

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

Vol. 5 No. 47 13th December 1986

White Or Black X'mas?

(By a Special Correspondent)

The Indian Government has no objection to direct talks between President Jayewardene's Government and the leaders of the Tamil militant groups on the ethnic problem, according to our sources in New Delhi.

"Indeed, we welcome such talks", these sources said, adding that India was very keen that this problem should be resolved as early as possible.

This is a recognition that no lasting settlement of the ethnic problem could be devised or implemented without the concurrence of the militant groups.

Sections within President Jayewardene's Government, too, are now veering to this view, whereas earlier there was total opposition to any talks with the militant groups unless they

laid down their arms first and also renounced their demand for a separate State.

President Jayewardene himself has indicated to a journalist in Colombo recently that he is prepared for a direct meeting. So also the Minister of National Security, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali.

This is a trend which bodes well for the country.

The militant groups should utilise this opportunity, if they are keen on a negotiated settlement instead of leaving room for more senseless killings.

The killings of more people — the majority of them innocent men, women and children of all communities — must STOP.

Two Ministers of the Indian Government, Mr. P. Chidambaram (Minister

of State for Internal Security) and Mr. Natwar Singh (Minister of State for External Affairs) who have been entrusted a mediatory role, are expected to have reached

Madras yesterday to confer with the militant leaders, on the latest proposals for a settlement put forward by the Sri Lankan Government at the talks between the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene last month. They are expected in Colombo on 16th December.

If all goes well, we may have a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New year.

BYE, BYE, VIJAYA

The M. G. R. and Rama Rao of Sri Lanka, Vijaya Kumaranatunga, has come to Jaffna a second time and gone with his main objective — obtaining the release of the two Sinhalese soldiers held in captivity by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) since 12th October — unaccomplished.

Why is Vijaya so concerned about these two particular soldiers. Why not campaign for the release of all the thousands of Tamil Youths held in detention in the South?

Or at least bring two of them to Jaffna in exchange for the two soldiers, as demanded by the LTTE?

The General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party must realise his limitations. The Government is

not going to allow him to score political points over it.

His visit on 5th December with a motley crowd of Buddhist monks and laymen, was a good propaganda exercise for his party. A political stunt, to put it briefly.

May be, the visit might help strengthen South-North links to some minute extent; to that extent his attempt was commendable.

But stunts on the cinema screen, at which he is adept, are not easy as on the political screen. For there are better actors like President Jayewardene and Minister Lalith on hand.

Bye, Bye Vijaya, for the present. But please do come again. The people of Jaffna love you as a film actor.

(See also page 11)

Priest Meets Mother

Fr. Aparanam Singarayar — now in remand custody in Welikade — met his 86 year-old mother at Palaly Army Camp on Thursday morning (11th December), following special permission granted by President Jayewardene.

Fr. Singarayar, who has been indicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in connection with the attack on the Chavakachcheri Police Station in 1982, wrote earlier to the President complaining that the Minister of Justice had turned down his request for permission to visit his dying mother (See SR, 22nd November).

Fr. Singarayar was flown to Palaly from Colombo on Thursday morning. His aged mother, two sisters, one of them a nun, and two priests motored up to Palaly from Jaffna to meet him. They chatted for about two hours.

In 1984, Fr. Singarayar was first allowed to visit his mother. He was flown from Batticaloa jail to Palaly and then taken under military escort to his mother's house down St. Patrick's Road, Jaffna.

A member of the party which met Fr. Singarayar at Palaly told SATURDAY REVIEW he appeared to be in reasonably good health and confident he'd be a free man soon.

Fr. Singarayar had arrived at Palaly at 7.30 a.m. by the first flight. He left for Colombo by the 10.45 a.m. flight.

The Army authorities were very cooperative and cordial, the SATURDAY REVIEW learns. They had served refreshments and were very self-effacing throughout.

S. M. FERNANDO OPTICIANS OPENING A NEW BRANCH

In view of the prevailing situation we have opened a branch at 580, 1st Floor, Hospital Road, Jaffna, near Bank of Ceylon.

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— GRANDMET —

SR EDITOR'S REFUGEE FUND

We gratefully acknowledge the following contributions to the SR Editor's Refugee Relief Fund.

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Refugees Almost Starving

The refugee problem in Mullaitivu district has reached crisis proportions with the Government refusing to grant any further assistance.

There are nearly 15,000 refugees in make-shift camps and welfare centres, most of them from the disturbed adjoining district of Trincomalee.

From December 1985 refugees began coming in from Karunadukane,

Kokkulai and Kokuthoduvai. They have been joined after August 1986 by displaced persons from Sally, Sampaltheevu, Anpuvalipuram, Selvanayakapuram, Pallaiyuthu, Linga-nagar, Thirukadaloor, Ward No. 10 Trincomalee town, Thiriyai and Up-puveli.

The Government is asking them to go back to their villages and resettle but they are not willing to do so because they fear further attacks by the Security Forces.

On 28th November, some refugees went to their respective villages but returned soon because of the continued unsettled situation. The Mullaitivu Citizens' Committee and the Mullaitivu Refugee Rehabilitation Organisation with assistance from the SATURDAY REVIEW EDITOR'S REFUGEE RELIEF FUND, AND THE REFUGEE REHABILITATION ORGANISATION (TRRO) based in Jaffna have been providing some succour to the affected persons.

But the funds available are not sufficient to meet the refugees needs.

The refugees face starvation and disease.

Recently, they staged a satyagraha opposite the Government Agent's office to draw attention to their pathetic plight.

The total number of refugees in the North now is estimated to be over 150,000.

The Government does not seem to care tuppence for them, probably because the vast majority of them are Tamils. But it has money in abundance to buy death-dealing weapons.

We continue to receive appeals from Mullaitivu as well as other Northern districts, for assistance. But there is little we can do with the limited resources at our disposal.

We urge Readers to contribute whatever they can to the SR FUND so that we could, even in a small way, help alleviate the suffering of the unfortunate people.

A big Thank You to Dr. N. A. Ranjitham, resident in the United States, for a further contribution of Rs. 10,000 to our Fund. His generosity is exemplary. He has also raised money from other Sri Lanka residents in the U. S.

Our grateful thanks also to the Staff of the Kankesanthurai Cement Factory and the Old Boys' Association of the Fishery Training Centre, Jaffna.

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Dr. Ranjithan, U. S. A.	10,000-00
Mrs. R. Jayanandan, West Indies	500-00
Mrs. V. Williams	9 boxes of used clothes

PAYMENTS

Milk food supply to Trincomalee refugees at Mullaitivu	9,998-00
Drugs and Milk food supply to Madhu Church Refugees	8,059-55
Drugs supply to Kilinochchi refugees	5,000-00

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STUCK IN THE MUD!

I had one more of those exciting and, at times, hilarious journeys to Jaffna last week.

As usual, it started opposite the Fort Railway Station.

I had booked a seat in the V.I.P. bus scheduled to leave at 9.30 p.m. on Saturday — because I like to travel with very important people.

I was there on time but the bus was nowhere in sight.

With the other passengers, I sat on the steps of a hotel and waited and waited. There was no one in charge to say what time the bus would arrive or whether it would arrive at all. VIP treatment indeed.

The bus finally did come around 11.30 p.m., just as I was thinking of returning home.

I got in hoping to leave for Jaffna, but the bus went to Wellwatte to pick up more passengers.

OK, OK. We were finally on the road to Eelam, a little past midnight.

A brief stop at Warakapola and then on to Dambulla. The driver

was taking a route that could avoid too many checkpoints, as happens in vehicles that take the route via Puttalam.

It was a little before 6 a.m. when we reached Vavuniya, from where no vehicle is allowed to move until that time.

Then the checking. Tired in body and mind, like a sheep being taken to slaughter, I got off the bus and followed the other sheep to the checkpoint.

The Security Boys did not find a single black sheep on board.

It took two hours to reach Manakulam, for the road stretch from Vavuniya onwards is a paradise only for organisers of cross-country runs to test both the drivers and their vehicles.

Never mind. We reached Murikandi by 9 a.m.

Oh, Muruga! As usual, I did what everybody else did: washed my face and feet with the filthy water in one of the small water tubs; then on to the kovil where I burnt incense and broke a coconut.

The coconut did not break at the first shy. I was reminded of the heads in the Government which need to be broken. With that thought in mind I dashed the coconut again. It broke in two.

Perfect.

Then a hurried breakfast in one of those kiosks that have survived Army attention.

I wanted to ease myself in the natural way, but there are no facilities in Murikandi, or on most of the waystops, for that purpose.

I went behind a tree and eased part of myself. The balance I decided to carry to Jaffna, which is in urgent need of fertiliser.

I saw several Colombo 7 ladies also vanishing into the jungles nearby.

