
>
> Only supreme electricity
> of doubt,
>
> those screaming moments
> when wind, muscle and mind
>
> argue
> whether to keep me here
> alive.

1 "Sunless Sequences", p. 97.
2 "Flight of the White Butterfly", p. 99.
3 Donne. *Sonnet XVI* "Father, Part of his double interest", p. 110.
4 Milton. *Paradise Lost*, pp. 242-271.
5 Homer. *Odyssey*. 8. 577-80. in Lincoln, Bruce. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship*. Trans. Bruce Lincoln. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1999. p. 21.
6 "Still Close to the Raven" p. 13.

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Text and Context: An Analysis of the First Japanese Introduction to Ceylonese (Sinhala)

Dileep Chandralal

Kanyou Ceylon-go Kaiwa
by Kageyama Kensei
Kenbunsha, 1943; 118 pp.

Introduction

Textbook analysis is usually done to examine the pedagogical value of a textbook. Among the questions raised in such an analysis will be whether the book makes an original contribution to the subject-matter or provides a new organization to the already available body of knowledge and whether it is successful as teaching resource, etc. However, a book that attempts a contribution as an original treatise of a language, particularly one produced for the purpose of foreign language teaching, can be examined as a cultural artefact and also questioned on ideological grounds, when a relevant chronological framework and context for its production is provided. I intend to address the latter type of issues in this paper.

As often observed by students of the sociology of language, the spread or promotion, as well as the manipulation or endangerment of languages, have occurred from ancient to modern times, together with forces such as religion, trade and politics. The use of language as a tool and a weapon for the establishment and maintenance of empires was noticeable from the early expansionist phase of imperialism. When Colombus set off to "discover" the new world in 1492, a language expert named Nebrija presented Queen Isabella of Spain with an ambitious project proposal to consolidate the queen's language with the first ever grammar of a modern European language, and to teach it as a standard in an education system.

The main focus of this paper is on a rare book written in Japanese as a brief introduction to Sinhala and published in Tokyo in 1943, which shows that the Japanese national's objective was to reach a land as far away as Sri Lanka to achieve his/her perceived goal, and which, in its ideology of culture, gives a glimpse into the strenuous efforts made by the Japanese to promote their language widely in Asia. The Japanese title of the book to be introduced here is *Kanyou Ceylon-go Kaiwa* ("Practical Ceylonese Conversation"). According to the brief "introduction to the author", appearing at the end of the book, the author, Kageyama Kensei, lived in Malaya and Sri Lanka for eighteen years altogether, though it is hard to judge the exact number of years he lived in Sri Lanka. My survey, through personal communication with the author's wife and daughter, reveals that the whole number of years he lived in Sri Lanka might be seven or eight, and during this period he worked as a planter managing a farm close to Anuradhapura in the North-Central Province.

In this piece, I undertake to investigate the distinctive characteristics of Japanese cultural intercourse, as revealed by Kageyama's work, *Practical Ceylonese Conversation*, which will not only reveal the author's brave attempt at walking on a previously untrodden path and his first-hand experience in living in rural Sri Lanka, but also provide some important clues to a hidden aspect of Japan's massive war-time cultural project. I will first discuss the purpose of the book in the context of the dominant politico-cultural discourse in contemporary Japan, and then proceed to analyze some features of the text.

Ideology behind the Linguistic Exercise

I begin with the assumption that a language textbook brings certain types of knowledge and images with it and may present a certain vision of the world, in addition to the valuable knowledge of the target language, and thus implicitly transfers an ideology. Certain types of images and values are generated and reproduced through dialogues, the vocabulary and visual pictures. We can identify that the same mechanisms of ideological transfer operate in varied forms and with varied degrees, across cultures and through different periods of time. A textbook designed to teach American English, for example, may present a dialogue with a background picture across which beams the yellow McDonald trade mark. Drawing upon Edward Said (1978), who used the term "orientalism" to cover a wide range of hegemonic beliefs and practices used by a dominant group to shape another group, we can identify how Kageyama's *Practical Ceylonese Conversation* (*PCC*) unfairly delimits the ideas, attributes and verbal expressions of the Ceylonese even within a restricted local context.

Let me present a caveat, which should precede the discussion. There is, or was, no language called Ceylonese (*Ceylon-go*, in Japanese) in Sri Lanka. The two native languages of Sri Lanka are Sinhala and Tamil, the former being the majority language and the latter the minority language within the national boundaries. Even the European colonists, who called this country Ceylon, never used the same term for its languages. They called the majority language Sinhalese, Singhalese, Singhala or Cingalese. Through the content of the text and an introductory note offered by the author, we realize that what is understood by *Ceylon-go* (Ceylonese) is Sinhala. However, from a linguistic (including linguistic human rights) point of view, it is a gross injustice to the speakers of either language to present one language as Ceylonese. Sinhala speakers would feel that their ethnic identity is not respected by leaving out the real name of their language. Tamil speakers, on the other hand, would tend to feel that they are discriminated against by a purposeful presentation of others' language as the sole language spoken in Ceylon or Sri Lanka. I will correct this misconception by using the term Sinhala, instead of Ceylonese, in this paper, in so far as it refers to the language.

The author has prefaced the book with a short account of how he was motivated to step into this field:

> With the rise of our empire as the leader of East Asia, the world is experiencing a revolution on a scale unprecedented in history. When the twelve hundred million people in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere are liberated and allowed to occupy their own proper places under the honorable authority of the Emperor, realizing the ideal of *Hakko ichi-u* "everyone under one roof" (literally, "eight corners of the world, one roof"), it is of great urgency to send the base of language, which is part of culture, to the southern countries. With this thought in mind, I have compiled this book.
>
> I am more than happy to see this volume in print, which will be of immense help to the imperial military officers and soldiers, who are at the front as well as at pacification work with civilians, and to those people who set out to be engaged in public service in the economic field and thereby who will come into contact with the local people (Kageyama, *Preface*).

It becomes explicit from these words that Kageyama found inspiration for the study of Sinhala from the vision of *Dai Toa Kyoeiken*, or "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", which had sprouted in the Meiji era and gained momentum in contemporary Japan. Kageyama may have genuinely believed that his effort would contribute towards achieving the perceived goals – both military and civilian – enveloped in the Pan-Asian ideal.

It should be noted that the urgent need, as the author mentions, is "to send the base of language, which is part of culture, to the southern countries". It is not clear what "the base of language" meant to the author. It cannot be the Sinhala language, since the author mentions it as the one to be sent to the southern countries. We cannot interpret it as human language in general, in spite of the author's inclination to imply so. It is likely, from the context, that "the base of language" refers to the Japanese language, used in the realm of the Japanese emperor. The author seems to be interested in the linguistic needs of a specific section of the Japanese community which would be engaged in military action, pacification work or public service in southern countries like Sri Lanka. I will provide evidence for my argument from historical facts, with corroborative documents, and also through the text.

It is highly interesting that a strong recommendation of a high-profile official of the Japanese military forms a prelude to Kageyama's book. In his recommendation of the book, Yamada Tetsujiro, a Lieutenant General

of the Imperial Army and Director General of the Central Training Institute for Overseas Brethren, provides some important clues to understanding the overall cultural project. First, Yamada Tetsujiro takes a critical look at the Japanese attitude towards foreign people. "Compared with the large number of Indian people in industrialized European countries, there are a few Indians in Japan. For one thing, England has taken a conciliatory policy, inviting many Asians to study there. On the other hand, Japanese themselves were responsible for the situation with their unkind treatment of non-Japanese people" (*PCC* 1943). He eventually explains his philosophy:

> The term Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere is often heard these days. But I think that it should be Greater East Asian Co-Existence Sphere. "Co-existence" has a stronger sense than co-prosperity because it transcends the material. Japanese people should think of Greater East Asian Co-Existence Sphere in spiritual terms. It might be good to advance the thought of material co-prosperity to the southern people. But ultimately it should lead to spiritual co-existence. … Though humans are divided based on appearance and physical characteristics such as hair, colour of skin, face, and eyes, the Japanese and the southerners must indisputably be unified and be in harmony with each other. Some researchers prefer to call it "the philosophy of blood", and if such a philosophy is followed, there would be no problem whatsoever, even if one million Koreans were to immigrate to Japan. It is to be taken for granted that the southerners and the Japanese remain unified. This is possible if the Japanese nation improves the cultures of the southern nations. Even within Japan, for example, if we tell Kyushu islanders or Okinawans "You are descendants of *Kumaso*"[1] , they will reply with a smile, "oh, yes, so what?". We should try to achieve mutual communication and understanding (in terms of cultural intercourse). While there are many measures to be taken towards achieving this goal, the most urgent task is to interact with other nations and social groups. For this purpose, we need language study (PCC *Prelude*).

From the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese leaders had surveyed the world and learned from Western powers in their drive to catch up with the developed world, even to the extent of learning how to penetrate the outer world. Comparing Japan with Western countries, the writer correctly estimates Japan's status of inferiority to the Western powers in terms of international exchange. He then proposes a union of the Japanese and the southerners. Though the criterion for this classification is not clear, the writer clearly imposes the dichotomy of Self and Other on these components of union. He seems to consider southern cultures as inferior and backward, and perceives that it is the great duty of the Japanese nation to "civilize" them.

Powerful Western countries, and the Japanese leadership following them, undertook geo-political expansion and wider "civilizing" operations by means of stick and carrot offers and via ideas (Phillipson 53). These Western or industrialized powers assigned themselves a missionary role of civilizing Others, based on racial prejudices, according to which Asian cultures were "backward". The author of PCC and his mentor who recommends the book create a rigidly binomial opposition of "we" versus "they". The mentor draws this boundary by identifying some ethnic or provincial groups within the Japanese territory, like the Okinawans and Kyushu islanders, with *Kumaso*, a savage tribe appearing in an ancient legend. What Said states about Orientalism and its instrumentality in colonization is very true of the Japanese leaders of the "civilizing" mission: "Formally the Orientalist sees himself as the union of Orient and Occident, but mainly by reasserting the technological, political, and cultural supremacy of the West" (Said 246). Thus, the mentor's "union theory" becomes a "division theory" in the final analysis.

The mentor apparently understands the significance of language or linguistic penetration for all other kinds of expansion including territorial acquisition. So he recommends language study. History is full of such instances. All colonizing forces in history carried with them the weapon of language, the primary means of transmitting ideas, values and norms to the colonized people. Linguistic research in the nineteenth century assumed that just as languages were distinct from each other, so were human beings. Divided into races, nations, and civilizations, they were arranged according to a hierarchical order. These assumed ontogenetic boundaries helped the powers at the Centre to control the groups in the Periphery. Japan, which was in the Periphery in the nineteenth century, later emerged as a colonizing power, following the European examples and asserting a dominant role in Asia. A question which needs to be answered is "Does this kind of assumption match up with ground truths"?

Ground Situation

Until the mid-twentieth century, Asia was a vast territory with a history of continuous unchallenged Western dominance. Having felt victimized for a long period, Japan wanted to change this history, and turned to Asia and Asian heritage which it had cast away after the Meiji Restoration. At this particular moment in history, Japan believed that its source of morals and power, and even the sense of national fulfilment, rested only in Asia. By building a single, harmonious family under one umbrella by the name of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", Japan naïvely believed that it could gain the power necessary to resist the colonizing West. Japan also thought that it would help other Asian nations to find their own place in a hierarchy of Asian countries. Assuming leadership of this project would lead to Japan becoming popular among other Asian nations, which could inevitably help Japan to gain its own proper place of dominance that had been denied by the West so far. In short, the reaction to Western dominance was soon to follow.

Motivated by its sense of natural hierarchy, and determined to realize the aforesaid ideal, Japan went on expanding and militarizing its territory. When they were confronted with resistance, Japanese leaders did not hesitate in resorting to coercion, and they overcame Chinese resistance in 1937. In 1938, the Japanese government issued its declaration on "The New Order in East Asia", justifying its plans for Asia, which claimed, "What Japan seeks is the establishment of a new order which will ensure the permanent stability of East Asia. In this lies the ultimate purpose of our present military campaign" (Maki 78-79). The Japanese government decided on its expansion southward in 1940. By launching the Pearl Harbour attack in 1941, Japan entered the war against the United States and Britain and, after a few months, secured the Malay Peninsula, and overpowered the British forces in Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia.

At this point, one may ask the question "Did Japanese operations extend as far as Sri Lanka?" In fact, the question was raised in March 1942 by British authorities, based on reasonable grounds, as evident in a news report titled "Will Japanese Operations Extend as far as Ceylon?" (*The Ceylon Observer* 12.3.1942). The news report stated, "The Japanese might extend their activities as far as Ceylon, or concentrate their offensive on Darwin, or, with the bases they have obtained, they might spread their activities further eastwards towards Fiji, which lies to the south east of New Hebrides".

True to such a prediction made by British sources, just a few weeks after the publication of this report, the Japanese air force attacked Colombo on Easter Sunday morning (April 5 1942). The British military boasted of, and perhaps exaggerated, its resistance to the Japanese offensive. Annalist, the well-known British military commentator, wrote, "The best news of the week from the British war zone comes with the announcement of a sharp defeat inflicted on the Japanese air force which attacked Colombo on Easter Sunday morning. Twenty-five enemy aircrafts were shot down for certain. Five more probably destroyed, and 25 damaged in addition. This is an encouraging "bag" (*The Ceylon Observer* 6.4.1942). However, a few days after this bombing raid, again, the Japanese air force attacked the British naval base in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, on April 9, 1942.

While all these operations were carried out across Asia-Pacific nations, a vast political, educational, and ideological network was built in order to mobilize all the strengths of the state, public and private institutions and individuals towards achieving this goal. That is, Japan initiated a cultural, political, and military programme to establish a model socio-political structure within which it developed a sense of resentment towards Western powers and a sense of brotherly love and paternal authority with respect to other Asian nations. With Japan's territorial acquisitions in Asia (China, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Burma), the need for transmitting the norms of this socio-political structure was greatly felt, and the inevitable result was a linguistic penetration across Asia. Kageyama, con-

1 A savage tribe living in the southern part of Japan, according to the legends recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* chronicles.

sciously or unconsciously, offered to contribute to this project by fulfilling the great need of compiling a practical guide to the native language in Sri Lanka.

Text Analysis

Let us now turn to the content of the book. At the beginning of the book the author states, "I wrote the reading of Ceylonese characters in *Kana*, the Japanese syllabary, so that it will be easy for those who are not familiar with Ceylonese characters. I also extended some consideration to local readers who want to know Japanese, and I am thinking to re-edit it someday adding Sinhalese characters, which will be convenient for local learners" (Kageyama 4). These introductory remarks imply that the book is primarily aimed at Japanese readers, as mentioned earlier. This can also be supported by the fact that all entries of words, that cover a large section of the book, are given in Japanese.

The author also elaborates on some of his ideas on language learning in general, and learning Sinhala in particular. The author deserves praise for recording these valuable ideas that represent some basic tenets of language learning, which, till recently, had been forgotten in foreign language classrooms and have remained as a lost paradigm in language education in Japan:

> With his long-time experience in foreign countries, the author believes that foreign language acquisition will be most effective when it is thoroughly based on conversation patterns that are often used in everyday life, and that can be put into immediate use. First try to remember two hundred words and then increase your vocabulary. If you learn how to use these words in daily conversation, you will catch the language without much difficulty. Then you can gradually improve your standard of language proficiency…Since I wrote this book while being on the land where the language is used, I hope it will be practically useful to beginners as a textbook. Sinhalese, like Malay, is a language relatively easy for us, Japanese, to use. One doesn't need to stick to the grammar so much, like in Chinese-type expressions or English, but you can put yourself across easily by combining words (Kageyama 4).

Kageyama's approach to language is very practical. The author seems to believe that grammatical rules are useful for the study of language, but not for the learning of a language. He never attempts to specify rules, sub rules and exceptions etc. Instead he presents lists of vocabulary and some rudiments of conversational expressions applicable to particular situations. These situations include social greetings, describing people and places, talking about time and weather, talking about families and homes, food and drink, motion, modes of transportation, farming, buying and selling things, giving directions and military activities, etc. It is a widely accepted fact that presenting language with a situational focus makes language learning more rewarding, meaningful and efficient.

Another important fact noted by the author is that Sinhala is a language relatively easy for the Japanese. Though the author has not gone into great detail regarding this point, any language student who has learned or tried to learn Sinhala will admit this is so, given that the grammatical structure of Sinhala is similar to Japanese in many respects. Since the author has limited interest in grammar, in comparison to his interest in other aspects of language, he chooses not to discuss this point in detail.

Any serious student of Sinhala understands that the language has two varieties – Literary and Spoken, though the difference between the two has recently decreased. The variety generally used in daily life for real-life communication is the Spoken, albeit with slight dialectal differences. The variety used by speakers of the South-Western coastal region has developed as the standard language and is easily understood by all members of the Sinhala community, irrespective of their provincial attachment, social class, or educational level. The text of this book, however, does not represent this standard language that is commonly heard in present-day society, and that can be easily adjusted to a speech dialect of any region or to a literary variety, for that matter. Rather, it seems that its focus is on a colloquial variety used by, or at least oriented towards, members of a social class of a relatively lower rank and / or from a remote province.

There are two ways to look at this aspect. According to one point of view, the book represents the standard spoken language commonly used in contemporary Sri Lankan society. According to this view, today's standard language is a new adaptation developed through the influence of mass media. This point of view can be supported with some evidence from an authoritative source. One may think that the imperative form, ending in *–pan*, and the second person pronoun *umba*, frequently used in the book, do not represent the standard language. However, contrary to such views, Professor Wilhelm Geiger, in his comprehensive grammatical description of Sinhala, has given these morphemes as commonly used forms, and not as features of a particular variety (Geiger 150).

However, if we analyse the language of novels and short stories written during the time Kageyama wrote his book, we will not be able to find enough evidence to support this standpoint, and therefore, we will have to shift to an alternative viewpoint in order to grasp the book's content as well as its motives more clearly. This second view presumes that the book is clearly biased in favour of a restricted spoken dialect, and can be supported by facts available in the text itself. For instance, a noticeable feature common to all the lists of words in the book is that verbs are given in imperative form in almost all cases. In Sinhala, the indicative form of the verb is considered as the "dictionary form" customarily included in vocabulary lists, a tradition our author was genuinely unaware of, or consciously turned away from. Instead, the author preferred the imperative form, which can be readily used in giving directions, ordering or commanding people of a lower rank. Observe the following verbs selected from the author's word lists. According to the horizontal order used in the book, the items are arranged in line with the Japanese word in Chinese Characters, the Sinhala word in Japanese *kana* syllabary, the Sinhala word in Roman characters, and finally, the Japanese word in Roman characters (the first two items are omitted in this reproduction):

Sinhala Word	Japanese Word	
waren	koi	= come
paleyan	yuke	= go
dipan	yarinasai	= do
liyapan	kakinasai	= write
erapan	akenasai	= open
ganin	torinasai	= take
sitowapan	uetukenasai	= plant
wadakarapan	hatarakinasai	= work

A careful reader of the text will naturally wonder about the reason which made the author put so much emphasis on imperative forms. It should be noted that in language education, learning a particular *form* presupposes knowledge of its meaning and *function*, which helps learners to use it according to the purpose and role of the participants in a particular situation.

Even a casual glance at the text reveals the hierarchical order, which permeates the whole text, and indicates the superior versus subordinate status imposed on the speaker in a given context. In each of the following conversational utterances, the Sinhala sentence, given in the first line, is followed by the Japanese utterance, considered as the proper equivalent by the original author:

Ohuta yanda kiyapan = Tell him to go
Kare ni yuke to iinasai

Awu Mahatmaya = Yes, Sir
Hai dannasama

Ohuta yanda kiyanawada? = Shall we tell him to go?
Kare ni yuke to yunodesuka?

Den ohuta kiyapan = Tell him now
Ima kare ni iinasai

Me minissunta yanda kiyuwada? = Did you tell them to go?
Minnani yuke to ittanoka?

Tavama kiyuwe ne = I haven't told yet
Mada iimasen

Vigahata kiyapan = Tell soon
Hayaku iinasai

Mahatmaya kiyuwe mokadda? = What did you say, Sir?
Dannasam wa nanto iwaremashitaka

Umba kiyuwe mokadda? = What did you say?
Anata no ittanowa nandesuka?

To further prove my argument, I will compare the last two utterances given above. First consider the Sinhala sentences. The only difference we can observe is in the initial position occupied by the sentential subject, denoting the addressee in this case. It is an honorific term in the former utterance and a second person pronoun in the latter. Irrespective of the form of subject, the predicate takes the identical form. Now consider the Japanese sentences. The former sentence has a marked, honorific form of the verb, whereas the second verb is an unmarked, neutral form. Also note that the second person pronoun used in the same sentence has two forms – *anata* in Roman character and *omae* in Japanese writing. The two forms represent different speech levels or language registers; the latter being considered as lower / inferior than the former. This kind of treatment indicates that the author, from the beginning, has been very conscious of different social ranks, and has been

inclined to use different speech levels.

Some observations regarding the arrangement of the text, the choice of model sentences and their interpretation provide evidence for my initial assumption that some sort of cognitive / pragmatic transfer, from Japanese to Sinhala, has occurred in the process of language acquisition and text arrangement. As many linguists such as Mizutani have demonstrated, there is a marked vertical polarization or a higher-lower distinction apparent in various areas of the Japanese language, including its structure, vocabulary, and nominal and verbal categories. It seems that the author had decided, consciously or unconsciously, to use the rules related to this superior-inferior relationship in interacting with members of the host community. For example, observe the following interaction:

Sinhala: Umba yanawada? = Are you going?
Japanese: Anata wa yukimasuka

Sinhala: Ohu, yanawa = Yes, I am going
Japanese: Hai mairimasu

The verb forms in the Sinhala dialogue cannot be characterized in terms of a higher-lower relationship. The verbs in the corresponding Japanese utterances, on the other hand, clearly indicate signs of polarization along a vertical line. The verb form *mairimasu* is used by a "subordinate" member of the community to express "go" or "come" in addressing a "superior" member, but this does not apply vice versa. The author has thus presupposed that the given response was from a member of a lower rank. It signposts how the author's mind and his use of language are conditioned by rules of Japanese vertical society.

The author's commanding tone is evident in the following imperative sentences as well:

Mage toppiya aran waren = Bring my hat
Watakushi no bosi o motte kinasai

Gei dora arapan = Open the door of the house
Ie no to o akenasai

Vigahata arinta kiyapan = Tell him to open it quickly
Hayaku aketo iinasai

Boy mage kema genen = Boy, bring my meal
Boy watakushino shokuji o motte kinasai

Pol kadapan = Pluck coconuts
Yashi o torinasai

Similar sentence structures can be found throughout the text, but none of them have been identified as dialogues between a master and a servant, which indicates that the whole text has been produced with a particular purpose and situation in mind. The work seems to be informed by a sense of control over the target culture, as opposed to the recognition and non-judgmental observation of, and respect for, the host culture. The text can be regarded as a poor, inaccurate depiction of mainstream culture of Sri Lanka, given that the project has been governed not by an intercultural paradigm of reciprocity, community, and mutuality, but by a cluster of desires, dreams, fantasies, and projections. The book is a good example for how projected sociocultural narratives influence intercultural communication.

Concluding Remarks

In general, the text is produced along authoritarian lines. In the text, the speaker has an authoritarian voice, or the author seems to have assumed it to be so. The humble addressee always represents the silent voice. Thus, the text depicts a microcosm of the imaginary world order mapped out by the war-time scenario of contemporary Japan. In a restricted sense, the language of the text centres on a master-servant relationship, which binds the Sri Lankan community to servitude through Japanese linguistic hegemony. In a wider sense, it may encompass the self-promoting vertical relation between Japan (master) and other Asian countries (servants).

This textual analysis has been undertaken in the context of the historical period during which Kageyama's book was produced. Just as the idea of European identity emerged as a superior one relative to all non-European cultures in the nineteenth century, the idea of Japanese supremacy manifested itself as dominating all non-Japanese peoples and cultures in the first half of the twentieth century. The ideology of the Yamato (Japanese) spirit, which has been built on ideological constructs borrowed from Buddhist, Shintoist and Confucian traditions, stressed the virtues of loyalty, benevolence, trust, personal probity and harmony. These qualities, identified as being the hallmark of Japanese civilization as well as the guarantor of ethnic superiority, persuaded Japanese leaders to regard other Asian cultures as backward. It also encouraged them to consider themselves as the purveyors of the benefits of civilization to the rest of the world, transforming the rhetoric of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere into a new global partnership project and dreaming of profound global harmony.

In the years leading up to World War II, Japan was resolved to acquire other Asian countries geographically, politically, and culturally, to incorporate and assimilate them within Japanese supremacy, and to "civilize" them at will. Though the sabre-rattling tactics faded with Japan's defeat, the *hakko ichiu*, the "unity of the whole world under one roof" paradigm continues to visit Japan in post-war years in different forms – religious, cultural, and political. One such phenomenon was depicted in the documentary *Yasukuni* (2008). A vivid historical and societal description of this tendency was also presented by Norma Field in her well-researched book *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor: Japan at Century's End.*

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The Gift

Maheen Senanayake

He literally hung on to her hand… with the tips of his fingers wrapped around one index finger, as he half dragged his feet in arcs across the pavement, dressed in school uniform. He was eager. The woman gave him enough leverage to keep him lightly on the ground on his toes; she was virtually carrying him on her finger. In her other hand, a school bag hung placidly; the ones that are coloured in tones and images that are so festive to the very young. She walked in small steps to keep up with the little bundle who now had a finger in his salivating mouth. His eyes sparkled and his mouth emitted audible yet incomprehensible sounds. He was now pointing to his right while walking.

"Butter..tterfly", he said stuttering.

"Yes. B U T T E R…fly" she added, articulating every syllable so that there would not be any mistakes. The little one squealed as the butterfly flew closer. It veered to the right and then to the left and then suddenly, without warning, flew over his head and around him, while the little one tried desperately to keep it in view. While thus absorbed, he was unaware of the pain the woman had to go through to keep him from falling, hurting his arm or just tripping over himself. The early morning tranquility and the coolness of the fresh morning were slowly dying as the first direct rays of light slowly etched their glow on the ground ahead. You could feel the warmth of the sun now. The woman stopped to catch her breath, and shifted the bag onto her other hand while gently holding the child with the free hand. She wore a sari that was draped casually. Her features were sharply etched. She somehow seemed younger than her demeanour belied. Her soft and caring manner with the child was only second to her aura, that seemed weighed down and forlorn. They walked along the path that led them out of their own house and onto the slowly broadening, tarred surfaces which had begun to dominate the environment.

Today, the clothes were different, and the child was carrying his own bag, wearing it on his back. She no longer had to walk bent over in order to reach down to the outstretched hand. Today, too, the same butterfly waited in anticipation of his arrival and ambushed him. The child squealed while the mother struggled to keep him from falling. He squealed and pointed at the butterfly, which now mockingly held itself in suspension in front of him. "Only hummingbirds could do that!" she thought to herself. The child managed to stammer the word…

"BU..BU..ter..FLY", he said. The woman's lips extended into a gentle smile. She smiled for both of them. Framed by a setting where even time lagged behind, village folk prayed to the unseen and preyed on the seen. The unknown was fascinating to some, and to the same, it was fearsome. As they passed the residential blocks, the town lights and the telephone poles began to surface like erectile signatures of a utopia in the making.

At home on the verandah, Piyadasa struggled to open his eyes and raise his head from the mat. His toes touched something made of glass, and slowly but surely, he began to smell his poison of yesterday. Piyadasa realised that the sun had already risen, and his ears attuned to the silence around him, indicated that the other two members of the household had already left. His rose swiftly from the mat. He walked briskly to the kitchen and poured himself the plain tea from the flask and opened the bottle of sugar. He picked the bottle and shook it ever so lightly, pouring a drizzle of little sugary granules onto his outstretched left palm. With a single move he settled the Horlicks bottle on the table and screwed the cap on, and wiping the traces of rust on his sarong casually picked up his mug of plain tea. One lick of the sugar and a sip of the plain tea brought him back to reality. He regretted the previous day's drink, as he had the day before and the day before that. It has been five years since he began drinking like this. He could hardly afford it with the pittance he earned, and he was realising that his body could not take it anymore either.

As the two continued to walk, others passed them by in groups of twos and threes, some hand in hand – the young, the not so young, and the young adults.

A butterfly was flitting around this day as well, although it was not the same one. It was moving around the child's head, which was now up to her elbow. They walked hand in hand. Her right hand was now beginning to show traces of dry skin, which continued to hold the boy's left hand. He giggled when he saw the butterfly, and odd sounds escaped from his lips. One light post after another passed as they inched their way towards the school. One or two boys and girls shouted out to him. He waved at them and looked lovingly at the woman. She was happy for a moment, but did not know why. Her skin was becoming drier, and there was a hint of white in her hair. Her smile was still the same, and her gait had hardly changed. The child walked in the awkward way only babies could; in arches and sometimes dragging his feet. One shoe-lace had come off. She knelt down to tie his shoelace, while he lovingly bent over her head and grabbed her blouse at the waist.

Piyadasa was already on his way back from the *chena*. He was beginning to feel hungry. The previous night's brew had not kept him from attending to his responsibilities. What he grew was all they had to keep the family going. Today was a special day. It was his son's birthday. He was rushing home, and on his way, he was planning to buy his son's favourite dish – prawns. In a way, he was a lucky man. His son asked for so little, even less than what his wife asked him for.

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The classroom was noisy, and forty desks and chairs were arranged in three columns, while there was one lone desk at the front for the teacher. The boys and girls were busy thrashing each other with paper balls; throwing, ducking and shouting at their victorious marksmanship. One child sat at his desk, oblivious to his surroundings, gazing on the light outside.

The big kid spelt bully from his waist up.

"Get up!" he said.

"The boy did nothing". He was visibly scared.

And then the other thin one said, " Leave him alone!"

"No!" was the immediate response. He pulled him by his shirt and slapped him on the head. The child covered his head, anticipating the next few blows that would surely fall on his head. He waited while the bully threatened him. Another slap SLATTT!

The thin boy intervened, "That's enough!". The bully persisted. The boy kicked him hard on the shin, and the bully retreated threatening to tell his parents. He stood there and gently placed his hands on the other child's shoulders. "Don't be afraid". He slowly moved his palms aside looking through the cat's eye that he had created. He had closed his eyes shut so hard that he had to squint while his eyes re-adjusted to the light. Suddenly there was commotion. A woman neatly clad in a sari arrived with several bags, placed them on the desk at the front, and all rose to attention. The thin boy slowly returned to his seat. The solitary boy remained seated throughout the proceedings.

"Good morning children".

"Good morning teacher!", all said in unison.

The butterfly returned today. It was another one; red with a dash of yellow. How colourful they were! He played with the flitting insect as he strode alongside the woman, hand in hand. Children around him were in neat clothing today. The huge pandol was set up to welcome a minister who was paying a visit to the school. It was huge, and designed using the traditional style with *Gok* leaves. Today, many children would receive recognition for their achievements.

Piyadasa chose the new clothes with attention. True, he spent a lot on his brew, but he would be damned if he was not going to provide for his son and family. His wife was so adorable. Never complaining, she dutifully carried out her responsibilities. He chose the white material which was called yellow line. His son would be wearing longs soon. Only boys in the secondary school were permitted to wear long white pants.

It seemed that the butterfly had changed its routine. It normally met the duo on the footpath, long before the tarred roads began, and accompanied them up to the point where the tar appeared to take over the whole scenery. Unexpectedly, it appeared to have changed this routine. Suddenly, beads of sweat appeared on both their faces. As the sky shut away the

mighty sun, a little wind edged itself through the static before the storm. The grey clouds overhead stood at attention. The herd of water buffaloes seemed disturbed by this, but moved away as the duo approached closer. The woman was worried that the freshly sewn white pants would be dirtied by a casual flick of a tail. The butterfly whispered to the wind and the wind to the shrubs and the shrubs to the flies and the flies muttered their message to the mighty buffalo, clearing the pathway and providing safe passage. The leader of the herd raised his head. A mighty crown of two horns adorned its head. The mooing was definitive and the water buffaloes moved away without any command from the shepherd. The mighty one, who bowed to no one, gently lowered his head as the woman moved past the herd. The boy clad in white played with the butterfly, and his gaze slowly fell upon the mighty crown of the buffalo. He pointed and uttered, "BU .. BU..FALO". The mother smiled at the progress. Once the duo had passed, the herd reunited and spread across the whole breadth of the footpath.

The rain drenched Piyadasa. He ran from the makeshift shop, which was hidden in the undergrowth, from where he bought his daily dose of the illicit brew. It was his anniversary and he was keen to collect the beef that he had ordered at the local butcher. He had a dash of *Kansa* stuck in his sarong. This ingredient would give a special aroma to the dish. He wanted to give her so much more, but fate was such that he could not provide his family with too many comforts. The tears in his eyes ran down his face mingling with the drops of rain. The banana leaf he held over his head could not protect him from the gods. He was a well-known poker player in the village, but despite all the luck he had at the game, his life had dealt him a hand that he did not know how to play. He knew not how to hold them nor when to deal them. He rushed home, running through the muddy paddy fields and thrashing across the undergrowth.

Kamala walked with the little one. She longed to see the butterfly today, and she wanted to see it so much. Suddenly, she could not help it, and a tear began to crawl down her cheek. The child stopped and looked up at her.

"No No!" he said, and slowly wiped her tears.

"Amma Sad!" he said, half questioningly.

"Amma not sad! Amma happy", she said, and reflexively moved sideways to kiss him gently.

Three boys who had been leaning against a lamp post stopped their banter to look at Sudu. That was his name. They looked at Sudu with expressionless faces and then at Kamala. She knew they were salivating. Even at this age, she could elicit these feelings with her mere presence.

Children were running to school as they reached the tarred road, and they were in sight of the school. Given the absence of a wall, the school grounds were open, and anyone was able to observe what went on there. The steps on the winner's podium were adorned with the numbers 1, 2 and 3. She said a silent prayer, and imagined her Sudu on the middle step. The number one, the best in the world. She raised her hand to wipe off another tear.

Piyadasa could still hear the crickets screeching in the yard. Kamala was already in the kitchen. He knew this from the sounds that came from the kitchen. Sudu slept undisturbed on the adjacent mat. How he loved him. Kamala and Piyadasa had waited a long time for a child, and now they were happy. He rose from his lying position on the reed mat without disturbing Sudu.

He walked quietly to the kitchen. He noticed the banana leaf ready to receive the luscious *Kiri bath*, the milk rice that was considered as the foremost symbol among the symbols of auspiciousness. Yesterday, he had bought a few bananas from the shop, and Kamala had made some *Kokis* and *Kavum*. His one remaining task was to pick a few white flowers.

Piyadasa blessed his son by touching Sudu's head with his right palm as he knelt in benevolence and reverence. Kamala helped Sudu rise and kissed him gently, whispering a silent prayer. Piyadasa quickly put on his shirt and went outside.

Kamala accompanied Sudu out of the house, advising him to place his right foot first when stepping out of the house. Piyadasa approached them with a smile and a glass of water with white flowers floating on it. He put the glass to Sudu's lips. Kamala gently gestured to Sudu that he should take a sip from it. As the duo passed him, Piyadasa held the glass firmly, myriad thoughts passing through his mind.

He was a happy man… yet!

Hundreds of boys and girls thronged the school to read the results displayed on four foolscap sized sheets. The Ordinary Level examination results were their passports...

On a thin coir rope, one solitary white flag fluttered in the breeze, and bid good day to the pedestrians.

At home, in the lone bedroom, Kamala draped her white sari, while Piyadasa donned his white sarong and a worn but clean white shirt. Suddenly Kamala collapsed onto the bed. Piyadasa rushed to sit beside her, and put his hands around her. Kamala did not sob. Nor did Piyadasa. They sat there, silently listening to the myriad sounds outside. Village life was a contradiction in itself. They hated you but they loved you too. The village was taking care of everything; the tents, the religious rites, the decorations, the food, the drinks…

As they walked out into the little neat verandah of their tiny but picture-perfect house, Sudu arrived in the Peugeot 505 Limousine. The couple watched as it made its way towards the house. Villagers hurried to the limousine as two passengers stepped out of the car, bringing with them various equipment that they took past the couple into the house.

They waited in anticipation near the rear of the limousine. The two men who had rushed in took a good 15 minutes before they yelled "ready!". The villagers came in and they selected the tallest and the fittest amongst them. There was silence. Then, Kamala suddenly lost her composure.

"Wait!", she shouted. She ran into the house. There was silence all around as they waited to see what would happen. Kamala returned with a glass of water. Upon seeing this, Piyadasa rushed to the garden and picked a few white flowers and went back to his wife.

He looked at her as a teardrop rolled down her face. "It's the last time that he will be coming home!", she half wept, squeezing out a gentle smile. Piyadasa was not listening to her voice. He was looking at this woman he had married. Sudu's mother, who had silently loved his son for such a long time. Even now, she wanted it to be perfect in her own way. He picked up each flower individually and placed them gently on the water in the raised glass. They floated well. He did not bother to wipe off the tears. He instinctively pulled his shirt down, adjusting his sarong at the same time. He stretched himself to his full six feet and stood next to a smiling Kamala who walked out of the house, right foot first, to meet Sudu. The villagers resumed their responsibilities and silently carried Sudu's capsule to the sitting area of the house. A distant cry was heard from among the villagers who could not bear it any more. The couple followed the villagers in silently and watched as the casket was opened. Their Sudu was static and smiling. His eyes were shut and his hands were folded. They would remember him like this forever. Their Sudu would be immortalized at this age.

That morning, they had to decide whether they were ready to accept a request from the village doctor, who had suggested that the boy should be handed over to the Medical Faculty in Colombo.

At school, the children were joyfully getting into several buses, thankful for the time off studies. The older ones looked slightly more sombre, but there was little which could take away the picnic atmosphere from them.

As the buses arrived, the priest spoke his last words.

"Dust to dust and to earth we return", he said. Piyadasa was a Buddhist and his thoughts wandered off. Why did they put that tree up there? This all knowing God that his wife prayed to obviously had a plan, and the priest had repeatedly told him that unless he partook in the Divine meal of body and blood, he would not see. Yet, such concepts were alien to him. He put down his lack of comprehension to inadequate education, and thought that someone as wonderful as his wife could not be wrong.

