

Tamil **TIMES**

Vol XIV No.5 ISSN 0266-4488 15 MAY 1995 90 p

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka.....£15/\$25
Australia.....Aus\$45
Canada.....Can\$40
USA.....\$35
All Other Countries £20/US\$35

LADY IN TROUBLE FACING PROSECUTION



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister,
Ms. Jayalalitha Jayaram

★ Sri Lanka: Back To
Square One

★ Govt. Blames Tigers
and Tigers Blame
Govt. for Breakdown

★ Religious Conversion
of Tamils

★ Shadow Over SAARC Summit

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*I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it.*
- Voltaire.

Tamil TIMES

ISSN 0266-4488

Vol. XIV No.5

15 MAY 1995

Published by

TAMIL TIMES LTD
P.O. BOX 121
SUTTON, SURREY SM1 3TD
UNITED KINGDOM

Phone: 081-644 0972

Fax: 081-241 4557

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka	£15/US\$25
Australia	Aus\$45
Canada	Can\$40
USA	US\$35
All other countries	£20/US\$35

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Back to Square One

Few people within or outside Sri Lanka would have wished the latest developments that have occurred since 18 April. On the contrary, there was almost universal hope, expectation and wish that the peace process initiated by the government and reciprocated by the LTTE leading to negotiations and a cessation of hostilities between both sides would lead to a just and lasting solution to the ethnic conflict, and that peace and normalcy would return. They hoped that the death and destruction that have been a part and parcel of the life of the people, particularly in the north and east of the island, since the early 1980s would be a thing of the past. But it was not to be. Even the Peace Monitors who came from three foreign countries which wanted to see the ushering in of peace in the country have left disappointed and sad.

The LTTE's withdrawal from the peace process and the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of armed hostilities between them and government forces have brought the situation back to square one. Fighting has resumed with a vengeance leading to the all too familiar scenario of death and destruction. In the battles that are raging, victories and defeats are being judged by the ignoble criterion of the number of deaths and the scale of damage that one side inflicts on the other. Naval boats have been sunk. Planes have been shot down. Army posts are being overrun. Bombing and shelling have recommenced. Thousands of civilians are being displaced. Embargoes have been reimposed. Hundreds are being taken into custody on mere suspicion. And history is repeating itself as the tragedy of a renewed war is being re-enacted.

In the emerging atmosphere following the recommencement of war, one side is demonising the other. Those who occupied the centre stage up to now advocating and campaigning for a peaceful negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict are bound to be sidelined. Warmongers who advocated a violent military option and who were pushed to the sidelines are gradually creeping back to the centre stage of the political arena.

Sadly we have been in this situation before. Victories have been claimed. Defeats have been inflicted. Battles have been won and celebrated. Defeats have been sustained and mourned. But what experience over the years demonstrates and teaches those who are prepared to learn is that at best what either side can hope to achieve is a military stalemate accompanied by unendurable and continuing suffering perpetrated upon the civilian population in the war-torn areas.

In the Sri Lankan context, it is the incapacity of one side to inflict the ultimate defeat on the other that had compelled them in the past, on more than one occasion, to gravitate towards the idea of negotiation expressing their commitment to a peaceful solution. But the tragedy is that once they are there at the negotiating table, they seem to lack the courage and patience to continue making the effort. Seeking solutions to intractable problems between parties particularly with long-standing mutual suspicions is a difficult and tortuous task. What is needed is a combination of sustained commitment, conviction, will and patience to engage in dialogue until a solution is arrived at.

The breakdown of the peace process and the resumption of fighting with all that it entails constitute a betrayal of the peoples' hopes and expectations. The government and the LTTE should cease hostilities and return to the negotiating table before more lives are lost. The people expect no less.

NEWS REVIEW

SAMs BRING DOWN AIRFORCE PLANES

President Kumaratunga had to cut short her visit to New Delhi to attend the SAARC summit to deal with the fallout from the downing of two aircraft belonging to the Sri Lankan Airforce on two successive days killing nearly one hundred personnel on board.