It was 9.20 a.m. when the bus took the turn-off at Kilinochchi to reach Paranthan. for the main Kandy-Jaffna road at this point has been closed to all private traffic since the attack by Tamil militant, on the Kilinochchi Police Station several months earlier.

The bus went along the Kilinochchi tank bund, wallowing in mud part

of the way, getting stuck in some places.

Never mind. Other vehicles, including food lorries, were going through the same treatment.

Due to the buffeting, some parts of the V.I.P. bus, including its spare wheel, fell off. More delays.

Never mind. We reached Paranthan (a distance of five miles from Kilinochchi) in the record time of one hour and 55 minutes. Another item for the Guinness Book of World Records.

I reached Jaffna by 1.30 p.m. A total of 13 hours to travel 250 miles.

I thanked Allah that I arrived in one piece.

I did not curse Transport Minister M. H. Mohamed, though he is partly responsible for the ordeal that commuters to and from and within the North have to undergo.

The Highways Department under Prime Minister Ranasingha Premadasa has not been doing its job, though money has been allocated for road construction and repairs in the North.

Of course, the typical excuse will be that the activities of the Tamil militants are standing in the way.

But that is no excuse. The roads in the North have to be rehabilitated urgently if the Government wants to keep Sri Lanka in one piece. Or has it already conceded Eelam?

—GAMINI NAVARATNE

How do ordinary people live in Lebanon after eleven years of war? On nerves worn dangerously thin, Maryam Davies who is a journalist with the London based Inquiry magazine and Muslim-media reports.

What a relevance to us, here in Jaffna!

'When the war started in 1975 we were strong both physically and emotionally. Now we just don't have nerves. We don't live anymore. We just exist,' Iman Khalife, a child psychologist living in Muslim West Beirut, tried two years ago to start a silent march by ordinary Lebanese to force a ceasefire. It was a brave attempt, but it failed.

'I am Lebanese,' she proclaims. 'I am not a member of any political party and my religion is not important.' But although there may be many ordinary people who feel like Iman, foreign intervention and sectarian strife have prolonged the civil war for eleven years. In Lebanon violence has become routine and violations of ceasefires as regular as weekends.

Normal life has become impossible. According to some estimates

LIVING IN LEBANON

one third of Lebanon's infrastructure has been destroyed. Roads are ripped up by the steel tracks of tanks and pot-holed by artillery shells and mortars; water and sewage facilities have fallen into disrepair; the telecommunications system is in a state of partial collapse and buildings lie shattered by mortars, rockets and artillery shells. In South Lebanon alone US \$12 billion

per cent after the camps war began in May.

The 1986 draft budget for US \$533 million has not been approved as the cabinet has not held a normal sitting for nearly a year. As the government is unable to collect any taxes or telephone, electricity and water payments, it has to borrow more than half of its expen-

diture. The top customs official at the finance ministry, Shawki Shaaban admits that today the government is netting only US \$13 million from customs dues whereas before the civil war began it was US \$66 million. In the absence of a central authority the militias are running at least seven illegal ports and they also control the four legal ones.

by **Maryam Davies**

worth of damage has been done to buildings and agriculture.

Some 1,200 schools have been destroyed or damaged; and as the country is only one-third self-sufficient, in meat and milk products, food shortages are common. The cost of living rose 12 per cent in the first three months of this year on top of last year's 65 per cent rise. The prices of imported goods which account for 85 per cent of Lebanon's consumption, rose 50

per cent in some areas according

to director of employment at the labour ministry, Adnan Kanaan. The fall in world oil prices has added to the unemployed. A few years ago 300,000 Lebanese worked outside the country, contributing around 40 per cent of the national income. Remittances totalled Dollar 2 billion in 1981 but have been slipping since 1983.

The loss of the once 350,000-strong Palestinian community has also hit the economy. This highly educated group was a major source of remittances while the PLO's own spending power, especially in running its own welfare system in the camps, was of benefit.

Rushing into shelters, basements and corridors for safety as the first sound of rockets and mortars is heard has become a reflex action in Lebanon. Some psychologists say that the emotional capacity to adjust to the terror is wearing thin. A Lebanese

(Continued on page 4)

NORTH AND EAST

Decentralisation in a democratic framework is meant to bring the process of government and the making of decisions closer to the people directly concerned. In the context of this country it must also remove causes for insecurity from the minds of the Tamil minority. A Tamil homeland linking the Northern and Eastern provinces would seem the natural unit of devolution that would fulfil these needs. And this has its precedent in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact of 1958. Unfortunately red herrings pertaining to Sinhalese and Muslims living in these areas have been dragged in to confuse the issue. If one consistently adopts the principle that powers should be devolved in stages to smaller units which are subdivisions of larger units the needs of the smallest village community can be eventually met. Each unit must have the maximum power consistent with its role.

Jeevaraj has pointed out in an article published in the SR(4 10 86) that to break up the Eastern province into Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim districts will spell disaster for all concerned. This will amount to Lebanonising the East, bringing artificial barriers and interests between peoples who have lived cheek

by jowl. Given the behaviour of the STF, such a break up may even set a legal seal on destruction of Tamil villages in areas designated non-Tamil. We must not be party to such a muddle which will be most unfair by the people of the East. The unit of devolution is at Present largely outside our control. The best we can do is to work towards the substance of North-East unity so that it will become hard to deny it legal form. We cannot force common loyalties on others unless we work hard for them. An extra effort needs to be made to

girinathan, told me, "my sons fate is now in God's hands. What can be done has been done. My wife and I are now most concerned with the well-being of the students who are on a fast." Vijitharan was amongst those arrested in Batticaloa in November last year in the same incident where 9 Tamil youths were murdered by Sri Lankan forces in Bar Road. Jaffna was regarded as a place of refuge.

LIFE IN THE EAST

The precariousness of life in the East together with the inter-dependence

by

Rajan Hoole

reach out to the Muslims of the East.

The strong sentiments espoused in Jaffna for North-East unity came to the surface following the disappearance of Vijitharan. This crisis called forth some of the finest moments of Jaffna University's Vice Chancellor Prof. Vithiananthan whose scholarship had involved studies of folklore of the East. The strength of the student protest was such that it left Vijitharan's parents who had come from Batticaloa deeply moved. The father, Mr. Aruna-

dence of the Tamil and Muslim peoples is illustrated in a letter from a young student, "...My father is ill and I cannot leave until he recovers as I must take charge of my home, brothers and sisters. The army walks into houses around 7 p.m. and young men are taken away. They are then beaten up and shewn to a masked man. Depending on the result they are released or detained. Thus I do not sleep in my home. I sleep at homes of Muslim friends. I do not go to the Post Office or the market because of the security forces. If I have to take my father to Kandy for an operation, my Muslim friends will help me."

In strengthening our ties with the East we must also strengthen these ties of neighbourliness between Tamils and Muslims which have recently suffered some setbacks. People of the East whether Tamil or Muslim are some of the nicest people one can meet.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Jaffna has for a long time held an attraction for people of the East as a place renowned for its education. Other facilities available here are training in technical trades and trades such as journalism. Classes are also available here for professional examinations. These are things we can offer the people of the East.

Undoubtedly a major role in promoting personal contacts between North and East has been played by the University of Jaffna. These students in turn have helped to develop contacts at wider levels. Hence much is to be gained by enhancing the reputation of this

University as a place for education so that its attractiveness will offset other disadvantages. This is where Tamils residing abroad can help, in other ways if not by coming here to teach.

There is greater scope for the general public and organisations to take an interest in the welfare of students from outlying districts and create in them a loyalty to a common identity. Many of them lead isolated lives, not overanxious to express their inner feelings. Perhaps they feel that there exists a paranoia in Jaffna making it less acceptable for those from outside to hold opinions that deviate from the prevailing political orthodoxy.

In order that those from districts outside Jaffna can pursue educational and training careers in Jaffna many of them will require either employment or scholarships. Here is where non-governmental and employers organisations can do much. Jaffna has after all benefited considerably from having its sons find employment in other Tamil districts.

We are at present facing additional reluctance on the part of Muslim students to study in Jaffna as evidenced by the absence of Muslims amongst new admissions to science and Medicine. Here cynical explanations abound. Such sentiments miss the point. While many in Jaffna feel that they have borne their share of the suffering, those outside tend to feel that they are at present receiving the brunt of state oppression while their opinions count less. We must go deep into their problems and offer whatever comfort and reassurance we can. If not we would not have learnt our lessons from the history of insensitivity, egoism and falsehood that led to the break of Sinhalese-Tamil relations.

Muslim Political Party

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress decided to set up a separate political party for Muslims, at a meeting held in Colombo on Saturday, 29th November.

Attorney Ashraff, speaking at the meeting, emphasised the need for a Muslim political party to preserve the separate identity of the Muslims.