The village priest ensured that the Buddhist rites were conducted properly. Kamala was a being of love, and understood the merits of love and compassion. She had lived a wonderful life. She had been dutiful, to both child and husband. But now she wanted at least a little understanding…

"God…" she thought, "why did you not show mercy to my Sudu? I am

a mother, and I asked for nothing for myself. I only asked for him. I prayed to you and lived as you bid me to. What wrong have I committed?" Her husband, the Buddhist, had spoken of karma. Perhaps it was karma, and perhaps karma was the plan, or vice versa. Ultimately, she did not understand. They wanted to do everything possible in order to ensure that Sudu would have a good life where ever he was now.

She vaguely heard the priest's intonations during the last rites. Everything afterwards became a blur.

A month later, a taxi arrived at the house. It was a Saturday, and both Piyadasa and Kamala were at home. They had grown accustomed to being together, whenever and wherever. They were two children and two lovers again. And this visit was a novelty.

Kamala adjusted her sari while Piyadasa rushed in to get his shirt. An old man and a young man clad in army uniform approached them.

"I am Vimal, but you don't know me", he said. "He has a pleasant face", thought Kamala. She noticed the scars on his face, but most importantly, she recognised those eyes…

"Come in", she said, while Piyadasa watched nonplussed, oblivious to her recognition. He was interrupted by the postman, who rode with great effort past the jack, the Rambutan and the Veralu trees.

"A letter for you from Colombo", he said, letting his bike fall on its side and running towards him. Piyadasa took the letter from him and looked at it.

He read the letter aloud so that Kamala too could learn of its contents.

In Ampara, Kumaran Selvy rose from her seated position with the use of her new limb. They did not match at all, but, after what she had gone through, to be able to walk again was a miracle.

In Kurunegala, P K Podi Banda devoured the soup that his kids had made. He would live a few more years, thanks to the new kidney he had received, which had been donated by some unknown young man.

In Ambalangoda, a fat child who still couldn't get over the fact that the boy he harassed had passed away the previous day, prayed hard for forgiveness and a heart…

On Kynsey Road, Pala started to walk from the Medical Institute to the bus stand, and wondered whether he had tagged the last remains of the boy from Ambalangoda, as the ambulance carrying his heart began its journey to the Karapitiya Hospital to answer a prayer…

The LTTE's Exploitation of Culture and Femininity

Chantal Croteau

The nationalist movement of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had the potential to create a lasting change for women in Sri Lankan Tamil society. The LTTE actively recruited female members and maintained that gender equality was a foundational idea for the movement (Gonsalves). The chance of liberation which the movement offered from traditional roles and conceptualizations of gender enticed innumerable Tamil women to take up arms. According to Human Rights Watch, by the end of the conflict in 2009, one third of the LTTE forces comprised of females. In a society where traditions, including gender norms, are highly valued, the significant percentage of female cadres is especially striking. Joining the organisation was seen by Tiger women as the first step in challenging the oppression they experienced on a day to day basis, and, as Gonsalves has explained, many women in the LTTE were quick to link their own "liberation" and "empowerment" with the Tamil nationalist struggle.

It is important not to minimise or overlook the small but real benefits that Tiger women experienced by fighting as equals alongside men. However, it is equally important to recognise that the sense of agency the women gained upon joining the movement was largely a mirage. The LTTE, in addition to coercing Tamils to join the fight through threat or kidnapping, exploited the difficult and chaotic life situations of many Tamils in order to gain support. According to Trawick, a priest at the Batticaloa Tiger camp identified "the LTTE construction of sacrificial death [as] a deliberate mystification" (168). The Tamil Tigers understood the wide range of issues that Tamils during the civil war faced, and used that knowledge to their advantage. For Tamils who felt trapped within a complex of poverty and abuse, the LTTE presented death as a means of liberation. It was a glorification of a painful process designed to give an option to those who felt they had none. This conscious mystification of death, and exploitation of the highly stressed climate, perpetuated cultural stigmas and norms that were particularly harmful and oppressive to women. Tiger women renounced what made them uniquely female, their generative powers of life, to support a cause that either took their lives or abandoned them in a traditional post-war society (Rajasingham-Senanayake). They gave away their lives and everything important to their lives for an organisation that failed them in the end.

Cultural Context of Tamil Women

It is necessary to understand the various factors which affected the situation of Tamil women in Sri Lanka during the civil war, before specifically discussing the complicated experience of the LTTE female cadres. On a fundamental level, both religion and nationalism impacted the role of women in society. Though religion was not explicitly part of the Tamil nationalist movement, as it was postulated to detract from the Tamil cause and unity, it certainly impacted the experience of many Tamil men and women (Lawrence). The majority of Tamils on the island practice Hinduism, a complex religion that has significantly shaped conceptualizations of Tamil women and their "appropriate" position in Sri Lanka. The female role and place in Hinduism go beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it is important to understand, on a basic level, that several aspects of religion play a vital role in constructing the feminine identity in Tamil society.

The Hindu idea of "Shakti" is particularly critical to understanding the traditional role of Tamil women. Shakti stems from the idea that the world is made up of opposing forces that are in equilibrium (Goonasekera). In Hinduism, Shiva represents the male force and Shakti represents female power, which is regarded as the "generative force of the universe" (Rajasingham-Senanayake 112). Shakti embodied with Shiva results in the goddess Parvati, the good mother, and Shakti without Shiva is Kali, the fierce and uncontrollable goddess (Coomaraswamy, "Siva"). Though worship of Kali increased considerably during the war, traditionally, she was feared for her destructive powers (Lawrence). Conceptualizations of Kali seem to suggest, in practical terms, that women must be balanced by a male force, without which they will become a powerful and dangerous threat to their community.

It is also believed that women have inherent "powers that can lead to life and prosperity or to destruction and even death" (Susan Wadley qtd. in Coomaraswamy, "Siva" 6). Virgins and married women are believed to hold life-giving powers, whereas sexually promiscuous women or raped women are considered to wield powers of destruction. This notion has been used to justify the confinement of women to the home. A woman's purity must be protected by her father, and later, by her husband; else she may become unchaste and a dangerous threat to society (Coomaraswamy and Perera-Rajasingham).

The beliefs of Hinduism present an interesting duality of female identity. Women are seen as both subordinate to men and as immensely powerful. Tamil women are powerful in two ways: as givers of life and as destroyers of life. As the idea of Shakti demonstrates, the "conventional Hindu construct of the 'good woman' [is] one who is married and auspicious" (Rajasingham-Senanayake 107). In other words, a good woman is one who emulates Parvati and chooses to give life by becoming a mother. Inherent in this is also the notion of "sexual purity as a necessary female trait" (Coomaraswamy and Perera-Rajasingham 115). A good woman is sexually pure and a bad woman is sexually experienced outside marriage.

The focus on sexual purity, and, as a result "paternal protection", or strict supervision of females by men, intensified as the Tamil nationalist cause strengthened (Coomaraswamy, "Women" 62). Within the discourse of nationalism, women are seen as the protectors of the endangered culture. They become a culture's "signs of progress, purity, and status", and therefore, they must be protected at all times (Coomaraswamy and Perera-Rajasingham 111). Due to the increased focus on female purity, the stigma attached to rape amplified during the nationalist movement.

Aside from the fact that rape is a direct violation and abuse of the female, emotionally and physically, it fuels the notion of women as victims and feeds into the idea that women must be protected since they ostensibly cannot protect themselves. However, the stigma attached to rape is perhaps the most detrimental aspect of the crime. The LTTE's definition of a "good woman as chaste and [a] bad woman as the raped woman" illustrates the type of beliefs that raped women struggled to contend with on a daily basis (Coomaraswamy and Perera-Rajasingham 128). Rape was used as a way to intensify collective contempt for the enemy, and came to be understood as an act of dominance of one group over another. If a Tamil woman was raped by a member of the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) or the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), she was seen as both polluted by the ethnic other and as a polluter of the pure nation. Because the nation's purity was at stake, the need to protect women greatly deepened. It is in this way that during the Tamil LTTE movement, women's bodies became a battleground for the nationalist fight (Maunaguru).

The implications of nationalist ideology for women extend beyond those connected to purity. Nationalism, by its very nature, emphasises the importance of a motherland. The term motherland, made up of "mother" and "land", highlights how "Tamil nationalism [is] laden with the metaphor of woman as land and land as woman" (Sumathy 128). The problems in this construct are immense. Women are reduced to their bodies, which become "the site where the male self confronts the 'other'" (Coomaraswamy and Perera-Rajasingham 134). Furthermore, their bodies become the site of the perpetuation of the nation. In a way, women become a cultural land that needs to be both protected and fertilized in order to secure the future of the nation.

Despite the limiting nature of nationalism for women and the conceptualisations of women in terms of only their bodies which it encourages, nationalism arguably induced some changes for Tamil women that could be described as positive. Adele Balasingham claimed that nationalism created a space for women to come to their own in society (Sumathy). Both the exodus of men, sacrificing themselves to the nationalist cause, and the death of many male heads of households created a vacancy in the home

that led to women adopting new roles in the family and society. These new roles and women's entrance into the public sphere gave women a greater sense of self-confidence (Rajasingham-Senanayake). Perhaps, most importantly, "nationalism created a space for a militant women's consciousness to emerge" (Sumathy 127). With this space, Tamil nationalism of the LTTE introduced to Sri Lanka the fierce, determined female fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Tiger Women

Women's involvement in the LTTE began in the early 1980s, though their role at that time was limited to the medical and fundraising spheres of the organisation (Maunaguru). The LTTE allowed women to join its fighting forces for the first time in 1987, an inclusion that many speculate to be a "result of necessity, rather than a real commitment to gender equality" (Gonsalves). Nonetheless, the place of women in the LTTE was not truly solidified until four years later. The Battle at Elephant Pass on July 10, 1991 was the first time that women fighters had an active role in combat, where over 120 Tiger women were killed (Balasingham). In 2009, the LTTE was reported as having the highest percentage of female fighters in any nationalist movement. In fact, 40% of LTTE suicide bombing attacks were carried out by Tiger women (Goodwin). However, it is important to note that despite the active militant role women played in the LTTE's prime years, females were not included in the organisation's decision making processes.

The position of female fighters within the LTTE and the larger Tamil society is complicated and to a great extent contradictory. None can deny that some women in the LTTE gained a sense of agency through their involvement with the organisation. Empowerment was achieved through the opportunities that the LTTE offered. For instance, female cadres were taught to handle weapons and fight alongside men. They were no longer kept at home under constant paternal supervision, though arguably the training camps served as another source of supervision. The gender neutrality of army roles and the equal glory given to men and women for martyrdom furthered this sense of liberation from gendered oppression. A fifteen year old female soldier explained that "on the battlefield we are their equals, and they are ours" (Trawick 157). Though she was referring to the Sri Lankan Army in her quote, the notion that she felt equal to the male soldiers of the opposing forces demonstrates the extent to which female fighters felt empowered by their involvement in the LTTE.

Through the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's claims of "women's equality with men as being a foundational idea for the movement," the LTTE fostered, in its female fighters, a sense of trust in the organisation (Gonsalves). Tiger women were made to believe that "because the quest for their equality and liberation [came] from the leader of the movement, this liberation [would] automatically flow..." (Gonsalves). Such a sentiment is incredibly problematic as it suggests that the quest for gender equality is valid only if it has a male frontrunner. In other words, the women felt that they needed a male to legitimise their opinions and voices. Additionally, the structure of post-war Tamil society illustrates that the pursuit of gender equality took a backseat to the pursuit of national independence with the LTTE. Few lasting gains for women were achieved. Currently, many former female cadres face stigmatisation in their society, as well as a bleak future void of marriage, job, and educational opportunities. In the end, the organisation's promises of liberation turned out to be empty.

Even though Tiger women made no significant changes in the conceptualisations of gender roles in Tamil society by the conclusion of the war, during the war, the popularised and idealised image of the self-confident, self-assured, and liberated LTTE woman came to represent the liberation of all Tamil women (Balasingham). It is quite evident that there are problems in claiming that a woman who wears a cyanide necklace, who is prepared to die in combat or who will kill herself for a nationalist cause, can represent the liberation of all women. Firstly, much of what will be discussed in this paper suggests that Tiger female cadres could not escape patriarchal oppression within the LTTE. Secondly, not all Tamil women could or would harm another human being intentionally. The choice of the female fighters to celebrate death over life separated them from many other Tamil women who viewed giving life as a gift and as something to be celebrated (Coomaraswamy, "Siva"). The importance of that separation cannot be understated.

The image of LTTE women, as noted above, became popularised through the media during the war. In many ways, the changing image of the female fighters from submissive into self-confident and fierce combatants was freeing. The Tiger women were able to shed their traditional dress and ornamentation, trading the sari for camouflage. In this way, they were able to step out of the role of a "good" Tamil woman and define themselves in new ways. The famous image of LTTE female cadres as "women in combat boots, with no make-up, jewellery or ostentation, often with their hair cut short similar to the style of men, wearing a cyanide capsule around their necks" signifies their separation from what had originally been defined as female, and the exchange of femininity, as how it was understood in Tamil society, for androgyny (Coomaraswamy, "Women" 63). However, the movement was similar to androgyny in a male sense. The LTTE female fighters gave up what made them female by cutting off their long hair, which is culturally symbolic of femininity and female sexuality (Selvy).

In addition to the physical markers of femininity, the Tiger women renounced nurturance of life, compassion, and tolerance, exchanging these traits for violence, nurturance of the life of a nation through the death of others, and intolerance towards those who are ethnically different (Coomaraswamy, "Women"). Men, on the other hand, made no such sacrifices. The male cadres were not required to give up what made them uniquely male in order to join the nationalist fight. As Radhika Coomaraswamy wrote, "the complete eradication of femininity by the LTTE [was] not so much a victory for women but a triumph for the masculine worldview of authority, hierarchy, and aggression" (Coomaraswamy, "Tiger" 10). In other words, the push for androgyny in the LTTE, limited women, forcing them to give up what made them female and feminine and forced them to better fit into the patriarchal organisation.

Perhaps the biggest issue for women in the LTTE was the portrayal of female fighters as armed virgins (Rajasingham-Senanayake). This popularised image came out of the strict prohibition of "unlawful sex", which refers to anything from casual sex, long term relationships, and masturbation, in LTTE camps (Goodwin 8). In Sri Lanka, the "idea of an armed virgin embracing not her 'femininity' as a woman, but her power as a fighter [was] difficult... to accept" (Gonsalves). During the war, Tiger women were not seen as feminine, a caricature reinforced by the media image of armed virgins. This is incredibly problematic as it suggests that women can be seen as either feminine or fighters, but never both. Such a notion supports traditional cultural ideas of gender and the "incongruity of women with war", and demonstrates that LTTE female fighters maintained these norms by choosing androgyny over femininity (Gonsalves).

Furthermore, the portrayal of female fighters as armed virgins perpetuated the ideal of female chastity, which has been theorised to be a source of empowerment for women, although, in actuality, it has limited female agency and intensified shame in instances of rape. The word "karpu" refers to chastity and restraint, particularly in relations with the opposite sex (Gonsalves). Scholar Peter Schalk hypothesised that women find power and strength in "karpu", a theory that is based on the Hindu belief that chaste women have "powers that can lead to life" (Susan Wadley qtd. in Coomaraswamy, "Siva" 6). However, this rationality is deeply problematic as it supports the idea that those who are not chaste have lost that inherent strength and power, a notion which feeds into the heavy cultural stigma of rape.

The inaccurate depiction of LTTE women as armed virgins is further problematic as it allowed the group to ignore a serious statistic. According to interviewer Jan Goodwin, many LTTE female cadres, specifically those in the Black Tiger suicide bomb squad, had been raped or sexually abused (Goodwin). The fact that the LTTE suicide bomber Dhanu, who killed the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, had been raped by IPKF members provides support for Goodwin's haunting observation (Sumathy). By portraying Tiger women as armed virgins, the LTTE was able to essentially side step confronting the issue of rape publically, which allowed the organisation to continue exploiting the cultural stigma attached to rape in order to recruit more female members.

The fact that innumerable members of the Black Tiger division of the LTTE were rape victims / survivors has serious implications for Tamil women as it supports the idea that a raped woman "is not only violated

but polluted", and indicates that a raped woman "cannot regain her purity by any means except by negating her polluted body" (Maunaguru qtd. in Sumathy 134). In this case, the act of killing oneself in a suicide bomb attack becomes a sort of ritualistic purification for the woman and the entire Tamil nation. The Tamil term "agnipravesam" means immolation or sacrifice by fire (Maunaguru). The female suicide bombers sacrificed themselves for the nationalist cause and, by doing so, also removed the pollution their impure bodies brought upon the nation. The LTTE was highly aware of the cultural stigma attached to rape, and used that stigma to the cause's advantage, both in terms of female recruitment and national purification. For the LTTE, this exploitation was seen as a win-win situation. But for women, it can hardly be described as positive. That the female suicide bombers felt they had no other choice but to purify themselves through suicide suggests that raped women have no real options within this particular cultural / political context.

The lack of, or the perceived lack of options was directly exploited by the LTTE in its recruitment of both male and female members. The leaders of the LTTE understood well the situations from which many of its future members would emerge. They catered to individuals who struggled with the deaths of relatives, poverty, sparse chances for education, and abuse, presenting sacrificial death as an option that would lead to glory and honour for the individual and his or her family (Trawick). The LTTE's clever exploitation of the unfortunate circumstances of northern Tamils certainly earned the organisation many new members, as the idea of a sacrificial and glorified death was particularly enticing for those who felt they had no options. As anthropologist Margaret Trawick has noted, many female child soldiers came from a background of poverty, family problems and economic difficulties. More than one soldier had experienced the loss of an important relative, due to violence or suicide. Several others had experienced physical or sexual abuse in the home (Trawick). They needed a way to escape, which is what the LTTE conveniently offered. New recruits joining the Tamil Tigers were promised a chance at liberation not from gender oppression, but from the pain they had to face on a daily basis.

It is important to note, however, that not every member of the LTTE had a difficult family / economic background. Though the aforementioned trend was significant, one must also take into consideration the other ways used by the LTTE to put pressure on potential members who were reluctant to join the Movement. An article published by the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) illustrates a primary way in which the LTTE recruited new members. In the article, a former Tiger woman explains that "each family living under LTTE control was required to provide a child to the separatist forces..." ("Former Female Fighters"). She signed up to spare her younger sister, a story that is shared by numerous other former members, and which illustrates the members' actual lack of agency. A second IRIN interview further demonstrates how the potential for female liberation that the LTTE offered was rendered negligible by the LTTE's employment of coercive tactics. This former Tiger woman left the organisation to have a family, but was pressured to rejoin in 2006. The following quote illustrates the lack of agency and control she felt while in the movement; "At the same time, it was very difficult because I was worried about my family. I always thought if I die who will look after my family? Memories of my family were always on my mind when I was on the battlefield. On the other hand, I did not have a choice to decide this on my own and I continued to fight." ("Ganeshwary Santhariam")

Surely, this former Tiger woman is not alone in her experience. Though the LTTE had the potential to bring about lasting and true liberation for Tamil women, the contradictions inherent in women's involvement in the LTTE campaign suggest that the organisation fell short of such a task. Neloufer de Mel has stated that "Tiger women [were] not given freedom to determine their own destiny; they [helped to] act out the destiny of someone else" (Coomaraswamy, "Women" 63). This sentiment closely echoes LTTE military spokesman Irasiah Ilanthirayan's own words that female fighters did not "take their own life, but [gave] it to the cause... they [gave] their lives for the Tamil nation" (Goodwin 12). It seems obvious, but giving their lives to the nation means that these women literally gave away their lives. They gave up everything to be part of an organisation that exploited their situation and failed them in the end.

Today, former Tiger women face a heightened form of discrimination. Due to the stigma attached to having being an LTTE female cadre, former fighters have few marriage, job, and educational opportunities. As 18 year old former fighter Jeya Kamalrajan says, "people do not want to hire me because they see me as a bad woman who joined the Tigers" ("Fewer I Do's"). It is important to note that though the stigma affects both male and female former Tigers, it is the women who are "criticised most harshly" ("Fewer I Do's"). It seems that the war has not changed the cultural idea that "the woman is always looked at as the bad one" (Mihler). It is difficult to say with complete certainty, however, a mere two years after the end of the war, that the LTTE had no lasting impact on the understandings of gender norms in Sri Lankan Tamil society. However, because of the stigma attached to LTTE women, the prospect of enjoying gender neutral roles outside of the nationalist movement, at this time, seems grim.

In the end, the female cadres sacrificed everything for the hope of liberation that was possible only within the context of the nationalist movement. They gave up actively pursuing a discussion of gender issues, because they were made to believe that gender equality would naturally follow the independence of the nation (Gonsalves). Then, when the movement crumbled, any gains towards gender equality that were achieved during the campaign were lost, as LTTE former fighters were expected to fit into civilian Tamil society again. For over twenty years, Tiger women gave up their femininity, both physically and symbolically, to an organisation that used them to further the patriarchal nationalist cause. They perpetuated, perhaps unknowingly, the stigma of rape and the ideal of female chastity, both of which were consciously exploited by the nationalist movement. And, most importantly, the Tiger women gave up their generative Shakti powers when they participated in the celebration of death over life. In the movement, the uniquely female ability to give life, which was what could have given the LTTE women the power to make a lasting change in Tamil society, was forsaken as death became the focus and single means of liberation. The Tiger women gave up everything for a movement that, in the end, betrayed them and left them with the difficult task of figuring out how to survive in a society they are no longer truly a part of.

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Text Books, National Identity and Ethnic Perceptions[1]

Reggie Siriwardena

History as Servitude or Freedom

In the weeks after the eruption of July 1983, the English language press in Sri Lanka carried a number of readers' letters and articles placing the responsibility for the ethnic conflict on the educational system. Two recurrent points of view emerged from them:

a. The segregation of schoolchildren into separate Sinhala and Tamil language streams has widened the gulf between the two ethnic groups.

b. The adoption of the *Swabasha* (national languages) as the media of instruction in schools has imposed a communication barrier between children of different ethnic groups and deprived English of its former role as a unifying factor.

It is apparent that many of these writers (probably in their fifties or older) look back nostalgically to their own childhood when they claim a sense of common nationhood transcending ethnic differences, given by education through the English medium. A similar viewpoint was expressed three months after the July violence by Justice D. Wimalaratne, speaking as the Chief Guest at the prize giving at S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. Looking back on his schooldays, Wimalaratne commented, "Whether one was a Molamure or an Abeysekera, a Saravanamuttu or an Abdulla, a Mugabe or an Arndt, all were equal and no one was considered superior to the other except, of course, when a boy showed his superior talents in the classroom or in the playing field". It so happened that I too went to the same school as Justice Wimalaratne, who was my contemporary, and can confirm that the state of affairs he admiringly refers to did obtain there. But what was the pre-condition for this obliviousness to ethnic differences? The fact was that children attending such schools as S. Thomas' during the colonial era were not only taught in English but came from homes that were English-speaking, and, therefore, belonged to a specific social strata. The letter-writers and authors of newspaper articles (referred to above) were also probably educated in English in the colonial period or its immediate aftermath. Both generationally and class-wise, therefore, they belonged to a particular group with a distinct social and cultural outlook. What is striking, however, is the unawareness these writers seem to share of the fact that their experience was not characteristic of the entire nation. In some of these passages, indeed, there is an underlying assumption that at one time everybody was educated in the English medium and that the ethnic conflict began after and as a result of the "shift" to the national media. The facts are very different.

The Turning Point

The turning-point in the history of our educational system is constituted by the *Report of the Special Committee on Education* in 1943 which recommended the adoption both of free education and the *Swabasha* media of instruction for primary classes. At this time, according to the figures given in the report itself, the distribution of pupils between different types of schools was as follows:

English	92,049
Bilingual	15,917
Vernacular	650,910

It should be evident from these figures that linguistic segregation of children did exist in the colonial period on a different basis from that which obtains today. There was a threefold division between those who were taught in English, in Sinhala and in Tamil. However, the main dividing line was between those who belonged to the first group and those who fell into the latter two, since this division corresponded to a class differentiation, reflecting the capacity to pay for education. What is also evident from the figures is that the majority of children were, even at that time, educated in Sinhala and Tamil (that is, if they were educated at all). This last reservation is necessary because there were many children who had no access to education before the wide dissemination of schooling in the post-independence period. However, of the children who actually went to school, those who were educated in the English medium constituted a little over 12%; a small, and unrepresentative minority, although their parents and families constituted then the socially and politically influential elite.

It should be apparent that when writers in the English language idealised the happy ethnic harmony of their schooldays, they were unwarrantedly assuming that what was true for them was true for the entire nation. Moreover, they failed to recognise that the "common identity" which they remember sharing was less a common national identity than a class identity, which transcended their ethnic identity as Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims or Burghers. Fluency in the English language, and their Western-style dress, were distinguishing marks of that class identity, which was in many ways defined through differentiation from the rest of the nation, the majority of whom spoke Sinhala or Tamil, went barefoot and wore sarong, verti or cloth and jacket.

Link Language/s

This historical context must be borne in mind when considering the argument that the promotion of English as a "link language" between communities would be a way of easing ethnic tensions. The fundamental assumption behind this proposal comes, as it seems to me, from people who remember the role of English in the past as a link between members of different ethnic communities, and who, however, belonged to the same social class. Such people imagine that the function that English performed in a different era for a social minority can be resuscitated in the present with regard to the whole nation. To state the proposal in that way is to bring out the fallaciousness of the thinking on which it is based. This is all the more evident when one notes that the possession of a common medium of communication in the English Language has not prevented racism from spreading among the English-speaking strata in recent years, and that those among them who are involved in the rat-race of competition for jobs or for places in higher education for their children, are often as racist as anybody else.

Those who advocate the development of English as a "link language" are also usually oblivious of the fact that it simply is not practicable, with our present resources, to give every school child a comprehensive knowledge of English. In fact, we yet do not have adequate teaching skills and other facilities even to give every child who reaches the stage of tertiary education, a sufficient command of English to enable him / her to use the language as a means of access to wider knowledge. That is the useful and necessary function which English language teaching should serve; but if the solution to our ethnic problems has to await the day when Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims can talk to each other freely in English, then God help us all!

The alternative proposal with regard to a "link language" which has been mooted is that Sinhala and Tamil-speaking children should be taught each other's language. In the atmosphere of euphoria which followed the UNP's election landslide of 1977 and the party's election promises to uphold national unity, this proposal was even adopted as part of the Government's educational policy. It was, however, never implemented at any significant scale. The official reasons given for jettisoning it were, (a) that Jaffna schools had not co-operated in teaching Sinhala, and (b) that more time was needed for English-language teaching.

The idea of Sinhala and Tamil as mutually supportive link languages was, in principle, a useful contribution to communication between communities, and it was not open to technical problems of the same order stemming from any endeavour to teach every child English. The political problems are another matter. Unfortunately, one has to conclude that what might still have been made acceptable in 1977, if energetically and persuasively promoted, now would meet with greater resistance in the atmosphere of intensified ethnic conflict today; and that the adoption of Sinhala and Tamil as link languages requires as a pre-condition a different political climate.

1 Editorial Note – This article is based on two talks Reggie Siriwardena delivered at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and the Marga Institute, Colombo in May and August 1984. It has previously been featured in *Beyond Ethnic Logos* (Vol. 31, March 1992) published by the Centre for Peace, Colombo, and has been re-published in *Nethra Review* given its contextual relevance and as a tribute to its Founding Editor.

There is, however, a more fundamental point which must be made with regard to the very concept of a link language as an answer to ethnic problems. It assumes that linguistic diversity and segregation of schoolchildren in different language streams is the heart of the problem, and that the problem would be, if not totally solved, at least substantially solved if schoolchildren had a common language in which to communicate. This assumption is questionable. In a survey regarding ethnic perceptions among schoolchildren of Grades 11 and 12 in which I participated, my colleagues and I observed that the presence in the same class, of children of different ethnic groups who were being taught in the same language, did not necessarily make for more enlightened or tolerant attitudes. We even had the experience of hearing Sinhala children making derogatory statements about Tamils in the presence of Tamil children who were being taught in Sinhala in the same class. On a larger scale, there is no reason to think that possession of a common language as a medium of communication, ipso facto guarantees harmonious ethnic relations. Catholics and Protestants have been fighting each other in Ulster for a long time although they have no linguistic difficulty in talking to each other.

Divisive Content in Text Books

What is taught is more important than the medium in which it is taught in determining schoolchildren's ethnic perceptions. The exploitation of history as an instrument promoting divisive ethnic ideologies has long standing precedents in our school text books. For instance the *Kumarodaya*, the most widely used Sinhala school reader in the era of private publication, began by plunging the kindergarten child into the cesspool of racial hatred with a lesson on the young Dutugemunu, in which his father warns him that the Tamils are "very cruel". The only set of Sinhala readers of the immediate post-independence era which was designed to promote a sense of a larger identity transcending ethnic consciousness was the *Nava Maga* series by H.D. Sugathapala. Their content bears out in a large measure their author's claim "those books have been prepared so as to create in the child a good understanding of his country and its people, and to help him to live with them free of communal hostilities, in affection and co-operation" (*Preface*, Nava Maga Reader).

On the Tamil language readers of the same period, I shall quote the observations of Professor K. Indrapala:

> Until the introduction of common text-books published by the state, the language text-books in Tamil were not, as a rule, directed towards creating an understanding of and a respect for the way of life and culture of ethnic groups other than the Tamils. There was hardly a lesson on the Sinhala people, culture and society, or on Buddhism. Even lessons on Sri Lanka were conspicuously missing. On the contrary, most of the text-books fostered in the Tamil child a special feeling for his or her community and language and helped to strengthen communal attitudes. What is even more significant is that there were lessons which helped to foster a kind of patriotic feeling, not towards Sri Lanka, but towards Tamil Nadu. Many of the hardened attitudes regarding race and language among the Tamils who received their education exclusively in the medium of Tamil in the fifties and sixties could be attributed to some extent to the text books they had used in their schools (Siriwardena et al 35).

In the 1960s, however, the state took over the publication of all basic text books. The language readers, for compulsory use in schools, on which I am going to comment are the fruits of that policy and are all published by the Educational Publications Department, which is a state organisation. There are two sets of Sinhala Readers; one, originally produced in the 1970s under the previous administration but reprinted and used in schools until the end of 1982; the other, introduced from the beginning of 1983. I shall refer to these as the (Sinhala) Old Series and New Series respectively. In Tamil, on the other hand, a single set of readers has been in continuous use throughout this period.

Eliminating Sectarian Ideology

It is evident from these books that the state take-over of textbook publication has had different effects with regard to Sinhala and Tamil readers. In the case of the Tamil readers, it has served to eliminate all traces of the sectarian ideology that Prof. Indrapala described as having been dominant in the era of private publication. What has replaced it is a recurrent concern for the projection of a national identity bridging ethnic differences. The keynote is struck already in the kindergarten reader, which has on two adjacent pages pictures of a Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim family, and then of the fathers, the mothers and the children of the three families in friendly postures. The accompanying text reads the following:

> We are Tamils
> We are Muslims
> We are Sinhalese
> Ilankai (Lanka) is our land
> We are all people of this land
> We are friends.
> The land of Ilankai is our land
> it is our sweet motherland.

Lessons in later readers include themes relevant not only to Hindus but also to the Christian and Muslim minorities. There is material presenting relations of friendship between Tamil children on the one hand and both Sinhala and Muslim children on the other. Stories are drawn not only from the Hindu culture, but also from non-Hindu cultures, including Buddhist culture. The festivals portrayed cover all four major religions of the island, while the major secular festival of the country, the indigenous New Year, is identified as the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. There are lessons on both Sinhala and Tamil anti imperialist national heroes.

How well do the Tamil readers promote the purposes for which they have been designed? I hesitate to offer an answer because I can judge them only from translations, but it seems to me that the methods adopted are too often overtly didactic (it is hardly likely that kindergarten children will be influenced by being preaching to on national harmony). The *Nava Maga* readers could have used models which were more imaginative and which functioned as effective methods of communication. However, well or ill done, what is most significant about the Tamil readers is that they provide a total contrast when compared with the Sinhala text books issued parallelly.

Mono-Cultural Character

Considering the old Sinhala readers first, one notices that they maintain a solely mono-cultural context, and this means not merely a Sinhala culture, but a specifically Sinhala-Buddhist culture. The readers for the early grades are based on the experiences of a family, its friends, relations and neighbours. The characters, way of life, festivals and practices presented in these readers are confined to a Sinhala-Buddhist milieu. Even the existence of Sinhala-Christian children is ignored, and no references to their lives and culture are included, although a large number of Sinhala-Christian children studied these books. In fact, if a child's knowledge of Sri Lanka happened to be confined to these readers, s/he would not even be aware that there were any people in Sri Lanka who were not Sinhala-Buddhists. The opportunity presented by the New Year for bringing out a certain commonality between Sinhala and Tamil cultures is also cast aside. The New Year is simply the Sinhala New Year, and there is even a lesson which starts by referring to the rituals and observances of the Sinhala New Year and which goes on to describe corresponding festivals in India, Laos, Kampuchea, Japan, Burma and Germany. However, nowhere is there even a mention of the fact that Tamils in Sri Lanka observe the New Year on the same day as the Sinhalese and with broadly similar practices.

The readers for the higher grades (3-9) do not shed their mono-cultural character. Rather, they begin to further acquire a more disturbing element. They project an image of a Sinhala-Buddhist identity, which is defined fundamentally through opposition to, and struggles against, Tamils in past history.

Some of this material has extremely sinister potential in affecting young minds. One lesson on Gajabahu starts by reminding the child that parents frighten naughty children by threatening to hand them over to the *billo* (bogeymen). Who are these *billo*? The text goes on to explain that the Chola king wanted to kidnap Sinhalese to make them work for him, and sent a group of fierce people of the *billa* race to Sri Lanka; "The *billo* who entered the Sinhala land by force began hunting the Sinhala with bundles of ashes in one hand and strands of rope in the other. As soon as they saw an isolated Sinhalese approaching, they thrust a handful of ashes into his mouth and straightaway bound him hand and foot with the rope they had and sent him to a Chola ship".

This lesson evokes the child's memories of being frightened by his / her parents with threats of the mysterious and fearful *billo*, and identifies these bogeymen as Tamil agents. It thus promotes deep-seated, irrational fears of early childhood, and creates apprehension of and hatred against the Tamils.

Finally, with regard to more recent history, the readers project an image of an exclusively Sinhala struggle for

Independence (all the national heroes celebrated are Sinhala Buddhists). This trend culminates in a lesson which presents the freedom gained in 1948 as a liberation of the Sinhalese. It does not seem to have struck the authors that if this were true, no further argument would be needed to justify Tamil separatism. In the entire range of the ten readers (Old Series) there is only a solitary lesson - a poem by Sagara Palansuriya - which expresses a sense of shared experience common to Sinhalese and Tamils, and which is entirely at variance with the general character of the Series.

The New Series of readers is not essentially different in character. Although all the books have been re-written, the pattern of the Old Series is maintained. Thus, the context of the first three readers, based on family life and experiences, is again mono-cultural. By examining the life styles of the main characters and the religious and cultural activities in which they participate, one can easily infer that these are Sinhala-Buddhist children, living in a Sinhala-Buddhist environment. All the names of the characters are clearly Sinhala, except for the name of one boy, which is Raja. Raja is a name common to both Sinhala and Tamil communities, although the Raja in the lessons is not identified as Tamil. This ambiguity, however, is dangerous, because of all the characters presented in the lessons, it is only Raja who is identified as a "bad boy". Such ambiguity could easily have been avoided.

Some Fundamental Problems

In depicting history, the New Series sustains the Sinhala-Buddhist ideological interpretation of the Old Series. The lessons drawing on Sri Lankan history relate either to "great" kings who saved the island from Tamil invaders (ex. Dutugemunu and Vijayabahu), to more recent personalities "who saved the Sinhala language" (Munidasa Kumaratunga) or to those who "restored the self respect of the Sinhalese" (Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero).

What appears to be an innovation in a lesson on *Deepavali* turns out to be a superficial reference only. Having described the rituals of *Deepavali*, the lesson goes on to identify it as "a festival of the people of India" as well as one which is celebrated in Sri Lanka by "those descending from the Tamils of India". If the intention was to give Sinhala children some understanding of Tamil culture, the effect is negated by assigning an alien character to Sri Lankan Tamils. One wonders whether in a lesson on *Vesak* the writers could have thought of describing it as a festival celebrated by those who have descended from the Bengalis of India.

There is another lesson which describes a trip by a party composed predominantly of the Sinhalese, but there is among them a girl called Harriet, who is described as "although Tamil, she was a pretty girl, who in appearance and speech seemed really Sinhalese". Obviously, this is the ideal by which Tamil girls are to be judged!

The New Series raises the same fundamental problem as that posed by the Old Series; Why is there this immense gulf in attitudes, outlook and objectives between the Sinhala and Tamil readers produced by the same state institution? Why must a sense of common nationhood be taught only to Tamil children, and why must Sinhala children be infected with a sense of Sinhala-Buddhist dominance? There are, no doubt, people who think that this is as it should be. To them I would like to quote a section from a critical study on school text books that I have undertaken:

> A system of education that encourages and fosters ideas of racial superiority and domination among the majority community is no basis for national unity, or even for national peace... To adopt or sanction a two faced educational policy by giving Sinhala and Tamil school children different conceptions of the relation between the two communities and their place in the national life is, in fact, to promote continuing discord, conflict and bitterness and to foster divisiveness and separation (Siriwardena et al 61).

One pre condition applicable to any effort put into building a sense of national identity is the rewriting of school text books. In the same study I have suggested that such a reform should be based on "a new perspective on our history, culture and national life, free of unscientific racial myths and obsessions with the invasions and wars of another age and another society, and a recognition of the common elements that link the peoples of this country in shared experiences and mutual assimilation of elements from each other's cultures" (Siriwardena et al 61).