Using sophisticated heat-seeking surface-to-air missiles, the LTTE shot down a British-built Avro HS-748 transport aircraft on 28 April killing all 45 personnel on board. The aircraft was attacked by missiles as it was taking off from the Palaly airbase in northern Jaffna peninsula.

On the following day, 29 April, an identical aircraft was again destroyed by the Tigers in another missile attack along with all 52 personnel on board including three journalists from Colombo who had flown to cover the story of the previous day's disaster. The aircraft was attacked during its descending course to land at the Palaly airbase, but the wreckage of the plane with all its ill-fated passengers fell in Tiger controlled territory outside the airbase.

Military authorities and the government in Colombo seemed to be baffled by the knowledge that the LTTE had acquired an air defence system to counter their superiority in the air. They had no intelligence clue as to the quality or number of the missiles that the LTTE possessed. Some 18 months ago, the defence establishment would appear to have come by information that the LTTE had acquired SAMs, but no further work was undertaken to gather more intelligence or to acquire anti-missile systems.

The Airforce immediately responded by suspending all scheduled flights to the northern region. A military analyst said that civil aviation was also threatened by the LTTE's latest military acquisition and that many commercial flights to regional destinations, particularly in south India, would now have to avoid flying over northern Sri Lanka.

This was the first time the Tigers had used such surface-to-air missiles in the long running armed conflict with the government forces. The missile attacks had completely changed the previously perceived military equations on both sides, and brought to an end the military's effective su-

periority in the air. 'It is now a different ball game. You may be able to carry out high altitude bombings, but you can't come down to supply your camps and support your grounds because of the SAMs', said a military analyst in Colombo.

After referring to the damage caused to the Sri Lankan navy by the destruction of the two naval gunboats anchored in the Trincomalee harbour by Tiger suicide squads on 19 April, a western diplomat based in Colombo was quoted as saying that the acquisition by the Tigers of SAM missiles changed the entire complexion of the conflict. 'Mr. Pirabakaran may not be in a mood to sit down and talk after these kind of successes. At least not unless he gets what he wants, that is his separate state'.

Reports during the first week of May that Tigers had laid siege to a string of army camps in northern Sri Lanka confirmed that Eelam War III had not only begun in earnest, but also that it was bound to escalate to an unprecedented level. About 20,000 Sri Lanka troops were bottled up in a number of camps in the Jaffna peninsula and adjoining districts which were surrounded by Tiger-controlled territory. There had been no airlifting of troop reinforcements or fresh food supplies to the camps since the missile attacks which downed two planes in late April.

A field commander in Jaffna, who preferred to remain unidentified is reported to have said: 'There is no way to break the siege except by launching a major operation. Otherwise we will be sitting ducks and only be sacrificing our camps, weapons and above all our lives'. Quoting LTTE radio intercepts, he added that there was a buildup of LTTE forces near the Palali military base in the peninsula and the Pooneryn army camp. In addition, using the radio-telephones set up during the peace process to enable local commanders of the LTTE and the security forces to contact each other, the LTTE was already asking the troops to surrender.

However, military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe denied reports that the army camps in the north were under LTTE siege. Although the loss of the two Avro aircraft did temporarily disrupt the supply lines, all the major camps in the north were supplied by the sea, and the sea was still under Navy control, Brig. Munasinghe said.

Meanwhile, there have been reports that the security forces in northern Sri Lanka have deployed anti-aircraft

guns following unconfirmed reports that the Tigers have set up their own 'air force' having acquired microlight planes and/or gliders and that they would be used to launch suicide attacks on vital military installations. In this connection the 'Military Analyst' of the *Sunday Times* (30.4.95) wrote: 'It is also likely that the LTTE Air Tiger program will come into operation in the next few months. The destruction of LTTE airfields from the air have been a setback to this program which could have devastating effects on the war. Shankar alias Sornalingam, a double engineer from Canada, who developed the program had confided in a colleague, 'This will be decisive point in the War for Tamil Eelam'.