The ruling United National Party (UNP) it is learnt, is rather perturbed by this move.

Living in...

(Continued from page 3)

psychologist, Dr. Abdel Rahman Labban, says that both drinking and abuse of tranquillisers are a problem. Workers are said to be more aggressive and fights break out frequently over minor issues. Head of the Muslim Maqassed Charity Organization, Tammam Salam, described people as "living hour by hour".

With the breakdown in law and order and an abiding concern for their homes and finding food, any extra impositions such as 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. curfews, or no electricity, wreak havoc on nerves.

According to Dr. Labban, "Psychosomatic effects are increasing. Heart disease gastric disturbances and ulcers are very frequent among younger generations now". Children brought up on the horrors of death, destruction and deprivation must be psychologically scarred, he said. Children who were five at the start of the civil war are teenagers today;

those born then are now 11 years old.

Since the civil war broke out on April 13, 1975, when a busload of Palestinians were ambushed by Christian gunmen in Beirut, more than 100,000 people have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been uprooted from their homes and hundreds kidnapped and held in illegal detention.

According to an announcement in June by yet another group, the Independent Movement for Liberating Civil War Hostages, 2,200 Muslims are held by Christian militias. This number does not include Muslim prisoners who were illegally transferred by Israeli invaders to their own prisons or those held by its Christian proxy forces, the South Lebanese Army.

While the sufferings of the people never seem to end, Lebanon—a strip of land no more than 120 miles long and 35 miles at its widest—is spilt into cantons, in all but name, and held by sectarian and factional militias—Third World Network Features.

The Little Traditions:

An excerpt from a paper entitled "The Impact of Tradition, Culture and Religion on Women in South Asia" presented at the Conference of University Women, Washington, October 1986.

What I have described so far has been the impact of the formal tradition on the lives of South Asian women; the overarching ideological framework to which Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim women subscribe. But to leave it at that is to tell only half the story. Despite the oppressive features of some of those Great traditions women have managed to express themselves and the power and individuality of women has been recognised in certain spheres of social life. Anthropologists have been particularly sensitive to these differences. On the other hand, political scientists and sociologists in search of unifying principles have not really attempted to assess the dynamic features of women's roles in specific social contexts.

NUNS

In the Buddhist tradition, women have often used religion as a means of escaping from the householder chores assigned to them. They have often opted out to become nuns involving themselves not only in meditation but also in healing and therapy. This escape into nunhood is not unfamiliar to the Christian church. But in Sri Lanka and especially East Asia it is usually through Buddhism. In 80 B. C. the great Buddhist nun Sumangalamala said:

O Woman will be set free. How free I am /How thoroughly free from kitchen drudgery / Stained and squalid among my cooking pots/my brutal husband ranked as even less/Than the sunshades he sits and weaves.

Nirmala Salgado, in an interesting series of studies on Sri Lankan Dasa Sil Maas describes how and why these women aspire to be nuns. But, perhaps what is more important is that while the institutions of Buddhism acquired state patronage in Sri Lanka and became more formalised, the position of nuns began to decline. Today their ordination is not recognised by the Sri Lankan Buddhist hierarchy. In contrast the Zen Buddhist hierarchy in Japan, following the Meiji reforms, placed emphasis on the formal education of nuns. The development of institutions dedicated to Buddhist teaching to women received state patronage and like in the Christian church, it provided an avenue for woman to break away from the family in search of spiritual values or social servi-

ce. Today in Japan this process is formalised. In Sri Lanka Buddhist nuns still have to struggle and live in informal settings once they decide to choose the path of meditation and social service.

THE GREAT GODDESS

The portrayal of women has also differed in context despite the oppressive framework of the Great traditions. The Great traditions favoured Sita or her equivalents, the obedient chaste and dutiful bride of Lord Rama. She reappears in Buddhist texts and Muslim texts under a different name but always docile, passive and long suffering. In contrast, in many of the regions of India and Sri Lanka, the Great Goddess remains a central religious personage. She appears as Kali, Devi, Lakshmi, Pattini or Saraswathi. In such a context she is empowered and protective. She is recognised as Shakti, the energy which keeps the world together. This worship of the Great Goddess which is still widespread in Hindu and Buddhist circles has to be understood as a counter trend to the formalised ideology of the Great traditions.

by

Radhika Coomaraswamy

The Great Goddess has of course also undergone historical transformation in certain areas. In the near East Gerda Lerner shows how the Goddess Ishtar in her earliest days was warrior, protector interceder. With time she gradually became only a healer and a partner to the male God. In South Asia, the division also exists. The Goddess in her Devi, Lakshmi and Pattini mould is seen as the healer and the householder. But, in Bengal especially as Durga and Kali, she is seen as all powerful, both protector and healer, warrior and mother.

Ashis Nandy in his article on Sati describes how the cult of the Goddess was a great embarrassment to the early Hindu nationalists such as Ram Mohan Roy. They set up organisations such as the Arya Samaj which devalued the Gods and the goddesses of Hinduism and played up the texts and the scriptures. In doing so they modelled their reform on the patriarchal religions of the Near East, the monotheistic formal religions which had come with colonialism. Despite these attempts, the Goddess is a powerful figure in Hindu mythology and is an im-

portant aspect of the daily lives of individuals living in Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. While the westernised Brahminical classes downplayed these symbols of power and energy and preferred instead to concentrate on the sacred texts such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads, the Goddess remains more popular and perhaps more in touch with the actual religiosity of a vast majority of people in South Asia. Even in Buddhist Sri Lanka she marks her appearance as the Goddess Pattini, a Goddess whose quest for Justice resulted in the destruction of a corrupt kingdom and who today is the Goddess of health and well-being.

The Goddess then stands in marked contrast to the image of woman as Sita or householder. She is power and energy. She can be a demoness, she can be vengeful, she can be protective and giving. She is the uncontrolled passion which the lawgivers so feared and yet she is worshipped by both men and women. They go to her for empowerment to provide them with the energy that they lack in a repre-

ssive and cruel society. Many researchers doing work with South Asian women are often surprised by this other face of South Asian womanhood. But, in fact the image of women in South Asia is contradictory. Women's power in accepted and worshipped but also devalued and repressed. In recent case-studies on Tamil women, this ambiguity comes out very clearly, leading many researchers to conclude that the power of woman is recognised by South Asian tradition but its operation is strictly in the sphere of the household, especially if the woman is married with children. However, the hidden power, Shakti or Anku remain private and in the interaction with family members. It has yet not been mobilised for feminist purposes whether in Sri Lanka or in India.

THE TEMPLE DANCER

While the Great Goddess challenges the image of women as portrayed by some of the Great traditions, social institutions of the past also cast light on how women were allowed to express creativity in unusual social contexts. There has been a lot of discussion about the role

of the temple dancer in traditional Indian society. Today, Indian dance especially Bharata Natyam has become an extremely important part of Indian culture and a must for young women of the elite classes. Just a hundred years ago great controversy surrounded the dance and dancers bringing with them many social and political issues which were relevant to the debates on women's issues. Traditionally Indian dance was danced by the Devadasis, or the "slaves of God." These devadasis were dedicated to the temple by their parent at an early age and married to the God of the temple. The cost of the temple dedication was often met by a patron of the arts who then entered into an arrangement with the devadasis who became both dancer and courtesan. Intimacy with a devadasi was a sign of public success. The Devadasis was considered a very auspicious symbol in traditional society. When she died her funeral procession was given full temple honours. She was often given land by her patron and the cultural life of the village centred around her and the temple. She was in the past a powerful figure of the village.

The devadasis were an unusual social tradition and as Amrit Srinivasan points out in her article, they were at the root of Indian culture and art especially in South India. They were economically independent and socially free. However, their unusual dependence on the temple was to be their downfall. With the coming of colonialism, the temples lost their significance and importance. As the temples went into decline, the devadasis stopped being the economically independent courtesan. The institution became one which was exploited as temple prostitution and young women were sold to the temple by parents who could not afford to raise them. It was transformed from a cultural institution of slavery. By the nineteenth century, reformers both Indian and British from all over India took up her cause and demanded the abolishment of the Devadasi system as being mere prostitution. The cause was also taken up by the lower castes against the Brahmins in temples. The reformers wanted to make Hinduism respectable and they believed that the Devadasis like widow burning and child marriage would shock the conscience of the world.

(Continued on page 11)

Are Human Rights Safeguarded Today?

10th December was Human Rights Day.

Despite the rhetoric, how far are human rights being safeguarded today even in those countries which are signatories to the UN Declaration of Human Rights?

Rhetoric and reality are polar opposites.