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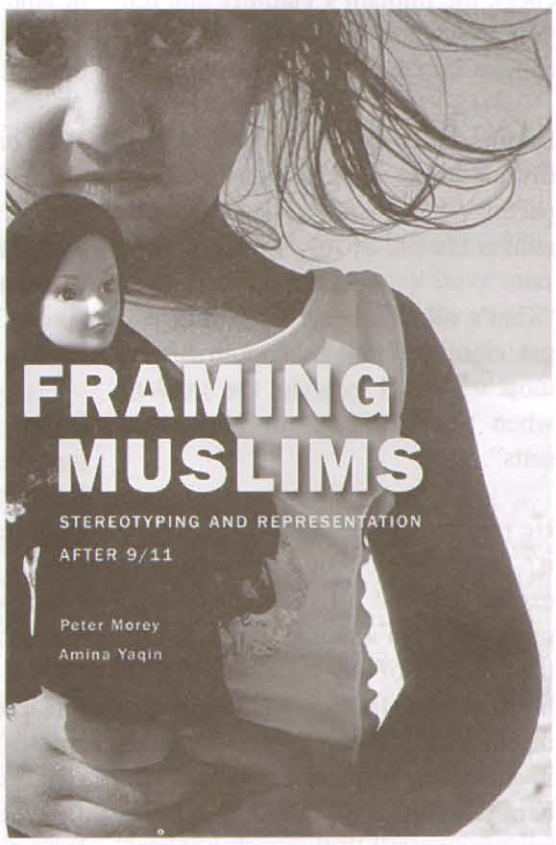


Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11
By Peter Morey and AminaYaqin
Harvard University Press, 256 pages, 2011
$27.95

In *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11*, Peter Morey and AminaYaqin dissect the ways in which stereotypes depicting Muslims as an inherently problematic presence in the West are constructed, deployed, and circulated in the public imagination, producing an immense gulf between representation and a considerably more complex reality. Crucially, they reveal that these stereotypes are not solely the province of crude-minded demagogues and their tabloid megaphones, but are multiplied as well by the supposedly progressive elites, even by those who presume to speak "from within", on Muslims' behalf. Based on nuanced analyses of cultural representations in both the United States and the UK, the authors draw our attention to stereotypes that sometimes globalise local biases and, at other times, bring national differences into sharper relief.

The Tale of the Tooth: A Love Letter to Sri Lanka

John Stifler

Natalie Goldberg, an American writer known for giving sage practical advice to students with literary ambitions, compiled in her popular book "Writing Down the Bones" a list of topics she reckoned might stir the verbal cauldrons of the mind. When I read the book, one of these topics struck me as brilliantly simple; "Write about teeth. Hardly anyone ever does".

Teeth indeed. Suddenly the possibilities seemed vast, profound. Like rings on a tree, teeth are markers of age and growth. A baby's first tooth may be the cause of considerable wailing, on the part of the infant, as it breaks through the gum and emerges pure, white, not yet stained by coffee, tobacco or betel juice, not yet chipped by the owner's falling face-first on a rock. That first tooth, and the ones that soon follow, are,rather, a small person's advance into the early stages of being able to tear into a mango, a pizza crust, a fistful of deviled cashews or anything else that might be edible.

Less happily, consider the child's mother, as I must now consider mine. Breast-feeding, as every nutritional expert knows, is healthy for child and mother alike. It reduces the child's tendency to develop allergies. It strengthens the marvelous bond between the maternal parent and the babbling offspring, the family's joy, the hope of the future. Unfortunately, my experience on the receiving end,of what must have been at least briefly a cheerful event,was limited.

"When you were four months old, you had teeth", my mother remarked several years after the fact."I said 'Ouch!'", she added. That story explained my extended acquaintance with warm glass bottles capped with brown rubber nipple substitutes and filled with the white liquid that grownups called "formula", although what the formula was no one ever explained. All because I had precocious teeth.

My teeth have always been eager to get on with the next thing. When I was eight years old and my family moved to a new town, a new dentist guessed my age as twelve years. When I professed to being only eight, she said, "Really? Your 12-year molars have already come in". When I was fifteen, the dentist determined that it was time for me to have my wisdom teeth removed. Wisdom teeth normally do not appear until later in one's teen years.

Other teeth adventures similarly lurk in the dusty vaults of my memory. The many fillings, to the music of a whirring little device that sent shock waves through my body from my wide open vulnerable mouth. The braces, those metal bands wrapped around the incisors, elastics attached to hooks on the bands, pulling my teeth into somewhat better alignment.

And the water-skiing accident. Hardly an accident, really, just a sloppy fall. I was whipping outside the wake of the boat as it made a long curving turn when I lost my balance, let go the tow rope, and, as I fell into the water, smacked my upper right incisor onto my knee, knocking the tooth back a millimeter or so. The knee was fine, the boat was fine, the water was refreshing, and I slowly accepted the fact that the incisor would no longer align perfectly with its mate on the right.
And so on.

Over the decades my teeth grew more mature, less prone to drama. But then came 2008, when one of my back teeth roused itself from the quiet, honest labour of just chewing, and developed a vaguely irritated sensation deep in the gum, an insistent feeling, and squishy underneath. Not good.

"It needs to come out", said the first dentist who examined me."And then you'll need an implant".

I went to another dentist for a second opinion.

"It needs to come out", said the second dentist. "And then you'll need an implant".

The second dentist, Dr. Megas, inspired confidence. Maybe it was his breezy, upbeat way of talking as though we were friends. Maybe it was because he pointed out that he'd have to schedule my tooth-pulling appointment on a date that did not conflict with his upcoming trip to Venice – followed by his profession of great interest in hearing about Venice from me, since I had several times visited the Gem of the Adriatic, while he was about to make his first trip to Italy.

However, we also had to schedule the appointment not to conflict with my own imminent departure for India and Sri Lanka, a sojourn that would last for 13 months.

And herein lay a small problem. A dentist can pull your tooth out in less than an hour, including the anesthesia, the paperwork and the chitchat about where in Venice to find the best ice cream. An implant – the installation in your jaw and gum of an artificial replacement tooth – takes at least three more visits covering a period of two months or more. As Dr. Megas explained, you wait several weeks while the gum heals; then, after the gum has grown whole again, the dentist cuts back into it to insert a sort of frame around which the gum then grows again, creating a tidy opening where the dentist can embed a titanium socket in the jaw. Wait a few more weeks, and then the dentist finally inserts the implant into the socket. Add one more visit after that so he can check the implant's viability and tell you about how his son dropped his camera into the Grand Canal.

Bottom line; Dr. Megas could pull my tooth late in June, but I was departing for the south Asian subcontinent at the end of July.

"That's all right", he said."You can get along without that tooth for 13 months, and I can do the implant when you get back to Massachusetts".

He pulled out the tooth."May I keep it?" I asked."No, you can't", he said, explaining that all organic material removed from a human being within the confines of any medical office or hospital in Massachusetts must be disposed of by licensed professionals in a properly inspected receptacle for harmful waste. My dead tooth was harmful waste? With a sigh I accepted the fact that I could not keep my own former body-part in a jar, or varnish it and drill a hole through it and wear it on a string about my neck.

At this point in the film version of this story, you'll see a quick cut of an Air India jumbo jet in the evening sky above the ocean, then a busy five months in India where I enjoyed the heat and dust, and where I consumed many a curry and dhosa with only the slightest inconvenience from an empty space in the right rear of my mouth where a tooth used to be. Born under the sign of Libra, I crave symmetry, but I got used to chewing exclusively on the left side of my mouth.

Medical care in the Third World? My friends at home frowned when the subject came up. If you're an American and you are going to spend time in South America, South Asia, South Anywhere, someone will try to sell you evacuation insurance. That's what you need when you're trekking somewhere near Kailash and your appendix bursts, or you're in Chennai and you get dengue fever, and everybody knows you need to get a helicopter in a hurry so you can Get Out And Get Back to America So You Can Find A Real Doctor. Or some such thing. Americans can be quite provincial and narrow-minded, some of them.

I didn't get sick in India. I did go to a dentist, though. After five months of the best tea I'd had in years, plus ample quantities of turmeric, my teeth needed a cleaning. Easy, quick. In America I would have had to make an appointment a month in advance; in Andhra Pradesh I simply walked in, introduced myself, and sat down in the dentist's chair.

Then on to Sri Lanka.

And in this lovely island of Serendib, as the reader of any guidebook quickly learns, teeth have a special importance. Or, rather, one particular tooth does.

I lived for eight months in Dangolla, just down the road and up the hill from the Sri Dalada Maligawa, the beautifully situated temple by the lake in Kandy; the temple that contains, sure enough, the Lord Buddha's tooth.

I learned the stories told to devout Buddhists and eager tourists alike; How someone removed the tooth from the Buddha's mouth as his body lay on its funeral pyre; how a princess smuggled the tooth from India to

Sri Lanka, hiding it in her hair for the journey; how a disaffected king ordered that the tooth be smashed into dust, so as to suppress any local veneration for the Awakened One; and how all efforts to destroy the tooth failed, so that the king promptly became a convert; how the Portuguese stole what they believed to be the great relic, as part of their effort to convert Lankans to Catholicism, but were foiled by clever monks who substituted a fake tooth for the real one; and, as depicted in one of the colorful murals inside the temple, how the British ultimately agreed to help keep the tooth safe in Kandy.

Safe indeed. Just to walk past the DaladaMaligawa, I had to open my camera bag for inspection by the armed soldiers who protected the temple from whatever dangers that might threaten the sacred relic. I noticed the brand-new appearance of one section of the temple, rebuilt in 1998 after an LTTE bomb damaged the building. I saw the room where lies the gold casket, inside which is another gold casket, inside which … all the way to the seventh and smallest casket, wherein lies the tooth.

Kandy, Dangolla, and all of Sri Lanka blessed me with good fortune, wonderful friends, fine adventures. The birds and flowers around my house were paradise in miniature. Coconuts and mangoes fell in the yard, breakfast practically dropping into my lap. One friend showed me his hideaway cottages outside the city, amid jungles, paddies and tea plantations. Another took me to Yala, where I saw four leopards. Others showed me Galle Fort, Colombo 7, Riverston, NuwaraEliya, the ancient sacred cities, and much of the rest of the island that Anne Ranasinghe describes as a teardrop hanging from India's southern tip.

Through it all I made my way, sharing sandwiches with Buddhist monks on a hike, dining in the imperial Galle Face Hotel, sipping the contents of a king coconut through a straw, licking an ice cream cone from a shop in downtown Kandy, savoring snacks at a restaurant on the highway, drinkingLion lager on the shaded lawn of the deputy U.S. ambassador's house and champagne at the reception for friends celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Always, the food and drink moved mostly through the left side of my mouth, while the gap in my lower right row of teeth reminded methat a small part of me was missing.

Somewhere in those days, I made the acquaintance of Dandi and Bhatti. They are sisters, slender and lovely, demure and very bright, cosmopolitan and capable, and with excellent voices – which is how I met them. I joined Peradenya's best-known choral group, and frequently it was Dandi and Bhatti who gave me a lift from my house to where we rehearsed.

We talked about many things. School. Voice lessons. Plans to attend a university to study medicine. The imminent arrival of Dandi's boyfriend, who was studying in the U.S.

One evening on the way to rehearsal, I asked Dandi and Bhatti about the rest of their family, and about their parents' occupations.

"Well", said Dandi, "Daddy's a dentist".

"Oh really? Does he have any specialty?"

"He does. He's an implant surgeon".

"An implant surgeon?"

"Yes. Actually, he introduced implant surgery to Sri Lanka".

"Mm-hmm", I said out loud. To myself I added silently, "Why not?"At least I could meet him, have him take a look inside my mouth…

Dr. Prasad was glad to put me on his schedule promptly. Anyone who would sing the Verdi *Requiem* with his daughters deserved some consideration, even from a very busy man (Dr. Prasad was also the head of dentistry at the university). Tall, affable, he made me instantly comfortable in his office.

Incidentally he also reinforced my growing realisation that dentists appear to be in love with travel. Dr. Prasad had studied in England and went frequently to Japan – not as a tourist but to lecture to students of dentistry there. I thought of Dr. Megas's trip to Venice; of my college friend Bill, who practices dentistry in Southern California but frequently teaches in Ecuador or provides volunteer dental care in Haiti (and goes SCUBA diving in the South Pacific when he wants an actual vacation); of my ex-uncle-in-law who attended a conference in Zurich and worked in a dental practice in Saudi Arabia; of my other dentist at home, who, while examining my teeth and repairing a filling, talked about how he and his wife were about to go trekking in Nepal. There's a message here somewhere about the cost of dental care, but I digress.

One meeting with Dr. Prasad sufficed to convince me that this man could provide me with the implant for which I had been thinking I would have to wait several more months."It won't be cheap", he said, quoting me a price. It was slightly less than half of what Dr. Megas was going to charge me back home.I could spend the difference to buy an airline ticket for my next trip back to Sri Lanka. More to the point, Dr. Prasad was impeccable in his manners and, to my amateur eye, in his professional skills.

And not to my eye alone. When it was time to cut away the gum and install the titanium socket, a younger dentist, who was training to do implants, made the six-hour round trip from Colombo just to watch Prasad work on me. I was in good hands.

Three more appointments were scheduled; one to inspect the socket, one to install the implant (and another dentist was planning to make the same trip from Colombo to watch that operation) and one for a follow-up to make sure the gum was growing properly around the implant.

A new kind of anticipation began to set in. For months I had accepted the empty space inside my mouth whence the old tooth had been pulled. Now I could feel the smooth, tidy surface of the new metal socket in my jaw. And it occurred to me, for the first time in my life, I am going to have an artificial body part, a synthetic replacement for something that, like the rest of my physical being, grew organically, naturally. And what will it be? A sturdy little piece of metal, treated to be as white as any normal tooth.

Did it need to be white? It would be artificial anyway, so why not let it appear so? Perhaps I could get a red implant. No, a red implant would look as though the operation had been botched and a permanent blood clot had covered the new fake tooth. Purple? A purple tooth would be fine with me. Purple and white are the official colors of Amherst College, my alma mater. Perhaps whoever manufactures these implants could etch a small white "A" on the side of the tooth. I'd be the envy of tattooed and body-pierced teenagers from Boston to San Francisco.

"Sorry", said Dr. Prasad."I can get you a silver tooth instead of white, but that's your only other choice".

Perhaps it was a perverse imagination with too little activity and too much free time. Perhaps it was too much Lion lager and deviled cashews. More likely, it was the magic of Serendib; the way that everywhere I turned in Sri Lanka, some new delight waited and some new possibility appeared. I had a backstage invitation to the EsalaPerahera. My favorite Sri Lankan writers were welcoming me into their living rooms, pouring tea in the afternoon and scotch in the evening. A local tuktuk driver and his entire family took me to Anuradhapura for the PosonPoya. One blue-eyed Episcopalian from New England was among the 500,000 Sinhala-speaking Buddhist pilgrims; barefoot, head bowed in reverence, uplifted by the grace of a people and a place. Anything seemed possible.

Really. Anything. Which is when I thought of the Tooth.

It was early May. The awful 26-year old civil war might be drawing near a close, but the Tigers clung to a bit of land on the east coast, and security continued to be high, checkpoints everywhere, tensions unmitigated. The tooth had defied an ancient king, eluded the Portuguese, and emerged unscathed from the 1998 bombing, but was it really safe? As the conflict dragged on, would some last-ditch terrorist group try to destroy the tooth, or to steal it? Earlier that year, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims had jammed the streets in hopes of getting a glance at the Buddha's tooth when it was put on display for the first time in seven years – such a crowd that the police had become nervous and had insisted that the monks put the tooth away. What next? Wouldn't it be prudent – indeed, wouldn't it be a benefit for devoted Buddhists everywhere –

if the Tooth were removed from the temple and put somewhere less obvious? Somewhere no one would think to look. A princess had once carried it in her hair, and fortunately it hadn't fallen out, but a more secure place would be where a tooth is supposed to be in the first place, i.e., inside someone's mouth. Someone's mouth that happened to have a gap where a tooth had recently been; a gap containing a socket made of a light but divinely strong metal, more reliable than gold, ready to accommodate the security needs of a people, a religion, a way of life.

Possible objections to this intriguing idea seemed utterly predictable, trivial, simplistic, lacking the kind of imagination that the Buddha himself surely believed a human being should possess. Dr. Prasad could insert one end of a titanium pin into the Buddha's tooth, anchor it securely, and then insert the entire tooth into the place he had already prepared.

Dr. Prasad was trustworthy, and only one or two monks would need to know. Just as it was done to deceive the Catholic missionaries in the 1600s, a decoy tooth could be put into the gold casket. Meanwhile, I would provide my cell phone number for any continent where I happened to be, along with my email address, to the monk who would need to reach me from time to time, to confirm that the tooth was safe. I would learn Sinhala and Pali, and I would memorise sacred chants, singing them regularly to maintain a sacred aura about the Tooth. I would arrange for a skilled clandestine associate with a global positioning system to establish a connection to me,so that, were I to tumble off the edge of the World's End or the Grand Canyon or the Matterhorn, this trusted associate would immediately find my body, remove the tooth, and carry it back to Kandy.

It would be clear to the monks of the Sri DaladaMaligawa that I intended only the highest respect and awe for the sanctity of what had been their charge for centuries. Personal aggrandisement would be meaningless and, in any case, impossible and unthinkable. I wanted only to serve.

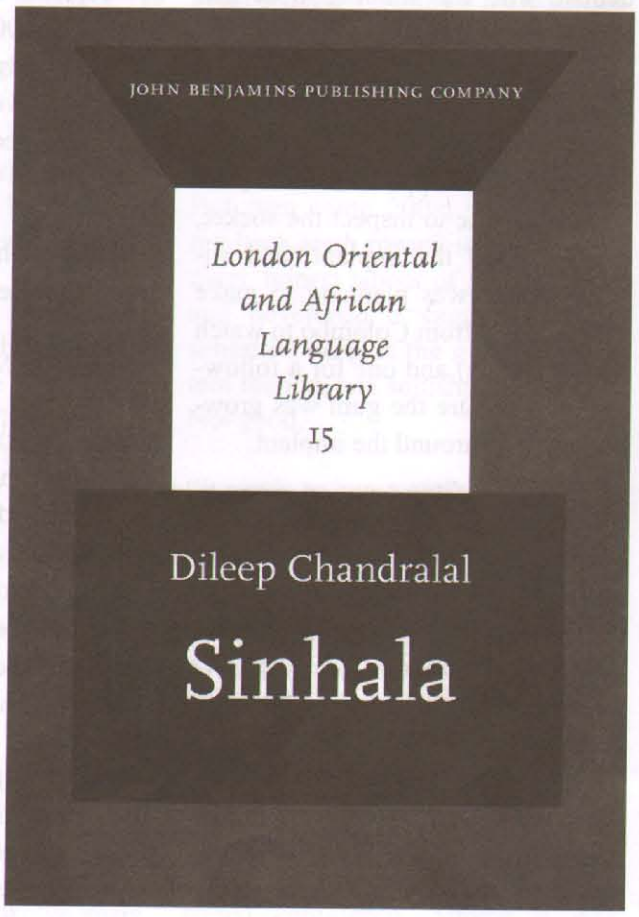
Dr. Prasad put his hand to his chin, nodded and thought for a moment.

"It's an excellent idea", he said."Very sensible and imaginative. But it won't work".

"It won't?" I asked.

"No. You need a molar. The Buddha's tooth is a cuspid".

And so, months later, I walk the streets of Northampton, Massachusetts, or sit at my computer and read emails from friends in Colombo, or teach classes at the university, or hike in the woods, contemplating the news and the weather, only occasionally thinking about how I am convinced that, had it been a molar instead, the Buddha would have allowed me to bear his tooth, since we are all part of the same great Being, after all, and any distinct location is an illusion. At such times, I run the tip of my tongue along the inside of that lower right rear synthetic molar, marveling at its smoothness, its impermeability, its immunity to decay, and at the way it ensures that, wherever I go, I shall always carry a piece of Sri Lanka with me.



Sinhala (London Oriental and African Languages Library, 15)
By Dileep Chandralal
John Benjamins Publishing Company, 296 pages, 2010.
US $ 165.00

This publication is a linguistic introduction to Sinhala, one of the official languages of Sri Lanka. Deviating from conventional grammars that focus on Literary Sinhala, the book provides a comprehensive understanding of the standard variety of spoken Sinhala used in day-to-day life. All the main aspects of Sinhala grammar are analysed, and the semantic and pragmatic aspects of grammar, topics which are generally ignored in more structure-focused approaches, are discussed at length. The book deals with both the structural and functional aspects of language. While describing the typological character of the language, the author draws on various historical and linguistic forces that have shaped the modern Sinhala language in a unique way, setting it apart from other modern Indo-Aryan languages of the Indian subcontinent. Written in a clear and lucid style, the book presents a rich sampling of data and serves as a useful typological reference.

The "Post-Newtonian Political Equilibrium" in Post-War Sri Lanka

Sumith Chaaminda

> It is now clear that the anti-Tamil riots of July '83 constitute one of the most important points in the recent history of Sri Lanka. A particular equilibrium within the Sri Lankan social formation has been irrevocably lost and a new equilibrium is yet to be achieved (Gunasinghe 204).

At the beginning of a new phase of the ethnic conflict after the July '83 holocaust, Newton Gunasinghe predicted that the ethnic conflict was to over-determine Sri Lankan politics. His analysis remained an influential one among theoretical Marxists in the country for a long time, since it addressed one of the central problems of Leftist political debate; the complicated relationship between the ethnic conflict and the class struggle. His words eventually have become reality, in the sense that all mainstream political parties and groups found new strategic moves and alliances around an ethno-nationalist ideological frontier, in the two-and-a-half decades after his prediction. Gunasinghe identifies the post-1983 political conjuncture as a transformative moment, where the prevailing equilibrium in the Sri Lankan social formation had been lost and a new equilibrium was yet to be formed. His was not only a theoretical piece but also an intervention in a particular political conjuncture that made an important statement on future strategies of the Left politics.

As Qadri Ismail notes, Gunasinghe's analysis has highlighted not only the political and historical but also the epistemological significance of the post-1983 political conjuncture (xii). Being a Leftist activist and a Trade Union leader, Gunasinghe contributed to conceptualising a new vision that prioritised the struggle for a democratic solution for the ethnic conflict within the political agenda of the Left. He argued that "within the context of a heightened ethnic consciousness among the masses, the Left and the democratic forces are in a situation of theoretical disarray. One symptom of this disarray is the dominant tendency in the old Left to sweep the ethnic issue under the carpet, and to raise "safe" economic and class slogans" (Gunasinghe 204). As Ismail points out, one of the main implications of this well-quoted article is "class contradictions were no longer the primary questions the Sri Lankan Left had to address in this changed conjuncture" (xii).

This was the path that was taken by the old Left at least until the conclusion of the war in May 2009, presumably not because of Gunasinghe's influence, but because of a series of other reasoning that stemmed from political pragmatism. However, at the end of the era of military confrontation of ethno-nationalist blocs, it is still important to read his analysis, made at a very crucial moment and at the outset of ethnic civil war. Reading his thesis of ethnic over-determination in the light of changed socio-political relations in the post-war context is still politically, as well as theoretically, valid. A most crucial question arising within the current conjuncture is whether we are in a situation where the emerging equilibrium glimpsed by Gunasinghe in 1984 has become history. I would argue, in this short article, that the over-determination of the ethnic antagonism thesis should be re-thought against the backdrop of significant changes in the political scenario, such as the total defeat of the LTTE, the consolidation of state power within the new ruling elite, the weakening of opposition against the ruling regime, the formation of new political alliances, the Opposition's move to make a new frontier around non-ethnic issues like democracy, the economic burden on the underdog classes, and increasing corruption.

In this kind of exercise, the first requirement would be defining concepts and explaining the theoretical perspective. Hence, the next section of this article focuses on interrogating the theoretical concept of over-determination. The article will critically review Gunasinghe's different ways of using the concept. This will be followed by a discussion on how the concept can be modified, and its applicability in understanding post-1983 political relations in the country. Finally, the article will attempt to introduce future possibilities in Sri Lankan politics in terms of diverse factors of over-determination. The main emphasis of this whole analysis is that a pluralistic understanding of ethnic and other factors of over-determination is needed to conceptualise new developments which occurred in politico-military as well as politico-ideological levels at the end of thirty years' ethnic civil war.

Rethinking Ethnic Over-Determination

Given the importance of Louis Althusser's theory of structural Marxism in Gunasinghe's project, and the fact that the central conceptual category of his essay comes directly from Althusser, it is reasonable to examine Gunasinghe's way of using the Althusserian concept of over-determination. A closer examination of Gunasinghe's essay reveals that it sounds less Althusserian than he claims it to be; "In both ethnic formations, class contradictions are overdetermined in the Althusserian sense, by the ethnic conflict. "Over-determination" refers to a structure of dominance over the contradictions of a particular formation at a particular point of time (204-205).

However, I would argue that the Althusserian concept of over-determination is somewhat different from what Gunasinghe identifies as a structure of dominance, and that the former emphasises the multiplicity of contradictions and their conditions of existence. Althusser acknowledges that he has borrowed this concept from Freudian psychoanalysis, where it means that a single effect, say a dream, is determined by multiple causes or factors at once. It is important to bear in mind that, by this concept, both Freud and Althusser have tried to capture the multiplicity of factors / contradictions working together in determining a unitary effect. It does not merely imply that a dominant structure determines the other contradictions; rather, each and every contradiction and their circumstances and currents are actively working in over-determining the political or unconscious moment.

For Althusser, the orthodox Marxist understanding of history as a simple determination of forces and relations of production, which guarantees successive modes of production, is more Hegelian than Marxist, in the sense that it ignores the materialistic characteristic of dialectic, in terms of plurality of contradictions and over-determination. For Althusser, Marxist (materialist) dialectic differs from Hegelian (idealistic) dialectic not merely because the latter turns the former upside- down by applying the idealistic principle of dialectic on a different object, say, material life. On the contrary, when the dialectic becomes Marxist, it acquires a new structure as well. He explains this particular Marxist characteristic of dialectic through Lenin's conceptualisation of revolutionary Russia as the weakest link of the imperialist chain. Socialist revolution was possible, for Lenin, in relatively undeveloped Russia, against a background where all the historical contradictions were accumulated and exacerbated. According to this new understanding, revolution is guaranteed by the accumulation of the largest sum of historical contradictions, and not necessarily by an abstract and simple contradiction between forces and relations of production, as Marxist orthodoxy maintained for a long time. However, to make revolution possible, these contradictions, their circumstances and currents should be "fused" or "merged" into a "ruptural unity". Althusser introduces the concept of over-determination to explain this process:

> In constituting this unity, they reconstitute and complete their basic animating unity, but at the same time they also bring out its nature: the "contradiction" is inseparable from the total structure of the social body in which it is found, inseparable from its formal conditions of existence, and even from the instances it governs; it is radically *affected by them*, determining, but also determined in one and the same movement, and determined by the various **levels** and **instances** of the social formation it animates; it might be called *over-determined in its principle* (100-101) (All emphasis is in the original).

Although Gunasinghe has made a significant contribution to "liberate" the Sri Lankan Left from a simple class determination thesis, it seems that, as his "May Day After" essay implies, he might have tried to replace class with ethnicity as the main determining factor in the new political conjuncture marked by the

July holocaust. But, replacing one contradiction with another as the determinant factor would not work well with the Althusserian concept of over-determination. On the contrary, to make the dialectic Marxist, the structure of simple Hegelian dialectic itself should be changed by taking into account the multiplicity of contradictions in the given political conjuncture, and by conceptualising the concrete political moment resulting from the accumulation and exacerbation of those contradictions. Simply put, "determining class politics by ethnic contradiction" is nothing but a turning upside-down of the conventional Marxist thesis of "determining ethnic relations by class struggle". The structure of the dialectic in both cases is the same, in the sense that both imply that one category determines the other. Gunasinghe's analysis of the post-1983 political conjuncture is, I would argue, less Althusserian than claimed because it fails to go beyond the conventional Hegelian / Marxist idea of simple determination. The following quotation suggests how Gunasinghe uses the term over-determination to describe simple ethnic determination:

> If the class contradictions in the Sri Lankan social formation today are overdetermined by the ethnic conflict, it logically follows that class struggle does not occur in a pure vacuum but in an "ether" which is constituted precisely of this conflict, which determines the intensity, tempo and pattern of class contradictions. Moreover, it exercises a determinant influence over class relations, conflict, as well as alliances (205).

Furthermore, when it comes to political strategy, Gunasinghe seems to be closer to the traditional Marxist assumption that, sooner or later, class struggle as the true contradiction will take its proper place, once ethnic conflict has lost its determining capacity. Here he is siding with the mainstream, old Marxist theoreticians and practitioners, who considered the ethnic conflict as an ideological deviation from the proper trajectory of history marked by the class struggle; "The worsening economic crisis enables the Left to raise the class issue with renewed vigour, raise the class consciousness of the working class and contribute towards the reduction of the affectivity of ethnic overdetermination on class conflict (Gunasinghe 207). Reading between the lines, one can detect the traditional Marxist anticipation of the non-over-determined form of class struggle. The missing point of this analysis is that class struggle, even when it is articulated by Marxist class consciousness, cannot but be an effect of over-determination; and in this sense, the "proper history" with class struggle as a necessary consequence of economic crisis would never come.

Over-view of Over-determination: 1983-2009

As Gunasinghe has finely elaborated in his essay, political forces had been regrouping and re-dividing in an unimaginable manner at the particular political conjuncture in the early 1980s when, according to him, the previous political equilibrium was irrevocably lost. One of the significant characteristics of this process was that conventional and familiar political frontiers and distinctions were cut through by newly achieved political alliances and groupings:

> New alliances have been forged where none existed earlier, and old alliances which had withstood the strain of decades of political manoeuvre have been ruptured. "Conservative" and "Progressive"' camps are internally divided on a possible solution to the ethnic issue, and groups at the opposite ends of the political spectrum have discovered similarities as far as the approach to this problem is concerned (Gunasinghe 205).

This happened to be the dominant fashion in mainstream politics in the country, especially in the years following Gunasinghe's unfortunate and premature death. Against the backdrop of the signing of the Indo-Lanka accord in 1987, a significant part of the Marxist Left aligned with the "political solution to the ethnic conflict" ideology, which was then championed by the Right-Wing UNP regime of J.R. Jayewardena, while other Leftist groups with the ideological and political leadership of the JVP initiated a struggle against so called separatist elements they identified in the Indo-Lanka accord. The confrontation between these two political blocs became violent when the *Deshapremi Janatha Viyaparaya* (Patriotic People's Movement), a JVP offshoot, initiated an armed struggle in the name of the nation's sovereignty, the unity of the country, and liberation from Indian imperialism.

As the above observations clearly indicate, there is no doubt that the ethnic conflict has played a central role in constructing political frontiers around ethno-nationalist identities, and in determining the strategic moves of concrete political agents at the time. However, when this political process is seen through the conceptual prism of over-determination, one can also reasonably claim that not only ethnic conflict but also many other contradictions (and their conditions of existence) were at work in over-determining this particular political conjuncture. Ethnic conflict itself has been influenced and fashioned by those contradictions. This is not actually something Gunasinghe was unaware of. Many of his other writings exemplify how he became a pioneer amongst theoretical Marxists in the late 1970s and 1980s, in transcending the dominant trend of simple class (or ethnic) reductionism. For instance, Gunasinghe authored many papers addressing diverse issues such as the open economy and its influence on ethnic relations, the role of *Bhikkhus* (Buddhist monks) in nationalist populism, the changing nature of caste, class and ethnic relations against the backdrop of economic liberalisation, and the transformation of class composition in the post-colonial state in 1956. It seems to me that, through these various writings and other engagements, he was successful in applying the first principle of Althusserian over-determination, namely the multiplicity of contradiction. However, he failed in applying the second principle; the accumulation and exacerbation of those contradictions into a ruptural unity.

For instance, it is not fair to explain the JVP's second armed insurrection during 1987 and 1989 only as resulting from ethnic over-determination, without taking into account how anti-capitalism, radical elements of rural youth, anti-UNP populist sentiments, etc. were articulated with anti-Indian *cum* anti-power sharing ideologies in the so called *Deshapremi* (patriotic) discourse. Although Sinhalese nationalist elements acquired a central place within this discourse, we should not forget the fact that this armed insurrection was possible against a particular historic background, where mainstream Sinhalese opposition was weakened, mass protests against worsening economic situations were suppressed, the democratic channels of contestation of power were obstructed by a very powerful executive presidency, and emerging criticism against open market policies and their implications for socio-cultural relations were becoming more popular, especially among the Sinhalese intermediate classes. A popular political slogan which developed during this period *Colombata Kiri Gamata Kekiri* ("Milk for Colombo, nothing for the village"; "milk" symbolically representing the availability of better facilities, infrastructure etc. in the cities), finely exemplified the significant non-ethnic articulations within this particular moment of over-determination.

However, during the last three decades, the non-JVP Leftist parties have been prioritising the ethnic conflict over economic and other issues, letting the JVP, JHU and the Sinhalese mainstream articulate those issues in ethno-nationalist terms. It seemed that, against the background of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the twentieth century experience of international communism, the Sri Lankan Left found "safe ground" in the "political solution to the ethnic problem" ideology. It should also be kept in mind that, since the emergence of NGO civil society politics in the country in the early 1980s, new themes like conflict resolution and transformation, constitutionalism, peace studies, state reform, development studies, etc., were increasingly introduced and funded, and that this contributed to significant changes in Leftist political discourse, and weakened its commitment to political economy. Interestingly, the first generation of the NGO civil society in Sri Lanka emerged from the Left! It seemed that, within the popular political discourse, the identity of the Left itself was redefined by the above- mentioned strategic and discursive changes.

The Left parties continued with this duel strategy of supporting a political solution to the ethnic conflict, and undermining the protest against economic problems faced by the people, as it was finely manifested in the Norwegian facilitated liberal peace process, under the leadership of UNF Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe during 2001 and 2004. The non-JVP Left parties prioritised peace over economic issues, and decided to support the UNF, even when the Government championed unpopular economic reforms tending towards privatisation, commoditisation of land, and tough labour regulations. Venugopal highlights this in his paper "The Politics of Sri Lanka's Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna":

> In October 2003 and again in January 2004, when the UNF government (and hence the peace process) appeared in danger of collapsing under the weight of the

JVP-led campaign, the main non-JVP Left parties met with prime minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and agreed to use their influence to defuse trade union pressure on the government in return for a postponement of the more controversial parts of the reform agenda such as privatisation and labour reforms (12).

This again paved the way for JVP-led radical Sinhalese nationalism to capitalise on economic issues, and to mobilise mass protest successfully, against both the terms "liberal" and "peace" in the UNP-led "liberal peace agenda". Venugopal further argues that "the non-JVP Left was not strong enough to prevent the collapse of the peace process, but nevertheless laid themselves open to the charge of collaborating in the government's unpopular reform agenda at a time of growing worker unrest" (Venugopal 12). In the end, the ethnic over-determination thesis, which was theoretically established by Gunasinghe and practically implemented by the so-called old Left, lost its significance even among those who championed it, given that a large portion of the Sinhalese Left aligned with the Rajapakse regime.

Glimpsing the Future: Over-determination in the Post-War Context

I would suggest that, at the end of the thirty years' ethnic civil war, by May 2009, the post-1983 political equilibrium conceptualised by Gunasinghe has also been lost, and that we are in a new historic moment, as Gunasinghe identified it in the early 1980s, in which a new equilibrium is yet to be achieved. One of the significant characteristics of the post-war political scenario is that, for the first time since the introduction of open economic policies, the ruling regime seems successfully to manage the tension between the anti-liberalisation claims articulated in ethno-nationalist ideologies by leading intellectuals and activists, who have emerged mainly from intermediate classes and strata, and the interests of so-called comprador capitalist sectors, which are also aligned with the Rajapakse regime. The post-war ruling regime has become the first of its kind, simultaneously championing Sinhalese Buddhist ethno-nationalist populism and the neo-liberal reform agenda! Interestingly, within this new context, the JVP has emerged as the main Leftist party in the South that campaigns for the rights of the people in war affected areas, while the old Left parties, being allies of the Sinhalese dominant capitalist regime have largely been criticised for their betrayal of commitment to socialism, democracy and social justice. Certain new political groupings and alliances, which were unimaginable within the post-1983 political equilibrium, have emerged during the two years that followed the end of the war. For instance, the JVP, TNA and UNP supporting a common Presidential candidate was an improbable occurrence five years back, although it did happen soon after the conclusion of the war. Likewise, the UNP and the JVP were the main oppositional groups in the protest campaigns against the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, while the old Left supported this most undemocratic constitutional reform in a very cynical manner. However, it is also clear that, from these issue-based protest campaigns and temporary alliances - mostly aimed at elections - a sustainable political bloc has not yet emerged, because of the significant ideological differences among these oppositional parties. This implies that the new political equilibrium is yet to come, especially from the perspective of the opposition.

It is also clear that the end of the war has not given rise to any positive repercussions in terms of a political solution for the ethnic conflict. If the debate on a political solution and power-sharing had acquired the central space in the political discourse at least until 2004, it has largely been marginalised in the post-war conjuncture, not only by the ruling elite, but also by most of the oppositional groups. The debate seems to have been replaced by new terminologies of post-war resettlement, development, democratisation and / or authoritarianism. Ethnic, class and other forms of suppressions and exclusions have increased under the new hegemony, marked by authoritarian statism and developmentalism that go hand-in-hand with open-market policies, which are mostly favourable to new comprador sectors aligned with the ruling regime. Revisiting the concept of over-determination is desirable in conceptualising the emerging new political equilibrium in post-war Sri Lanka, and in exploring new counter-hegemonic strategies for democratic reforms, equality and social justice.

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On the Death and Life of Languages
Claude Hagège
Yale University Press, 384 pages, 2011
$20.00

Twenty-five languages die each year. At this pace, half the world's five thousand languages will disappear within the next century. In this timely book, Claude Hagège seeks to highlight the magnitude of the cultural loss represented by the crisis of language death. By focusing on the relationship of language to culture and the world of ideas, Hagège shows how languages are themselves crucial repositories of culture; the traditions, proverbs, and knowledge of a culture reside in the language we use. His wide-ranging examination covers all continents and language families to uncover not only how languages die, but also how they can be revitalized - for example in the remarkable case of Hebrew.

Space for a Poem

Liyanage Amarakeerthi

Translated by Ranjini Obeyesekere

In that unseen space between time and emptiness
Allow me to be.

Between the flower and its scent, in that flower-scent
Allow me to be.

At that fine line that divides poetry and prose
Allow me to be

In that cool place between air and water
Let me be.