Seeking Foreign Help

Since the resumption of fighting, and particularly following the shooting down of the two aircraft, there have been credible reports, both from Colombo and outside, that the government was seeking military assistance from foreign countries, including India, United Kingdom, USA and China.

It is said that the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, was sympathetic when President Kumaratunga apprised him of the predicament of her government during her visit to New Delhi for the SAARC summit. While Colombo might seek and obtain some assistance in the form of military hardware, the induction of Indian troops again was out of the question both from the point of view of Colombo and New Delhi.

In fact the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Salman Kuresheed specifically denied that Mrs. Kumaratunga had asked for any military assistance from India, although Colombo newspapers were speculating on the subject. However, defence analysts say that the Indian Prime Minister's remarks about the LTTE acquiring surface-to-air missiles indicated that New Delhi had not closed the door to helping the beleaguered Sri Lankan government. After his meeting with the Sri Lankan President, the Indian PM is reported to have said: 'The situation developing in neighbouring Sri Lanka is causing deep concern because the kind of weaponry coming into the hands of non-government individuals and organisations is frightening'.

Reports that India had despatched naval gunboats to the northern waters of Sri Lanka have been strongly denied in New Delhi. Referring to

reports that the Indian Navy had blockaded the Palk Straits at Sri Lanka's request, a defence Ministry spokesman in New Delhi said that the Navy as well as the Coast Guard were conducting normal patrols on the Indian side of the international boundary. He said that these patrols were undertaken all along the coast as a preventive measure to stop smuggling of arms into Indian territory.

While New Delhi has been more discreet in commenting on the latest developments in Sri Lanka, the newspapers there have not been so reticent in their comments. *The Times of India* in its editorial warned that the surface-to-air missiles in the hands of the Tigers was not only a threat to Sri Lankan military operations, but also endanger civilian air traffic even in Tamil Nadu. While India should not repeat the mistake of inducting Indian personnel into Sri Lanka, there should be no reservation in providing material and other help to the Sri Lankan government; and security in Tamil Nadu and the waters around Tamil Nadu coast needed to be reinforced, the editorial added.

However, in Tamil Nadu, the DMK leader M. Karunanidhi, the leader of the MDMK V. Gopalswamy, and the leader of the Patali Makkal Kadchi, Dr. Ramadas have expressed strong opposition to any assistance to Colombo from the Indian government.

Military Build-up

Despite the fact that the government has stated that it would continue with the peace process with or without the LTTE, and does not want to engage in another 'disastrous war', the developing scenario is one of military build-up for a confrontation with the Tigers.

The military began a recruitment drive on 2 May to have 6,000 more soldiers. The walk-in recruitment at 15 centres across the island, other than in the Northeast, saw hundreds of young men lining up several hours before the enlistment began to boost the beleaguered military weakened by an estimated 26,000 desertions besides the thousands killed in battle with the Tigers.

The military had put up posters in the streets and radio and newspaper advertisements for new recruitment.

It is said that banking on the unshakable belief in the success of the peace talks with the LTTE, President Kumaratunga had cancel-

led many orders placed by the previous government for refurbishing and replenishing the military with hardware and other weapons. Whether she liked it or not, the resumption of fighting called for a renewed military build-up. The first budget which was formulated taking account of a probable peace dividend was destined to go haywire.

A military team was visiting Russia to purchase four Antonov-32 transport planes, six MI-17 transport helicopters and two large navy warships each costing \$13 million. Army delegations were visiting Holland, the Czech Republic and China to purchase tanks, armoured personnel carriers and an assortment of artillery. The Navy was looking for command ships and gunboats from Russia and Israel. Authorization has already been given for the purchase of nine new Dvora each costing \$43.9 million from Israel.

To counter the SAMs in possession of the LTTE, the Air Force is also seeking to purchase anti-missile missile systems fitted to their aircraft.