The term Human Rights is the latest modification of what was in the 17th and 18th centuries "Moral rights" and "Natural rights". Seeds of this concept can be seen in earlier Greek traditions such as *isogoria* meaning equal freedom of speech, *isonomia* meaning equality before law etc. which obtained in certain Greek cities.

John Locke, associated with the English Revolution of 1688, has written a lot on Natural Rights. This was followed up by Thomas Jefferson whose efforts resulted in the proclamation of Independence by 13 American States in July, 1776. This was spearheaded by Lafayette in Paris resulting in the French Revolution and a similar proclamation in 1789 in Paris.

The protagonists of Natural rights theory in the 19th and early 20th centuries engaged in an onslaught on individual rights. They thought that such rights were only rights of nations and not of individuals. They scorned and ridiculed as nonsense natural law and natural rights being contextualized for individuals. These positivists would not tolerate the extension of natural laws and natural rights to individuals. This view was most hardened in the German-speaking world. To them only those that were upheld by a Court of Law was real Natural Law and what the Courts pronounced were Natural Rights. They also maintained that any "so-called truth that could not be verified by sensory experience was meaningless." But the rule of Hitler disillusioned them and soon they began to be uneasy. They found it impossible to condone certain laws and even certain judgements given by the Courts acting under the command of Hitler as just or fair. It soon devolved upon them around 1933 to rethink on the subject and revise their views. Oppression of individual rights began to be vehemently opposed and the need to protect natural rights was felt at all levels as never before.

In this vigorous debate, various terminologies and phrases began to be introduced and the subject of

natural rights was enriched by volumes of writings, debates and propagation. The term "Natural rights" was replaced by the term "rights of man" which meant rights of mankind as a whole and did not exclude rights of women. However, in 1940s, Eleanor Roosevelt found that since the term **rights of man** was not understood to include the rights of women too in some parts of the world, she advocated and promoted the use of the term "Human Rights."

With the formation of the United Nations, eminent personalities like Winston Churchill wished to see the "enthronement of human rights". In 1946, the UN appointed a Commission to examine the question of Human Rights and sort them out. In 1948, on the recommendation of the Commission, the UN endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human

by

Rights and several countries became signatories and pledged to uphold the declarations.

Among the rights spelt out, in the declarations are political and civil rights of individuals. To this list of twenty articles are added economic and social rights—rights involving social security, medical services and holidays with pay. While the former inhere in a person as a human being, the latter are acquired under certain conditions. Therefore, the former are inviolable and there cannot be a compromise over the exercise of these rights. The 1946 instructions to the Commission on Human Rights aimed at an "International Bill of Rights" that could be corrected by International Institutions where such violations are alleged. **But what emerged in 1948 was a manifesto or a declaration and its inherent weaknesses are manifest in the behaviour of even countries which are signatories to the said declaration.**

In 1950 Europe produced the European Convention of Human Rights highlighting political and civil rights

and they made considerable progress. This question of Human Rights is well expounded by Jaques Maritain, a philosopher. He says: "The human person has rights because of the fact that it is a person, a whole, a master of itself and its acts and which consequently is not merely a means to an end, but an end, an end which must be treated as such — by virtue of natural law, the human person has the right to be respected, is the subject of rights, possesses rights. These are things which are owed to a man because of the fact that he is a man".

It is worth quoting here some salient points made by Prof. Maurice Cranston, Professor of Political Science in the London School of Economics, who acknowledges political and civil rights as of primeval concern and asserts that the rights to life and property are very important. He says — "Human rights are something that everybody has. They are not rights a man acquires by doing certain work, a certain role or discharging certain duties, they belong to him simply because he is a human being. A human right, by definition, is something that no one, anywhere, may be deprived of with-

But to what extent are these human rights safeguarded and preserved today?

Arrest without charge, detention incommunicado, and torture of opponents by Governments continue and this is well shielded from public concern through disinformation and misinformation. The right to freedom of speech, writing and organised efforts are still being oppressed and opposition to oppression is categorized as terrorism and state terrorism unleashed.

These oppressions generally emanate from ideological conflicts, racial, communal or linguistic considerations or religious intolerance. While ideological conflicts are few, the other types are rampant since such clashes flare up consequent on man's easy susceptibilities to appeals on race, community, language and religion. Prof. Mario Pei the century's most stimulating writer on linguistics states that the idea of one race, one language, one religion, one culture is the result of a diseased imagination. Arrogance and adamancy pervading these issues aiming at the destruction of the other groups which eventually prevent a process of compromise and tolerance is nothing short of the reflection of the diseased imaginations of the oppressors, a case of political madness and needs some psychiatric treatment. No wonder then their opponents are subjected to even torture which no sane man sound in mind and thought will embark upon.

A student of linguistic sociology puts the case of linguistic intolerance in the following words. "To the naive monoglot, objects and ideas are identical with and inseparable from the particular words used to describe them in the one language he knows, hence he is inclined to consider speakers of other languages as something less than human, or at least foreign and hostile to the world of his own experience." Karl Vossler in *The Spirit of Language in Civilization* observes. "Tolerance of national languages is a still later, tenderer flower of human culture. Once that insight has been gained, thereafter intolerance on this point is an even greater idiocy. If I grudge my neighbour his religious beliefs, and hammer my own into his skull, I shall at any rate be able to excuse myself on the ground that I believe my own to be the only one that leads to salvation, that his leads to damnation, and that I want to save his

(Continued on page 7)

A. Theva Rajan

out grave affront to justice. There are certain actions that are never permissible, certain freedoms that should never be invaded, certain things that are sacred. No one wants to die a violent death or be injured. No one wants to be hindered in his natural movements and in his utterance of natural sentiments. Furthermore, man is exceedingly vulnerable. Unlike lobsters and porcupines, *homo sapiens* has few physical defences in his own body. It is sometimes suggested further that it is this vulnerability which converts man from an egoistic into a social animal. For his own preservation, a man must live under a system of rules, which will assure peace for himself and his neighbours".

Prof. Macpherson explains the doctrine of human rights thus "Any doctrine of human rights must be in some sense a doctrine of natural rights. Human rights can only be asserted as a species of natural rights, in the sense that they must be deduced from the nature (ie. the needs and capacities) of men as such, whether of men as they are now or as they are capable of becoming".

WHAT THE TAMILS WANT OF THE U.N.

One of the most important ideals of the United Nations is the promotion and safeguarding of fundamental human rights of human beings so that the world can maintain International Peace and Security. It also aims to raise the standard of living of all the people, particularly those of the Third World.

But Sri Lanka as a member of the United Nations is violating the Charter and violating the fundamental human rights of the Tamils. If we trace the history of the Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka from 1956, they have been deprived of their basic rights to use their language, and Upcountry Tamils have lost their citizenship. Many hundreds of Tamils died during the communal riots which occurred several times in Sri Lanka. Many Tamil shops were burnt to ashes, and Tamils lost their belongings. The

holocaust which took place in July 1983 was the worst one and from that time there has been heavy loss of life and property due to the brutal force used by the State. A good number of youths are missing, whole families have disappeared. We hear the cry pain and suffering in every nook and corner of the Tamil speaking areas.

by

V. Rattai

Sri Lanka's ethnic problem has been taken up at the UN level. Before that the A. I. has condemned the killing of innocent Tamils then and there. But the Sri Lankan Government never cared about this but gave different types of excuses for their exposures.

Now what do the Tamils require from the United Nations?

The United Nations General Assembly has to study the problems of the Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka very deeply and ask the Security Council to send a committee to Sri Lanka to study about the violation of human rights.

Secondly, the United Nations must ask Aid-giving countries to stop aids and loans to Sri Lanka until the ethnic problem is solved.

Thirdly, the United Nations should ban the sale of dangerous weapons to Sri Lanka to stop the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Finally, the Security Council which is functioning under the United Nations must send a Peace - Keeping Force to maintain Peace among the Sri Lankans.

S.O.S. From Mannar

The Mannar Association for Relief and Rehabilitation has appealed for public support for its rehabilitation efforts.

In a press release, the Association has pointed out the plight of the farmers and the fishermen in the Mannar District.

Excerpts from the appeal:

The Mannar District consists of 70/- farmers, 20/- fishermen and 10/- businessmen.

In the past this District was the virtual granary of the North. Daily the excess fish caught was sent in lorries to the South.

At the present time, however due to the disturbances, the District and its people are in dire straits.

As far as Agriculture is concerned earlier about 23,000 hectares were under cultivation but now only 5,000 hectares have been cultivated, largely due to the non availability of seed paddy and urea.

The total prohibition of fishing in the seas around Mannar is a setback to the once booming fishing industry, and has reduced the fishermen of the area to abject starvation.

Business too which went hand in glove with agriculture and fishing has also been brought to a stand-still.

With the set backs to Agriculture and Fishing, income-generation has been reduced, with parents becoming refugees; the education of children has suffered to a very great extent.