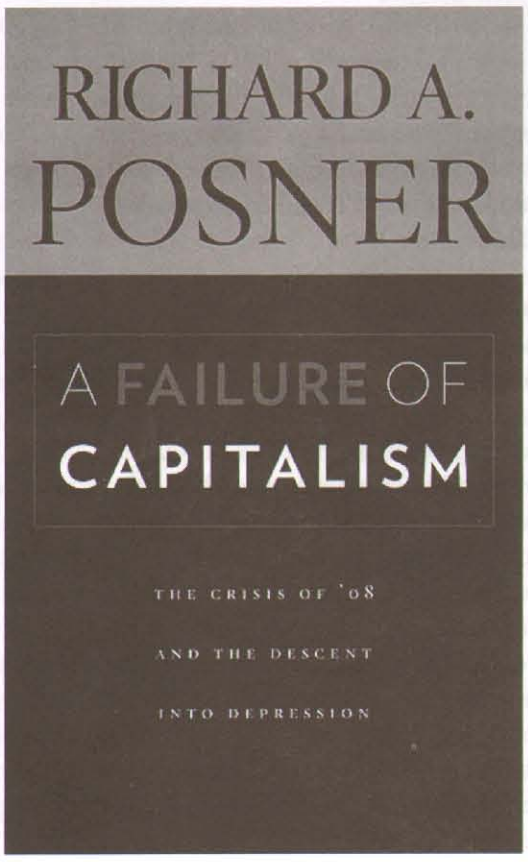
In that rare hour between night and day
Let me stay.

In that fluid region between motherland and foreign land
Let me live.

In that infinitesimal space between nationalist and anti nationalist
Let me be.

In that fleeting dawn – moment between poet and poem
Allow me to be

In truth, it is not for me I ask that space, friend,
It is for my poem to live.



A Failure of Capitalism: The Crisis of '08 and the Descent into Depression
By Richard A. Posner
Harvard University Press, 368 pages, 2011
$17.95

In *A Failure of Capitalism*, Richard Posner presents a concise and non-technical examination of the financial crisis, which surfaced in 2008. Requiring no specialist knowledge of macroeconomics or the theory of finance, this book appeals to both the intelligent reader as well as to the specialist. The causes which led to the crisis, as identified by Posner, include excess savings flowing in from Asia and the reckless lowering of interest rates by the Federal Reserve Board; the relation between executive compensation, short-term profit goals, and risky lending; the housing bubble fuelled by low interest rates, aggressive mortgage marketing, and loose regulations; the low savings rate of American people; and the highly leveraged balance sheets of large financial institutions.

The Making of the Meat

Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe

When we entered Antony's house we knew what he would be having for lunch. On to the veranda drifted the unmistakable smell of beef curry. Someone was cooking. Chunks of the freshest meat would have sat marinating in a mix of spices for a few hours. The cook's own impromptu recipe – dried red chillies crackling, spilling out minute yellow seeds; pearls of hollow coriander bursting and jumping; the green stalk of lemon grass and the ochre bark of cinnamon as thick as a small child's wrist, cracking open… All would have been ground on a stone into a thick paste. Then, wet and dripping with the water that held it together, the paste would have been scraped off the stone and slapped on to the meat.

By the time we went to Antony's house, at eight in the morning, the pre-preparation of the meat had been done. The house released the distinct vapours of a clay pot-curry on the stove: beef cooking. It would soon be taken off the fire when the coconut-milk gravy frothed and bubbled to its final, pitched frenzy.

Antony lived in a beautiful house. From the veranda we looked into a living room. Its furthest wall formed the backdrop to a mural of a stream, and following the cement imitation was a rivulet of water which at certain points cascaded into gentle falls. From the wall hung abundantly grown ferns, spreading and green from the constant spray of water. The garden surrounding the house was well looked after. Rows of glistening red Anthuriams circled a mango tree dripping with April fruit.

Shiva and I sat in the veranda with two other men who had got there before us. We waited. During the fifteen minutes we spent sitting purposefully, lorries, all panelled in wood and fully covered, ambled slowly past the house and disappeared round the bend in the road. The trees and the house throbbed briefly each time a lorry drove past. We were away from the suffocating air of the main roads of Colombo, the Capital of Sri Lanka. Here, in the suburbs, the surroundings breathed of life lush and ever-flowing.

We could hear a woman talking inside Antony's house. She spoke briskly and when her audience mumbled assent and dissent she laughed.

A man in his early twenties came out of the house and spoke to the two men, "go and wait near your lorry".

The two men got up immediately and went in the direction of the lorries. The man then turned to us and smiled to himself.

"You want a cow?" he asked. Shiva nodded.

"Have you chosen? Anyway we don't have many cows these days. Only bulls. You want a cow, then we have one that has just calved. Four days old. You will have to take mother and baby both", he continued.

"How much?" asked Shiva.

"Can't say. We will have to go and see. I must ask Antony Sir. Won't be less than twenty thousand rupees", he said, and looked at me.

"Let's first see", said Shiva. The man went back into the house. From inside we heard the man talking to the woman. When he finished, she cackled with laughter. A boy came out.

"Antony Sir says twenty five thousand", said the boy. Shiva clicked his tongue in impatience. He looked at me and said, "They take one look at someone like you and know you will end up paying any price. This happens all the time".

We followed the boy in the direction the two men had gone and took the bend in the road. On either side of the road were banana plantations with barb-wire fences separating them from the road. The emerald banana fronds rustled; under the trees, the ground-cover of creepers was moist with the morning watering. In the distance, the lorries were parked along the sides of the road. Then, I saw the crows. Hundreds of these large black birds were swooping, circling the sky, flying on to coconut trees, impatient, agitated, scanning the ground. Their cawing filled the air. I failed to hear them unless I listened.

We were led to a walled compound. At the entrance to it were the two men who had sat with us in the veranda unloading cattle from a lorry. Three other men carrying heavy wooden poles were helping them. One man stood inside the lorry surrounded by cattle; over a hundred were packed together. The cattle frothed at the mouth. He selected an animal at random and hammered it till it moved forward and fell from the floor of the lorry to the ground, five feet below it. Some of the animals buckled as they fell and lay on the ground unable to move. The other men kicked the animals away from the lorry towards the clusters of cattle that were scattered in the open yard. The new arrivals searched the dusty ground. There were no trees. The sun burnt mercilessly.

One of the men shouted to the boy we were with, "Not a good lot. Go back and tell them. Half of these are only skin and bone. And almost all are very old".

"We have been driving for three days. They always look like this by the time we get here", said one of the men who had sat with us. To this, the others snorted.

"What do you want us to feed them here? Grass? Antony Sir only pays by the lorry when we get this type of load. Don't expect to get money by the weight of the animal with this garbage".

"You look after your own problems. We'll look after Antony Sir. I have been doing this longer than you have. We know how we should get paid".

"See", said the boy to us, unmoved by the argument going on around us, "no cows. Only bulls".

"We were told there's a cow with a calf. Now if you don't give us that, we don't want anything else", said Shiva and started to walk out.

"Oh, you mean the cow with the four-day calf? They were taken to the other side last night. I don't know if it's still there".

"Well let's go and see", said Shiva. We went back onto the road and walked to another compound further down the road. Here, the walls were higher and the gate was closed. The boy went up to the metal gate and hammered on it till a man peeped out. He recognised the boy and let us in.

There was first, the smell. It was of cattle urine, which was neither repugnant nor nauseating as it carried a comforting picture of the open fields with it, but underlying it, there was something heavier, more insidious. The unmistakable smell of fresh blood. And then, there were men shouting; impatient commands, angry curses, followed by intermittent thuds above high-pitched animal cries.

Ahead of us we could see only rows of men standing, looking in. The boy shouldered his way through the spectators. At one end of the yard, now made smaller by the wall of people, stood over fifty cattle, huddle together, kicking the ground and backing further and further into each other. Most seem to have lost control of their bowels and were constantly urinating and defecating.

Opposite the cattle, was a makeshift shed with a cement floor. Piled on it were carcasses, some whole, some dismembered and skinned. Two men would take a carcass, weigh it and then hold it up to the spectators, shouting out the weight.

A few feet away from the shed stood a small group of men. They surrounded a bull that had been toppled on its side with its feet tied together. One man cut the artery in the neck deftly, effortlessly, and the animal struggled, crying hideously till it gradually went still. The waiting cattle kicked and bucked; answering with similar cries. The blood ran down a cement drain and pooled along the back wall of the yard. Several mangy cats and dogs hovered near it. As soon as the animal became still, two men untied its legs, lifted the carcass and threw it on to the cement floor where a man started hacking at the legs and the stomach with an axe. As the guts spilled out, crows would swoop down and grab what they could. They were everywhere; perched on the tin roof, on the walls, in the sky. Their droppings fell, white on the blood stained floor and the carcasses.

Another bull was dragged on a rope from the cluster of cattle, bucking and

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Author's Note – "The Making of the Meat" highlights actual events that take place in abattoirs in Sri Lanka, based on real encounters and personal experiences. All names of individuals have been changed.

struggling. As soon as the distance between the cattle and the shed was crossed, the man with the knife lifted a heavy pole and brought it down on the bull's head. The animal shrieked but did not fall; the group of waiting cattle echoed the shriek. Many started urinating. The man clicked his tongue with impatience and brought the pole down on the bull again. This time, as it buckled down, the other men grabbed the legs, tied them together and turned the animal over.

"There's the cow", said the boy, pointing to the cluster of cattle.

"But there's no calf", said Shiva. The boy shrugged, "Too late", he said. "It's easier to control them when the calf is taken up first. Anyway, Antony Sir always takes the calf".

"To the house?" I asked.

"Yes, the stomach with the milk half digested is a delicacy. Like beef-cheese sandwich. But we don't get that. Only Antony Sir. He gets the best, of course".

"Of course", said Shiva. He and the boy led the cow out of the gate.

"Give water later", said the boy. "They have been here since last night. No water. It makes it easier to handle them. How far are you going, you want a lorry?"

"Yes, to Colombo", said Shiva.

"Antony Sir gives a lorry for two thousand rupees to Colombo".

"That's too much. I will get a lorry from the road".

"No lorry from Antony Sir; no permit".

Shiva raised his voice, "Thousand rupees for lorry and twenty thousand for the cow. Nothing more", said Shiva.

The boy said, "Don't know. I will only tell".

We walked back to the house and sat in the veranda. The boy tethered the cow to the gate and went in. We heard him talking excitedly to the woman who laughed once he finished. We were led into her room.

"There is no calf madam, only the cow. So twenty thousand only", said Shiva. Woman smiled, "Young cow, only three and half years. You take or leave it. Twenty five and two for lorry".

"Last year we released eighty cows, and paid over and above the meat price, but not this much. Meat price of this cow must be fifteen thousand. You give for twenty thousand and one for lorry. Ok? Or you tell Antony that there will be no more cow releases from here", Shiva said with determination.

The woman looked at him, "Ok you wait outside". She lifted her heavy frame with difficulty from the chair and left the room. As she passed, she muttered something to her troupe of boys who were scattered around the room. They laughed gleefully. Some time later, a boy came out on to the veranda with the Cattle Transport Permit. He handed it to Shiva in exchange for twenty one thousand rupees.

We loaded the cow on to the lorry and followed in the car. Shiva relaxed.

"One more out, but we lost the calf", he said and sounded irritated with himself for the delay.

Mid-point to Colombo, according to the driver, the clutch-plate of the lorry gave way. The lorry stalled. Amidst the angry hooting from other vehicles and the flat refusal of the lorry driver to push the vehicle out of the centre of the road, Shiva managed to stop a passing lorry. He agreed to pay thousand five hundred rupees to its driver for completing the remainder of the journey.

As we continued behind the lorry in the car, Shiva said, "You can never fight that man. He always wins, he's got the police and the politicians on his side".

The cow was taken to a Hindu temple in Colombo where it would remain for the rest of its days: a life spared of a hideous death because of a legend. Every morning old women would throw garlands of bright marigolds round the cow's neck and anoint it gingerly with oil. The temple devotees would stroke it on their way to the alter: their homage to God Krishna's childhood as a cowherd.

In Antony's world he is God.

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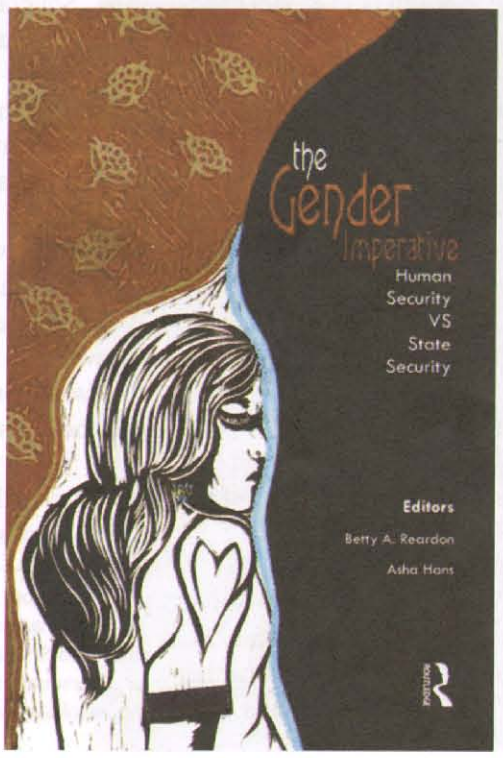
*Shiva is the son of a Brahmin head priest at a Hindu temple in Colombo. He works with other Hindu temples, the Sai Baba Centre, Buddhist temples, Christian churches and individuals in Sri Lanka who are campaigning to release and shelter cattle that are slaughtered in abattoirs such as that of Antony's. Shiva and many others are working to end the inhumane methods of slaughtering animals that are still prevalent in Sri Lanka. The meat that, at the end of the morning, reaches the open-air meat stalls, the sleek stainless steel counters of western-style supermarkets, five star hotels and family homes, all have the same origins. Regulations exist to ensure the humane transport, treatment, and slaughter of cattle, as well as the hygienic storage of meat. Also, it is illegal to slaughter cows. None of the regulations are effective, nor are they enforced. The abattoir owners work closely with police and the health officials.



The Gender Imperative: Human Security Vs State Security
Edited by Asha Hans, Betty A. Reardon
Routledge, 472 pages, 2010
£65.00

The book asserts that human security derives from the experience and expectation of human well-being which depends on four essential conditions: a life sustaining environment, the meeting of essential physical needs, respect for the identity and dignity of persons and groups, protection from avoidable harm and expectations of remedy from them. The book demonstrates their integral relationship to human security.

Patriarchy being the germinal paradigm from which most major human institutions such as the state, the economy, organised religions and social relations have evolved, the book argues that fundamental inequalities must be challenged for the sake of equality and security. The fourteen essays in the book critically examine militarised security in order to find human security pathways, show ways in which to refute the dominant paradigm, indicate a clear gender analysis that challenges the current system, and suggest alternatives to militarised security.

The Language of Reconciliation

Simbarashe Mabasha

Introduction

The Language of Reconciliation is a theory of communication by which I attempt to argue that how individuals or a group communicate in the pursuit of reconciliation is very important. I argue that the way such communication occurs between divided individuals and groups is a fundamental tenet in building a future of unity. I will use a Church-inspired reconciliation project at a small Church in Cape Town, South Africa, as the case study in this discussion.

Racial Reconciliation in a South African Church

South Africa is one of Africa's youngest democracies, founded in 1994 after over 200 years of Colonial, white minority rule. South Africa was governed by the Dutch and the British, who governed significant portions of the world for about 400 years between them. Unlike other colonies, South Africa has a select place in history, as it was governed by a systematic oppression very different from the colonial oppression by which the white minority Government of 1950 established Apartheid. Apartheid (pronounced *apart-hate*) is a word derived from the Afrikaans language, which was, ironically, a slave language that was a combination of Dutch, Malay, Khoi-San and English, but which was adopted by the white people of Dutch ancestry as their language. *Apartheid* literally means "separateness".

Unfortunately, the Christian Church, in many ways, was used to further the political, economic and social agendas of secular Governments that governed South Africa. Therefore, the Christian religion fostered and entrenched colonial and Apartheid ideals, which included racial, cultural and economic segregation. European Christianity's growth in Africa was coupled with the political, social and economic subjugation of indigenous Africans. Many, but not all, Churches in Africa were established under an oppressive system of government.

Thus, when it came to independence from colonial or Apartheid rule, Christians had also to be reconciled to one another, as there was segregation in the Church which was very similar to that in the rest of South Africa. However, it should be noted that there were clerics, including Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of the Anglican Church, who disagreed with the Apartheid regime. Unfortunately, reconciliation in Church seemed to occur somewhat slower than in the rest of the country. It was this lack of progress that led a small church in Cape Town, South Africa, to try biblical-based racial reconciliation.

The following discussion is a critique of the whole experience, with particular emphasis on the language and/ or communication involved in the process.

Lost in Translation - Finding a language for Race, Culture and Class in the Church

"Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all" (NIV, Colossians 3 v. 11)[1].

These are the words of the Apostle Paul with which he elaborates how Christ is all and is in all. Christ is in all races, cultures and classes. But why is it that we struggle to speak in Christ-terms or God-language when we deal with everyday issues of race, culture and class? It seems that many things are lost in translation. Good intentions are seen as condescending, patronising or paternalistic, cultural differences are interpreted as primitive or imperialist, asking for change is regarded as demanding something which one may not deserve. In the Church today, many things are lost in translation. The Church is struggling to find a complete language or form of communication that transcends these issues, and helps the Body of Christ fully realise that Christ is all and is in all.

Race Language

Race in an African context is a big box full of many complex puzzles that are hard to unravel and solve. The dominant racial groups are the white Europeans and the black African races with a small but important group of Coloured (mixed-race) and Indian Africans (Indian immigrants brought to Africa during colonial rule). What seems to be happening in multiracial Churches is that the two dominant groups are struggling to communicate their differences publicly and honestly to each other. Thus, these groups retreat into monochromatic spaces (single colour spaces) and speak about one another sometimes in unloving and unflattering language. Sometimes, this language is spoken in public spaces and is then interpreted as racist or prejudicial. God or Christ-centred language is the only bridge language between different races. But the Church needs to intentionally speak it and translate it well. At the moment, multicultural Churches are making the grave mistake of assuming that the body is communicating in the same language. More often than not, the different races speak in their own languages and use different dialects of the God-language. This leads to confusion, misunderstanding and frustration within the body, which plays itself out on racial lines.

Multiracial churches have to guard against assuming unity when it comes to matters of race. The Body of Christ has to be sensitive to the fact that it is made up of very different members that are united by Christ and thus have to work together for the glory of God. Therefore, different races in the Body of Christ cannot work individually or against each other. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 v 12-14 that "the body is a unit, though it is made of many different parts and though all its parts are many they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we are baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and we were all given the Spirit to drink[2]".

Cultural Language

Race language is very similar to cultural language, although there are some differences between the two. The main difference is that the dividing lines are ethnic, geographical and language based. Multicultural churches in Africa have to be aware of how easily secular cultural differences may infiltrate the Body of Christ. Some differences are acceptable and natural but others may be divisive in the Church context. Developing God or Christ-centred language in cultural terms is also difficult, but necessary. One way forward is to elevate God-culture over all other cultures. That is not to say that other cultures are not beautiful and God-inspired, but that the God-culture which is based on His word transcends other cultures. These cultures make up the Body of Christ but that body is headed by Christ who is a part of God-culture. Our different cultures can be united under the God-culture banner. Under this banner the Body of Christ is united through the union of the diverse and beautiful tapestry of ethnicities and languages.

Cultural language is a language of unity in diversity. More often than not, multicultural churches struggle to shake off secular and ungodly divisions, and this causes tension within the Body, on cultural lines. Churches have to look for what unites their diverse membership, instead of what divides them. Church is a place in which people congregate in the single-minded pursuit of God. So the congregation is united by God. Therefore, no matter how ethnically, geographically or linguistically diverse we are, God unites us.

Class Language

Class issues in the Church have always been a problem since the inception of the Church. Secular class language is based on two competing political ideologies; socialism or capitalism. Many Churches have been framed in these secular political ideologies, and thus, secular class issues are present in the Church. The battle of the Haves and Have-Nots plays itself out in the Church as well. In Africa, one finds churches specifically assigned for the lower class, middle class or the upper class. However, even in these mono-class Churches, there are those who do not have as much as others and more often than not class tensions arise.

The class language the Church employs has to become, once again, God-centred. How people give has to be God-centred, regardless of whether you are a Have or a Have-Not. In the Gospels, Jesus Christ refers to a woman who gives away her last few coins, and she is duly praised for her action since she gives from

1 Bible (New International Version). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984

2 Bible (New International Version). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.

her heart. Giving has nothing to do with class; it has everything to do with God. Class tensions arise when members of the Body of Christ have different expectations of each other when it comes to helping each other, especially financially. The Haves do not like to feel under pressure to give more. The Have-Nots expect the Haves to give more. The language that is used to communicate these issues is sometimes not God-centred but secular. So some will argue that we all cannot be the same financially, which is true. But because we are not the same, those who are blessed with more may be required to give more to those that do not have. Churches should be weary of issues of jealousy and envy within the Body of Christ. Jealousy and envy can be fostered on class lines, and if these class lines are defined in secular terms, they will be divisive and damaging to the Body of Christ.

How Churches communicate internally is very important. The language that is used for this purpose is of utmost significance. Many things are lost in translation though. Several Churches are very diverse, and thus, the language used to communicate should be God-language.

The Language of Reconciliation

The Language of Reconciliation is a form of communication that tries to avoid alienating members or groups involved in any form of the reconciliation effort. It is important that the method of communicating the past, pain suffered, disappointments and expectations, is constructive and not destructive. Failure to communicate with each other even when individuals or groups have the same goal in mind is common. It is therefore important that those involved in reconciliatory projects ask the following questions in order to improve the communication process.

What are the Goals of the Reconciliation Process?

This may seem like a simple question, but my experience has made me realise that people from a conflict background have different goals when it comes to reconciliation. In my experience, the group that used to be in control of the political and economic processes will try, to some extent, to use the reconciliation process as a way to appease feelings of guilt, or to fully understand the experiences of the oppressed / disadvantaged groups. It might provide the more powerful group an opportunity to become aware of the sufferings of the oppressed groups. In South Africa this has been the case, as many in the white minority seemed to be unaware of government atrocities committed against the black majority. Goals of the oppressed / disadvantaged groups might be to vent pain and obtain some form of political and economic retribution from those who used to be in control. Both groups involved in the reconciliation process have to be honest and frank as to what their goals are. They can then, as a group, set up universal goals to be achieved through the reconciliation process.

What are the Expectations of the Reconciliation Process?

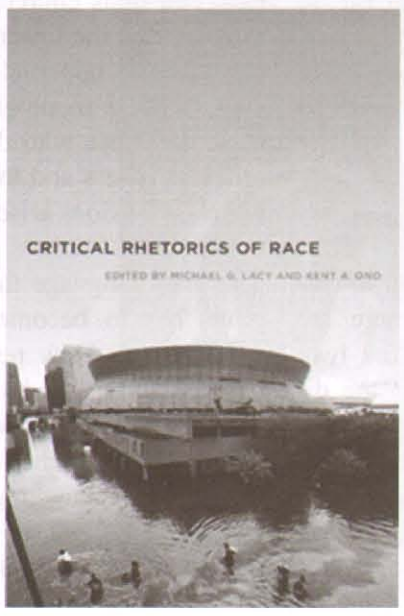
This is a very important matter, as the groups involved have to be clear about their exact expectations. Many mistakes have been made in the reconciliation processes that I have been part of due to the inability of the relevant groups to be honest about their expectations. Thus, half-way through the process, when those expectations are not being met, animosity and tension grow which, in many cases, threaten to derail the reconciliation process or create a flawed outcome. This will, in turn, affect all future attempts at reconciliation, and future generations have to deal with the consequences. In South Africa, small-scale reconciliation processes struggle with this problem the most, as the groups involved do not articulate their expectations at all, or do not articulate them well enough. Thus, throughout the process, achieving any amount of reconciliation becomes a painful struggle for all parties involved. In the case of most reconciliation projects in South Africa, Black members had expectations which were very different from those of the white members, especially with regard to economic issues. As a result of these differing expectations, and because, in some respects, goals were not clearly expressed, many important features of the process were lost in translation.

What are the Practical Ways of Achieving Long-lasting Reconciliation?

National reconciliation processes are complex, and require time to be evaluated and critiqued. However, smaller and more personal reconciliation processes may be able to achieve practical methods or results throughout the process. I have come to understand that the building and nurturing of personal relationships that lead to friendship can help the reconciliatory process to a very great extent. Removing the racial, economic, cultural and social masks might help people to relate to each other better as human beings. After establishing a basic relationship, and once people begin to relate to each other because of their common humanity, the process of tackling pain, hurt and expectation will become easier. It is therefore important to note that, in many cases, people have more things in common than what divides them. However, reaching that point of common ground is sometimes difficult, particularly because people are more guarded and defensive during the initial stages of the reconciliation process. The reconciliation process needs innovative thinkers and people who are able to identify common ground, and create opportunities to build relationships. Some opportunities come in the form of simple acts such as enabling people to have meals together or providing them the opportunity to attend sporting or entertainment events together. The main aim would be to develop relations that can go beyond race, culture and class.

Conclusion

The Language of Reconciliation is the language with which people communicate the past and present in order to help build a better future for one another. Clear communication is a fundamental component necessary for the success of any relationship. However, effective communication can be difficult to develop, especially when groups of people have been divided along racial, economic and cultural lines for over centuries. Therefore, a language to communicate the differences should be reinvented if we desire to celebrate human unity in diversity.



Critical Rhetorics of Race
Edited by Michael G. Lacy and Kent A. Ono
New York University Press, 368 pages, 2011
$79.00

According to many pundits and cultural commentators, the U.S. is enjoying a post-racial age, thanks in part to Barack Obama's rise to the presidency. This high gloss of optimism fails, however, to recognise that racism remains ever present and alive, spread by channels of media and circulated even in colloquial speech in ways that can be difficult to analyse.

In this groundbreaking collection edited by Michael G. Lacy and Kent A. Ono, scholars seek to examine this complicated and contradictory terrain while moving the field of communication in a more intellectually productive direction. An outstanding group of contributors from a range of academic backgrounds challenges traditional definitions and applications of rhetoric. From the troubling media representations of black looters after Hurricane Katrina and rhetoric in news coverage about the Columbine and Virginia Tech massacres to cinematic representations of race in *Crash, Blood Diamond,* and Quentin Tarantino's films, these essays reveal complex intersections and constructions of racialised bodies and discourses, critiquing race in innovative and exciting ways. *Critical Rhetorics of Race* seeks not only to understand and navigate a world fraught with racism, but to change it, one word at a time.

Education for Nation-Building

Tissa Jayatilaka

. . . facilis descensus Averno;
noctes atque dies patet atri ianua
Ditis;
sed revocare gradum superasque
evader ad auras,
hoc opus, hic labor est.
(The *Aeneid*, VI, 126-129).

The above lines constitute one of the most famous excerpts from Virgil which in translation reads as, "Easy is the descent to Avernus; for the door to the gloomy underworld lies open both day and night. But to retrace your steps and return to the upper air – that's the task, that's the toil".

Then there is that nursery rhyme that we learnt as children years ago:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

The few profound lines of the Roman epic and the simple ones of the nursery rhyme help illustrate the status of Sri Lanka today. As a country, we have hit rock-bottom, if not the gloomy underworld itself. To reach the surface, to pull ourselves up and recover our lost decencies, will surely require toil of Herculean proportions. What a gigantic task! What labour is required to overcome the awful fall that we have had to endure?

I recall Virgil's lines, and those of Mother Goose, when I am invited to contribute my thoughts on the kind of education the younger generation ought to receive, to begin the daunting task of our national resuscitation and regeneration. I have greater faith in the latter day Sri Lankan counterparts of Aeneas than in either the King's horses or the King's men to resurrect Sri Lanka from its parlous state. In the reflections that follow, I have striven to speak and write my truth with sensitivity to other opinions, within the human limitations I share with my fellow citizens. I have, however, not hesitated to express my views candidly.

I am in complete agreement with Susil Sirivardana's assertion that "Nation Building, as Nation Building, has been singularly absent from [significant] writings and discussions on politics in Sri Lanka". Sri Lanka is yet a country and not a nation. A country is a physical entity with defined geographical boundaries and a certain number of human beings living in that space. For a country to become a nation, its populace must form a cohesive and integral whole; must be able to bind together in such a manner as to be indivisible. Sri Lanka's people should bear allegiance to an ethos that is all-embracing and indissolubly Sri Lankan. Such a populace will be made up of individuals who can and will rally round that geographic entity which is home to all. If these characteristics are present, the country then becomes a nation in which socio-cultural heterogeneity is recognised, respected, valued and cherished while national homogeneity is celebrated.

By the foregoing definition, Sri Lanka is a country of several ethnic groups, yet to morph into Sri Lankans. Even these groups are divided among themselves on caste and class lines to such an extent that we could even label their behaviour as tribal. We are Moors, Malays, Parsis, Sindhis, Bharathas, Chettis, Tamils and Sinhalese living in separate worlds. A country divided against itself cannot hope to become a nation.

The idea that a united, integrated citizenry living in harmony is a prerequisite to the emergence of a strong nation is a precept of Buddhist philosophy. The Buddha was a consistent advocate of human brotherhood based on harmony and integration. As we know, the Buddha opposed any discrimination based on caste, creed, colour, religion, power, position or wealth. The philosophy he introduced to the world extols the nobility of the *Eightfold Path*, which, if followed, leads individuals and societies to fulfilment. The primary focus of Buddha's endeavours was to demolish the pernicious caste system which dominated life in the India of his time, but the arguments he advanced to demonstrate the irrationality of the caste system apply with equal force to other forms of discrimination based on colour, ethnicity, religion or economic standing.

My view is that Ceylon, as we were called then, missed the opportunity to grow into a nation at the end of the British colonial period in 1948. The competition and rivalry among the ruling clique of our country led to ruinous national division, and so we were well on the path to self-destruction even before we could say "freedom!" Given the uneasy relationship then between the Indian plantation workers, other Indians resident in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and the Ceylon National Congress from 1927 to 1931, the consideration of the grant of citizenship to these Sri Lanka-based plantation workers of Indian origin was not a priority for the Government of D.S. Senanayake. In fact, the Government of the day was actually hostile to the blanket grant of citizenship rights to this group. This state of affairs led to the significant and controversial change caused by the *Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act, No.48* of 1948, which, together with the *Ceylon Citizenship Act No. 18* of 1948 and the *Indian and Pakistani residents (Citizenship) Act No.34* of 1949, caused distortions in the electoral system of the fledgling independent country. The Citizenship Act of 1948 created two classes of citizens - those by descent and those by registration. The immediate effect of this distinction was the disenfranchisement of a large number of Indian Tamils, mostly in the central highlands, but also in other urban areas, together with some Indian and Pakistani Moors. Not a very happy beginning for a country freed from the yoke of colonialism. By the time political amends were made years later, the disillusionment of the non-Sinhalese segment of the Ceylonese population with the political establishment of the state had become entrenched, to the detriment of national unity and harmony. The largely Sinhalese segment of the Ceylon National Congress, founded in 1919, coalesced in 1946 to form the United National Party (UNP) under the leadership of D.S. Senanayake. Those opposed to the UNP were the left-wing Trotskyites who formed the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (The Ceylon Equal Society Party / LSSP) and the Bolshevik Leninist Party – which, having splintered from the LSSP, later changed its name into the Bolshevik Samasamaja Party (BSP) – and the Moscow-oriented Communist Party (CP). In 1948, the Tamil political leadership split into two segments: those who joined D.S. Senanayake and the UNP, of the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress (TC), and those opposed to the TC, who formed the Tamil Federal Party (FP). Their Sinhala counterparts splintered into the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party within less than 48 months after "independence". To those of us who believe in our common humanity, subsequent events have proved that those early divisions and segmentations were shadows cast by events to come. To the great detriment of our common future, competing Sinhala and Tamil ethno-nationalisms thus strangled the birth of an overarching Ceylonese nationalism.

Clearly, the previous generations have failed Sri Lanka. How then should we seek to empower and enable our younger generation to undertake the responsibility of resuscitating and revitalising our society to make us a nation? Assuming that education is absolutely crucial to such a re-generation of Sri Lanka, how should we set about to reform our system of education? An essential step is to de-politicise it.

Need for De-politicisation of Educational Reform

Given that the administration of education in Sri Lanka is centralised, and the population served by the system relatively small, education reform has hitherto been instituted and terminated with a startling regularity. Consequently, we have had to endure United National Party-inspired or Sri Lanka Freedom Party-inspired reforms, as opposed to national educational reforms. In *Tiny Sapling, Sturdy tree: The Inside Story of Primary Education Reforms in Sri Lanka*, Kamala Peiris relates how a very significant systemic restructuring of elementary teaching was curtailed by a change of Government. Such reforms as those introduced in the past are highly politicised; they are not based on sound educational theory, but serve a particular political agenda. We need a system of education that will serve Sri Lanka, not a political entity within it. We should enable the dog to wag the tail.

Our educational reforms for the twenty-first century must be predicated on belief in a common future for all citizens of Sri Lanka. We must take pride in our core values and celebrate them, with each ethnic group cherishing its language, religion, and culture. However we must come

together on the basis of our shared values, including our political and economic systems. Sri Lankans by and large accept the democratic way of life and subscribe to a non-statist economic policy, regardless of their individual core beliefs and values.

The motto of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum* – out of the many, one, or many uniting into one – is apposite here. An absence of fundamental unity, however, makes it necessary for outside arbitrators to get involved in bringing us together each time we go through periods of mad conflict. Until and unless we recognise our common humanity and learn to love and respect each other, we will be forever doomed.

W.H. Auden's lines from his poem "September 1, 1939" illustrate these sentiments brilliantly:

> There is no such thing as the State
> And no one exists alone;
> Hunger allows no choice
> To the citizen or the police;
> We must love one another or die.

However difficult the task may seem, if we wish to become a nation, we have to build a national community free of the idea of ethnic hatred and caste division. Such a project obviously calls for courage, imagination and statesmanship. Nothing less will save Sri Lanka.

What should a system of education, aimed at building country into nation, look like? Any education reform in Sri Lanka should immediately eliminate the tyranny of the pre-university examinations, making the Ordinary Level examination ("O' Level) and Advanced Level examination ("A" Level) more creative and less dependent on cramming. Such modification would also severely curtail the tuition industry – a definite side benefit. The "O" and "A" Level examinations today are fossilised educational artefacts that fail to reflect what we know about how to promote, reward and measure authentic learning. Not only do these GCE Examinations primarily reward only one kind of learning style, they also convey a promise that cannot be delivered. That is, on the basis of available statistics, of the approximately 75,000 students who are deemed "qualified" for university admission based on their GCE "A" Level Examination, and who apply for such admission, only 12,500 (a little over 17%) can be accepted.

At the core of educational reform are the status, training and professionalism of the individual teacher. Even people justly or unjustly cynical of courses in education theory and pedagogy will, I think, agree that hiring secondary school leavers and university graduates solely as a way of dealing with unemployment does not enhance the possibilities of students' learning. Being unemployed and a potential voter at a national election should not be the primary qualification for becoming a teacher.

Beyond this starting point, it is crucial that teachers have access to a variety of teaching methods other than the traditional lecture. "Lectures" often degenerate into dictation, which in turn promotes passive learning geared towards passing the Final Examination, rather than an active understanding of the meaning and practical consequences of what is being learned. In *Folklore of Sri Lanka*, Nandasena Ratnapala recounts the folk tale in which Mahadenamutta falls into a well. Instead of rescuing their teacher, Mahadenamutta's five disciples study the handbook of instructions written by their teacher. The handbook contains, however, no instruction as to how the disciples should conduct themselves in case the teacher falls into a well. Sinking farther into the well, Mahadenamutta demands that his students give him the book of instructions and the "great teacher" proceeds to write in it "Whenever your teacher falls into a well, take him out". Mahadenamutta then throws the book of instructions back to his disciples who, upon reading it, are finally able to pull their teacher out. In other words, passive models of education tend to produce passive behaviour and an inability to connect classroom learning with everyday life.

Free Education

Perhaps it is also time to re-consider the principle of "free education". This is clearly a policy that, for all of its undisputed value at the time it was conceived, when formulated and put into practice, can be considered today as a misnomer. The education currently imparted free to some of our children is sadly and tragically inadequate. It makes a mockery of the hard work, far-sightedness and the dedication with which C.W.W. Kannangara and his colleagues put into effect this "pearl of great price". Even though the public impression is that education in Sri Lanka is free, the facts argue to the contrary. The Open University, the external examinations departments of all of Sri Lanka's universities, and the private Degree Awarding Institutes (The Royal Institute, The Brighton Institute, Institute of Technological Studies, The American College of Higher Education, The American National College and other such Institutes) – all of which charge fees – enrol more students than Sri Lanka's "free" conventional universities do. The higher secondary education costs are not insignificant, and virtually every school-child I know receives tuition for at least in a subject or two. A university contemporary of mine, now a senior don at the University of Kelaniya, and who resides in Kadawata, told me the other day that he brings his daughter all the way to Nugegoda for a tuition class in a particular subject she is weak in. Moreover, only two per cent of the 20-25 age cohort receives "free" university education anyway. In an educational system characterised by severe financial limitations, it seems to me that the Government should concentrate its financial aid on students from families who cannot afford to pay reasonable fees.

As Ralph Pieris has pointed out (see his "Universities, Politics and Public Opinion in Ceylon") "free education" had its genesis in the populist politics of the 1930s. The advent of universal suffrage under the Donoughmore Constitution, implemented in the thirties, made those aspiring for membership in the State Council "woo their electorates with promises of indefinite extension of educational opportunities, without any reference to the employment prospects for educated youths". This was perhaps one of the earliest examples of political meddling in university affairs in Sri Lanka. Today, such pressures, external to the university, determine the development of higher education in a manner that is commonplace in our country. Election posters of the thirties, presumably not dissimilar to those that ruin our landscape today, advertised political candidates as "friends of the poor", for the majority of the needy poor of the day had a vote. Through the three Officers of State appointed to the State Council by the Governor – the Chief Secretary (defence, external affairs and public services), the Financial Secretary (finance) and the Legal Secretary (justice, i.e., legal matters and the conduct of elections) – the colonial Government of Ceylon kept a stranglehold on political power. The democratically elected Ceylonese members of the legislature, who were hostile to the Secretaries, not infrequently sought to act as a permanent opposition. They considered it their role to embarrass the colonial rulers, especially the Finance Secretary, in order to secure as many benefits from them as possible. Thus was born the system of central schools, at first, and later, in 1945, the Free Education Scheme to provide education from kindergarten to university free of charge.