Arrests in Colombo

Since the fighting between the Tigers and government forces began on April 19, security measures in Colombo and its suburbs have been intensified. Among the security measures adopted are increased protection for important government installations, additional roadblocks manned by troops, checks on vehicles for possible car bombs, and stringent checks on passengers at the main Kastunayake airport and main railway stations.

Police also have continued to arrest almost on a daily basis hundreds of Tamils living in Colombo and adjoining areas in the hope of tracking down alleged Tiger infiltrators and operatives who are reported to have moved into the capital with a view to mount attacks on government installations and assassinate leading politicians.

Persons, mainly young Tamils, have been taken into custody from their homes, hotels and hostels. The police warned landlords and hotel and hostel keepers against renting out rooms or buildings to strangers without proper check on their identities. The police are reported to be targeting those who had procured rooms for short periods after paying huge sums as rents.

Of the hundreds that are being rounded up almost daily, the over-

whelming majority are reported to be released within 24 hours after questioning, but those whom the police suspect of alleged Tiger connections or who allegedly do not have valid explanations for their presence in Colombo are being detained for longer periods. The Crime Detective Bureau disclosed that they were holding at least 60 Tiger operatives captured in the course of these roundup operations. A 28-year-old Tamil woman, identified as Sivagnanasundari Agaliya from Nallur in Jaffna, alleged by the police as a LTTE suicide bomber, taken into custody from her temporary residence at Kohuwela in Colombo, committed suicide by swallowing cyanide at the police station.

The scare in Colombo is that the LTTE will target VVIPs in Colombo for assassinations, and may even stage an Oklahoma Federal Building type strike in Colombo. *The Sunday Times* (30.4.95) 'Military Analyst' wrote: 'It will be surprising if the LTTE had not already brought to Colombo at least a fraction of the 50 tons of TNT and the 10 tons of RDX purchased from the Chemical Plant in the Ukraine producing false end user certificates from Bangladesh and Myanmar'.

On the Battle Front

Nineteen soldiers including an officer were killed, fourteen others injured in a midnight amphibious attack by Tigers on the Forward Defence Locality (FDL) at Araly Point in Kayts on 17/28 April. Tiger cadres had infiltrated the Kayts defences by moving in several boats across the Jaffna lagoon on to the island from the peninsula and attacked the military from the front and the rear. The army's 27th Brigade located at Velanai had sent reinforcements, but a separate group of Tigers had intercepted the reinforcements and inflicted heavy casualties. A spokesman for the military said that the fighting had gone on from midnight to 4 am and that the LTTE too had suffered many casualties - at least four of their bodies were recovered by troops.

The attack at Araly Point came less than 24 hours after the troops in a major ground operation backed by about ten helicopters and fixed wing aircraft had raided and set fire to two LTTE bases at Omanthai-Nochchimoddi in the Vavuniya district where, according to the milit-

'We Have Not Closed the Doors for Eventual Peace' - LTTE

'In deciding to withdraw from the agreement on cessation of hostilities, the LTTE has not closed its mind, or its doors towards an eventual, durable peace. At the same time it cannot drop its guard, as long as the Sri Lankan government persists in its hidden agenda of a military option. Creating the necessary space for Peace rests on any new initiatives from the Sri Lanka government', a statement issued by the Political Committee of the LTTE on 24 April said.

The LTTE was mindful of the international community's concern in sustaining the peace process in Sri Lanka and that the Tamil people themselves have the biggest stake in the peace process. But the government 'was inspired by other motives' which 'became clear as the talks dragged on. One can understand a ruling party trying to woo the Tamil people over the heads of a liberation movement fighting for their rights.

Continued from page 5

ary, at least 20 Tigers were killed and 50 of their huts destroyed.

At least eight civilians were wounded in air attacks on alleged Tiger bases in the Jaffna peninsula on May 1. Airforce bombers blasted alleged LTTE positions and bases close to army defence lines as well as Sea Tiger bases on the northern coast.