The Mannar Association for Relief and Rehabilitation has taken many steps to alleviate the distress caused to the people of the District—cultivators, fishermen and children but its resources are limited.

The Association therefore appeals to all organisations and the public to support its Relief and Rehabilitation efforts.

Mothers' Front Pinpoints Tamil Detenus' Plight

Text of a press statement by the Mothers' Front issued to mark Human Rights Day.

people were arrested arbitrarily under the pretext of Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency regulations.

The Article 12 of the Constitution which guarantees to all persons the right to equality, prohibits discrimination against citizens on any of the above mentioned grounds.

What happened to the report of the delegation headed by the Deputy Minister of Justice Mr. Shelton. Ranarajah recommending the establishment of a Fundamental Rights Commission in Sri Lanka to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to monitor the observance of fundamental rights, after his 30 day visit to the U.S in Nov. 1985?

We want our leaders to be honest and act fairly.

Today there are nearly 2000 of our children detained at Welikade Prison and Boosa Camp on the verge of death. Some of them, about 58 youths and 18 girls went on a fast unto death campaign to show their protest against the conditions under which they are forced to live. They were forced to go on this hunger strike not because they are denied political and fundamental rights but for their basic needs and because elementary facilities provided to a normal remand prisoner are denied to them in Welikade and Boosa where they are kept in custody. All these young

Publish Report — AI

Amnesty International has again requested the Government of Sri Lanka to make public the Police Report on the alleged disappearance of Father Mary Bastian.

A.I. has pointed out that there is evidence about the shooting of Fr. Mary Bastian by the Security Forces at his parish house in January 1985 when they carried out an operation in Vankalai, in the Mannar District.

A.I. has also expressed its regret at the fact that the government has not made public the Police Report even though the Catholic Bishops' Conference had made a request.

Are Human Rights...

(Continued from page 6)

soul. But if I throttled my brother's mother-tongue in order to impose mine on him, what excuse can I have except that of conceit? For my neighbour's language is his inner-eye, form of thought with all its potentialities of expression, his spiritual childhood and future. To everyone who has understood this, all repressive measures directed against a language must seem like crimes against the budding life of their spirit."

How do we explain the horrendous crimes committed even by Governments against the agitating oppressed in spheres of language, religion, race and colour?

In South Africa, even children are arrested enmasse and subjected to torture so that psychologically this terror will prevent them from agitating against colour bar engaging in human rights activities.

Since a decade or so a military philosophy of "seek and destroy"

is being practised in some countries. Their philosophy assumes that in the process of destroying 1000 human beings at least 10 of their opponents will also get destroyed. This shows the extent of mental aberration holding human lives to ransom. The right to live is a basic human right and to wrest this right one has to attune himself to very low depths of sub-human will and courage. It is not possible for one who is truly human. Those who think in the same wave length are also postulating the theory that war and bloodshed can only be prevented and peace ensured by more nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, cluster bo-

mbs and neutron bombs. The greatest tragedy is that even in International conferences this idea is being put across.

So much so, that once again individual human rights are at stake. It has become the exclusive prerogative of Nations and States. Human rights has become the subject only of convenience based purely on political expediency. Right now, there is no effective machinery to check these violations. The world must seriously think of an effective means of ensuring and safeguarding human rights before these baneful forces destroy humanity altogether.

This Century Would Have Been A Good One...

Today we are witnessing the deterioration of values, of mutual respect towards our fellow beings, of the right to live in peaceful co-existence, all because man in his greed for power has thrown all caution and sensible thinking to the winds and is trying to dominate his unfortunately weaker fellow beings. Never before have we seen such deterioration in our attitudes, inspite of the fact that we have vastly developed our scientific technology. But instead of using such developments for the benefit of mankind, we are just annihilating our fellow beings, ultimately annihilating the whole human race!

According to Lelwyn Law White in his book, *The Future Development of Man*, "At no previous period of human history has there been such widespread examination of the nature of man and his present environs. This is partly because the race has become more conscious and more aware of its failures and partly because it faces problems which are unprecedented both in gravity and extent."

With the Nuclear Age, our lives are in the balance; we are battling

with the question whether to use it for the betterment of mankind or make his total annihilation a certainty? Rightly did the late Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam say, when he was addressing the U.N.O. some years back, "Man in all his recorded history has never been able to use the vast resources of the earth as he is able to do so today. Yet the will to live seems to have deserted him and it is ironical that with the accumulation of the wisdom of the ages, he has not been able to prevent the creation of weapons for his own

ther catastrophe, wherein we are on the brink of a Nuclear War which means the total annihilation of the human race! God forbid!

According to Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Condemned of Altona* "This century would have been a good one if man had not been ambushed by his cruel enemy since time immemorial, by that carnivorous species, sworn to his undoing by that raging beast without hide-MAN".

Have we lost our sense of reason, only to degenerate to the level of

by

R. Gurusingham

destruction". This wise utterance some years back is true today in the context of the present world situation. We see man's inhumanity to man. It has become a world phenomenon.

With the then League of Nations, now the U.N.O.'s and the U.N.E.S.C.O's charter for Human right, safety and well being and the right to live peacefully, never again to enter into another war, we are today, by our folly, breaking all conventions mentioned in the charter drawn up by leaders of the world. And sad to say, we are drifting to ano-

savage beasts killing one another without compunction? If life, that has been so laboriously nurtured so studiously prepared for and is meant for higher things, is destroyed, then the whole rationality of nature is impeached.

We need one another, whatever our racial distinctions we may have. To live and let live, to live in peaceful co-existence, to recognise the rights of others and to respect one other's point of view and sentiments that is the refined quality of man. In short to respect

the Brotherhood of man. In this context it is apt to quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.:

"In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must not let our creative protests degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The new marvellous militancy which has engulfed the Negro Community must not lead us to distrust all white peoples, for many of our white brothers have come to realise that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone."

This is a very good example for us in Sri Lanka to follow and I would like to alter slightly Martin Luther King's word to read: "This new militancy which has engulfed the Tamil Community must not lead us to distrust ALL Sinhalese people, for many of our Sinhalese Brothers have come to realise that their destiny is linked up with our destiny and that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. They cannot walk alone."

HILLS ARE ALIVE

During a brief span of sojourn in the hill country, after interviewing a cross-section of the people of different communities and religions, belonging to various social strata, I have come to the irresistible inference that all are in one voice, in accepting the peace package put forward by the Sri Lanka Government, mainly, because all are thirsting for peace and order in the country.

Most of whom I interviewed are not motivated by any political ideology, nor have they any fear by expressing what they had in their minds. Hence their opinions have to be taken as sincere and genuine and are really the impact of the disastrous consequences emanating from the prevalent turbulent conditions in the country.

Further, the general opinion is that the government has had the courage to place the proposals despite threats and vehement opposition from potent political forces that still appear to hold sway in the country. The proposals are not final and conclusive, but could be improved upon through a process of negotiations and discussions.

No one appeared to be seriously interested about the goings-on in the North and the East, especially about the bloody confrontations between the Security Forces and the boys. In fact, the situation in the North is a closed book to most of them. But all that they aspire for is some sort of a settlement of the ethnic issue, that will give them, at least a breathing pace, if not a permanent restoration of normalcy, of peace and order in this strife-torn country.

The Chairman of an Urban Council in a Provincial town nostalgically recalled the Paradise that was Sri Lanka, where people of various communities and diverse political hues co-existed in a fraternal and cordial atmosphere. This Chairman continues to hold office for a number of years in the past because he is a redoubtable champion of national unity, and held in high esteem by the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people of the area.

A Medical practitioner and Coroner serving a very wide area, comprising several estates for the last three decades, who has been sharing the joys and woes of the people

of the area, particularly the Tamils, loudly wondered why human beings should divide themselves on linguistic and racial lines and shed their blood. He emphatically declared that the talk about the Sinhala blood and the Tamil blood is utter nonsense. He recalled how his daughter, like hundreds of other-well-meaning educated, sober and humane Sinhala people afforded shelter and protection to her Tamil neighbours in Colombo during the 1983 blood bath.

A Planter at Labukelle lamented the unwarranted current mess to which the country has been reduced and ascribed it to the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act and the subsequent policy of Nationalisation, particularly the take-over of schools in 1960. He did not mince words when he said that national unity was broken asunder by the myopic introduction of the Sinhala and the Tamil languages as the media of instruction leading to the virtual segregation into two streams and the elimination of English as a link language in due course. As it is there is hardly any opportunity for a dialogue between the Sinhala and the Tamil students.