J.E. Jayasuriya's views on free education, with which I agree entirely (see his *Education in the Third World – Some Reflections*) are worthy of citing in full:

> **The immediate consequence of the principle of free education accepted in 1945 was to give a bonanza to the well-to-do by making available to them without payment the good education that had hitherto been paid for by them**. The masses continued to receive free the poor quality education that had all along been free to them. The Central School idea represented a genuine attempt to extend the benefits of a good quality education, but the establishment of Central Schools could proceed only at snail's pace as the lion's share of the finances of the Government was taken up by grants of great liberality to the few prestigious schools which had been earlier fee-levying but now had become free. The Junior School came as a half way measure in the government sector between the old, bad, free school for the masses and the new and better Central School for a few of them, but even Junior Schools were not established in sufficient number. Such small mercies as did come their way placated the masses, and they were too inarticulate to ask for full scale justice. For its part officialdom was content to programme changes at the minimum rate of disturbance to its own lethargy and complacency. The policy that had been accepted was free education from the kindergarten to university. **Education became indeed free for all, but what was free was a good education for the few and a bad education for the many. In other words, from the point of view of quality, free education was more a mirage than a reality in so far as the masses were concerned** (emphasis mine) (Jayasuriya, "Education in the Third World" 86-87).

However flawed or insincere it may have been in conception, "Free Education" has had its benefits. A sig-

nificant number of Sri Lankans from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds have aspired to and secured a place in the sun (in the civil service, in the universities, and in the schools of Sri Lanka), thanks to the opportunities provided for them under "Free Education". But with the disappearance of the sizeable sterling balances accumulated during the war, the maintenance of funds to sustain the lofty ideal of free education proved a challenge that could not be overcome. Free education, as originally conceived by its founding fathers, has today all but disappeared. What remains of that lofty ideal is now a shell, and only those who are today's Hobsons choose it. A serious lack of intellectual and material resources has made the continuation of it worthless, but for reasons of political expediency, no one is willing to acknowledge its demise.

Instead, thanks to political expediency and to the obvious attractiveness of this concept, "Free Education" has, over the years, acquired the status of a sacred cow. To re-examine the concept with contemporary insights, in the spirit of seeking to make a good thing better, is not to be anti-egalitarian or non-progressive, as purblind defenders of the status quo would have it. Far from it. I am not advocating the discontinuation of free education. All I wish to suggest here is that (a) we modify this time-honoured but hoary concept, so that the state can afford to continue it into the future, and (b) we offer it to those who are most deserving and in need of it. I am not for a moment suggesting, to borrow the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams, that everyone should stand on their own two feet and turn into reliable "independent" consumers and contributors to the GNP. Rather, to quote further from the 2009 Christmas sermon of the good Archbishop, delivered at the Canterbury Cathedral, I suggest that we help each other, receive from each other, and learn how to depend on the generosity of those who love and stand alongside us. Those of us who are able to pay for the education of our children and to contribute tangibly towards the education of those who are less fortunate, should do so. Such action on our part would enable the Government to distribute its meagre resources more equitably and concentrate on the truly needy, to ensure the continuance of free education with excellence, as we were able to do at the inception of the idea many years ago.

Language Policy

Another priority for nation-building is the revaluation of the language policy in education. In what language ought a child in post-colonial Sri Lanka be educated?

In the twilight years of the British colonial period here, some members of our political and academic elite began to decry the use of English and to advocate instead the use of the mother tongue of a child as the medium of instruction in Ceylon's primary and secondary schools. Pressures for the replacement of English as the official language by Sinhala and Tamil arose in the 1920s. In 1943-44, the State Council of Ceylon decided that, within a reasonable time, Sinhala and Tamil should become national languages.

As in most other things at this juncture in our British colonial period, in the instance of agitating for the dethronement of English, we were following the lead set by India. The *swabasha* movement, as it came to be called, arose as a protest against the dominance of the majority by the English-educated minority.

Adding to the social divisions based on caste, ethnicity and religion in the Ceylon of the British period, there arose two other significant socially divisive tendencies which had their origin in British rule and cut across caste, ethnic and religious distinctions. One was the class distinction, a product of the emerging capitalist economy and the social order that the British helped to bring about; the other, closely related to, and interwoven with the concept of class was the English language. Ceylonese society came to be, and continues to be, divided into two clear-cut groups on the basis of English; its English-speakers and the *swabasha* or indigenous language speakers. The former segment is made up of those belonging to the western-oriented middle-class of Ceylon/Sri Lanka, with a good percentage of Christians, especially of the Protestant persuasion, being in this group. British rule produced an English-educated class of about 6 or 7 per cent of the island's population and, not surprisingly, this small coterie effectively monopolised the best jobs in the government and the mercantile or private sectors of Ceylon. Although its numbers today have dropped significantly as a result of the migration of a sizeable segment of this class to greener pastures (the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and Canada), the English-speaking class remains dominant.

The *swabasha*-speaking segment was and is the rural Buddhist Sinhalese and the predominantly Hindu Tamil masses. Also in this category of non-elites are the Indian Tamil plantation workers.

By 1935, the agitation for *swabasha* was quite vigorous, and closely related to the movement for educational reform that had begun in earnest. In the same year, the Ceylon National Congress published a memorandum calling for educational reform, and one of the striking features of this strident call was its demand for the introduction of Sinhala and Tamil as media of instruction. Those behind this call for the switch from English to the indigenous languages were some of the notable Ceylonese school- teachers in certain prestigious English secondary schools in the island. With the passage of time, they were to become household names, as they eventually achieved high public office: C. W. W. Kannangara (Minister of Education, 1936 – 1947), W. Dahanayake (Cabinet Minister, 1956 – 1959, 1965 – 1970, Minister of Education, 1956 - 1959 and briefly Caretaker Prime Minister, 1959 – 1960), P. de .S Kularatne, and T.B. Jayah, a Malay, who was a member of the first post-independence government. Their counterparts in Jaffna went one step further when they led a boycott of elections to the first State Council. This group of nationalists among our then secondary school teachers believed that a system of education based on our social and cultural values was absolutely necessary to mobilise the masses in the struggle for national independence, and that a change in the medium of instruction was vital to bridging the gap between the socially elite English-speaking minority and the rest of the population.

The Hindu Board of Education, which controlled the Hindu schools in the north, took a far-sighted and enlightened position when they decided to introduce Sinhala as a compulsory subject in all their schools. In 1938, the Jaffna Youth Congress decided that the teaching of Sinhalese and Tamil should be made compulsory in all schools in Ceylon. The true nationalists of the time believed that bilingualism would be an ideal force for national unity, and a most effective launching pad for the quest for independence from colonial bondage. As in 1905, when Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Ananda Coomaraswamy spearheaded the movement for a national university, in the late 1930s, too, there were positive signs that Ceylon could achieve such welcome unity of national purpose. Yet the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Sinhalese to learn Tamil led to Ceylon's foregoing a crucial ingredient necessary for the formation of a nation state, as opposed to a "state nation". Consequently, while the agitation for *swabasha* continued, no thought was given to building a link language between the Sinhala and Tamil speakers once English was dethroned. If the Sinhalese did not learn Tamil and vice versa, in what language would the one communicate with the other, once English ceased to be? In their monumental and tragic ignorance, the ultra-nationalists of the time ignored the sensible advice of Robert Marrs, the British expatriate and first Principal of the Ceylon University College. He had presciently alerted the Ceylonese to the danger of the triumph of *swabasha*. If at that time Ceylon was divided on the basis of English into two nations, the removal of English would in turn lead to the more dangerous division of the nation on the basis of Sinhala, the language of the majority, and Tamil, the language of the minority.

The above factors notwithstanding, the Executive Committee on Education in the State Council under the Donoughmore Constitution began, from 1939 onwards, a concentrated effort to reform education with special emphasis on the medium of instruction. After prolonged deliberations, the Executive Committee on Education produced a landmark report in 1943 on education in Sri Lanka. Among the significant recommendations contained in the report was that on language; the replacement of English by the mother tongue of the student, as the medium of instruction in schools in Ceylon.

Definition of the Mother Tongue

As a part-time university teacher and education administrator for almost 35 years now, I have considerable reservations about the definition of the mother tongue that is in use. Is the language of one's parents one's mother tongue? What if the parents are from two different ethnic backgrounds? Even if the parents happen to be from the same ethnic background, would it necessarily be the case that their offspring should use the language of their parents as their mother tongue? Even at the risk of being autobiographical, let me take

my predicament as an example to illustrate the point I seek to make here.

My father and mother are "Sinhalese", if one is able to accept this label as valid for a moment. My father came from a non-anglicised, semi-urban background, while my mother was from an anglicised and urban one. My father was extremely fluent in English and Sinhala and, as all public servants of his day, had a smattering of Tamil. While English was my mother's linguistic forte, she could get by in Sinhala and Tamil. As with the rest of my siblings, I am proficient in English and Sinhala. Yet, I am far more fluent in and comfortable with using English to express myself. It is the language I am at home in, so to speak. It is the language in which I can be spontaneous. Hence although technically, by virtue of my parentage my mother tongue ought to be Sinhala, for all practical purposes it is English.

On the basis of the above reasoning, I am opposed to the definition given by some educationists and the officialdom of Sri Lanka with regard to the mother tongue of a Sri Lankan child. In my view, the official stance is erroneous and extremely damaging. While I agree with the dominant pedagogical view that a child learns best in his or her mother tongue, I am in total disagreement with the restrictive Sri Lankan definition of what the mother tongue of a Sri Lankan student actually is. Indeed I would argue that a child born to Sinhalese parents, if brought up in a Tamil-speaking household, would express him/herself best in Tamil. The language in which that child would function most effectively would then be Tamil and not Sinhala. Ergo, that child's "mother tongue" would be Tamil.

Let me illustrate by further personal experience. I began my primary and secondary education, as did most children of my parental background, in Sinhala. By the time I reached the upper forms, from age thirteen upwards, as a student of biological science, my medium of instruction became English. Except, of course, for Sinhala, Religion and Civics, I studied all my other subjects – English, Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Mathematics – through the medium of English. As it turned out, when I sat my GCE O Level Examination, I opted to answer both my Religion and Civics papers in English, although I had followed classes in these subjects in Sinhala. Having failed to secure all of the five credits necessary then to continue with my studies in biological science, I decided to change horses in mid-stream, as it were, and switched to studying subjects in the field of arts and the humanities. My new subjects were English Literature, Greek and Roman Civilization, Buddhist Civilization and Political Science. I was compelled by the prevailing regulations to follow the two latter subjects in the Sinhala medium, as Sinhalese citizens had no choice but to follow all arts and the humanities subjects, as secondary school students, in Sinhala.

Given my greater fluency in English, that being the language in which I had followed my biological science-related subjects, I failed the two subjects I studied in Sinhala when I sat my GCE A Level Examination. As there were no stringent rules to bar a private student (i.e. a student with no formal school affiliation) from sitting the examination in the English medium, on my subsequent attempt, I sat my A Level Examination in English and passed it with ease, securing very good grades for the two subjects, Political Science and Buddhist Civilisation, that I had failed earlier.

While I do not contest the notion that the mother tongue should be the language of instruction in our schools, I would argue strenuously that the definition of the "mother tongue" should be an inclusive rather than an exclusive one. I am also in favour of giving parents and students the freedom to choose the medium of instruction in school. For such sensible flexibility to prevail, we need to allow for competent English-medium instruction, and therefore, we must make possible the recruitment of good teachers with a sound knowledge of English. We must also provide for regular in-service training of teachers to ensure the updating of skills.

For those who might contend that this may lead to the creation anew of a privileged coterie of citizens, I would point out that my proposal for making available English-medium instruction in our schools would go hand in hand with the strongest possible recommendation for an expanded and clearly thought out English Language Teaching programme for all school children in Sri Lanka. Such instruction in English would not only ensure, to the extent humanly possible, equality of opportunity for all students, but would also ensure that we did not revert to the bad old days when only a minority of social elites had access to English. As we know, the idea that English education fosters elitism has been an influential one. But the way to deal with this is not by restricting the number of English-speakers even more. It is by widening its reach and democratising it. The elites have the means to access English, come what may. Locking out the underprivileged would be tantamount to reinforcing their lack of privilege. My advocacy of English as a second language for Sri Lanka is premised on another important reason; if a second language is to be learned, the choice should fall on the language that is the greatest linguistic force in the world today. Admittedly, the ideal methods of teaching English to Sri Lankan children have yet to be worked out on the basis of research and experiment, but some guidance may be had from the writings of those who have taught English to non-English speaking children in Japan, China, Malaysia and India.

Once a child acquires competence in a second language, the psychological argument for the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, ceases. The example of the significant number of our citizens who have successfully completed undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes in Russia, Germany, Japan and China is a good counter to the nationalist argument that the mother tongue medium should continue throughout a student's career. So is the lack of Sinhala and Tamil textbooks and journals. Such a lack has crippled generations of university products who are left to the tender mercies of incompetent instructors who regurgitate the notes they picked up from their teachers decades ago. No independent reading is possible, as publications in the mother tongue are not available, and such as are available in English are beyond the grasp of those competent only in their mother tongue.

Bilingualism

The proposition that efficient bilingualism is not beyond the capacity of the majority of men and women is implied in most discussions of language policy, and, explicitly stated in a few of them. The experience of other countries suggests that it is a reasonable proposition to accept. In parts of Europe (notably in Switzerland), it is not unusual for the common citizen to be an efficient trilingual. In India, even illiterate men and women converse readily in two languages, and it is possible that, if educational facilities had existed, they would have achieved an efficient bilingualism (the word "efficient" is used to mean that a person can not only converse in a language but can also read and write it). An efficient bilingualism is therefore not an unreasonable goal to set ourselves in Sri Lanka.

On the basis of arguments proffered and reasons adduced in the course of the foregoing discussion, I would earnestly recommend the following be taken into serious consideration in any revaluation of Sri Lanka's language policy in education:

a) Theory and orthodoxy should not be the bases on which we define the mother tongue of a Sri Lankan student of the 21st Century; and

b) Efficient bilingualism, if not trilingualism, should be the goal we set for all Sri Lankans.

Proposals for Curriculum Reform

In so far as our curriculum goes, my suggestion is for a major overhaul of it, both at school and undergraduate levels. The History syllabus in particular, taught through our education system, needs significant revision as it is one of the biggest impediments to the fostering of national unity and harmony. Instead of forging mutual understanding and reconciliation, the history taught in our country, according to the moderate view, tends to foster a mood of recrimination rather than a mood of renewal. It causes men and women to look back in anger, rather than to look forward in hope and confidence. The education system of our country, on the whole, has not merely tended to keep the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim students apart, but has actually instilled in them ethnic feelings. There are in Sri Lanka several Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim *Maha Vidyalayas*; separate schools for the different ethnic groups, thereby virtually institutionalising ethnic segregation! Although detrimental to nation-building, no politician or political entity wishes to re-consider changing this horrendous state of affairs, for reasons of political expediency. This is the reason why I began by declaring that building a nation out of the different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka will require Herculean energy!

A study of school text books and communal (ethnic) relations conducted by the Council for Communal and National Harmony in the early 1980s found that the Sinhala text books produced by the state have endeavoured to instil feelings of ethnic

superiority among the Sinhalese children. The unprecedented outbreak of ethnic violence in the same decade, at the University of Peradeniya, which caused grievous physical and psychological hurt to Tamil students, may well be ascribed to this type of indoctrination of students by the flawed education system of Sri Lanka. It should be noted here that on all previous occasions of ethnic rioting in the country, at large, the University of Peradeniya was able to rise above this human depravity. Indoctrination of students via flawed educational systems is, sadly and tragically, a characteristic common to most countries of South Asia. As Kudlip Nayar points out in the article "A Doomed Region", in schools of certain states in India, songs that exalt the regional idea have been introduced into text books (8). History books used as texts for the lower grades have disclosed a marked tendency to exaggerate past achievements of the dominant linguistic groups. History should be taught in Sri Lanka in such a way that it brings to the forefront the rich diversity of our society in order to encourage our essential oneness. Religion and history should be subjects that bring us together, not that which separate us. Religious Studies should incorporate into its syllabus the basic philosophies of all the major religions practised in the country. I wish to adapt and echo here the exemplary thoughts and words, reflecting the core values / shared values and assertion made above, of former United States Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, expressed in a different context, but which are nevertheless relevant to us in Sri Lanka today:

> We have a chance to become someday a nation in which all ethnic stocks and classes can exist in their own selfhoods, but meet on the basis of respect and equality and live together, socially, economically, and politically. We can become a dynamic equilibrium, a harmony of many different elements, in which the whole will be greater than all its parts and greater than any society the world has seen before. It can still happen. (Chisholm 23)

A Minimum Required Programme (MRP) of Study

To make a solid beginning, to reach that exalted and blessed status of "a harmony of many different elements", we desperately need to re-structure our curriculum. Such a re-structured curriculum should be broad enough to impart a sound education, and at the same time, be able to appeal to the imagination of a student. The ideal would be a curriculum that is inter-disciplinary and which avoids over-specialization at too early a stage. The rigid compartmentalisation of the curriculum that forces students at an early age into science, arts and commerce streams must be avoided. A commingling of the three would immeasurably strengthen the curriculum by preventing early academic over-specialisation, and would thereby help convert learning into an exciting adventure, as opposed to a burdensome exercise, as it is at present. A curriculum concerned merely with loading factual knowledge on a student and conveying loads of information will be both unwholesome and grossly inadequate. A minimum required programme of study (MRP), that should be both sweet and useful (*dulce et utile*) to a student, is our urgent need; useful, in that the MRP is challenging and stimulating, while at the same time it is aesthetically appealing and enjoyable ("sweet").

Making sure that the MRP is appealing and attractive to the student is only half the battle; the other half is to provide quality teachers – teachers who can draw out the knowledge that lies dormant in each student and lead him / her to the Promised Land of meaningful and superior quality education. As suggested by the authors of *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community* (1990), nine experiences are essential to the kind of holistic and wholesome education we should promote in Sri Lanka, and which this essay focuses on. Some of these might be thought of as skills, while others can be considered as "ways of growing and understanding". However, all nine experiences are crucial to a coherent and wholesome education. These experiences include Inquiry, Literacy, Understanding numerical data, Historical consciousness, Science, Values, Art, International and multicultural experiences, and Study in depth.

1. The MRP should focus on making students think for themselves through critical analysis of subject matter where the teacher acts as a facilitator, as one who shows the way, or as a *margopadeshakaya*. Our tuition-oriented curriculum of today does not stimulate thinking. It only leads to rote learning, which in turn produces mostly pliant and subservient students who cannot think independently and freely. A teacher today is a figure of authority, one armed with facts, who then seeks to fill the empty vessel that is the student with information and knowledge, not wisdom. This type of teacher is very different from the guide, philosopher and friend, or the *margopadeshakaya* that he / she is meant to be. Children possess inherent capacities at inquiring, analysing and thinking for themselves. But stimulating and imaginative teachers are necessary to draw out and refine the untutored genius that resides within every child.

2. The word "literacy" lends itself to varied meanings. It is used here to denote the fluency in writing, reading, speaking and listening that a decent curriculum should help a student achieve. "Writing" in this context means the mastery of language to express how we "think, feel and judge". The avoidance of meaningless ambiguity, the reliance on simplicity in the exploration of complex thought so that whatever is written can be understood by the average reader, and the ability to enlist wit and humour, when occasion demands them, are attributes of a properly educated and literate student.

3. Reading may be done for pleasure, for obtaining information, for dispassionate inquiry and analysis, and for discriminating between right and wrong, good and bad, the genuine and the spurious. One effective way of countering some students' over-reliance on lecture notes is to encourage greater reading; "those structured invitations to contemplation and self-education that characterizes memorable undergraduate courses..." (*Integrity in the College Curriculum 16*). Two other crucial aspects of literacy are speaking and listening. A good communicator is usually also a good listener, for it is imperative to listen to multiple points of view before agreeing or disagreeing with issues. As in writing, directness, clarity and simplicity are invaluable in speaking as well. Some of us, confusing learning and intelligence with ponderousness, tend to speak like encyclopaedias; a confusion that a truly educated person avoids at all times. Consequently, educated schoolchildren and graduates are those who can read, write and speak in such a way that they can be easily differentiated from the general body of students.

4. Statistics scream at us today from all sides. Figures, tables, averages of births and death rates, costs of living and such other vital statistics abound, and we are often confused and confounded by them. Politicians use such numerical data to dupe us, as do commercial advertisers to seduce. The satisfactory interpretation of this data requires from us a capacity for discrimination. A sound education should equip us with the tools to distinguish fact from fiction, and the sincere persuader from the calculating manipulator. The suggestion here is not to introduce a compulsory course in Statistics, but for an education which ensures that the students are made aware of the importance of balancing the quantitative and qualitative aspects of knowledge.

5. Historical consciousness is a most useful attribute for a good education. The availability of multiple choices, the presence of ambiguity and paradox in our lives, and the significance of human curiosity, among other things, make recognition of complexity a vital need for us. An understanding of the historical background enables us to deepen our understanding of human nature at any given time. Citing an example or two from the study of English Literature, we can say that our readings of Chaucer and George Eliot would make us familiar with the life and society of Mediaeval and Victorian England. It is also likely that if we are familiar with an outline of the history of these two epochs, we would better understand Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Situating a work of art against its socio-economic and cultural background yields rich dividends and deepens our understanding of that work of art. Likewise, we will be in a position to appreciate better the stupendous scientific discoveries of ages past, mostly taken for granted today, if we place them in their historical context.

6. The furious pace of contemporary change has rendered contemporary existence increasingly complex, and nothing contributes more to this pace of change than science and technology. Science and technology helped humans to land on the moon, enabled us to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki, made us aware of the dangers of accelerated climate change, placed

computers on most of our desks, and have introduced modes of communication which can help us to communicate instantaneously. In other words, science and technology have revolutionised our lives. Yet, most of us continue to live in societies where compartmentalised knowledge keeps the greater part of the society in the dark about these technologies and how to make use of them. Many carry the enormous intellectual handicap of having no knowledge of science and technology whatsoever. A familiarity with science and the scientific method, their strengths and limitations (for we know that there are questions that science neither asks nor answers), will serve to de-mystify the world of knowledge available to us through the sciences. Too many of us, familiar only with the arts and the humanities, continue in our ignorance to believe that the human condition is explained best by literature and philosophy. An inter-disciplinary curriculum that combines arts, science and commerce-based subjects will pave the way for a student to receive a more rounded education, in which each discipline enriches the other. At the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya, in the early 1970s, there was an admirable effort to diversify the undergraduate curriculum in the arts and the humanities. Undergraduates in the latter disciplines were made to follow a foundation course of lectures through which they were introduced to significant themes and issues in the discipline of science. There was also an excellent forum for the discussion and exploration of inter-disciplinary subject matter at the *Popular Science Gossip* held regularly at the Faculty of Science, which was addressed and attended by members of all faculties at the University. With the passage of time, and given the vagaries of Sri Lanka's zero-sum politics, these useful initiatives were unfortunately abandoned.

7. To attempt to make sense of the world around us, to search for proper answers to questions that the ambiguities and paradoxes of our existence force upon us, to satisfy our insatiable curiosity and to help us make wise and civilised choices from the welter of choice available to us, we need right values. Initially, every educated person studied theology which was part of their core curriculum, but which was supplanted by moral philosophy in the nineteenth century and which was, in turn, supplanted by the "value-free" social sciences and objective sciences. In our part of the world, too, education in the past had a religio-ethical dimension to it as education was closely associated with the temple and clergymen. While I am not blind to the benefits which are attached to a "value-free" education in the furtherance of secularism, it is my conviction that a value-based education is the more desirable model. Values help us to make moral judgements and however wary we may be of final answers, we will ignore only at our peril the task of inculcating humanistic values in our students. The arrogance of a Creon, the tragic single-mindedness of an Antigone, the calculated judgement of a Maname Queen or the fraught determination of a Sinhabahu remind us of the challenges and opportunities involved in choices, and the role that values (or the lack of them) play in the making of choices. Is majoritarianism right? Should the war in Iraq have occurred, regardless of the absence of weapons of mass destruction? Is the war in Afghanistan justifiable? Were the summary executions of Rohana Wijeweera and Velupillai Prabhakaran necessary? These are questions for which there are no clear-cut answers. Both human subjectivity and objectivity need to be employed in the search for meaningful answers to these imponderables of life. Hence, the indispensability of a value-based approach to education.

8. An appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of life contributes immeasurably to the making of an educated citizen. Music, poetry, drama, dance, painting, pottery and sculpture are essential in this regard. Art encourages creativity and enriches our spirit and imagination. Art enables us to explore life from a multiplicity of angles and dimensions and, through such imaginative exploration, to apprehend what it is to be human. Without an awareness of and experiencing the fine arts and the performing arts, we will be like horses tied to a carriage. We will succeed in reaching point B from point A, but we would surely have missed appreciating the beautiful waterfalls, sunsets, the flora and fauna on either side of the road.

9. Acquaintance with the world outside our narrow confines makes possible a broader outlook on life. The lack of such acquaintance is bound to make us resemble the proverbial frogs in the well. An education that helps us to ground ourselves firmly in our own ethos whilst immersing ourselves as fully as possible in that of our fellow-human beings outside our location will make our worldview more wholesome. A curriculum that fosters hybridity, and promotes internationalism will serve to underscore our common humanity. It will make us realise that, despite our different skin colourations, genders, ethnicities, religious upbringings, cultural backgrounds and geographical limitations, we are essentially one. This profound idea is reflected in Hindu and Buddhist philosophies as expressed in the Theory of Non-duality and Maya, and in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (*The Flower Ornament Scripture*), which upholds that nature cannot be reduced to "basic building blocks". The *Avatamsaka Sutra*, according to Gunapala Dharmasiri, is a Mahayana Buddhist text that was composed in India during the first centuries of the first millennium of the common era. Dharmasiri goes on to state that the sutra deals with the universe in great detail, going to the extent of giving details of various galactic systems, even naming some. According to these philosophical constructs, the universe is an inter-connected whole in which no part is any more fundamental than the other, and every part contains all the others – in the words of the great seer Sri Aurobindo, "all in each and each in all". This essential oneness of the universe is found not only in Eastern mysticism but also in Western mystical thought as apparent in the following lines from the poem "Auguries of Innocence" by William Blake:

> To see a world in a grain of sand
> And heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And eternity in an hour.

A study of the different languages and literatures, political systems and religions of the world will make us realise our vulnerability and our inter-dependence as human beings, huddled together on an increasingly volatile planet.

A system of educational instruction predicated on the salient features delineated above, should provide for the right depth of academic exploration. A superficial dip into the sea of knowledge should prove as detrimental as too deep a dive into it. For we know that there are dangers in over-specialisation, as much as in an education that avoids any specialisation at all. As ever, the middle path, deep but not overly deep, is best. When we impart information and knowledge to our students using such a balanced method, they will be able to process these two ingredients, and find the wisdom or the kind of knowledge that goes beyond common understanding.

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Pansiya Panas Jātaka Pota: The Story of a Sinhala Classic

Ranjini Obeyesekere

The Sinhala *Pansiya Panas Jātaka Pota* (*Book of Five Hundred and Fifty Jātaka Stories*) is without doubt the best known, best loved, and one of the most venerated books in Buddhist Sri Lanka. The fact that the term *vahansē* (used generally to indicate an exalted being such as the Buddha or a king) is often used as part of the title of the book itself – *Pansiya Panas Jātaka Pot Vahansē* – indicates the reverence with which the book is treated.

The broad human appeal of these stories is because the Bodhisattva appears in recognisable situations and contexts with which readers can identify in almost all of these stories. He appears in human or animal form, sometimes as the hero of the stories, sometimes as a character in them, and sometimes as a commentator on the action. In addition, since these stories are believed to have been related by the Buddha about his own previous births as a Bodhisattva, they are also seen as part of the continuing Buddha story, and so have taken on the aura of the Buddha. Hence the veneration with which the book is treated. We know that over the centuries, in Sri Lanka, the *Jātaka* stories have been constantly referred to and discussed in sermons by Buddhist monks, used as images and illustrations in literary works, and depicted in paintings and used for sculptures by artists. Thus these narratives have seeped deep into the people's imagination and become part of their vocabulary and their culture.

Origins of the *Jātaka* Collection

The Pali Buddhist canon consists of five hundred and forty-seven stories. Its earliest version is believed to have been an oral collection of verses. Scholars such as Professor Kulasooriya and Professor Rhys Davids suggest that there was, very likely, an oral prose commentary too, which may have accompanied some of these verses.

Rhys Davids, in his Introduction to the English translation of the Pali *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*, edited by Fausboll (1880), admits that the orthodox Buddhist belief is that soon after the Buddha's death, a collection of five hundred and fifty stories together with a commentary was complied, called *The Book of the Five Hundred and Fifty Jātakas* and that, "Both text and commentary were then handed down intact and in the Pali language in which they were composed, to the time of the Council of Patna (held on or about the year 250 BCE) and they were carried in the following year to Ceylon by the great missionary Mahinda. There the commentary was translated into Sinhalese… and was retranslated into its present form in the Pali in the fifth century of our era" (Davids ii). Rhys Davids, however, argues that there is little direct evidence pointing to such a compilation undertaken soon after the death of the Buddha. Nevertheless, he does cite certain instances as evidence of the very early origin of at least some of those stories; The fact that several stories have been referred to in the early *Pitakas* (canonical texts); the existence of a text titled *Cāryapitaka*, found in the Pali *pitaka* which shows "where and in what births Gōtama had acquired the Ten Great Perfections"; the *Buddhavaṃsa*, a Pali commentarial text that gives "a history of all the Buddhas, and an account of the lives of the Bodisattva in the character he filled during the lifetime of each of the twenty four previous Buddhas" (Davids iii-iv.), suggest the very early origin of some of the *Jātaka*.

Moreover, there are pre-third century BCE sculptures, at Sanchi, Amaravati, and at Bharut, where even the title *Jātaka* is indicated in the inscriptions below the bas-reliefs. The existence of the *Jātakas*, as one of the nine sections (*angānī*) into which the Buddhist Scriptures were divided at a very early stage, and the fact that the *Jātaka angānī* is found in both the Theravada and the Mahayana traditions, also suggest that the *Jātaka* collection must pre-date the Council of Vesali (387 BCE).

Other scholars believe that the five hundred and fifty *Jātaka* stories, as they are found now in Pali, were originally a Sinhala prose commentary on the Pali verse collection of *Jātakas*, which was later translated into Pali, together with many other Sinhala commentaries, around the fifth century CE. There is no definite evidence to say that the *Jātaka* collection, as it exists today, was put together in Sri Lanka prior to its translation into Pali; nor is there sufficient evidence, up to now, to indicate that the Sri Lankan tradition is inaccurate. All we can say is that some of the stories do possibly go back to the time of the Buddha, but that the collection as we now know it was clearly put together much later by one or more editors / authors. The fact that it was organised into sections (*nipāta*) on the basis of the number of verses found in each story[1], suggests that the verses were the defining feature of the earliest collection. For example, the first *nipāta* consists of 150 stories, which have one verse each. The second *nipāta* has 100 stories, each having two verses. The third and fourth sections of 50 have three and four verses each and so on till the twenty-first *nipāta*, which has five stories, each having 80-90 verses. Section twenty-two has ten stories, each of which has 100 or more verses. It is thus very likely that the verses predated the present prose commentary, to which some of the verses are still attached. We do know, too, that several monks from neighbouring Buddhist lands visited Sri Lanka's many famous monastic centres around the fifth century CE, and translated many Sinhala commentarial texts into Pali. The present fourteenth century Sinhala version that we have today, interestingly, maintains the same order of the sections (*nipāta*), even though the stories are now entirely in prose. Some Pali verses do exist, but they are very few and have no relation to the manner in which each *nipāta* was originally organised.

The present Sinhala text of five hundred and forty-seven stories (three are probably lost or the title was, possibly, given to round off the number) is a translation or adaptation of the Pali *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*, and dates back to the fourteenth century. While being close to its Pali original (Cowell), and basically similar in the number, order, and content of the stories, yet, as is the case with so many Buddhist texts translated from one language to another, it can also be considered a different text.

How so? A large part of what we consider as Buddhist literature and literary history is the product of translations, and of translations of translations, of texts and commentaries that have travelled back and forth from one language to another. In the process of transference, they have undergone many shifts and changes, in style and presentation if not in content, and have sometimes taken on a life of their own. We know that as Buddhism spread throughout the Southern, Eastern, and Central Asian regions, what was often transported from country to country and language to language consisted of actual physical "texts". The early Chinese monk Fa Hsien and others came on long and arduous journeys in search of "texts". So did the many Indian, Burmese, Cambodian and other monks, travelling through the then Buddhist world. In this early transference, Sri Lanka played a key role, one that is often not recognised since the language of the country is hardly known and spoken anywhere else in the world.

Sri Lanka's Role in the Transference and Translation of Texts

When Buddhism spread from India to Sri Lanka, at the time of the Emperor Asoka in the third century BCE, it was exclusively in the form of an oral tradition. Although formalised at the different councils after the Buddha's death, it was retained and dispersed as an oral tradition. "Thus have I heard", indicate the canonical texts over and over again. While the canonical texts were preserved and diffused throughout the Buddhist world in Pali or Magadha, as they were considered the "word" of the Buddha, in Sri Lanka as elsewhere, they were translated into local languages and interpreted for the local population in the language of the country. Thus, a tradition of scholarship developed in Sri Lanka's major monasteries, where monks studied not only the canon which was in Magadha, but several other languages, and became fluent interpreters, commentators and exponents of Buddhism.

Thus, Sri Lankan monks undertook the translating, transcribing, and preserving of these texts as a key responsibility. Not only had they to learn several languages, they had to also develop technical skills relevant to

1 *ēka nipāta* consists of about 149 stories with one verse each; *duka nipāta* with two verses, *īika nipāta* three, and so on till the *mahā nipāta* consists of stories with over a hundred verses.

the writing of texts on palm leaves, to preserving them and to keeping such manuscripts in safe storage. This tradition of monastic learning existed right up to the end of the nineteenth century in spite of wars, internal political upheavals and conquests by foreign colonial powers.

In the first century BCE, the Pali canonical texts were first committed to writing by Sri Lankan monks at the monastery in Aluvihare. For such a procedure to have taken place, there had to have been not only a tradition of scholarship and familiarity with the Indian languages, but also an already established writing tradition. The evidence for this comes from rock inscriptions, edicts by kings, and inscriptions on rock ledges of caves that indicate the names of early Buddhist donors to forest monks. Besides, the keeping of written records – dates, names and important events, especially those that had to do with the religion – had become an important, on-going, monastic activity. The major Sri Lankan chronicles, the *Dīpavaṃsa*, (fourth century CE) the *Mahāvaṃsa* (sixth century CE) and its extensions, the so-called *Cūlavaṃsa*, it is believed, depended for their source material on these temple records. There is further evidence from citations and references by scholars and foreign monks of the existence of this rich Buddhist literature of stories, sermons and commentarial texts that had developed in Sri Lanka during these early centuries.

Geiger's *Cūlavaṃsa* (1: 37. 230) makes reference to the Indian monk Rēvata, who introduces the text to the monk Buddhaghōsa:

> The text alone has been handed down in Jambudīpa, there is no commentary here. Neither have we the deviating system of the teachers. The commentary in the Sinhala tongue is faultless. The wise Mahinda who tested the tradition laid down before the council as it was preached by the perfectly Enlightened One and taught by Sāriputta and others, wrote it in the Sihala tongue and it is spread among the Sihalas. Go there, learn it and render it in the tongue of Magadha. It will bring blessing to the whole world.

As we know, the monk Buddhaghōsa did just that! He came to Sri Lanka in the fifth century CE, spent many years in the major monastery at Anuradhapura, the then capital of Sri Lanka, learned the Sinhala language, and translated an enormous number of commentarial texts from Sinhala into Pali. There is a similar reference in the colophon to the *Dhammapada* Commentary, where another fifth century South Indian scholar monk states the following:

> A subtle commentary thereon [the *Dhammapada*] has been handed down from generation to generation in the island of Sri Lanka, but because it is composed in the language of the island it is of no profit or advantage to foreigners. If translated [into Pali] it might perhaps conduce to the welfare of mankind. This was the wish expressed to me by the Elder Kumāra Kasyapa, self-conquered, living in tranquillity, steadfast in resolve. His earnest request was made to me because of his desire that the Good Doctrine might endure (Burlingame).

Then, with the slightly condescending superior attitude of a classicist towards an indigenous vernacular, the monk adds, "Therefore, I shall discard this dialect and its diffuse idioms and translate the work into the pleasing language of the sacred texts".

Several centuries later, a Sinhala monk, forced now to use the Pali as the source for his translation because the original Sinhala work had been lost, states the following with mock humility:

> We have abandoned the strict Pali method and taken only the themes in composing this work. It may have faults and stylistic shortcomings but you should ignore them. Be like the swans who separate milk from water even though the milk and water be mixed, or like those who acquire learning and skills even from a teacher of low status, because it is only the acquisition of knowledge with which they are concerned... So consider only its usefulness and apply the healing salve of the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* to remove the hazy film of Delusion that clouds the Eye of Wisdom, and go happily and with clear sight along the highway of right actions to the city of nirvana (Obeyesekere 137).

With mock modesty and subtle irony, the Sinhala monk thus restores to his translation "the diffuse idioms" of his native language, which his august predecessor had so assiduously removed!

C.E. Godakumbure, in his book *Sinhalese Literature* (1955), has listed a large body of works in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit, written by Sri Lankan monks, scholars, and scholar kings, between the first and the fifteenth centuries CE. Many of the very early works were lost or destroyed, sometimes through sheer decay over time, or due to neglect / lack of use because of the archaism of the language. Sometimes these texts were damaged as a consequence of internal religious schisms, but most often as a result of successive wars and invasions of various external powers such as the invasions by the Cōla, Pandya, Damila rulers of South India, and later, by western colonial powers. Ironically, then as now, the major targets or victims of military conquests were religious shrines, monastic institutions and their property such as publications. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues by the Taliban, the burning of the Public Library in Jaffna during the Sri Lankan Government's war against the Tamil Tigers, the destruction of Tibetan monasteries and their libraries by the Chinese, and the looting and devastation of the ancient collections in the Museum of Baghdad during the Iraq war, are but a few more recent examples of such persisting madness.

The ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka record many such invasions, which were invariably accompanied by the destruction and vandalising of Buddhist shrines and the burning of books. In the reign of King Mahinda V (981 CE) the Cōla armies overran the country, destroyed the monasteries and took away treasures. Another devastating attack was by Māgha of Kālinga in 1214 CE, described vividly by the author of the chronicle; "They wrecked the image houses, destroyed many *cētiyas*, ravaged the *vihāras* and maltreated the brethren... Many books, known and famous, they tore from their cords and strewed them hither and thither" (*Cūlavaṃsa* 80 sec 56-80). The chronicles also record, however, in equally elaborate detail, the continuous efforts of local rulers, many of whom were themselves scholars and poets, to rewrite texts, rebuild shrines, and re-establish the religion. Thus, not long after Māgha's rule, King Vijayabāhu III (1232 – 1236) restored several shrines and religious institutions:

> Deeply grieved in his heart that on the island of Lanka so many books that dealt with the true Doctrine had been destroyed by the alien foe, the ruler called together laymen, endowed with a good memory and with knowledge, pious, well instructed, free from indolence, and skilled in quick and fair writing, and along with these many other writers of books, and made all these write down in careful fashion the eighty four thousand divisions of the Doctrine (*Cūlavaṃsa* II: 81; 41-44).

Rewriting, re-translating and transcribing were on-going processes, because again and again, the chronicles refer to such incidents. During the reign of King Parākramabāhu IV (1303-1333), for instance, a similar process is recorded to have taken place:

> To the office of royal teacher the king appointed a Grand *Thera* from the Cōla country, a self-controlled man, versed in various tongues and intimate with philosophic works. Ever and again he heard from him continuously all the *Jātakas*, learned them and retained their contents. Then he rendered by degree, these five hundred and fifty beautiful *Jātakas* from the Pali tongue into Sinhala speech. He recited them in the midst of the Grand *theras* who were intimate with the Three *Pitakas* and after correcting them he had them written down and distributed throughout Lanka. And these *Jātakas* he made over to a wise *thera*, Mēdankara by name, whom he had gained for that purpose, that they might be preserved in the succession of his disciples and thereby handed down still further (*Cūlavaṃsa* II: 90; 81-86).

What is interesting and easily forgotten is the constant contact and support that existed between Sri Lankan and South Indian Buddhist monks and scholars in their attempts at replacing lost texts. So when Magha's Kalinga armies destroyed Buddhist shrines and books, monks from the Cōla kingdom were invited to restore those texts and traditions. Again, in the introduction to our text of the Sinhala *Jātaka* stories, the author makes a reference probably to the same king:

> In order to dispel any doubts, wrong views and stories that may have risen in the minds of various people, monks and nuns... the compassionate [king] Parākrama said it was important to present in the *elu* language, the sermon on the five hundred and fifty birth stories [of the Bodhisattva]. At his invitation and through the efforts of the chief minister Vīrasiṃha Patirāja these *Jātakas* and their commentaries were correctly written in *elu*

(*The Revered Book of Jātaka Stories* 4 [translation mine]).

Cowell, in his preface to the English translation of the Pali *Jātaka Stories*, writes that "The native tradition in Ceylon states that the original *Jātaka* book consisted of *gāthas* (verses) alone, and that a commentary on these was written in very early times, in Sinhalese. This was translated into Pali about 430 AD by Buddhaghōsa, who translated so many of the early Sinhalese commentaries into Pali, and after this, the Sinhala originals were lost" (Cowell xxiv).

Unlike in the case of the *Dhammapada* commentary, alas, no colophon exists for the collection of Pali or Sinhala *Jātaka* stories. We only know that a flourishing Buddhist literature did exist in Sri Lanka in these early decades, and that a large number of these Sri Lankan commentarial texts were translated back and forth into other languages by visiting monks and scholars. By the mid and late fourteenth century CE, after the South Indian invasions, there was a resurgence of Buddhist literature in Sri Lanka, written in Pali, Sanskrit, and Sinhala. By this time, many of the early Sinhala commentarial texts had been lost, and only the Pali ones were available. Thus, there was a need to actively retranslate or rewrite them in Sinhala. It is a mark of the vitality and continuous cross-fertilisation that took place between the Sinhala and the Sanskrit, Pali and Tamil literary traditions, that such translations, retranslations and re-creations did continuously take place. There are occasional references in the *Jātaka* collection itself to the names of those who wrote commentaries on the text. In story Number 110 there is a reference to a monk, Vācissara Thera, who had lived in the Polonnaruwa period and had written an interpretive commentary on the *Jātakas*. Again, in story No 111, there is a reference to the noble Pandit Rājamurāri, a teacher well-versed in the words of the three-fold canon, who commented on the meaning of the Pali verses in the *Jātaka*, and who had given the *Jātaka* its name. These comments and references not only give an account of the constant commentarial work on texts, but also of how the Buddhist literary tradition was constantly revived and reinvigorated in Sri Lanka by the close cooperation between kings, scholars, and scholar monks, both local and foreign. It also helps us to understand the many variations in the techniques used by the translators, and their different relationships to their original texts. For example, the passage on how King Parākramabāhu IV approached his task suggests one such method.

The stories were generally "recited" by a scholar monk learned in many languages, then memorised by the listener and translated from the Pali into Sinhala. The translation was read out / recited before an assembly of scholar monks, corrected, and then put down in writing. Thereafter, it was distributed throughout the island and senior monks were assigned the task of passing these texts down to their pupils so that they could be preserved over generations. This approach to the process of translation involved a rigorous attempt to maintain accuracy and a close adherence to the original. This was clearly the method used for the translation of the canonical texts in order to preserve their authenticity. It was the approach adopted by King Parākramabāhu and perhaps also by many of his predecessors who had the task of restoring the lost or destroyed texts by rewriting and translating from other sources. It was also the method followed by nineteenth century Western scholars and translators of classical texts. Rhys Davids, in his English translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* states, "The plan has been to produce a literal translation as nearly as possible – an absolutely correct reproduction of the statements recorded in the chronicle (Davids vi).

We come across yet another method of re-writing / translation; the one used by the translator of the *Dhammapada* Commentary. He decided to discard the excessive stylistic elaborations of the original text and instead, rewrote it in the style and conventions of the target language – in this case, using elegant, concise Pali. The translator of the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* decided to use only the themes or content of the stories, and instead of merely translating, "transcreated" it into a Sinhala work, infusing it with the grace and exuberance characteristic of his own language and style. Both authors claimed to have "translated" the original text, and both respected the order and the basic content of their originals. Thus, the number of stories and their central content remained basically the same in both texts. However, in the telling of the stories, there were several stylistic differences between the two, given the freedom with which the translation was carried out. The important fact that surfaces from these varied and different approaches to the task of translation is that the major consideration was always the audience for whom the work was being translated. Buddhaghosa and the scholar monks of that period were clearly writing for an audience of Buddhist scholars – in an international language of Buddhist scholarship. The monk Dharmasena, author of the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, was addressing a lay audience of Buddhist listeners. Thus, the text is written in the language of the popular Buddhist sermon, replete with images drawn from the known world of his village listeners / readers. His translation thus reflects the harsh realities and cultural mores of that world to which his listeners / readers could readily respond.

The Sinhala version of the *Jātaka* stories, as we have it today, called for a slightly different approach to the task of translation. The Sinhala tradition is that the oldest Pali version contained only verses or *gāthā*. The expansive prose commentary was added, in accordance with popular lore, by the Sinhala interpreters and commentators on the text. What was translated by Buddhaghosa into Pali is thus believed to be this Sinhala commentary, which was condensed into the Pali translation. When retranslated back to Sinhala in the fourteenth century, perhaps because of the stricter approach adopted by King Parākramabāhu IV, it is not as free, as exuberant or as filled with elaborate stylistic ornamentation as the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* translation of the Pali *Dhammapada* commentary. However, in spite of its being closer to the Pali version, by the time the stories resurfaced back in the Sinhala, the prose had taken over. The sections or *nipāta* are maintained as divisions, but their rationale is lost. The Sinhala *jātaka* collection has thus resulted in just a collection of stories on the past lives of the Bodhisattva.

The Sinhala collection of the *Jātaka* stories is very well-known throughout Sinhala society, especially in the villages. King Parākramabāhu's plan to distribute it around the island, and familiarise it to successive generations of Sri Lankans certainly seems to have paid dividends! The stories have seeped into popular culture, and into the very life-blood of the people. They are used again and again in sermons, as illustrations of moral conduct, of human folly, and to discuss the whole gamut of good and evil as people know it in their everyday lives. The storyline is simple, even simplistic at times, or elaborate, with stories within stories that resonate and reverberate on each other. Similarly, its moral insights can be straightforward, or complex and profound. The characters too are sometimes lightly sketched, while at times they are psychologically complex and elaborately drawn. These stories are familiar not just at the level of popular culture and folk lore. Generations of Sinhala writers, poets, dramatists and creative artists, fascinated by them, have used them as a source for many major works, both classical and modern.

I shall provide an example of how seemingly simple stories resonate with each other and amusingly underline a moral position. Number 139 is titled "The story of the Crow":

> A Brahmin was walking along the street. He saw two crows seated on an ornamented gateway erected on the road.
> "I am going to defecate on this Brahmin's head", said one crow to the other.
> "This one is a very powerful Brahmin. Therefore if you raise his wrath he could wreak vengeance on our entire race. Don't do it!"
> "I cannot stop myself now. Come what may I must do it".

He does, and the Brahmin vows vengeance. The Brahmin gets his chance when the king asks his advice in treating his sick elephants:

> "If you apply the oil obtained from the fat of crows the wounds can be cured", said the Brahmin.
> "Kill all the crows", ordered the king.
> Accordingly, the town's residents killed hundreds and thousands of crows and heaped them up.

It needed the persuasion of the Bodhisattva, now born as a crow, to convince the king:

> "Our tribe is so timid that the mere sight of a small boy is enough for us to take fright and fly away. Thus there is not, was not, and never will be, any fat in our bodies". He adds, "Your Majesty, a king should not act simply because someone says so, without investigating its validity. A king should pay no heed to advice uttered in hatred".

This story provides an amusing contrast to the story titled Number 173:

> At that time there was a severe drought affecting the area. Many creatures suffered without water. If people happened to pass by they would get a little water. If no one passed by, they got no water. For a long time now no man had walked on that road, so many creatures

suffered without water. A certain monkey was sitting beside a water hole waiting for someone to come and give him some water. The Bodhisattva happened to pass by, drew some water and gave some to the monkey as well. The monkey, after drinking his fill, climbed up a tree and started mocking and jeering at the Bodhisattva.

"I gave water to the likes of you and you now mock me. There is no gratitude to be found in a base creature", said the Bodhisattva.

"Where have you found anyone of our kind being grateful for any help received? Besides, this is not all, I will now defecate on your head before I leave", said the monkey. He watched from a branch, excreted on the Bodhisattva's head, and then left. The Bodhisattva, without any malice to the monkey, washed his hair, bathed, and went on his way".

The stories illustrate two very different approaches to a similar incident. In the story of the Brahmin, there is a subtle critique of the Brahmin's pomposity. The action of the crow can be interpreted as a "put down". The Brahmin is not only enraged, but is determined to exact a vicious vengeance on all crows. By contrast, the Bodhisattva, faced with a similar incident, realises that it is in the nature of a monkey to act like that, and, in a seeming anti-climax, washes his hair and proceeds on his way. The moral point is amusingly but clearly drawn in terms of a known world and its realities.

The *Jātakas* also contain a vast amount of information about the lives and customs of the people of that time, their attitudes to kingship, caste, marriage, their economic activities, and social and religious beliefs. In the *Nigrōda Miga Jātaka*, (Number 12) there is a detailed description of how, tired of being forced to go hunting daily with their king who loved venison, the people decide to make a park, and corral the deer into it. This way, they would be able to provide venison on a daily basis for the king, and still be free to go about their own activities:

> So the people of that country got together to create a park with grasslands and waterholes… They came to the area where the deer were, saw them and surrounded them. Then they beat the ground, the bushes, the trees with the sticks and batons, scared the deer… and managed to drive the deer into the park and closed the gate. The people then went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, please do not keep us from our work by taking us hunting every day. We brought a herd of deer from the forest and left them in your park. From now on, you can kill them for your meals". Thereafter, the people left for their villages.

This solution is quite pragmatic, and encourages neither servility nor revolt.

By browsing through the titles in the contents page, one can get an idea of the range and varying complexity of these stories. Many seemingly simple tales, on close reading, reveal several profound insights. No doubt this is why so many creative works have evolved from them, both short skits and complex, long dramas such as *Mahāsāra Jātaka* and *Lōmahaṃsa Jātaka*. The stories lend themselves readily to such transformations. The Sinhala *Jātaka* stories, unlike in the Pali version, invariably begin with elaborate images that describe the glory of the Buddha. Sometimes extremely apt and powerfully resonant, and at other times merely repetitive, they nevertheless convey a sense of veneration that I consider an important distinguishing feature of the Sinhala text. Similarly, the opening sections, which provide the contexts in which the stories were related, have been preserved in the Sinhala text. The Pali version, translated into English by Cowell, gives the first line of the stanza or *gāthā* followed by a brief summary of the context. I shall illustrate the difference by referring to the very first story, the *Appaṇṇaka Jātaka* in the Sinhala version, which begins with an elaborate account of the Bodhisattva's birth as the ascetic Sumedha during the time of the Buddha Dīpankara:

> Four Uncountables [*asankya*] and a hundred thousand eons prior to the Bhadrakalpa age of our Supreme Lord Buddha, Teacher of the Three Worlds, the auspicious icon of the Sākya clan, who grieved at decay, who was a store house of compassion, a refuge of the destitute, beautiful in all things; [another] Supreme Buddha named Dīpankara was born. He followed after three [other] Buddhas, Thiṇhankara, Mēdhankara and Saraṇankara. He [Dīpankara] was a fearless supporter of the Three Worlds, a light to dispel the darkness of Delusion, a bringer of solace to all creatures, of peace to the good, of terror to Māra's hosts, and one who showed all creatures how to partake of the nectar of *nirvāna*. At the time he was living in the Sudasun monastery…

The text goes on to describe the story of Sumedha, and his fervent wish to become a Buddha, followed by a summary account of the Buddha Gautama from his birth to his achievement of *nirvāṇa*.

Repeatedly, human experiences and emotions are depicted effectively through the various characters in these stories. They are used as moral pointers to suggest how one should or should not conduct oneself in everyday life. It is for this reason that the collection is very popular, greatly loved, and venerated across generations.

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Eight Poems

Selected and Translated by M. A. Nuhman

They and You

M. A. Nuhman

They came by jeep,
Knocked at your door
and dragged you off
for investigation.

Your mother cried,
screamed and pleaded.

When she went to their camp
and asked for you
No,
They denied it
they hadn't taken you.

Your flesh torn,
bones crushed and
your blood mixed with the soil.

Now it is your turn.

You came from the forest
by foot.
You knocked at my door
and dragged me away for
investigation.

My mother cried,
screamed and pleaded.

When she came to your camp
and asked for me
No,
You denied it
you hadn't taken me.

My flesh torn,
bones crushed
my blood too
mixed with the soil.

Dawn

Vannachiraku

Our nights are uncertain
Dear,
let us look at each other
before we go to bed
This may be our last
meaningful moment.

Firmly press your lips
on the cheeks of our children
Then, let us think about
our relatives for a moment.

Lastly, let us
wipe our own tears.

If we are not burnt
this night
May our fingers feel
at dawn
the touch of the tea leaves
that bear the pearls of dew.

A Refugee Poet Talking to the Moon

Solaikili

Moon, I won't write
poems today.

In this temporary house
I have no doors of my own.
No plant to pluck and smell
its flowers by night.

You too an alien moon to me.
Your light that falls on my courtyard
and your light on this alien courtyard
are not the same but trouble me.

I am a refugee these past three days
and a victor salvaging this life
and the poems that spring from it.

Those who have seen my house tell me that
its nose has broken.
The flower plants I loved
have gone into the bull's stomach
and become dung.

Here I do not have my own sky.
The air I breathe too seems to
belong to others.

Moon, how can I write poems
when I have lost nine hundred thousand stars,
you and the sky?
Lost my butterfly and
the lizard that lives under my bed?

Cover your face with a cloud.
If a poet sighs
even the cold breeze
will get charred.

A Child Soldier

Cheran

I was caught
by the dogs of war
on my way to school
in the morning.

They threw my books away
broke my pen
stamped on my brush
and shaved my head.

They put a gun in my hand
and said go! go!
serve the nation,
fight the battle.

I obeyed.
If not,
I would be a corpse.

I feel it is my fate
to wallow in the dust
surrounded by
dried blood,
flies,
pity and sympathy
that remain at least with a few.

Every thing is cruel

Now
at an undefined
war front,
I carry
A double barreled gun.

Krishanthy[1]

Vinothiny

As the birds sang
and the sun fell into the sea
her death took place
in the open space of white sand.
No one knew about it.

When she was born a female child
she wouldn't have thought of such an end.
Her mother neither.
First their look pierced her like a thorn.
Then their terrible hands seized her arms.

No sound arose.
She fell in a faint.
They raped her senseless body.
It happened
in the open space of white sand.
She was buried
at the edge of the salty cremation ground.

When she was born
would she have thought of such an end?

1 This poem refers to a widely reported incident of rape and murder of a school girl, Krishanthy, at a sentry point in Jaffna in 1996.

A Letter to My Father[2]

M. Jabir

Father,
I remember the Thursday
that we lost you.

Father,
my heart boils like a cooking pot
as I think of your smile and your hard work.

What did they do to you?
Did they shoot at you?
Did they hack and cut your body into parts?
Did they smash your head with a rod,
pierce your body with a crow-bar?
and did they rejoice and dance?

Father, the fish curry
made of your catch
still gives out its aroma in our pan.

Mother and the younger brothers
cry often asking about you.

Convey the greetings of our village to
Ajward, Kaleel, Abusaly, Mohamed Hussain
and the others who came with you.
Convey our salaam to brother Mubarak.
Tell him his children are well.
Tell him also the Kufa mosque
weeps remembering him.
Tell all of them the village is in darkness
because their wives observe idda.

Father,
now you are on the swings of Heaven
Come often in my dreams, father.

Crying with the Pen of My Own Race

Solaikili

Fence the moon
Divide the sun and share it.
Count the stars
Apportion them according to ethnic ratio
We are the people of the civilized age.

Measure the sea and take it.
Cut the sky into pieces
If you get the chance.
Abduct the air or
Destroy the brotherly race with tempests.
One among us may land on Jupiter.

Label ethnically even the ants.
Teach caste and religion to the trees.
Let the dove laugh at the other race.
Let the sounds of lizard, snail, frog and insect
reflect hatred.
Come, butterfly,
This is the flower of your race, enjoy it!

The pity of it;
the way mankind is divided.
When I write this poem
the pen refuses to write and tells me,
"I do not belong to your race"
O… it belongs to a different race.

Fall

Shanmukam Sivalingam

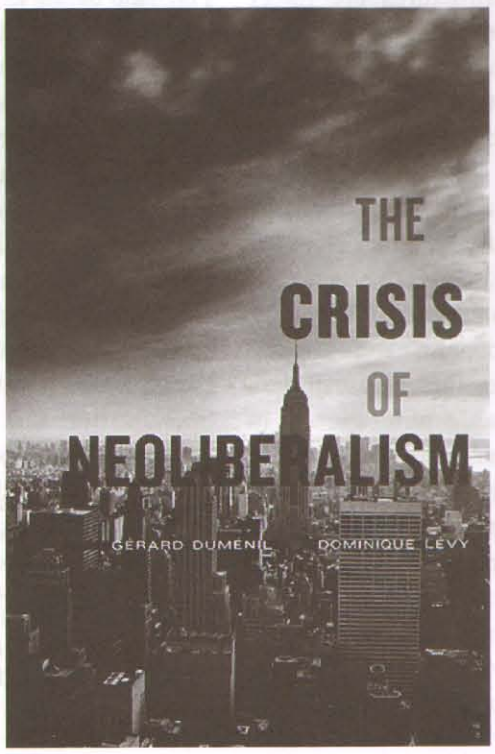
An earthworm like a dry leaf
was crawling at the edge of the steps.
I, being a man, looked at it with pity
for a moment and left.
Suddenly I heard a noise and
turned to look at it.

The earthworm was standing on its tail
opening a mouth full of sharp teeth.
As I thought of its tongue,
flames came out of it.
Does the earthworm have a tongue? Teeth?
As I pondered, it dawned on me that
the earthworm has transformed.

But I wasn't afraid.
I bent to pick up a rod.
As I raised it up
I saw a gun in the earthworm's hand.
No, a gun in the snake's hand
No, a gun in the soldier's hand

I bent and slithered like a snake
Became an earthworm like a dry leaf
Crawling at the edge of the steps.

2 This is a first poem written by a young boy whose father and neighbors were killed by the LTTE in Batticaloa in 2002 during the Peace Accord.



The Crisis of Neoliberalism
By Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy
Harvard University Press, 400 pages, 2011
$49.95

This book examines "the great contraction" of 2007–2010 within the context of the neoliberal globalisation that began in the early 1980s. This new phase of capitalism greatly enriched the top 5 percent of Americans, including capitalists and financial managers, but at a significant cost to the country as a whole. Declining domestic investment in manufacturing, unsustainable household debt, rising dependence on imports and financing, and the growth of a fragile and unwieldy global financial structure threaten the strength of the dollar. Unless these trends are reversed, the authors predict, the U.S. economy will face sharp decline.

Summarising a large amount of troubling data, the authors show that manufacturing has declined from 40 per cent of GDP to under 10 percent in thirty years. Rather than blame individuals, such as Greenspan or Bernanke, the authors focus on larger forces. Repairing the breach in the American economy will require limits on free trade and the free international movement of capital; policies aimed at improving education, research, and infrastructure; reindustrialisation; and the taxation of higher incomes.

Thimpu and the All Party Conference (APC) – The Making of a War Trap

Sanayi Marcelline

This paper is based on the findings of an ICES research project, funded by the World Bank, on the Politics of State Reform (PSRP) to resolve the Ethnic Conflict

Introduction

In 1977, the United National Party (UNP) led by J.R. Jayewardene was elected with a four-fifths majority to Sri Lanka's Parliament. With this landslide victory the UNP regime embarked on a massive economic restructuring programme, making Sri Lanka the first country in South Asia to take the path of neo-liberal policies for economic development. Historically this was also a significant period on the political front, as the years of the Jayewardene / UNP regime saw the intensification of the ethnic Tamil insurgency in the North and East of the country. While, to many an observer, it seemed that it was a matter of political expediency to resolve the ethnic Tamil demand for political autonomy, given the UNP Government's agenda of creating an investor-friendly environment in Sri Lanka[1], this period proved to be a turning point for Sri Lanka's ethnic Tamil problem, which transformed into a protracted civil war that ended only in May, 2009. The question that observers of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict have grappled with is why the seemingly logical path of an early political solution to a simmering problem was not sought by a Government committed to a programme of significant economic restructuring, and therefore wishing, at all costs, to avoid political destabilisation. Or, to frame it another way, why was the UNP government willing to initiate significant economic reforms, while backtracking on the agenda of State Reform for political autonomy, which at this point could have been resolved at the rather conservative level of District Councils?[2]

Amita Shastri provides an explanation to this question on the basis that there was continuity in the mental constructs favouring Sinhalese dominance and control of the state, through a unitary structure that was characteristic of Sri Lankan politics even in the pre-1978 period (14). Other writers have emphasised the reform-resistant nature of the Sri Lankan / Sinhala political elite, who have formed the ruling regimes since 1956. Uyangoda, for instance, has argued that constitutional reform in the 1970s and 1980s promoted a process of centralisation, which also led to the narrowing down of the social base of the state to a single ethnic group (This is Oren Yiftachel's *Ethnocratic State*). In one sense, the social base was democratised to include various social classes, in Sinhala society, but it also intensely ethnicised the post-colonial State. The resistance to state reform in the form of power-sharing with the periphery from Sinhala parties then became linked to the politics of coalition-building across class lines in Sinhala society (Uyangoda). It has also been pointed out that economic restructuring required the redesigning of political institutions in further strengthening or centralising State power within a unitary framework. This was because the implementation of the liberal economic policies meant adapting strategies to manage electoral politics. The UNP regime did this by the introducing a new constitution and paving the way for authoritarian politics. In this context, the demand for political autonomy from an ethnic minority group went against the UNP regime's agenda for economic and political reforms (Bastian). Venugopal has put across the idea that the reform-resistant character of the UNP regime, which championed a Sinhala nationalist agenda in the post-1977 era, was an outcome of a politics of expediency. As this argument goes, the UNP, as a party, commonly perceived from 1956 onwards as a party of Westernized, cosmopolitan elites, required an ideological linkage with the masses in order to implement a policy for restructuring the Sri Lankan economy. This ideological link was formed by the regime's overt support of Sinhala Buddhism, and a rejection of the political demands of sections of the ethnic Tamil leadership (Venugopal).

What this paper seeks to explore is not so much the lack of political agency to initiate State Reform as a solution to the ethnic conflict, but the crucial interaction between structures and agency, in the 1980s, that may have shaped the politics of State Reform in the decades to come. This paper will therefore focus specifically on two of the early engagements at negotiation between the Sinhala political elite and the ethnic Tamil political leadership, namely, the All Party Conference (APC) held in 1984 and the Thimpu Talks of 1985, to engage with the puzzle of what sort of a dialectical process of political agency and structures resulted in the failure of reform attempts in the early 1980s.

There are moments in history that could be analytically categorised as critical junctures, at which elite leaders exercised enhanced agency, and Amita Shastri identifies the UNP electoral victory which brought the Jayewardene regime into power (1977-1988) as one such juncture. Shastri goes on to observe that in situations of uncertainty and transition, when existing structures are likely to be weak and exercising far less or little constraint, the impact of elite agency is likely to be greatest in initiating and building new structures. As Shastri quoting North has observed, once structures come into being, the patterns of activity and incentives set up are likely to persist over time, in large part due to the human tendency towards incrementalism and inertia (3). Structures therefore can then constrain or enable elite agency in politics in various ways, though the channelling or restraining effects of structures may be more in some contexts and junctures and less in others.

As mentioned in the introduction of the article, when the UNP led by J.R. Jayewardene came to power in 1977, the debate on State Reform in Sri Lanka, initiated by the ethnic minority Tamil community at the time of independence, had reached a turning point. The regional Tamil party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), that represented the ethnic Tamil constituency of the North and East provinces of the island had, at their annual conference held in Pannakam (Vaddukoddai constituency) in 1976, passed a resolution to launch a struggle for secession from the Sri Lankan state. At the general election of 1977, the TULF sought from their Tamil constituency a mandate for their separatist struggle. Despite campaigning for such a mandate, the TULF continued to operate within the Parliamentary system and continued to seek a democratic option to address the ethnic Tamil issue. The UNP at the elections of 1977 had officially recognised the existence of a political problem, and their election manifesto revealed an understanding of the nature of ethnic Tamil grievances (Kois 51). The new constitution that was promulgated in 1978 made Tamil a National Language, though Sinhala continued to be the official language of the State. However, simultaneously, this period saw the intensification of violence against Tamil civilians in the form of ethnic riots in 1977, 1981 and then 1983. Despite the reservations of the TULF leadership, they were persuaded to work for a system of District Development Councils (DDC), which lacked any genuine form of political autonomy. By 1983, the TULF leaders had come to realise that the UNP government had no intention of engaging with the question of political State Reform.[3]

The All Party Conference

The riot of July, 1983, was widely seen as the push factor that resulted in the document titled Annexure C and the All Party Conference or the Round Table Conference, that was convened at the end of 1983 and continued till the end of 1984. The widescale attacks against the Tamils in July drew condemnation from India and from other parts of the world, at a time when the Government of Sri Lanka was on a track of economic liberalisation and was dependent on international support for funding its

1 This argument was made even by Ministers within the UNP government, namely, Ronnie De Mel, the Minister for Finance.

2 While the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) had, in Vaddukoddai, adopted a Resolution for secession, some participants of Vaddukodadai have interpreted this move as a bargaining strategy, by which the ethnic Tamil party was still willing to work with a District Council system that gave some degree of autonomy in decision-making. (Interview with V. Anandasangaree, TULF, September 2010.)

3 "The Tamils who asked for a separate state were prepared to work for a DDC, if JR was willing to drop the word development… We wanted District Councils but they did not want to give" – Interview with V. Anandasangaree, September, 2010, and interview with Dr. D. Nesiah (GA Jaffna in 1983), December 2009.

economic programme. This interplay of external and internal factors put pressure on the Government of Sri Lanka to initiate a dialogue with the Tamil political parties, in an attempt to restore Sri Lanka's image abroad. India's involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict during this period of time has been written on extensively, and needs no elaboration. To recapitulate very briefly, the Indian intervention centred on geo-political considerations and ideological and domestic considerations. Foreign policy under the Jayewardene government with regards Western nations, China and Pakistan, raised concerns for India in terms of regional security, given New Delhi's intentions of maintaining the South Asian region free of cold war politics. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was seen as a space for Indian intervention to influence Sri Lankan policy that could be unfavourable to India, and to deter any other external power from intervening in the affairs of the island. It needs to be said, this fear was not only in relation to the Sri Lankan Government, but also due to the growth of Tamil militancy; the decision to provide succour to the militant movement was shaped by the need to prevent the militant groups from seeking help elsewhere. India also saw Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, or the Tamil question, not as a purely military problem but a political problem stemming from the policies of exclusion adopted by successive Sinhalese Governments. The linkage that Tamil groups, especially the militants, had with the political leadership in Tamil Nadu, shaped New Delhi's responses to the Sri Lanka ethnic conflict. Aside from these factors it has also been observed that the Indian leadership's interest in the Sri Lankan Tamil issue at the time, specifically concerning Indira Gandhi's and Rajiv Gandhi's interest, was motivated not only by purely political concerns, but was also shaped by personal concerns[4].

The overall result of July 1983 then, was the offer of mediation made by Indira Gandhi to Jayewardene, immediately after the riot. It was in this context that G. Parthasarthy entered the Sri Lankan political scene, to help the Sri Lanka government craft a set of proposals for State Reform, to meet the demands of the ethnic Tamil political groups for power-sharing and greater democratisation of the State. On his visits to Sri Lanka, Parthasarthy met with Sinhala political leaders from both the Government and the opposition, minority leaders like the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) leader Arumugam Thondaman, Muslim groups and groups that enjoyed the symbolic privilege of representing the principal religious communities of the island, such as the Buddhist Congress, and other religious leaders. Parallel to Parthasarthy's visits to Colombo, a conference of political parties (APC) was summoned, in order to arrive at a consensus on power-sharing.

The APC, which initially met in December 1984, included the parties in the South, but not the TULF. Subsequently, the decision was made to invite the TULF but not the Marxist parties, proscribed following the July riot. The participants at the APC that met in January 1984, included the UNP, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL), Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP), Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), All Ceylon Trades Congress (ACTC), Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC), Democratic Workers Congress, and the TULF. In January 1984, when the APC met, the gathering of representatives from the political parties was expanded to include representatives from the Muslim, Sinhalese, Buddhist, Christian and Hindu communities[5]. Loganathan has interpreted this in his book *Sri Lanka Lost Opportunities* as a move on the part of the Sri Lankan President to undermine any meaningful debate on power-sharing. The essence of the proposals drafted by Parthasarthy, entitled Annexure C, envisaged the amalgamation of the existing District Development Councils into one or more Regional Councils with legislative powers. A special case was made for the Northern and Eastern regions, from which stemmed the demand for separatism, where such an amalgamation could take place without a referendum, on the basis that the DDCs for those regions were no longer operational.

When some of the participants at the Conference, namely the Buddhist Sangha, protested over the proposals, the Prime Minister, R. Premadasa, presented a new agenda, leaving out the proposals in Annexure C that the monks had objected to. The new agenda presented by the PM had three subjects which were far more diffuse in content:

a. Grievances of all communities to be looked into
b. If there is a need for decentralisation, how should it be done?
c. Terrorist activities should be crushed

The new agenda was revealing in many ways. It demonstrated the extent to which the Sinhala ruling elite was willing to commit to reforms. By locating the ethnic minority demands for State Reform and power-sharing within a discourse of law and order and national state security, the political question of ethnic minorities and State power could be delegitimised. As Uyangoda and Bastian have stated, the ruling elite's responses to the Tamil ethnic insurgency have been complex and diverse. The initial reaction to incipient rebellion was to manage it as a law and order problem. When this approach failed, it was combined with a military approach. When the military approach seemed ineffective, political leaders have also emphasised the necessity of political approaches to address the root causes of the conflict, yet from a position of military strength. But whenever political strategies have failed, there has been a revival of the military approach, once again treating the rebellion essentially as a security challenge to the state (Uyangoda and Bastian 20). The role of the APC for the Sinhala ruling elite at this time was more of a time-buying exercise in preparation for a military engagement with the Tamil militant groups.

This approach to Tamil militancy as a problem of law and order and a security challenge to the State was not limited to the UNP and the Buddhist clergy. The responses of various groups within the Sinhala polity showed a shared perception in terms of the Tamil question.

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (the Marxist Sinhala Nationalist Party), which was proscribed following the '83 riot and was excluded from the APC, criticised the Conference in their pamphlets. The party opposed any form of power-sharing stating that "If by means of the Round Table Conference, District Councils, Provincial Councils or Regional Councils or a Federal System by any other name is created, then, not only will it not abolish the Eelam movement, but will give it a fillip, and it will grow, as is happening in India which has a Federal set-up" ("J.V.P. Takes "Masala Vadai" Line" 8).

The most important factor in this text was the fear that a federal structure would further spur the movement for *Eelam*, leading to the break-up of the country. While the Federal structure was for a long time associated with disintegration by the Sinhala political leadership even in their engagement with the Federal Party in the 1950s and 60s, the militant movement for *Eelam* from the mid-1970s further exacerbated this fear and, as some commentators have written, further strengthened the resistance of the Sinhala political leadership to ethnic minority demands for State Reform (Uyangoda, "Travails of State Reform" 35-62).

At a meeting between Jayawardene and Indira Gandhi in Delhi, Jayawardene stated that progress at the APC was hindered by those engaged in violence in Sri Lanka (such as the terrorists living in Tamil Nadu and having training camps there) ("The End of Jaw-Jaw" 3). In an interview with a Sri Lanka daily in February 1984, Jayawardene stated that the Sinhala people had no faith in the proceedings of the APC. The reason he gave was that there was a fear that if the demands of the Tamil parties were met, it would lead to further demands, resulting in a threat to the unity of the country ("Sinhalese Have no Faith in the APC – JRJ Worried" 4). The Sri Lankan President stated that it was the extremist (militant) activities, coupled with the TULF's attempts to meet the demands of the militants, that were acting as an obstacle to the APC reaching a consensus ("Ethnic Problem – Do the Terrorist Groups Want a Solution? JR" 1, 8). The President's view of the expectations and reactions of the Sinhala constituency was echoed by the National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali. In an interview with the BBC, Athulathmudali stated that there was an integral connection between the political and military aspects of the conflict; "[T]he chances are that the more you succeed in curbing terrorist activities, the better the chances of a political settlement..." [6].

His argument was that the Sinhalese would be in a more responsive and liberal frame of mind if terrorist activities were curbed, thereby ensuring that the Government could make better advances on the path to a political settlement. In the politics of post-colonial Sri Lanka, two discourses guided the Sinhala political elite in their engagement with the ethnic Tamil demand for power-sharing. One was the construction of the Tamil political elite demand for Fed-

4 Interview with Bradman Weerakoon, 21 December, 2009.

5 *Eela Nadu*, 12 January 1984, pp. 1, 8.

6 *Lanka Guardian*, 1 July 1984.

eralism as divisive and a threat to the unity and sovereignty of the country. Secondly, in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the Sinhala political elite played a key role in the construction of Tamil militant politics as a problem of law and order, and terrorism. These two discourses in turn would be a key impediment to any ruling party that sought a negotiated settlement to the ethnic question. To use DeVotta's term, the politics of ethnic outbidding among Sinhala political parties in the subsequent decades, when the conflict turned in to a protracted war, would invariably involve the question of security in accommodating the ethnic Tamil demand for autonomy. By the mid 1970s, the Sinhala political elite had established the institutional structures to deal with the Tamil ethnic insurgency as a law and order and "National" security problem. Modelled on the British PTA of 1974, and drawing inspiration from anti-terrorism laws in Israel, the Government of Sri Lanka was the first in South Asia to follow the course of anti-terrorism legislation with the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provision) Act No. 48 of 1979. In May 1978, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and "any similar organisations" were proscribed by Act of Parliament. In 1979, the State of Emergency was declared in Jaffna, and massive army counter-insurgency operations were started. Interestingly, "terrorism", as defined in Sri Lanka, encompassed not only the commission of violent anti-state acts for political aims, but also the advocacy of such methods. Thus, as Wickramasinghe observes, terrorism was also a state of mind, which had to be erased if the rule of law and public order was to be implemented (375, 376). Following the July '83 riot, the Sixth Amendment to the *Constitution of Sri Lanka* defined the support or advocacy of the establishment of a separate state within Sri Lanka as a punishable offence.[7]

The Draft legislation for reform was placed before the APC in September 1984, but there was no significant change in the Government's position. The Government of Sri Lanka continued to offer the district as the only feasible unit of devolution. In a Memorandum to the APC in July 1984, President Jayawardene maintained that it was not justifiable for a provincial or regional basis of operation to be demanded for its own sake; the demand must be based on actual needs.

7 *Constitution of Sri Lanka*, Article 157A, Prohibition against Violation of Territorial Integrity of Sri Lanka.

UNP Government's commitment to State reform was minimalist to say the least, and, simultaneously, Ministers in his Government and Jayewardene himself were advocating a military plus political solution.

The Leader of the SLFP, Sirimavo Bandaranaike stated that **no political solution could be accepted until terrorism is resolved through military means**. Furthermore, Bandaranaike also stated that the proposed legislation is merely to legalise the handover of the North and East of Sri Lanka to the TULF as Provincial Councils.