V. Mahalingam

As far as the Tamil workers of Indian origin in the hill-country are concerned, they appear to have been hard hit by the take over of the plantations by the State. But it is a happy augury that the major Trade Unions in the upcountry have agreed to unite for the winning of the common demands. That is a correct step in the correct direction. The Indian youth in the estates though not aggressive, are not prepared to take things lying down, unlike their forebears, decades back during the Colonial era. They seem to be more politically conscious than their ancestors and in a way proud of the fact that India plays a significant role as a mediator in the ethnic dispute and consistently declares its interest in evolving a formula for a just settlement.

If the present trend of attitude to the ethnic dispute in the upcountry spreads to other parts of the country and the leaders on both sides of the great-divide display courageous statesmanship to arrive at a just and honourable settlement, one can be certain that communalism in this country will be "buried unwept, unhonoured and unsung" before long.

Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachyov on his arrival in New Delhi said on 26th November that "matters of Soviet-Indian relations in all their aspects" will be discussed during his talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. These aspects include the "topical problems of Asia, the Indian and Pacific ocean regions in the context of the struggle to prevent nuclear war and improve the entire international situation."

As is quite evident from the above quotation from Mikhail Gorbachyov's statement on his arrival at the Delhi airport, the famous

Gorbachyov's Indian Visit

July 29 Vladivostok proposals on evolving a comprehensive system of peace and security in Asia and the Pacific region will be a major point of concern during talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. During the last Rajiv-Gorbachyov Summit in Moscow held in May 1985 the Soviet leader talked of 'elaborating a general comprehensive approach to the problems of Asian

Security", knowing fully well that unless India, "a great Asian power" (an interpretation that differs from the strong lobby in the West which calls her only a "sub-regional power"), is taken into confidence the idea could not hope to make headway. Ever since then, the Soviet Union stressed on the necessity to start a "Helsinki-type Process" in Asia.

After the Vladivostok proposals, things became even more clear for India and other Asian countries on what exactly the Soviet Union meant when it talked of evolving a comprehensive system of Security for Asia and the Pacific. They found that the Soviet proposals had concrete measures attached to them, such as evolving different nuclear-free zones, while taking fully into consideration the interests of different Asian regions—South, South-East and West.

Improvement in Soviet-Chinese relations, a positive development for Asia as a whole, can also contribute to lessening tensions on Chinese-Indian borders. Contrary to what some lobbyists maintain, any improvement in Soviet-Chinese re-

lations is likely to have a healthy impact on all Asian countries, as it will ensure China also becomes a part of a process towards evolving a comprehensive solution to Asia-Pacific questions in a round-table rather than in an isolated manner.

The questions of bringing about peace and security in Asia and the

by **Viraj Kumar**

Pacific region is becoming a major concern for all countries of the area, including India, today particularly because of the increasing US military activity in this part. Indeed, the American strategists' aim is to turn East Asia and the Pacific and Indian Oceans which wash it into an area for the deployment of forward-based nuclear weapons of the same kind as the ones already deployed in Western Europe and the Atlantic.

31st DAY REMEMBRANCE

IN EVERLOVING MEMORY OF



A. J. ANTONY

BORN: 1927 - 12 - 11
CALLED TO REST: 1986 - 11 - 16

"MAY HE REST IN PEACE"

FONDLY REMEMBERED
BY EVER SORROWING
Wife, Children, Son-In-Law,
Grand Child, Relatives
& Friends.

68, Colombagam Road,
Jaffna.

IN DETENTION

*He fell from the ninth floor
He hanged himself
He slipped on a piece of soap while washing
He hanged himself
He slipped on a piece of soap while washing
He fell from the ninth floor
He hanged himself while washing
He slipped from the ninth floor
He hung from the ninth floor
He slipped on the ninth floor while washing
He fell from a piece of soap while slipping
He hung from the ninth floor
He washed from the ninth while slipping
He hung from a piece of soap while washing*

South Africa

—Christopher Van Wyk

APPRECIATION

E. K. Shanmuganathan

"Shan", as he was affectionately called by his friends, was an educationist, cooperator, social worker, guide, philosopher and friend—all in one. The cruel hands of fate have taken him away from our midst with a suddenness that has perplexed even the most enlightened of those who came in close contact with him.

Eliyathamby Kanapathipillai Shanmuganathan was born into a wealthy family on 31-12-23. Having had his early education at Kopay Christian College, he moved to St. John's College, Jaffna from where he matriculated. The death of his father and the consequent financial strains on the family compelled him to join, though reluctantly, the General Clerical Service.

But quill-driving was not his line; he had greater ambitions. He took the bold step which many others of lesser fortitude would have dreaded. He resigned from the service to join the University of Ceylon in 1946. Having graduated from the Ceylon University, he joined the staff of one of his old schools—St. John's College, in May 1949. From then on it was working his

way up the ladder till he reached the top. Everything he did was done with a genuine purpose. Personal inconvenience or even financial constraints did not deter him from pursuing what he set out to do, to its logical and successful completion. He battled successfully against the strange vicissitudes of fortune to emerge as victor.

From St. John's College through St. Patrick's where he served, he came back to his Alma Mater in May 1962 as Deputy Principal. He became Principal of Kopay Christian College in November, 1963 and all at once a new spirit was infused into the School. This led to the School being upgraded to Grade I. The Shanmuganathan era at K.C.C. from 1963 to 1971 was indeed the golden era of the school. Examination results ranked the School among the top ten in the North. But he was not satisfied with mere exam results. In Sports the School emerged as Champions in Hockey and Basketball besides putting the School on the Public Schools Athletic Map.

As a Cooperator he laid the foundations of cooperative enterprise in Kopay. The ease and speed with

which he erected buildings—be they at School or elsewhere—made him the envy of all. He started two co-operative Societies at Kopay Christian College—the Teachers Thrift Society and the School's Supply Society. The Co-operative Department later started these Societies in other schools and adopted as constitution the one which was framed by Mr. Shanmuganathan. These two Societies now serve as an essential link between the School and the Community.

Selfless, genuine service never fails to be rewarded; and so it was that Shan's ability was recognised by the authorities who gave him a 'double promotion' by appointing him to the Selection Grade I, thus skipping 'Super Grade'. Shan did not stop there as many others would have done. He later became Director of Education and on retirement took up appointment as Advisor to the Ministry of Finance in the State of Kaduna in Nigeria in July, 1983.

Cruel fate snatched him away from our midst on 4.12.85. It is said that those whom the Gods love die young. Let us console ourselves that Shan is safe in the hands of His Master, as one who had completed successfully his mission on Earth. To the members of his family we extend our deep sympathies. We mourn with them one of the choicest sons of Kopay.

May he rest in peace.

—S.S.R

Home Guards Or Blackguards?

Editor
SATURDAY REVIEW

I was one of the passengers in a bus to Jaffna which left Colombo about 9 p.m. on 5th December.

On reaching Puttalam, all passengers were subjected to the usual security check, including examination of all bag and baggage by the Army. We were then allowed to proceed. A few minutes later we were stopped at Puttalam by Home Guards. While some of them got into the bus and did a check, their leader assaulted the driver of the bus for keeping the engine running.

The driver was asked to switch off the engine and taken out for questioning. When they found that the driver was a Sinhalese, he was abused by all the Home Guards for driving a bus taking Tamil passengers and warned that he should not be seen serving Tamils in future. This incident took place about 2-30 a.m. in a lonely jungle area. By God's grace, we were able to proceed after 45 minutes of fear and suspense.

On humanitarian grounds, let me bring to the attention of all right-thinking people the criminal conduct of these Home Guards. They are nothing but drunken hooligans, appointed and paid by the Government, and are a source of terror to innocent passengers and unsuspecting and faithful transport employees, irrespective of race.

Will the Minister of National Security please open his eyes to reality?

A Jaffna Resident

Jaffna

Hell - Fire

Editor
SATURDAY REVIEW

Shelling takes place from the army camps in the North often and it has resulted in the death or mutilation of many innocent men, women and children. The shelling is more marked from the Jaffna Fort camp. The shells that fall in civilian areas appear to be more sophisticated and deadlier than before. They hardly make any noise till they fall and explode. People dying ghastly deaths by getting their heads or limbs severed or their entrails blown out by these attacks, has become a common occurrence. What is most cruel about these sellings is that they take place when least expected and the people are taken unawares. The shells are not directed at any particular target but they are fired at random.

The Government claims that the forces are only retaliating against attacks on the camps by militants. The question one would like to pose is: Retaliating against whom? Shells are fired from inside the army camps in all directions. It is seldom that a militant becomes a victim. Then who is killed? The tragedy is that the agents of the Government themselves do not know who is killed.

We have heard of civilians being killed in cross-fire. When there is a direct confrontation between two warring sides, people caught in the cross-fire die. That is sometimes inevitable. But what is happening here? Shells are discharged into areas where innocent people live and move about, like markets, shopping centres, residential areas and even hospitals. Can one resist the conclusion that the attacks are deliberately directed at hapless civilians?

LETTERS

The Government has to seek and win the sympathy of the Tamil people if it is to effectively solve the ethnic dispute which is strangling the nation slowly but surely. The unprincipled action of the forces like shelling populated areas to cause death and destruction will only tend to alienate the people further.

Alvai North

T. Ratnavel

An Allegory

Editor
SATURDAY REVIEW

SATURDAY REVIEW takes some days to reach Colombo and other commitments means time passes before I can read it in detail, so perhaps you will allow me to make a belated reply to the attack on the President of the Methodist Church by Mr. Victor J. Kiruparaj in the issue of 8th November. Apart from anything else it contains inaccuracies about the procedures of the Methodist Church. I would like to make the following points.

There is no way Mr. Kiruparaj can substantiate his statement that Rev. Harold Fernando was elected with 'the unstinted support of the North and the East.' As the President is elected by secret ballot at the annual Conference it is impossible for anyone to discover how people voted. As the voting was close it is doubtful if he received unstinted support from any one section. It is unlikely that all the delegates from the North and East voted for one of the other candi-

dates, but even if they had done so, the voting could still have gone the way it did.

The Methodist Ministers cannot be held responsible for voting him into office. The majority of the annual Conference are members of the laity.

If Methodist padres are indeed 'hanging onto his lapels' it cannot be to further their own advancement. All major offices are assigned by majority vote at the annual Conference, and his is only one in over a hundred. It could be that all they are doing is showing the respect they consider due to the elected head of their Church.

Whatever other allegations are made against the man, I can see no way in which he can be described as 'publicity-seeking.' He wanted his name to be withdrawn from the Presidential election at an early stage and it was retained only at the insistence of the then President, Rev. Soma Perera.

He has shown considerable concern for the situation in the North and East. On several occasions (including the last Conference), I have been present when he has invited ministers from the North or the East to speak about the situation in their area. One of the institutions helping refugees is the Methodist Church, which has a Victims of Violence Fund. If his picture of what is happening in these areas is sometimes inaccurate it is partly because people like Mr. Kiruparaj have not bothered to write to him to inform him about what is going on, but expect him to find out by some mysterious sixth sense.

The call for him to seek re-election is unnecessary. Methodist Presidents are elected annually. The constitution allows the same person to be elected for five consecutive years, but there is nothing automatic about this and members of the Conference are free to express their dissatisfaction at any time by voting for someone else. The last election was held in August this year and the next will be in August 1987.

I would be interested to learn the source of Mr. Kiruparaj's statement that 'Methodists believe in trading punches straight and true and where it hurts most'. I can discover nothing about this either in the writings of John Wesley or in the New Testament. In fact the teaching of Jesus

Christ seems to indicate an entirely different approach. For instance "Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39); and "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:43-45).

I reserve judgement as to whether Rev. Harold Fernando made an error of judgement in attending a service for the Security Forces until I discover the content of the service (not the tiny fragment shown of Rupa-vahini) and find out from him his reasons for being present. Incidentally, Mr. Kiruparaj could have requested the same information by writing himself to the head of his Church or requesting the Leaders Meeting of his Church or the Quarterly Meeting of his Circuit to do so.

However, it must be born in mind that enough the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers' may seem, to those unfamiliar with its words, to be a hymn praising the action of Christian members of the security forces nothing could be further from the truth. It is an allegory of the advance of the Christian Church against the forces of evil and the only enemy it speaks of conquering is Satan. It even contains the lines: "Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane, But the Church of Jesus, Constant will remain". Not, I would have thought words to be viewed with equanimity by any secular power.

Again, no Christian minister can confine his ministry to those whose actions he entirely agrees with. If that were so there would not only be no armed service chaplains, and certainly no prison chaplains but probably very few ministers of church congregations.

Jesus Christ Himself, mixed with the wayward and sinful in order to bring the message of God's love to them and in consequence was accused of being 'A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Matt. 11:19). There are times when His followers have to risk similar accusations for the same reason.

Perhaps Mr. Kiruparaj, and those who think like him, should re-read the sermon on the Mount which contains the words 'Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce you will be judged..' (Matt. 7:1-2)

Colombo-6

Jill F. Newsham

Release Of Soldiers

IT'S UP TO THE GOVERNMENT

The Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP) Secretary, Vijaya Kumaranatunge, made another trip to Jaffna on 5th December, this time with a bigger retinue consisting of 29 Buddhist monks, parents, brothers and sisters of the two soldiers, 2nd Lt. Chandrasiri and Private Bandara, held captive by the Liberation Tigers, Muslim leaders, representatives of Sarvodaya, Youth Organisation as well as Press correspondents. Altogether, well over 100 persons accompanied Vijaya.

The party was originally expected in Jaffna on 4th December but the Government had refused to allow the party to proceed to Jaffna: it

was stopped at Vavuniya by Army Personnel. Consequently, following a meeting Vijaya had with President Jayewardene and National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali, permission was granted them to proceed to Jaffna on a personal written undertaking given by Vijaya that they were responsible for their own safety beyond Vavuniya.

The militants of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) met the party at Yakachchi, between Elephantpass and Pallai, escorted them to Jaffna and housed them at two hotels in the town.

The same evening Vijaya and his party met Kittu—the LTTE's Jaffna

Commander—and had talks; the captive soldiers were also present. The talks were continued the next day as well. They left for Colombo on Sunday morning 7th December.

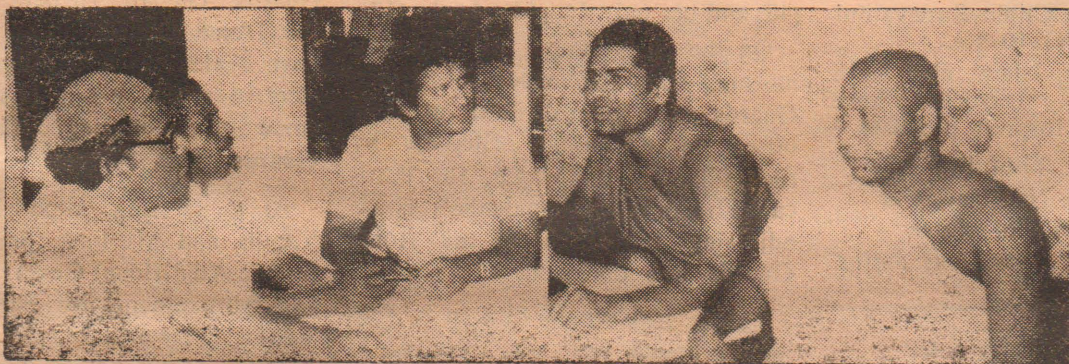
Vijaya in the course of his talks with Kittu stated that their meeting was a good augury for the reason that, in the midst of strife and turmoil, the representatives of the Sinhalese were able to sit and converse with the militants. The youth, both Sinhalese and Tamils, largely from the poorer classes were being sacrificed in this struggle. Most of the Sinhalese viewed the Tamils as their enemies and vice versa. This unfortunate situation should not be

allowed to continue and the age old friendship and unity should be re-established. Sanity should return to this Island home of ours.

Kittu in his reply readily agreed with the sentiments expressed by Vijaya but he regretted his inability to release the two captive soldiers as long as the Government was adamant in refusing to set free two of their comrades, presently in custody. He urged him to take meaningful steps with the assistance of the Buddhist monks, the parents of the soldiers and the others in the South who were sympathetic to their cause to convince President Jayewardene that he should accede to their request whereby there could be a humanitarian solution to the problem which is being unnecessarily prolonged due to the intransigence of the Government.

The second visit of Vijaya Kumaranatunge may have apparently ended in failure but the popular goodwill generated on both sides of the great divide has effectively exploded the myth—propagated by the chauvinist media—that the people in the North are consumed with hatred for their Sinhalese counterparts in the South.

The ball now is definitely in the Government's court. It should take the initiative to create a climate conducive to the release of the two soldiers.



Some of the members of Vijaya's mission. From left to right: Janab Akram, organiser SLMP, Matale Mr. Navaratne, Vice President, SLMP, Vijaya, Ven Padagiriye Vedananda Thera, and Siyambalagaswewa VimalasaraThera of Vavuniya.

Women Against The Current

(Continued from page 5)

At the time of their agitation they were probably right.

However, with the Indian nationalist movement came the need to revive Indian culture and Indian art. There was a need to rediscover the beautiful dance of the devadasis without the colour of prostitution. Therefore under the tutelage of Rukmani Arundale schools of Bharata Natyam were set up. The dance form became textualised. The students were treated as ascetics learning a religious trade. The dance was robbed of its sensuality and its sexuality and became a dance of pure structure and technique. It was now a diploma for young elite debutantes who were about to enter the marriage market. What was once a vibrant social institution was turned into an educational institution for women to learn the refined art so that they would be good wives and mothers, and the proper guardians of a society's culture.