In the public domain, leading media institutions gave primacy of place to the voices opposing State Reform, reinforcing the notion of power-sharing as equal to disintegration. Throughout the process of the APC, the Sinhala press such as the *Divaina* gave primacy to specific voices i.e., the Buddhist Sangha. At a meeting convened by the Sinhala Balamandalaya, Ven. Dr. Rahula Walpola stated that the proposed facility for the DDCs to merge was dangerous. While there was no necessity for the DDCs in the south to get together, the five DDCs in the north will merge and the "North will immediately get the Federal status". The TULF leader Amirthalingam was frequently portrayed as a puppet controlled by terrorist groups or Tamil Nadu politicians (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Sinhala Nationalism vs. Tamil Nationalism: A Meeting of Minds

With the outbreak of the ethnic war, as Uyangoda has observed, the Sri Lankan conflict increasingly came to be seen in terms of zero sum outcomes for each warring faction. Thus, with regard to negotiation processes that sought a political solution to the conflict, the underlying logic within which the contending groups acted was on the basis that the enemy should not possess any military or political capacity to define or influence the terms of the settlement ("Travails of State Reform" 39). At the APC and Thimpu, we see that the Sinhala ruling elite and Tamil militant groups lacked faith in a negotiation process, and acted on the basis that a military engagement would bring about more concrete outcomes. Therefore, we find sections of the Sinhala political elite, in power and in opposition, such as Jayawardene, Athulathmudali and Sirimavo Bandaranaike, advocating the destruction of terrorism as a prior condition to State Reform, and the APC was seen as a smokescreen to carry out a military build-up by the Sri Lankan Government in preparation for war[8]. The Tamil militant groups, on their part, sought to gain a monopoly over ethnic Tamil politics in the North and East, by operating on the argument that political engagements with the Sinhala political elite had not brought about significant outcomes. They were keen on undermining the TULF which continued to persist with the negotiation process (albeit with pressure from India). A *satyagraha* organised by the TULF in Jaffna, to commemorate Black July, met with lukewarm public support due to pressure from the Tamil militants, especially the LTTE and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Front (EPRLF). A two-day strike called by these two militant groups brought Jaffna, Killinochchi and Batticaloa to a standstill (Loganathan 97). It appears that at this stage, the Tamil militant groups shared a common strategy with the Government of Sri Lanka in attempting to derail the negotiation process, and undermining the TULF as a legitimate voice of Tamil nationalism.

8 *Lanka Guardian*, "Amirthalingam's statement" (reproduced from the *Daily News*), 1 January, p.12. Ketheshwaran Loganathan notes that while the APC was in progress, steps were taken by the government to settle 200,000 people in the North and East on the basis of national ethnic ratios (96).

An issue of the LTTE's official organ *Viduthalai Puligal* stated in an editorial that "the All Party Conference will not provide a solution to the Tamil problem. The history of the past 17 years proves it. The old generation Tamil leaders, who have become bald talking to Sinhala leaders, have not lost their hope of winning Tamil rights through talks… They must realise that a revolutionary new generation has come on the political stage" (quoted in Sabaratnam).

The Thimpu Talks[9]: The "Terrorists" and the "Deceivers"

By late December 1984, the APC had collapsed, and by 1985, the violence between the Tamil militant groups and the armed forces had spread into the Eastern Province. Moving beyond confrontations between Tamil militant groups and the security forces, the violence had begun to impact on civilian life, with clashes taking place between Tamil and Muslim groups ("New Battles on the Eastern Front" 5). Tamil militants also began to attack Sinhala-dominated areas such as Madawachchiya, Nikaweratiya and then Anuradhapura. The Anuradhapura attack in May 1985, dealt a severe blow to the ruling UNP's already badly bruised image ("Anuradhapura, Aid and the Ceasefire" 5). Newspaper commentaries and Sinhala political parties implied that the Government was failing to provide security to the citizenry from terrorist attacks.

With Indira Gandhi's sudden demise at the end of 1984, there was also fresh hope in the Sri Lankan South that the new Indian Prime Minister would follow a different approach from that of his mother. Sri Lanka needed Indian's cooperation to eliminate what was constructed as the scourge of terrorism in the island.

J.R Jayewardene met with Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi in early June,

9 The Thimpu Talks were held in Thailand on 8 July and 9-17 July 1985.

when both leaders agreed that immediate steps should be taken to create a proper climate for progress towards a political settlement. Following the meeting with Gandhi, Jayewardene, at a press conference, stated that if the Tamil terrorists laid down their arms, he would engage in talks with them, and that they would be granted an amnesty. He further promised that, if the violence in the North and East stopped, the security forces would be removed. There was, on the other hand, some apprehension in Jaffna over the new situation. Opinion from the North demonstrated that, for some, it was not the state but the militant groups that were their protectors ("Can We Allow it to be Forced? 4). The Tamil groups were even more sceptical of the proposed negotiations. Uma Maheswaran of PLOTE, at a press conference in Madras, stated that experience had shown that talks were of no use and that history, for the past 35 years, had proved only that talks bore no results for Lanka's minority Tamils ("Umar Maheswaran Reluctant" 7). Anton Balasingham of the LTTE stated to the *Financial Times*, "that our aim is to shift the balance of military power in our favour so we can negotiate with the Government on our own terms" ("From Ethnic Strife to Cold War" 3).

In response to a proposal for cessation of hostilities, Tamil militants and political leaders maintained that the Government had to adhere to various conditions. By March 1985, four of the Tamil militant groups had come together to form the ENLF, the four being the LTTE, the EPRLF, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and the Eelam Revolutionary Students' Organization (EROS). Though the militants initially declared that they would boycott the talks, when the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) leaders went to Delhi to explain their stand, they were told by the officials of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the defence and external affairs ministries that they had no option but to attend the negotiation process ("Thimpu Talks - A Search for a Solution" 6). The Tamil militant groups therefore felt that they were being virtually frog-marched to the talks by the Indian Government.

It was therefore the external factor, in the form of Indian involvement, that created the space for the Thimpu negotiation and pushed the protagonists in Sri Lanka's growing ethnic war to enter, albeit unwillingly, into a political engagement. Thimpu became a forum in the form of an international arena, where the protagonists sought to legitimise their political positions. The Tamil militant groups operated outside Sri Lanka's democratic mainstream and sought to be the principal voice of ethnic Tamil politics. As non-State actors, engaged in the use of violence to fulfil their political objectives, they required Indian / international recognition and legitimisation for their struggle. Thimpu, then, was a space for the protagonists to practice a form of political posturing, rather than a forum for a meaningful engagement on State Reform as a way forward for resolving the ethnic conflict. It is in this context that we can understand why the Sri Lankan ruling elite presented a set of proposals no different from the proposals for District Councils, which had been rejected by the Tamil political elite a year earlier at the APC, and why the Tamil militant groups laid down a set of pre-conditions, in the form of the famous Thimpu Declaration, which the Sri Lankan Government rejected.

Negotiations: War by Other Means - The Making of the War Trap

Commentators on Sri Lanka's past attempts at negotiation have observed that each encounter at the negotiating table between the Sri Lankan / Sinhala political elite and the Tamil militant groups, namely the LTTE, seems to have further hardened the resolve of the protagonists that a return to the battle field was the most logical and, possibly, the better arena to achieve positive outcomes in fulfilling their political objectives. In fact, Uyangoda even describes peace negotiations in Sri Lanka as a continuation of the war for state formation projects by other means, on the part of both Sinhala political elites and the Tamil militant political elites ("Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka" 11). A decisive military victory over Tamil militancy was seen by the Sinhala political elite as a way of granting minimum State Reform or no State Reform. On the part of the Tamil militant groups, strategic military gains were believed to achieve maximalist goals of substantial political autonomy or full secession. At this juncture, with the material support that the Tamil militant movement was receiving from India, it appears that all the militant groups were operating on the logic that gaining ideological legitimacy for their militant struggle against the Sri Lankan state would enable them to make significant political gains. Ketheswaran Loganathan, a member of the EPRLF and a participant at Thimpu, has recorded that the method of subverting the negotiation process by the Tamil militant groups was to fuel public opposition to the negotiations. While the negotiations in Thimpu were going on, demonstrations were being organised by the militants in the North. The demands of the protestors reflected the common position taken by the Tamil militant groups vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan state.

The *Eela Nadu* reported that the protesters in Uddupithi chanted slogans and carried placards questioning the negotiation process. They rejected any form of power-sharing and called on the Indian government to recognise the right of the Tamil people to self governance. In Koppay, protestors carried placards stating "People, let us save Eelam". There were also placards condemning the activities of the armed forces and the Government, demanding that all restrictions in the North be removed, the army withdrawn from the North, the East and the Hill Country, the Tamil rebels under detention released, the hill country people granted citizenship, and the settlement of Sinhalese in the Eelam area stopped ("Widespread Protests" 1,8).

A *hartal* planned for 8th July (the day of the first summit in Thimpu) promoted leaflets demanding an explanation from the Tamil militant groups in Bhutan, asking whether the talks were the respect shown to all who had died because of the fascist Sri Lankan government ("Militant Perspective" 16). As Sahadevan has written of Thimpu, all the militant leaders saw Thimpu as an international arena to seek legitimacy for their political struggle. Padmanabha of the EPRLF, interviewed by *Frontline* prior to the Thimpu talks, explained their position in negotiating with the SL Government with "We realise that our struggle is yet to gain international recognition because of certain misconceptions and the lack of clarity about the nature of our struggle" ("Militant Perspective" 16, 18). Balakumar of EROS stated that the militant groups wanted to justify to the world that their struggle was "a reasonable one". LTTE's spokesperson Anton Balasingham stated that "...we have to go through the universal process (of negotiations) to find out what the enemy is up to and we should make world opinion favourable (to us)" ("Militant Perspective" 17).

The Tamil militants' strategy for gaining recognition and legitimation for the armed struggle was to expose the reform-resistant nature of the Sinhala political leadership. Padmanabha's comment, as well as those of the other leaders, tend to be very revealing; "By going through the peace process initiated by the Indian government, we feel that the incapacity of the SL government to resolve the fundamental grievances of our people and its real design to solve the problem through military means will be fully and decisively exposed ("Militant Perspective" 16).

Sri Sabaratnam, leader of TELO, in his interview with *Frontline*, stated that, due to the Indian Government's good offices, TULF did hold talks with the SL Government, but without caring for it, the SL Government dragged on the talks. Balakumar of EROS commented that "thus far all talks have ended in failure. The people who represented the Tamils (at these talks) could not do anything for the Tamils... But this time, it is going to be very different... We know that Mr. Jayewardene is playing the same old game, which he knows very clearly and we also know the rules of the game he plays" ("Militant Perspective" 18).

Anton Balasingham, on the same topic, stated that the TULF was negotiating with the Sri Lankan government for a long time. Several agreements were made and abrogated; "The APC was a fiasco... We will never be enticed into political games" ("From Ethnic Strife to Cold War" 9). Interestingly, the statements of the militant leaders also reveal their fear of negotiations as a trap that would result in minimal or no State Reform rather than a way forward. In subsequent attempts at negotiation, the LTTE would continue to demonstrate this same mentality and operate on a strategy of exposing the reform-resistant character of the Sinhala political leadership. The LTTE used this strategy, for instance, in the 2002 peace talks with the Ranil Wickremasinghe Government, when they offered to explore a solution within a federalist framework. This was meant to expose the reform-resistant nature of the Sinhala political leadership, on the basis that Wickremasinghe's Government could never initiate a process of State Reform to create a federal system. The process of ethnic outbidding, entrenched in Sri Lanka's electoral politics, would prevent it. The rationale was that this situation, in turn, would give the LTTE justification to return

to a military solution [10].

On the part of the Sinhala political elite, the discourse of terrorism enabled a situation where a minimalist position on State Reform could be justified. Therefore, we see that the Sri Lankan Government's response to the Thimpu Principles was a reiteration of the position taken at the APC:

a. complete renunciation of all forms of militant action
b. surrender of arms and equip ment
c. closure of training camps in SL and abroad
d. return of refugees
e. restoration of damaged plac es of worship

("Lanka Lays Down Pre-Conditions" 1, 3)

Throughout the Thimpu negotiations, the newspapers in the South such as the Sun published commentaries on the intransigence of the "terrorist groups". The Minister for National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali, was quoted stating that over 200 violations had occurred, since the cessation of hostilities, by the terrorist groups, with the LTTE being responsible for a large number of the violations. "If they do not desist we will be forced to take action", Athulathmudali warned ("Attempts to Sabotage" 1, 3). The response to the Thimpu Talks by the opposition parties and sections of Sinhalese civil society groups reflected a similar position (Postpone Thimpu Talks, 4)[11].

The Thimpu negotiations came to an end when, at the second round of negotiations, the Tamil militant groups rejected the proposals put forward by the Sri Lankan Government for a conservative system of Provincial Councils, on the basis that they did not adhere to the Thimpu Principles. The Tamil delegation walked out of the negotiation process after accusing the Sri Lanka Government of violating the terms of the ceasefire. Their allegation was that this was proof that the Sri Lankan Government was seeking a military solution and that it was farcical to continue the peace talks at Thimpu.

In the public domain, a glance at the nationalist press reveals that whether sympathetic or critical of the UNP government, the mainstream press based in Colombo constructed Thimpu as a forum where a legitimately elected government was forced to negotiate with terrorists due to external pressure. An editorial in the *Sun* noted that "Those who masterminded and schemed to subvert the Thimpu deliberation have gained a partial success". The groups (implying the Tamil militants) subverting the talks were described as satanic elements, to whom peace and settlement are anathema. A Wijesoma cartoon in *The Island* depicted a dour-looking Jayewardene, forced to serve a hapless Amirthalingam and a predatory tiger (Figure 2).

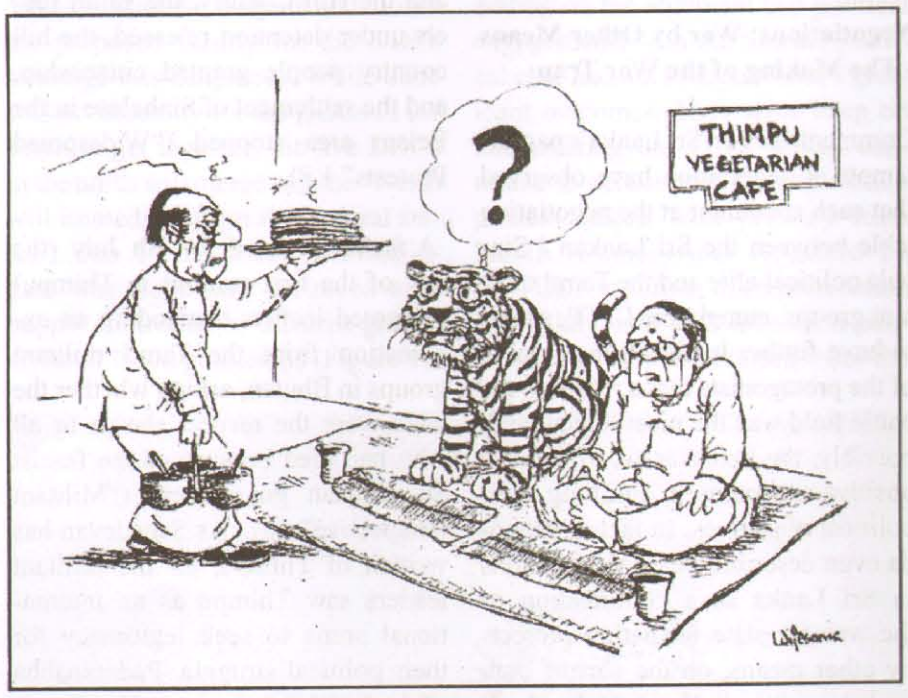


Figure 2

Political satire in the popular press would continue to play on the term Tamil Tiger, to depict Tamil militants in dehumanised forms. The tiger clearly was dissatisfied with the fare served up by the Sri Lankan President. These depictions fitted the predominant discourse of Tamil militancy as "terrorist", committed to an agenda of violence, and the Tamil moderate leadership as having become merely instruments of terrorism. The very logic of the discourse on terrorism could strengthen the resistance for State Reform.

Conclusion

The early attempts at negotiation in the form of the All Party Conference and the Thimpu Talks were at a juncture where the protagonists in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict and incipient civil war sought to sabotage talks, in the belief that a military solution or military upper hand would impact directly on the question of State Reform. War, in other words, would define political outcomes, and the zero-sum logic of military endeavours shaped negotiating positions, resulting in a situation where the peace negotiations were treated (to repeat Uyangoda's description) as war by other means. The Sinhala political elite, by defining and engaging with the Tamil ethnic insurgency as terrorism and a threat to the State precluded the possibility of an early negotiated settlement to the ethnic Tamil problem of power-sharing. The Tamil militant leadership undermined negotiations on the basis that they were time-buying exercises on the part of reform-resistant Sinhala political elites. The APC and Thimpu then appear to be historical moments where the behaviour of political agents played a role in creating the war trap that the protagonists of Sri Lanka's ethnic civil war would continue to return to.

10 The offer of a federal solution was explained as a bargaining gambit by LTTE negotiator Anton Balasingham. Interview with N. Vidyadharan (editor of *Uthayan*) November 2009 and September 2010.

11 The appeal for the eradication of terrorism and Sinhalese people to be resettled in their original homes in the North and East came from the Maha Nayake Thero of the Asgiriya chapter, Ven. Palipane Chandananda, Ven. Maddihe Pannaseeha, Ven. Sobitha Thero, the leader of the SLFP, Sirimavo Bandarnaike, the leader of the Opposition, Anura Bandaranaike, MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardene, representatives of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress, Sinhala Bala Mandalaya and the Buddhist Theosophical Society.

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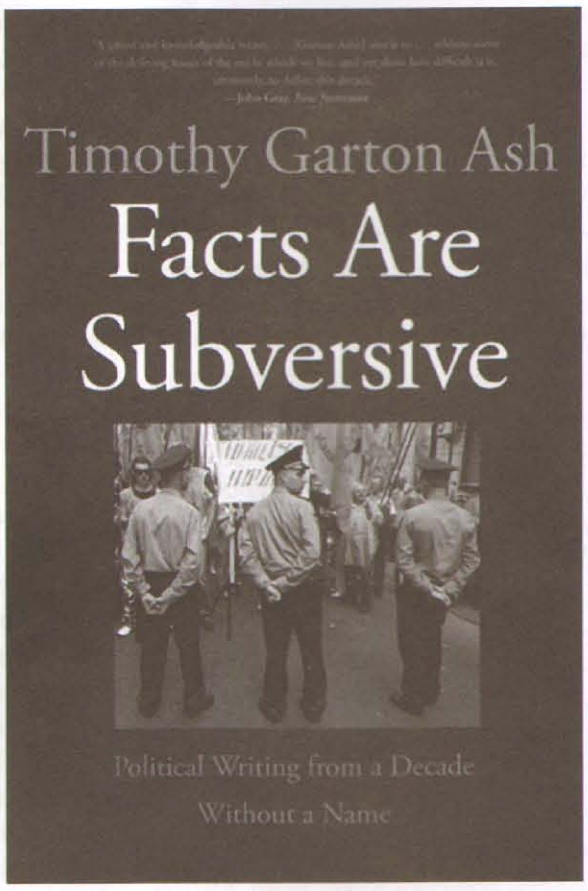

Facts Are Subversive
By Timothy Garton Ash
Yale University Press, 464 pages, 2011
$20.00

Timothy Garton Ash is well known as an astute and penetrating observer of a dazzling array of subjects, not least through his many contributions to the *New York Review of Books*. This collection of his essays from the last decade reveals his knack for ferreting out exceptional insights into a troubled world, often on the basis of firsthand experience. Whether he is writing about how "liberalism" has become a dirty word in American political discourse, the problems of Muslim assimilation in Europe, Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Günter Grass's membership in the Waffen-SS, or the angry youth of Iran, Garton Ash combines a gimlet eye for detail with deep knowledge of the history of his chosen subjects. Running through this book is the author's insistence that, whatever some postmodernists might claim, there are indeed facts - and we have both a political and a moral duty to establish them. By practicing what it preaches, *Facts Are Subversive* demonstrates why Timothy Garton Ash is one of the world's leading political writers.

Yesterday's Playmates

Frances Bulathsinghala

Lying amidst the tall grass, he awoke with a start as sunlight infiltrated the field.

His sleep had been that of an imprisoned man, dreams rattling against the iron bars of war, hands clutching the rifle with a cold, taut, death-like grasp.

The grass, brown-green and tall, which had curtained off the face of the enemy, now swayed with the breeze and showed him in the light of day the lives he and the other soldiers had ended.

He walked the length of the shrub-ridden terrain and counted.

Six. Six faces. Six bodies.

Beyond, behind a serene cluster of water lilies, lay the bodies of the soldiers who had been shot dead by the children.

"If I had not killed them, they would have killed me". He now repeated this like a desperate incantation as he had done the night before.

"If I had not killed them, they would have killed me".

Even this child.

He looked closely at the corpse. There was no sign on that face which indicated that the bullet that invaded his chest had caused him any pain. The eyes were open, staring as if enthralled by a new vision existing beyond the boundaries of life.

There had been four soldiers with him last night when this child and the other children had started firing at them. They fired back.

"Here's to you, you Sinhala bastards who bombed my parents", one child, not more than ten years old, had yelled in Tamil before firing.

He understood Tamil well and the words now stung him, deep and hurtful, hurting more than a bullet would have. The bullet would have ended it all, taking him out of all this. The words stayed, entrenched deep in the bloodied mire.

He thought of the accounts he had only read in newspapers before joining the army, which he now discovered to be true.

Mistakes. Carelessly flicked away like dust.

He thought of Nathan. Nathan's mother had worked in the houses of the well-to-do Sinhala families in the village and was sometimes summoned by his grandmother to help in the kitchen when they had guests.

Nathan was the only Tamil friend he had ever had.

In that awful interval when the gunfire finally ceased and he waited for hours knowing that it was not yet over, waiting for the first shot that would surprise him with death, or disable him, he thought of Nathan.

Nathan would be far away from all this. He would not be anywhere here in the north. He would be battling different battles, immersed in the blanket of tea shrubs to give a better life to his mother and father.

But in his nightmares he saw the podgy nine year-old, coming forward with a gun to kill him.

And sometimes when he looked at these dead children it was as if he was looking at Nathan's face shrouded in death.

He envied his colleagues.

They were not assailed by nightmares.

Or that gut-wrenching feeling that arose from the pit of his stomach and coiled through the body when he saw the faces of those he had killed.

"You think too much. Just fire back and do not look at those you have shot", his friend who had joined the army with him and who had died in the carnage of Elephant Pass had once said.

Advice.

That trickled through the crevices of his conscience.

The army was for him a choice destined by necessity when all other attempts at securing a job had failed.

The army was not choosy.

The army welcomed him with arms of steel and rigour.

Seated on a rock, he prolonged returning to his camp. Lured by the long threads of grass that shook themselves in the sunlight, he sat and closed his eyes.

Death was momentarily forgotten. All that surrounded him was the gentle swishing of this green, sun-soaked curtain.

And then the curtain parted.

The children.

The soldier sought the approaching faces, half hidden by the sheaths of grass.

He looked for his rifle which was leaning against the rock, took it in his hand and gripped it.

The child leading the rest stepped on uneven ground, stumbled and fell. But he quickly picked himself up and started walking forward with the impatience of a child wanting to get to the playground.

The grass shimmered.

There were four of them. He saw how their faces gleamed.

He steadied the weapon. The delay of a fraction of a second more would mean the end. But no, they had not seen him yet. And then he heard one youngster yell to his friends.

He heard their shouts and their laughter. They had seen him. They were joyful. He knew they would do it. Soon. Now. Suddenly, he wanted nothing more than that black laughter to be replaced by the laughter of Nathan when he hit the muddy cricket ball right into the paddy field.

How he wanted to hear that clear laughter of innocence.

The soldier sighed, letting go of his grip. The weapon dropped into the grass.

Something exploded inside his head but the laughter, like some silvery fluid, flowed through him. And he was very happy. Because he knew these children were happy.

Yes, they were... They shouted with joy for having seen him. Because they were Tamil children wanting to play with a Sinhalese soldier.

In their hands they held bats and balls. They laughed and they skipped with joy because they had a new playmate…

That was all there was to it, he thought; nothing more to it than that. Children wanting to play with a soldier… And he tried to smile at these children, but the smile was losing its grip and drowning, drowning in a pool of blood.

Emerging Voices

Melina Jaimon

The now infamous "Oxford fiasco", more than revealing a diplomatic faux pas, also revealed the influence of the migrant community. The incident also flags the need to understand the depth of division within the British Sri Lankan migrant community, which is largely divided along the lines of ethnicity. It has been proposed that ethnicities are the social organisation of cultural differences, and the essence of an ethnic identity is based on the ability to emphasise the boundary between insiders and outsiders (Barth). While the British Sinhalese celebrate the end of the conflict, the British Tamils are still looking for answers. These dichotomies in thought mirror the two ethnicities back home.

As a post-graduate student in London, my observations of the two communities revealed that the boundary between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Britain is almost tangible. This division is chiefly due to the impact of nearly three decades of conflict. Much has been said and written about achieving a lasting peace. Therefore, I will not attempt to add another alternative towards that goal. Instead, what I offer here is an understanding of the emerging voices of the second generation of British Sri Lankans.

The first generation of Sri Lankan migrants who settled in Britain left Sri Lanka either before or during the civil conflict. Therefore, their perspectives regarding their ethnicities may have been fashioned by the socio-economic and political status of their country of origin during their departure. However, many of the second generation British Sri Lankans' formation of identity, and awareness of their country of origin, may have been influenced by their parents.

Therefore, in my post-graduate studies, I focused on understanding whether the first generation Sri Lankans in Britain have passed on their ethnic identities to their children, resulting in a division between the two ethnicities. The areas measured in the study were the strength of ethnic identity retention through family socialisation, and intergroup anxiety in relations between the groups. Studies on migrant communities have demonstrated that the differences in the structural and historical conditions experienced by the first generation migrants and the second generation result in a more varied identity structure (Hurtado, Gurin and Peng). As Radhakrishnan points out, in the setting of a Diaspora, the learning and knowledge possessed by the two generations can be a two-way street, because the two generations have two different starting-points. The study chiefly concentrated on the following questions:

1. For which group did family socialisation play a bigger role in transferring ethnic identity retention?
2. Which group experienced more intergroup anxiety when interacting with each other?

Background of the Study

Karl Mannheim suggests that a generation is a historically conscious group of individuals who come of age at a certain point in time, and experience in common certain decisive economic, social, political or military events (Mannheim). The study was conducted one year after the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka, a critical juncture in Sri Lankan history, which offered a unique opportunity to examine how the two ethnic groups view each other.

Tajfel ("Social Identity") claims that the social construction of ethnicity leads to the assumption of two important conditions. The first is the division of the social world, which produces two clearly distinct and non-overlapping categories. The second is that there exists a serious difficulty in passing from one ethnic group membership to another. Thus, group behaviour brings into play the process of social comparison, social and psychological differentiation, and social identity. One may conclude from this that the British Sinhalese and Tamils engage in group behaviour that emphasises their distinct ethnicities.

Among the Sinhalese community in Britain, there exists a general feeling of mistrust towards the Tamil community in Britain. It is driven by the belief that Tamils in the UK finance the LTTE 's struggle for a homeland in Sri Lanka. It was a belief that proved to be true when the British media highlighted the fact that the British Tamils were being intimidated into giving money to the LTTE (Whipple).

Towards the latter part of the war in Sri Lanka, the *Sri Lankans Against Terrorism* (SLAT), an organisation led by British Sinhalese, staged protests against the LTTE (Alahapperuma). Consequently, the *British Tamil Forum* (BTF) staged protests against the "genocide" of the Tamils in Sri Lanka (BBC). Such categorical divisions of the Tamils and Sinhalese further separate the two groups. According to Renfrew (1986), tensions caused by conflicts between territorial groups frequently result in a heightened awareness of one's own identity. In migrant communities, the heightened awareness of one's identity becomes even more acute, especially given the dimension of conflict.

Migration and its Consequences

Arce states that minority group members must identify with others who share their customs, origins and traditions, in order to sustain a positive personal identity. Empirical evidence suggests that the density of the ethnic group plays a key role in the development of one's ethnic identity (Garcia and Lega).

Migration entails acculturation, where the meeting of cultures inevitably brings change. Acculturation provides an enveloping experience that impacts individuals' behaviour and cognition (Ward et al.). At the group level, acculturation may bring about changes in the social structure, economic base and political organisation. In particular, ethnic groups that are politically and institutionally more visible in a given community are identified as groups with a higher status (Berry et al.). At the individual level, this may bring about changes in identity, values and attitudes. At the group level, the Tamils are more vocal and active than the Sinhalese in Britain, because they are more formally organised.

Migration and Ethnic Identity

Migration complicates the study of inter-minority attitudes by adding the dimension of country of origin, which provides individuals with an entirely different framework for understanding social hierarchies. Bosma and Kunnen suggest that evolution of identity is likely to occur when individuals grow to recognise that the surrounding society's beliefs, values, and norms are discordant with their own.

Following migration, challenges accompanying cross-cultural interactions in border communities confront one's ethnically rooted worldviews. Thus the acculturation experience resulting from migration may provide impetus for individuals, including those of later generations, to initiate their search for ethnic identity. Immigrants, including those of later generations, are often described in terms of their ethnic group membership, rather than in terms of individual attributes and unique personalities. This ethnicity-based ascription and stereotyping give rise to a realisation of the ethnic group to which one belongs, and the individual may not have been aware of such a connection previously (Tajfel and Turner). It can be argued that an identity is not given by society; it must be sought after with sustained individual effort. From a psychological perspective, ethnic identity could be defined as deriving from "...a sense of peoplehood within a group, a culture and a particular setting" (J. S. Phinney and A. D. Ong 271).

The desire for belongingness is one of the fundamental human needs (Maslow) and thus, group identity constitutes an important self-concept (Tajfel and Turner). Group identity is an important facet for minority group members, because membership reinforces their values and beliefs. As evident among the British Sri Lankans when taking into consideration the formation of groups such as the BTF and the SLAT, such group formations could be understood as factors that strengthen group cohesiveness. Furthermore, the organisation of events by such groups to celebrate cultural and religious festivals highlights the importance of group membership, which reinforces one's ethnic identity.

The Role of the Family

Kagitcibasi states that individuals become exposed to the customs and norms of their ethnic group early on in their lives, typically via child-parent contact, and thereby face tacit but strong encouragement to internalise group values and worldviews. Many parents of both ethnicities instil in their children the need to maintain minimal contact with the "other". Why? The other should not be trust-

ed. I have not witnessed among the Tamils and the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka such deep division. It could be suggested that ethnic minority families engage in greater cultural socialisation and, consequently, foster greater awareness of and curiosity about ethnic identity.

Perceiving Anxiety

"Intergroup anxiety" refers to the experience of being personally threatened, while interacting socially with out-group members. It could also stem from feelings of apprehension and awkwardness, which are expected to rise because of concerns about negative outcomes for the self, such as being rejected, embarrassed, ridiculed, and misunderstood (Stephan and Stephan, "Intergroup Anxiety"). Anxiety can also stem from minimal previous contact with out-groups, large status differentials and high ratio of out-group to in-group members. As mentioned earlier, contact between the two ethnic groups in Britain is kept to a minimum. My observations have revealed that grocery stores operated by Tamils are shunned by some segments of the Sinhalese community. I am told it is apparently due to patriotism. However, it is in the Tamil shops that one can find an abundant array of Sri Lankan products. As they say, pride comes before a fall, and the inevitable d*ola duka* to eat Sri Lankan breadfruit or *vadei* reluctantly lures the Sinhalese to the Tamil shops. Some Sinhalese who do patronise the grocery stores of the Tamils choose to pay for products with cash rather than credit card, which is generally the normal method of payment in Britain. Payment by cash is due to the distrust regarding the LTTE funding, as credit card details can be allegedly forged.

The contact hypothesis suggests that living in an ethnically diverse community provides youth with more opportunities to interact with other groups, thereby giving them the ability to hold positive out-group attitudes (Miller and Brewer). Such findings, I initially believed, could also extend to the second generation Sri Lankans who, having been brought up in a multicultural society in Britain, may hold positive attitudes towards Sri Lankans outside their own ethnic group. Findings of the study revealed otherwise.

Threat perceptions play a central role in intergroup relations (Riek, Mania, and Gaertner) and have been identified as proximal predictors of prejudice ("An Integrated Threat Theory", Stephan and Stephan).

Although forming ethnic categories of people and identifying them within a category do not in and of itself imply prejudice, these can be the first steps that pave the way to differential evaluation of in-groups and out-groups. Moreover, categories foster perceived out-group homogeneity, leading to stereotyping.

Among the British Sri Lankans, the Sinhalese and the Tamils see each other not as Sri Lankans but as Tamil and Sinhalese. Therein lies the problem. Some Sinhalese refer to the Tamils as "the Ts", and the Tamils refer to the Sinhalese as "the Ss". At the Sri Lankan cricket festival held last year in London, at which all Sri Lankan schools were represented, I could count on one hand the number of Tamils who were present.

The gaping division between the two ethnic groups emphasises their need to carve out distinct ethnic identities. Several researchers have predicted that too much similarity between groups will be perceived as threatening and will lead to increased intergroup differentiation (Brown). Group distinctiveness could be defined as the perceived difference or dissimilarity between one's own group and another group on a relevant dimension of comparison (Jetten, Spears and Manstead). When two groups are considered similar, research reveals that it could cause a threat to distinctiveness (Jetten and Spears). In Britain, the Tamils and the Sinhalese are categorised as British Sri Lankans. When two ethnic groups embroiled in a conflict are assigned one category, it may provide an impetus for divisiveness. Despite the ethnic divisions among the Sri Lankan community in Britain, the migrant's ethnic identity is nested within the national identity (e.g. British Sri Lankan). Such categorisation into one group may cause intergroup anxiety. This may lead the two ethnic groups to preserve and promote the distinctiveness of existing social categories by demarcating boundaries between "us" and "them".

One hundred and one British Sinhalese and Tamils participated in the study I conducted on which this paper is based. These participants were recruited via email and personal contacts. Fifty-three per cent of the participants were male. The average age of the participants was twenty-five. The participants were all aged eighteen years and above and were born in Britain, as opposed to their parents, who were born in Sri Lanka.

Revelations

Findings revealed that, for both groups, ethnic identity retention is highly influenced through family ethnic socialisation. Child-parent contact is identified as a key link in transferring ethnic identity, customs and traditions in the setting of a minority ethnic group, where the parents lay the onus on the children to internalise in-group norms and worldviews.

With respect to the research question, "which group places greater emphasis on ethnic identity retention through family socialisation?", the results revealed that it was the Sinhalese, more than the Tamils. The key reason for this could be the differences between these two populations in Britain. In the United Kingdom, the estimated population of the Sinhalese Diaspora is 100,000 (*Sri Lanka High Commission*, 2010). The estimated Sri Lankan Tamil population in the United Kingdom is 120,000 (BBC, 2006). The Tamil population is significantly higher than the Sinhalese population in Britain. Therefore, the retention of identity could prove to be a difficult task for the Sinhalese, at a societal level. Due to inadequate representation in society, the family plays a significant part in transferring their cultural identities to their children. This could be the reason as to why the second generation British Sinhalese attribute the retention of ethnic identity to the family, more than the Tamils do, who have a higher population ratio in Britain than the Sinhalese. As supported by empirical evidence, the bigger the population of the ethnic group, the greater the support for retention of ethnic identity.

Regarding the research question, "which group has higher intergroup anxiety?", the results revealed that the Sinhalese had higher intergroup anxiety in comparison to the Tamil ethnic group. This could suggest, as discussed above, that the population difference of the groups in Britain is a key reason. In "Intergroup Anxiety" Stephan and Stephan have stated that a higher ratio of out-group to in-group members is a key cause of intergroup anxiety. Research suggests that those whose identity is threatened have a stronger in-group identification and bias (Verkuyten and Nekuee).Greater population and political support for the Tamils could be reasons for their significantly higher self-esteem, which makes them less prone to intergroup anxiety.

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, "The Social Identity") proposes that identification with one's group is linked to a belief in in-group superiority that satisfies the need for positive self-esteem. The British Tamils could be understood as having an achieved ethnic identity, which acts as a buffer against intergroup anxiety. As supported by empirical evidence, an achieved ethnic identity is characterised by a secure commitment to one's group, which is associated with lower feelings of threat from other groups (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje). The Sinhalese, on the other hand, may have lower self-esteem, which causes intergroup anxiety in them when interacting with Tamils. Such an attitude towards an out-group is consistent with the literature, which claims that lower status groups have an inherent in-group bias (Mullen, Brown and Smith).

The study reveals that group membership transcends generations and encourages the retention of ethnic identity. Group membership also encourages its members to practice uniform behaviour, both within the group and towards the out-groups, because individuals develop their attitudes and actions on the basis of those common group attitudes.

It could be proposed that the underlying need to maintain group distinctiveness is motivational in character, so that individuals see out-group members in stereotypical ways. Thus, intergroup behaviour is more uniform, both with the group and towards the out-groups because, as stated, individuals develop their attitudes and actions on the basis of those common group attitudes. Social behaviour should thereby, presumably, tend to display some characteristic variation, as the locus of cognitive control is switched from personal to social. It could be argued that individuals tend to structure their social environment in terms of groupings of persons or social categories, thus simplifying the world they live in. These categories to some extent are based upon one's own experiences, but are also largely determined by society. One's knowledge of one's membership in various social categories is defined as the social identity that forms an important part of one's self-concept. To enhance their social identity, individuals tend to behave in ways that make their own group acquire positive distinctiveness, in

comparison to other groups.

Due to the distinct ethnic categories the British Sinhalese and Tamils have created for themselves in British society, the categorisation of the two groups' ethnic identities could be understood as the social identities the two groups wish to identify themselves with.

The study reveals the importance of distinctiveness to both groups, as minority groups in a multicultural society. The study highlights how distinctiveness paves the way for intergroup anxiety among a community that has witnessed recent social change in their country of origin. It remains arguable whether the results of this study are applicable to all members of Sri Lankan society in Britain because, as with all studies, this study is not without its limitations.

But what does this study reveal? The Tamils in Britain have strength in their population numbers and are more vocal and active, simply because they have a platform to formally represent themselves, which is, sadly, suppressed for their family and friends back home. While the present regime calls for its people to rally around one Sri Lankan identity, its actions speak louder than words. The echo of those actions reverberates beyond the shores of this country. However, to be fair to the present regime, the continued division of the Sri Lankan community in Britain is a direct result of long-term inequality, witnessed by both sides. In an infinite cycle, the division seems to continue on to future generations. Can an end to the ethnic division be achieved in the foreseeable future? The consequences of inequality could result in greater conflict and ethnic segregation in time to come.

In conclusion, coming to terms with the meaning of one's ethnicity is a salient issue, especially with the added complexity of generational status in a migrant community. Generation is both an objective fact and a cultural expression of the way in which influence and power are mediated over time. In periods of significant change, be it economic, social or political change, questions of generation will come to the fore. Ethnic identity in a migrant community gives its members a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is basic to feelings of security and competence. Yet, in many situations, it will also be indicative of the availability of social, material, or emotional support in processes of psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

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T.B. Illangaratne's *Amba Yaaluwoh*

Wilfred Jayasuriya

T.B. Illangaratne was a socialist politician who to some extent represented the ideology of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in the period 1947 to 1977, i.e. the immediate three decades after Independence was given to Ceylon. He was also an excellent Sinhala language fiction writer, and his best known novel, *Amba Yaaluwoh* ("bosom buddies") is (among other things) an allegory and enactment of the Marxist class struggle in a Ceylon setting. Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* was meant to present his own version of history, the idea that history is made by men and not by abstract entities such as class struggles or clashes of ideas. An interpretation of Ceylon's political history from 1947 to 1977 is attempted, here, as an illustrative example of how Sartre's idea can be applied. This interpretation is based on a MA thesis, *Sri Lanka History from 1947-1977 in terms of Jean Paul Sartre's Philosophy*, which was prepared as a requirement for the Master's degree in philosophy at Fordham University NY, and written by Jerome Jayasuriya. An attempt is made to place Illangaratne as author and man in the context of all that.

The Child is the Father of Man: Literary Comparisons

We may compare *Amba Yaaluwoh* with other novels which are about growing up from childhood to manhood such as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, or Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* or Great Expectations, or Martin Wickremesinghe's *Madol Doowa* or G.Usvatte Arachi's *Aluth Maathanger*. This is a familiar genre in narratives, perhaps the best known, and it includes even the New Testament life of Christ or the *Dhammapada* life of the Buddha. The novelist has to choose significant situations to convey his message.

In T.B. Illangaratne's *Amba Yaaluwoh*, two schoolboys, Nimal and Sunil, are introduced in a scene where they are returning from school and are picking up mangoes which have fallen from a tree. They fight over the mangoes, while other schoolchildren observe the fight; "They rolled on the ground, they knelt, they got up and continued to fight. The other children, immersed in the enjoyment of their own mangoes, thought that this was just a mock battle. But when they saw the inflamed faces of the combatants they realised it was a serious matter and came closer to the scene of the action" (Illangaratne, 2)[1].

1 All translations are mine.

When Nimal does manage to get the disputed mango, instead of eating it, offers it to Sunil, who kicks the hand that made the peace offering, and the mango falls onto a dung heap.

> "What a waste", said the others. "Now no one can use it". They glared at Sunil.
> Sunil glared back at them. Nimal cleaned the mango juice from his hand on his trouser pocket. Just then a golden ripe mango fell and Nimal picked it up.
> "See how the squirrel chose the right side", said one of the children.

Sunil goes to the village school. Although he is dropped at school by his father in his car in the morning, as the father goes to work in Kandy (the nearby provincial town), Sunil has to walk back. Nimal, who lives in the same direction, accompanies him part of the way. After the fight described at the beginning of the story, Sunil leaves the school crowd behind and goes ahead to meet Nimal's father, the ("stone-breaker") quarry man and the man asks Sunil why Nimal is not with him, to which Sunil replies that Nimal is angry with him:

> Just then Nimal emerged round the quarry corner. The stone-breaker broke off a branch from a bush nearby.
> "Why didn't you accompany the *Sudu Appo*?" (Sunil is described as the "fair lord" or *Sudu Appo*) he asked in a loud, threatening tone. Nimal was mum.
> "Is your mouth stuffed with *pittu*? Haven't I told you to walk home with *Sudu Appo* from school?", and he raised his stick to hit him.
> Sunil sprang forward and caught the hand which held the stick.
> "Don't you hit Nimal!"
> An unusual smile filled the man's face.
> "Because of *Appo* I'll be patient. Otherwise I'll skin you. *Appo* loves you so much. Why can't you keep him company back from school? Run home now. Eat and come back with *Akka* to break stones".
> Nimal descended round the corner of the quarry and disappeared (Illangaratne 4).

Nimal is from a poor family whereas Sunil is from a rich family. But they are close friends. The novel uses the fight between the schoolboys to introduce the tensions and relationships that are in society. The reader begins to identify himself / herself with the context and observes how the story develops.

The story illustrates how Nimal and Sunil grow up into manhood, how they are placed in society, the good / bad fortunes they meet, the places they visit, the similar and contrasting things that happen to them, how their roles are sometimes parallel and sometimes reversed, and how society transforms over time. A similar, striking opening scene is presented in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* with regard to Pip. The voice of Pip, looking back over the years, is not describing a present experience, but a past experience, thereby bringing the past to life; "My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" (Dickens 1). Looking back at his life, the protagonist recalls important events vividly. Similarly, Illangaratne presents, through a dramatic initial scene, the beginning of life's journey for Sunil and Nimal.

Illangaratne's novel is a very popular story, which narrates the experiences of a rural child in Ceylon, and which has parallels in English novels such as R.M. Ballantyne's *Coral Island*, a British children's book we enjoyed as children, with its introduction to the natural world around us. It also has echoes of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, in which the child never really grows up. The child is happy to be an outsider in society, and the dialect used, as if the child himself is speaking, seems to voice the child's "authentic" emotions:

> You don't know about me without you having read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another (Twain 1).

The extraordinary thing about *Huckleberry Finn* is that instead of the author introducing his character as does Illangaratne, Wickremesinghe and Dickens, the character in the story introduces the author! The character goes on to speak of the adult world in an attitude of extreme rationality:

> After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushes, and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him, because I don't take no stock in dead people (Twain 1).

In *Amba Yaaluwoh*, the child who sees the world rationally is Sunil, the well-to-do child who observes the contradictions in society (like Huck in *Huckleberry Finn*), and it is through his eyes that Illangaratne lets us see the world. In the first scene (the fight) Sunil is depicted as the epitome of arrogance and injustice but he has a marvellous change of heart, which is brought about by the fight itself. In dialectical terms, we have the pattern of thesis (Sunil), antithesis (Nimal), synthesis (bosom buddies). Sunil walks back home and encounters Gal Banda, Nimal's father, and reconciles himself with Nimal. It is his love for Nimal that brings about this change, as evident by his protest against Gal Banda hitting Nimal.

If one were to place Illangaratne in this perspective, one would position him not as Nimal, who suffers yet overcomes suffering, but as Sunil, who understands suffering. In his political career, Illangaratne displayed the qualities of the head and heart idealised in Sunil's character. I knew him during his tenure as Minister of Trade in the 1970-77 SLFP Government. He was perhaps one of the few politicians that I have met who paid attention to what his officials said and did not attempt to monopolise attention. A comparatively silent man, writing was perhaps his main mode of communication, although he wrote such short minutes for official files! He was completely devoid of the desire to accumulate wealth. Ideologies like the class struggle ideology was not the driving force, but compassion, and understanding of the sufferings of the underprivileged, whom he did not wish to dominate. Both the novel *Amba Yaaluwoh*, as well as his

political career, may be said to exemplify in some way the view of history that Jean-Paul Sartre presented in his critique of ideology in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. To summarise Sartre in a phrase, Men, not ideas, make history.

How History Creates Justice

Illangaratne's novel is, of course, a portrayal of how man makes history. Gal Banda (the name means "one who breaks stones"), is Nimal's father, and is the son of a Kandyan upper-class, minor landowner in a village, whose father Muthubanda (meaning "a jewel of a man") had lost his ancestral home in a law suit against a *chettiar* (an Indian-born financier). In the context of the British Empire, a *chettiar* was as much a citizen of Ceylon as a Sinhalese villager. Though of high esteem in the village, the father and the son are both no match for the *chettiar*, whom Illangaratne characterises by speech, in the way Leonard Woolf presents a Muslim trader, Cassim, in his novel *The Village in the Jungle*. In *Beddagama*, the Sinhala film version of Woolf's novel, directed by Lester James Peries, Cassim speaks exactly like the *chettiar* in *Amba Yaaluwoh*. Thus a stereotype is formed of the non-Sinhalese Asian speaking Sinhala, and for the English reader, I will quote Woolf's way of converting Sinhala speech into English; "'The fat Moorman rolled from side to side with laughter. "O the dog! O the dog! O the dog! There is no one like these fishers to find money and women everywhere. Allah! They call us Moormen cunning and clever" (Woolf 106).

At another instance the *chettiar* declares "Yehma kiyanter epaa Nehlermeh paner kiyerner yeker giyohthin yehker giyaamer thamar. Idermer moner gajjakda?" ("Don't say like that, *Nilame*. If you lose your life, it's gone for ever, not like losing your land") (Illangaratne 26). Thus the *chettiar* is able to be wise and sententious, but loses his dignity by the mispronunciation of Sinhala words, which characterises an alien. Illangaratne was also a dramatist, and had produced school plays at St Anthony's College, Katugastota, where he studied[2]. He continued to write plays even after his school days. One of his plays was titled *Mineemaruwage Sihinaya* (Murderer's Dream), and in the 1960s, when he was Minister of Trade, he produced a script for a television drama as well.

As in Woolf's story, the system of justice is at the heart of the discourse. In Kiran Desai's acclaimed novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, the protagonist, who is an Indian judge cum civil servant, is the son of the champion organiser of false witnesses for lawyers practising in the city courts. Similarly, in a place which is supposed to administer justice equally to all, the first two Muthumala / Muthubanda generations lose their heritage as does Babun, the virtuous villager in The Village in the Jungle. Thus history is written, and the literary heritage that Woolf introduced with his path-breaking novel is used by Illangaratne for his *Amba Yaaluwoh*.

Though British-style justice involving the separation of powers and the rule of law are thus castigated by Illangaratne, the account of the Kandyan system of justice, as described by Robert Knox in his *Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon* is so horrifying that it could hardly have recommended itself to Illangaratne (for instance, impaling the offender on a pointed stick). The grand theme of his novel is justice and how history brings about equity through the rise and fall of two families, closely interconnected, compared and contrasted. But both families are from the village ruling class. So when the fallen family recovers its status, it is not a revolutionary upheaval but a recovery of the ancient status quo, and the village class structure is re-legitimised. It is only the alien, the foreigner, whether from within the country like the Moratuwa carpenter, or the naturalised foreigner like the *chettiar*, who is castigated and tarred. This is, of course, an aspect of the nationalism which post-independence Ceylon nurtured, and which Illangaratne and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party espoused and used to ride to electoral victory many times within the period of Illangaratne's political life (1947 to 1977).

The Audience

G. Mitford, a former Government Agent of Ratnapura during colonial times, makes reference to those engaged in stone-breaking in several of his diary entries. Gal Banda, in Illangaratne's story, is located about half a century after Mitford's time. Considering how difficult it is to break stones by hand to required sizes, as a means of livelihood, we can understand how authentic Illangaratne's description and characterisation of the father-son relationship is. Most of the characters in the novel, including the females, are quite violent in word and deed, especially the *Kumarihamy* or paternal grandmother of the upper-class Sunil. The grandmother speaks in almost Dickensian "characterising language" to suit her role as the obnoxious upper class Kandyan, a relic of the life-style described by Robert Knox, about two hundred years earlier. Illangaratne's skill as a novelist is displayed both in dialogue and in invention of incidents to suit the theme.

Let us take a scene where Nimal is now a servant in the *walauwa*, or Sunil's ancestral home:

> One dark day. That day Nimal got up late.
>
> "What! Are you sleeping till the day dawns on your butt?" The old lady came to the verandah where Nimal slept and awoke him with her foot. The whole day was a series of mishaps. The milk bottle slipped from Nimal's grasp as he took it from the milkman. The old lady blackguarded him, knocked him on the head with her knuckles, threatened to deprive him of breakfast. When Sunil objected to that he was given a stroke with a cane.

The narrative style is matter of fact, with short, elliptical sentences. In another instance, the grandmother calls Nimal by a "servant's name", Nima (which means "the end") instead of Nimal (which means "blameless"). Renaming is one aspect of changing identity and thereby either reducing or increasing status. In a reverse response, blacks in the USA often name their children "prince" or "princess", and I once had a student in my class whose name was George Washington the Third; the first and second being his grandfather and father. In Ceylonese society of that time, a woman servant would often be given a servant's name like Magilin or Alice, though her original name could be Yasomanike or Preethimalee. So, Illangaratne was a sharp observer of the nuances of name-giving.

A very recent novel *Aluth Maathanger* (2010) by G. Uswatte Arachi, contains a story which depicts an individual's transition from childhood to manhood, from rags to riches, from *Ambalangoda* to New York, which is accompanied by re-naming or identity changes; Girigoris *Appu* to Gregory to Vithanage. Dickens' hero begins by naming himself as Pip. And Twain's hero is Huck. Illangaratne's character has a two-syllable name, "Nimal", which the old lady tries to reduce to Nimaa. In *Aluth Maathanger*, the progression is more marked. The name change marks a more radical transformation than is available to Nimal in Illangaratne's novel, because Girigoris depends entirely on his scholastic ability plus his excellent human and moral qualities, hailing from a seaside village in Ceylon and rising up to the commanding heights of a UN Divisional Head in New York. The movement is not only social but international. A comparison with *Aluth Maathanger* would be very fruitful, but here, I will limit myself to quoting from Girigoris *Appu*'s reply to a question aimed at him at the University Entrance Exam interview (in the 1950s, a student had to pass the written exam as well as an oral interview to enter the University of Ceylon). The question is, why does he want to specialise in economics? Following is his response:

> "Mine is a poor school. Our batch was the first to sit for the University entrance. No good library. Nor is economics taught is schools. Only in universities. A student from any school starts at the same level in economics. I won't have the disadvantage of competing in subjects, which are better taught in other schools than mine. That's the second reason for choosing economics".
>
> "A very practical point of view", said Dr. Malalasekera [who was on the interview board] "We need only such economists in our country". (Uswatte Arachi 80).

Here is a mixture of history and fiction. The dialogue is extremely rational (admittedly the situation calls for it). Although this particular dialogue expresses hardly any emotions, in other places, the narrative does evoke strong emotional responses by the specificity and realism of details, as does Illangaratne's story.

T.B. Illangaratne uses simple grammatical language such as the language people speak in everyday life. His purpose is to depict society and emotions in such a way that the reader will understand the context. He wishes to portray how society transforms over time. Much can be said on how he uses the Sinhala spoken language (without the burden of using complex grammar and big words) in both narrative and dialogue. This may be an outcome of his practice as a playwright, since, in plays, the language employed is close to everyday speech.

2 Personal interview with Ivan Samerawickreme.

The audience is generally interested in how the events in the story develop. It is not a learned audience but a general, lay audience. Usvatte Arachi's "implied audience" however, is a more educated and more sophisticated one because the Sinhala readership has become more learned after 50 years of post-independence culture-change. The significance of choosing the audience correctly is reflected in the popularity of Illangaratne's novel, which is in its seventh edition, and in the popularity of the teledrama, which was based on it. It is likely that, as it becomes known, *Aluth Maathanger* too will become a popular success, given its portrayal of social success through academic achievement and simple family virtue.

Artist and Politician

In his novel, Illangaratne portrays the social revolution that takes place in a Kandyan village. It can be seen as a parallel to Martin Wickremesinghe's *Gam Peraliya* ("Upheaval in the Village"), which is about a village located in southern Sri Lanka. Both novels can be seen in the perspective of Sri Lanka's colonial and post-colonial history. We are familiar with various notions on colonialism and post-colonialism, and I do not wish to tread that well-worn path. I wish, however, to try to place him in perspective as a man of action, a politician who was driven by his understanding of the world.

Patterns

According to Marxist theories of history, the world is moving in a dialectical mode; thesis, antithesis, synthesis, which becomes in its turn the new thesis, so that the movement of history is not linear but consists of the interaction of opposites, their reconciliation and the creation of a new movement. Marx derived this notion from Hegel, who believed that the world is an idea, i.e. it all exists in one's mind, mediated by the senses, whereas Marx held that matter i.e. the mode of production of material goods like food, real things outside the mind, not an idea, is the prime mover. We have a repeat of the Plato / Aristotle idealist /realist dichotomy. However, when in 2000 AD, the US magazine *TIME* did a survey among its readers as to the most influential man / woman in history after 1000 AD, it turned out to be Marx! So other philosophers like Sartre were obsessed with Marx and it is not surprising that Illangaratne too was much influenced in his thinking by Marx, particularly because the Russian Revolution in 1917 seemed to have fulfilled Marx's predictions.

The story of *Amba Yaaluwoh* can therefore be seen in a Marxist perspective. The characters in it fulfil their class / caste roles. They are "interpellated" and fulfilled by their self-identity and act and speak predictably. The predictability of the characters as well as of the events, which the characters set in motion, is very much a factor in the popular acceptability of the story. The teledrama confirmed its popularity. However, there is one character, Sunil, who transcends his social position by acting out his love for Nimal, and running away with him from his own family. One could guess that in this invention, Illangaratne, the artist, transcended his own framework of ideology and created an existential situation, which enables new creativity. If this did not happen, the novel could have taken the form of socialist realism, the favoured the mode of Trotskyite and Stalinist artistic theory, according to which artists were expected to provide documentation supportive of the class struggle. A good example of that is Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* (1934).

If we consider the author and his role in history, it is an aspect that the novel does not raise, but which, because of its representative character and the nature of its theme, seems to imply significance beyond the artistic perspective. We can consider Illangaratne, his philosophy as represented in the novel, and his career and life, in the perspective of history. To do so adequately, one must also consider the ideology of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, which he represented, and which bolstered his rise to political power. Illangaratne was a clerk in the public service in the 1940s. He was also a trade unionist and a politician representing the Kandyan electorate of Uda Hewaheta in the 1950s and 60s. After completing his education at St. Anthony's College, Kandy, he sat for the competitive General Clerical Service exam to enter the public service and was directly recruited to Grade 2, when the normal recruitment grade was Grade 3. He soon became an influential trade union leader. However, as a result of his involvement in a general clerical strike, he was dismissed from his post. He then found ways and means to earn a living, and one of them was by writing stories and plays. When the first Parliament was elected after independence, he was elected as a MP but was unseated on an election petition. His wife, Tamara Kumari, contested and won the by-election. The next time around, he was able to regain his seat. He was hailed as a believer in change, and continued to be a Member of Parliament from the 1950s to 1977. He was also a Minister throughout his stay in Parliament, whenever his party the SLFP was in power, leading at various times the Ministries of Labour, Finance and Trade.

In Jean-Paul Sartre's re-writing of the process of history, where he attempts to centralise the activity of man as the maker of history, he discusses how the charismatic individual (Lenin / Bandaranaike etc.) sets in motion an idea which inspires people, and which unites individuals with a common purpose. A "seriality" is like a queue at the bus station. The people are waiting for a bus, but there is no interaction among the individuals. They are all waiting for the bus, but, except for that, it is a group without a unifying dynamic, though each individual has a similar intention. The charismatic individual gives the serial collection of people a unifying vision. Once the vision has been achieved, the unified group disintegrates, becomes inert, and enters into a state of disorder or entropy.

Patterns in Modern Sri Lankan History

Jerome Jayasuriya takes the example of the rise and fall of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in the period between 1952 and 1977, as an illustration of Sartre's theory. It was the Sinhala *Maha Sabha*, which was a component of the Ceylon National Congress, that fought for independence from British rule, including in itself other groups that later became the United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil Congress. After independence in 1948, Bandaranaike presented his vision or transforming idea, which was more nationalist than the UNP's vision. With this vision, he was able to create a dynamic, which galvanised a group that had seriality (the Sinhala *Maha Sabha*) into an activated entity. In Sartre's version, such a group will continue to function as one until its self-constructed mission is accomplished, after which its dynamic will be exhausted. The UNP, on the other hand, retained an ideal image of a united country derived from the Ceylon National Congress. However, that image dissipated with the passage of the *Ceylon Citizenship Act*, by the first UNP Government, which deprived an entire Ceylonese community of citizenship, thus setting off a train of divisive legislation which provided added dynamic to the Sinhala *Maha Sabha* ideology.

This idea of dialectic has some resemblance to the thesis of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which explains physical dynamism in nature itself, which ultimately loses its motive force and disintegrates into disorder or entropy. According to this notion, focused forces inevitably lose their dynamism when the motivating purpose is achieved. In the case of the SLFP, these motivating forces could include the nationalisms of language, race and religion, plus the nationalisms of family, caste, wealth and culture.

Though Bandaranaike was assassinated early in the process, his widow and her cohorts carried out the "Bandaranaike policy" to the hilt, until in the first half of the 1970s, society itself, as well as the SLFP, began to disintegrate under the weight of the dynamic. The huge SLFP victory in 1970 was immediately followed by the JVP insurrection of 1971 (the JVP had been one of the main contributors to the victory), and this was followed by a stage of entropy or disorder, component parts of the ruling coalition pushing and pulling in different directions. This entropy was replaced at the next general election (1977) by another dynamic that was created by the internationalism of J.R. Jayawardene.

In his paper, J. Jayasuriya examines how history consists of individuals forming themselves into groups for a common purpose, and how these groups, once that purpose is achieved (objectification), or when they fail to achieve the purpose, relapse into being individuals (seriality). Groups may also form coalitions where they "interiorise multiplicity" (recognise differences) but remain united for the purpose they want to achieve. In this double movement of forming and dissolving (petrification) lies the totalising effect of history (J. Jayasuriya 29).

How does Illangaratne, as man, artist and politician, fit into this scenario? As a politician, he was extremely creative. Drawing on his experiences as a clerk in Government in the late British and early post-independence times, when betting on horse-racing was a sport in which clerks too participated, often losing their entire

monthly salary to it, Illangaratne helped bring about the abolition of horse-racing in Colombo (in *Amba Yaaluwoh*, Nelumbandara, who is a clerk in the Kandy *kachcheri* (government office) gambles, loses, and is gaoled for misappropriation). As Labour Minister, he liberalised the labour laws and framed new laws, which legitimised collective bargaining. He created the Employees' Provident Fund, to which both employee and employer contributed, to provide security to private sector employees when employment ceases. As Minister of Finance, he created the Peoples' Bank, which broke the monopoly of the wealthy in gaining access to credit. Through decentralisation, rural banking and agricultural credit were made possible, and the state became a banker to the people. Deficit budgeting was an inevitable corollary. It was approved by development economists as the way forward, though Dr. N.M. Perera, the socialist leader, Illangaratne's ally and Doctor of Science in economics, did not believe in it. Illangaratne also brought the state into competition, though not always into equal competition, with the hitherto well developed private sector, in insurance and trade. By entering the field of economic nationalism, the SLFP dynamic seemed to have shot its bolt and entered the stage of entropy. It forced Ceylon to enter into barter deals with socialist countries, where the comparative prices of imports and exports were fixed by negotiation only, and not by reference to "objective" prices. At one stage in the 1970s, Sri Lanka was exporting tea to the Middle East in exchange for dates grown there! When the OPEC created an oil crisis in the early 1970s, I remember Illangaratne (as Minister of Trade) raising the question at a Ministry meeting whether the OPEC was treating friends (Sri Lanka) also like foes (Western countries). Things took such a turn with regard to the availability of foreign exchange for imports that, at one time, there was just enough to pay for only one shipload of rice from Burma! The Cabinet, which had stuck to its promise to provide free rice to the people ("even if it had to be brought from the moon", according to Mrs Bandarnaike), now decided to renege completely on it. At its next weekly meeting, when Dr. Colvin R. de Silva (LSSP Minister) was present (he had not been there for the previous one), and the minutes were read for confirmation, the decision was reversed after Dr. de Silva made one of his "roaring" speeches. Such was the disorder in decision-making (this account is based on personal experience in being a Government officer in the Trade Ministry during 1970-77).

It was clear that economic nationalism was not a feasible idea for a small island like Ceylon / Sri Lanka. Illangaratne's own contribution to the success of the SLFP had been in the social and cultural field, though he was never a minister of culture. His contribution is tied to his influence through his literary works. Works such as *Amba Yaaluwoh* and its successor *Shishyatwaya* (*Scholarship*), which portrayed social justice and love for the poor as exemplified in Sunil, and equal opportunity or *Sama Samaja* and upward social mobility as exemplified in Nimal's rise from the position of servant to middle class status, were also propaganda documents for the ideals espoused by the SLFP. They enacted creatively what Bandaranaike dwelt on so persuasively in his speeches. Illangaratne, therefore, became a central figure in the SLFP and was able to motivate the "feudal" leadership of the SLFP, consisting of such figures as Mrs. Bandaranaike and Hector Kobbekaduwa. He enabled the essentially middle class Lanka Sama Samaja Party to form a common front, commonly known as the *thun hawula* or the "unholy trinity". This United Front soon became the epitome of disorder or entropy, significant in the context of Sartre's theory of history.

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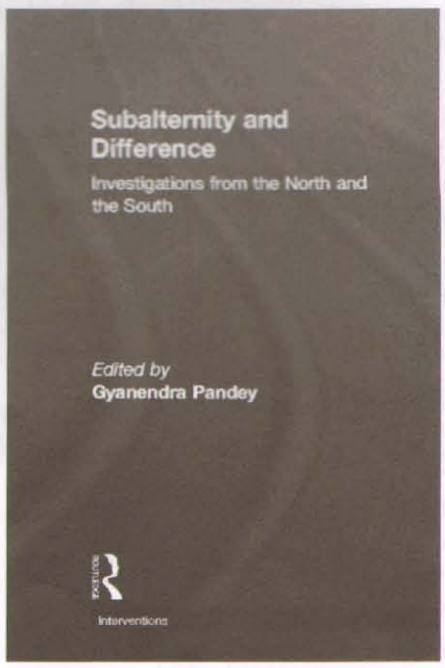


Subalternity and Difference: Investigations from the North and the South
Edited by GyanendraPandey
Routledge, 194 pages, 2011
£85.00

Focusing on concepts that have been central to the investigation of the history and politics of marginalised and disenfranchised populations, this book examines how discourses of "subalternity" and "difference" simultaneously constitute and interrupt each other. The authors explore the historical production of conditions of marginality and minority, and challenge simplistic notions of difference as emanating from culture rather than politics. They return, thereby, to a question that feminist and other oppositional movements have raised; how modern societies and states take account of, and manage, social, economic and cultural difference. The different contributions investigate this question in a variety of historical and political contexts, from India and Ecuador, to Britain and the USA.The resulting study is of interest to students and scholars in a wide range of disciplines, including History, Anthropology, Gender and Postcolonial Studies.

Contributors

Aparna Halpé is a lecturer at the English Department, Ryerson University, Toronto. Dr. Halpé's research is on the function of myth in postcolonial fiction. Her doctoral research is on the narration of myth as alternative history in fiction from South Asia, the Philippines and the Caribbean, and her current research is on mythopoetics and Sri Lankan fiction. Dr. Halpé has published articles in journals such as *Moving Worlds* and the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, and is a contributor to the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century World Fiction*.

Dileep Chandralal is a Professor of Language and Communication at Okinawa University, Japan. He was appointed Chair of the Department of International Communication of the Okinawa University in 2003, and has served as Dean of Student Affairs from 2007. His research interests include cognitive linguistics, rhetoric, language education, ethnicity and identity issues. He has published several books including *Language and Space* (Vishva Lekha), *A Rocky Path to the Royal Palace: Legend of Elephant Rock* (Bungeisha, Tokyo) and *Sinhala* (Vol 15, LOALL) (John Benjamins Publishing Company).

Maheen Senanayake is a social researcher with a day time job as a business trouble-shooter. He is a published author and has been a ghost writer for many years, working on projects around the world. He is currently working on a novel. Maheen Senanayake is also the founder of *Environmentality*, a magazine with a focus on how science can be used to save the planet.

Chantal Croteau is an undergraduate student studying psychology at Bowdoin College in Maine, USA. In fall 2010, she participated in the ISLE Study Abroad Programme in Sri Lanka. She also works as a Teacher's Assistant (abnormal psychology) at Bowdoin.

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 underE. 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).

John Stifler is a writer and teacher of writing. Since 1984, he has taught in the Junior (3rd year) Writing Program at the University of Massachusetts, and he regularly leads workshops for writers at many levels, ranging from high school to professionals and multi-talented people in many walks of life. He has written numerous feature articles for magazines and newspapers, on subjects ranging from music and literature to sports and nutrition. As a Fulbright Scholar, he taught at the Department of English, University of Peradeniya in 2008.

Sumith Chaaminda completed his Master's 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.

Ranjini Obeyesekere taught in the Department of Anthropology, Princeton University till her retirement in 2003. She has previously taught in the Department of English at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and at the University of California, San Diego. Her publications include *Sinhala Writing and the New Critics; An Anthology of Modern Writing from Sri Lanka* (co-edited with C. Fernando), *Jewels of the Doctrine: Stories from the Saddharma Ratnavaliya, and Sri Lankan Theatre in a Time of Terror and Yasodharawata.*

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.

Simbarashe Mabasha graduated from the University of Cape Town in South Africa with a BA in Law. While at UCT, Simbarashe was Vice-President of the Law Students' Council and Deputy-Speaker of the UCT Students' Parliament. He is the Executive in Charge of Operations of the Afrikan Dust Media Group in Cape Town, South Africa. In 2008, Simbarashe completed his first novel *My Reflection Eternal.*

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.

M. A. Nuhman is Professor of Tamil at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. He obtained his PhD in Linguistics from the Annamalai University, India. From 1976 to 1990, he worked as a lecturer in Tamil and Linguistics at the University of Jaffna. He was a Visiting Professor at the Tamil University in India and the University of Malaya, Malaysia. As a linguist, poet, literary critic and translator, he has published thirty books including *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1985), *Communication, Language and Modernization* (1993), *Language and Literature* (2006) *A Contrastive Grammar of Tamil and Sinhala Noun Phrase* (2000), *Lankan Mosaic: Translation of Sinhala and Tamil Short Stories* (Co Ed. 2002) and *Sri Lankan Muslims: Ethnic Identity within Cultural Diversity* (2007).

Sanayi Marcelline has a BA degree in History from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka and a MPhil in Historical Studies from the University of Cambridge, U.K. She was a Research Associate at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (Colombo),where she worked as a Senior Research Associate in the Politics of State Reform Project sponsoredby ICES and the World Bank. She is a Visiting Lecturer at the Department of History and the Department of International Relations at the University of Colombo.

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.

Melina Jaimon holds a Diploma in Journalism from the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, and has previously worked as a journalist in the English print media. She holds a BA in Sociology (Hons.) from the University of Colombo and a Msc in Cross Cultural Psychology from Brunel University, West London. Melina's paper "Emerging Voices" is based on her MA thesis. She currently works at the Social Research Division of Neilsen, Sri Lanka.

Wilfred Jayasuriya teaches English at the American National College, an extension campus in Colombo, of a consortium of US, British and Australian universities. His publications include *Sri Lanka's Modern English Literature – A Case Study in Literary Theory, The Libyan Episode,Christine's Story* and *Time Traveller.*

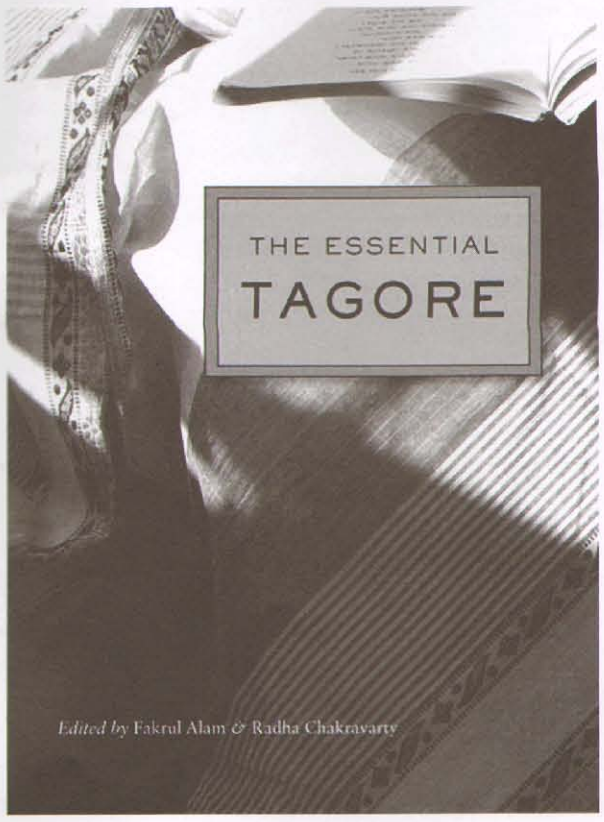
Nishan de Mel, A.B. Hons. (Harvard), M.Phil (Oxon), D.Phil (Oxon), is an Economist. He has held several senior policy and research appointments in Sri Lanka. He was a Member, Presidential Task Force on Health Reforms (1997); Member, National Steering Committee on Social Security (1998-2000); Member, 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 Professor 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*, while 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.

Yvette Paulusz holds an Honours degree in French from the University of Melbourne, and a Pass degree in Classics (Ancient Greek and Latin) from Monash University, and is currently completing a degree in Law from MonashUniversity. She has worked as a Research Assistant at Deakin and Monash universities (in Victoria, Australia), and in the capacity of copy editor at Deakin University.



The Essential Tagore
By Rabindranath Tagore
Edited by Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravarty
Belknap Press, 864 pages, 2011
$39.95

The Essential Tagore showcases the genius of India's Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian Nobel Laureate. Marking the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth, this ambitious collection - the largest single volume of his work available in English - attempts to represent his extraordinary achievements in ten genres: poetry, songs, autobiographical works, letters, travel writings, prose, novels, short stories, humorous pieces, and plays. In addition to the most recent translations in the modern idiom, it includes a sampling of works originally composed in English, his translations of his own works, three poems omitted from the published version of the English *Gitanjali*, and examples of his artwork. Translations for this volume have been undertaken by Tagore specialists and writers of international stature, including Amitav Ghosh, Amit Chaudhuri, and Sunetra Gupta.

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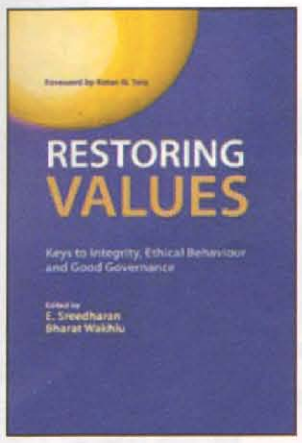

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BHARAT WAKHLU, *Resident Director, Tata Services, New Delhi*

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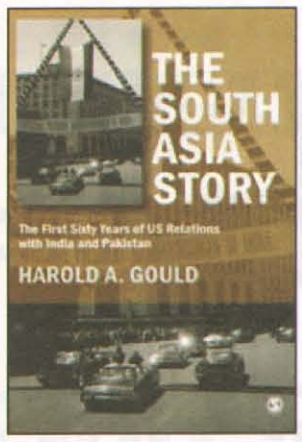

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HAROLD A GOULD, *Center for South Asian Studies, University of Virginia, Charlottesville*

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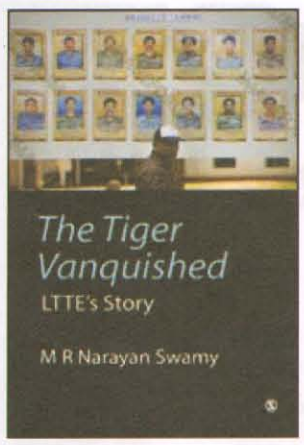

THE TIGER VANQUISHED

LTTE's Story

M R NARAYAN SWAMY, *Indo-Asian News Service, New Delhi*

This book tells the story of why the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) lost the war that they had always dreamt of winning in Sri Lanka. It is a collection of news stories and commentaries penned by the author from 2003 to 2009 on the ethnic conflict in the country. Each piece is provided with an introduction that places it in the context in which it was written. The unfolding of the drama is brought about through conversations with Sri Lankan leaders, Tamil activists, Indian officials, Norwegian and other diplomats, human rights activists, former LTTE guerrillas and civilians.

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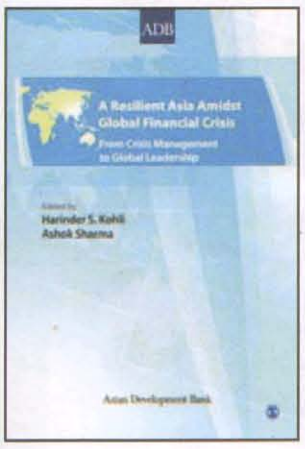

A RESILIENT ASIA AMIDST GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

From Crisis Management to Global Leadership

Edited by **HARINDER S KOHLI**, *Emerging Markets Forum and Centennial Group Holdings, Washington DC*
and **ASHOK SHARMA**, *Asian Development Bank, Manilla.*

This book is based on the papers presented and discussions held at a high-level regional workshop organized by the Asian Development Bank in January 2010 to discuss the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on developing Asia. It provides a clear and thought-provoking analysis of the global economic crisis from the perspective of 19 Asian countries.

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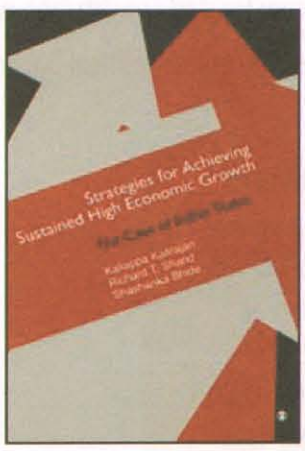

STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINED HIGH ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Case of Indian States

KALIAPPA KALIRAJAN, *The Australian National University, Canberra and Foundation for Advanced Studies in International Development, Tokyo,*
RICHARD T SHAND, *The Australian National University, Canberra*
and **SHASHANKA BHIDE**, *National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi*

This book identifies the factors influencing countrywide economic growth and development by analysing the economic strategies and experiences of various Indian states. It employs a very broad range of analytical techniques to understand the growth patterns and inter-linkages among the sectors and economies of the states.

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