EXORCISM, ECSTASY CULTS

Anthropologists have also highlighted other ways in which women

have sought to assert their individuality within traditions which have often been oppressive. Bruce Kapferer studying the practice of exorcism in Sri Lanka points to how women use these rituals to voice grievances against men or other women, and against the social system which they may find to be oppressive. In certain instances the women actually hit their men and give vent to repressed feelings of anger. To do so during an exorcism rite is of course socially sanctioned.

Gananath Obeyesekere also points how women become part of ecstatic religious cults and how the mythology of Asian religions allows them to escape into worlds of fantasy and personal symbols which help alleviate some of the stresses and strains of everyday life. These women express themselves in a unique and beautiful manner and their fantasies and religious experiences are full of personal and social symbolism. They find the energy and the strength to walk over coals, to endure pain and to express pleasure. Such intense feelings are not sanctioned by society and religious ecstasy is an accepted framework for such expression. These women stand apart from the South

Asian tradition as a whole. They are the exceptions but their experiences provide the researcher with a clue to how in a more subtle from the rest of society is conditioned by overriding symbols of power and release.

WARRIORS

Hinduism and to a lesser extent Buddhism allow for the development of these cults and rituals which give women a place within an overarching patriarchal structure of religion. The space for such activity in Islam is more limited. However, even within that tradition the image of woman is not always passive and obedient. Islam is full of stories of women warriors who fought by the side of the prophet. One, Solayem Bint Malhan tied a dagger around her belly and joined the prophet on the battlefield. The prophet's wives were often not only economically independent but also very vocal in their views. These role models then stand in contrast to the literal tradition of Islam as expressed in law codes. Many Muslim women see themselves as Aisha or Nessiba Bint Kaab even though their lawgivers assign them a docile role in society. In addition recent studies into the Islamic households show that women within the household have a tremendous sense

of community and express themselves to each other. Companionship, art and even joint ecstatic ceremonies are not uncommon.

In outlining some of the contradictory aspects of the great traditions, I only wish to point out that one cannot approach religion and tradition in South Asia with a simplistic framework. Not only religious scholars but also anthropologists have to be consulted. Religion in these societies is a living tradition and for women it is central to their lives. Their assertion of individuality and their attempt to recapture their lost place in society cannot be dismissed just because it comes from within patriarchal religious structures. There is no doubt that with time the patriarchal aspects of the larger traditions have diminished and transformed the unique position of many of these images of women who went against the current. But, there, is perhaps a lot we can learn from their experiences of why religion and community have always been important in South Asia. If we are to root out patriarchy it must be from a vantage point of understanding the pulse and rhythm of religious and cultural experience. Without such an understanding any movement for social change will be faced with insurmountable difficulties.

—(Courtesy:)

THE THATCHED PATIO)

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

Katankudi Incidents

MP READY TO DISBAND HOME GUARDS

No Militant Activity Within Hospital — Action Committee

The Action Committee of the General Hospital (Teaching) Jaffna has written to President Jayewardene through the Government Agent, Jaffna, denying that there has been any militant activity within the premises of the General Hospital (Teaching) Jaffna.

The letter has been signed by Dr. K. S. Nachinarkiniar, Medical Superintendent.

Here is the text:
Your Excellency,

DENIAL OF UNTRUTHFUL STATEMENTS

I am enclosing 354 affidavits signed by the staff of this Hospital denying the undermentioned statements allegedly made by your Hon. Minister of National Security, the State Publicity division Lanka Puwath, Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation and Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. We have not seen any militant activity within the premises of the General Hospital.

Hooligans Assault Undergrad Marchers

The Jaffna University undergraduates who started a protest march on 4th December called it off on 7th December following assaults on the marchers by unidentified persons at Madduvil, Kaddaipirai, Karaveddi and the Islands.

The Students' Organising Committee, in a press release has deplored the action of these hooligans who had attempted to break up a peaceful march in support of the 'disappeared' undergrad A. Vijitharan and in defence of democratic rights. At the same time the Committee has condemned the attempts of the Sri Lanka Government to exploit this situation to spread false propaganda and drive a wedge between the freedom movements and the undergrads.

Meanwhile the Arts and Science Faculties of the University of Jaffna were closed on 1st December for the vacation.

tal (Teaching) Jaffna. The Hospital functions 24 hours a day and if any militant activity occurred within the premises any one member of the staff of the Hospital in that place would have seen such activity.

We wish to request you to order the different state agencies to refrain from announcing untruthful statements which appear to be of a malicious nature.

1. Terrorist fired mortars from abandoned V. D. Clinic-Rupavahini news 9.00 p.m. (11-10-86)

2. 'CDN' and Island also have mentioned that "Terrorists have fired from the Hospital premises."

Yours faithfully,

Sgd: Dr. K. S. Nachinarkiniar
for Action Committee
General Hospital (Teaching) Jaffna.

No Comment For The Moment

The time is not opportune to comment on the proposals submitted by the Sri Lankan government for the settlement of the ethnic problem, according to a spokesman of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). President Jayewardene has yet to invite the militant leaders for talks in regard to these proposals and it will be only after that we shall decide whether we should participate in any meaningful dialogue the spokesman said.

Don Donates Books

Prof. O. H. de Wijesekara, Professor of Sanskrit and a former Vice-Chancellor of the Colombo University has donated his collection of rare books on Hindu Philosophy Vedic literature, Linguistics and Sanskrit texts to the Library of the Jaffna University.

Prof. Wijesekara held out this promise in 1976 when he declared open the Seminar on Epigraphy, organised by the Jaffna Archaeological Society at the Jaffna University, and everyone has acknowledged with gratitude that he had honoured his promise.

For Batticaloa, the past week could not have brought anything new as far as the killings were concerned. However, the death toll during two days was much higher than during the past few months. 26 persons were killed, including 8 Muslim home guards, on 5th and 6th December.

The first incident took place on 5th December when a Kalmunai-bound Sri Lanka Transport bus from Jaffna was sprayed with bullets near Kalawanchchikudi where the Special Task Force (STF) is stationed, Ratnasingam (23) conductor, Mahendran (23) and 3 others were killed on the spot and 4 injured. Among the injured were a woman, Maheswari (40) and her only daughter Leela (17).

On the early hours of Saturday morning—6th December 8 Home Guards were gunned down at their office in Katankudi allegedly by the militants. 2nd M.P. for Batticaloa Janab Riswi Sinnalebbe's house adjoining the office of the Home Guards was damaged.

Later, at about 4.45 a.m. a Kalmunai bound bus was stopped at Mananthoduwai and 20 Muslim youths got into the bus. They fired at the passengers, who, except for one Ganeshan, were all Eastern Transport Board employees. 11 of them were killed on the spot. The fortunate one, M. Patkunam, later testified before the Inquirer into Sudden Deaths.

"We were all going to Kalmunai when, near Mananthoduwai, the bus was stopped and we saw nearly 20 armed Muslim Youths. The engine of the bus suddenly stalled and some of the Muslim youths helped to push the vehicle. As the bus started moving, all of them sprayed bullets at us. The first shot hit the driver".

"I escaped by pretending to be dead" Patkunam told Mr. Sivathan, Inquirer into Sudden Deaths.

Following the killing of the 11 employees, all the Eastern Transport Board employees walked out from their work places on 7th December in protest at the killings. They were on strike till Thursday when finally, their demands were met by the ERTB.

At the time of going to press the situation in Batticaloa has become normal. From all accounts, the incidents in Batticaloa were not actually a communal conflict but a situation brought about by the continuous harassment of the Home Guards. On an earlier occasion, the Home Guards were said to have beaten up a Muslim headmaster. In recent weeks posters had come up denouncing the Home Guards.

At a meeting attended by the Tamils and Muslims, presided over by the Additional Government Agent Mr. Selvaratnam, Mr. Sam Thambimuttu Secretary of the Batticaloa Citizens Committee stressed that the Home Guards were 'Agent provocateurs, who were responsible for the recent disturbances. They had been organised in Katankudi to protect the people and not to harm innocent persons or bring about communal strife. If the recent incidents were the aftermath of communal ill feelings, the Muslims would not have opened their shops in Batticaloa the very next day after the disturbances, Mr. Thambimuttu pointed out.

Mr. Riswi Sinnalebbe, 2nd M.P. for Batticaloa, stated that if the people of Katankudi no longer wanted the Home Guards to be stationed there, he would take immediate steps to disband them.

NEW COURSES

Jaffna College Technical Institute

Vaddukoddai

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| III | Computer Programming - Diploma (1 year) |
| | Closing date : 30-12-86 |
| | Interview on : 15-01-87 |
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