On 8 May, 19 elite police commandos belonging to the Special Task Force were killed in a Tiger ambush attack. The Tigers exploded a landmine and directed a barrage of small arms fire at the STF platoon in the eastern Kangikudchchiaru jungles. The STF victims included an Inspector and a Sub-Inspector who were leading the commandos on an operation against LTTE bases located in the jungles. 'The casualties are very high considering that the STF is specially trained in jungle warfare. But they seemd to have walked into a well-laid out ambush', according to a defence source.

Adding to the spate of reverses suffered by the security forces, Tigers overran a police post in north-central Sri Lanka on 10 May killing 16 personnel. The Tiger mounted a pre-dawn assault with a barrage of small arms fire on the Kela

It can be a useful ploy worth attempting', the statement said.

The LTTE had from the beginning insisted that the cessation of hostilities should be converted into a permanent ceasefire. But the government's reluctance on this issue was 'obviously a way of keeping the military threat alive'.

Even on the question of the lifting of the economic embargo, the government did not take prompt action to ensure that even a fraction of the goods on which the ban was lifted and gazetted reached the people of the north. The military at the Vavuniya checkpoints had placed obstacles.

The government had been using the relaxing of the embargo and fishing ban as a bargaining chip in the negotiations. This was proved when the government re-imposed the embargo and the ban on fishing soon after the LTTE withdrew from

Puliyankulam police post in the Anuradhapura district. Six constables escaped with injuries, but those killed included a Sub-Inspector, 11 constables, three paramilitary homeguards and the wife of a constable.

The latest killings raised the casualty figure among government forces to a staggering 210 since the breakdown of the truce on 19 April.

According to military sources, on 14 May at least 43 Tiger cadres were killed as army commandos supported by infantry troops attacked jungle hideouts of the LTTE in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts. Brig. Munasinghe claimed that the army had smashed several LTTE satellite bases in the jungles. Eight soldiers were killed and 16 others injured in the fierce fighting that ensued between the Tigers and the military.

Amidst persistent reports of LTTE build-up around northern army camps, Sri Lanka Airforce carried out air strikes against alleged Tiger positions near Elephant Pass and Pooneryn on 13 May. This was the first time that the Airforce resumed action since the downing of two aircraft by Tiger SAMs. The bombing raids were carried out by Chinese-built F-7s probably flying at extremely high altitudes beyond the reach of missile attacks.

the peace process.

The government had not still deviated from the policy of its predecessor governments in bottling up the peninsula with a ring of army and navy camps. The request of the LTTE to remove at least the Pooneryn army camp was also consistently rebuffed.

The President's hesitation in sending officially accredited representatives of the government for the talks, and instead in sending personal emissaries who had neither political authority nor government status had made the peace process spurious and revealed a lack of serious intent.

The accusation made against the LTTE that it was not prepared for talks on a political settlement was not true. What the LTTE emphasised was that while the talks towards a political settlement could take a long period of time, the immediate day to day problems of the people had to be resolved here and now, the LTTE's statement added.

In response to the LTTE's statement, a government spokesman said that the government had decided to respond positively to the statement despite continuing hostile actions by the Tigers, because the Government was committed to exploring all avenues to revive the peace process. 'But we are willing to resume the negotiations only if the Tigers stop their attacks. It was they who broke the truce and attacked the security forces. We wish to stress that the doors are still not closed for the resumption of peace talks. Let the LTTE take some meaningful steps towards the resumption of the dialogue before the Government could reciprocate. If they stop their attacks, security forces will stop all operations'.

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Government Blames Tigers for Breakdown of Peace Process

The breakdown of peace for the time being is the product of a situation which is of the LTTE's making, and certainly not of the Government's making. In this situation, we wish to assure the people of the country that, just as we faithfully adhered to the cessation of hostilities agreement and remain unyielding in our commitment to peace, we are equally conscious of the Government's paramount obligation to preserve the security of the nation and to defend the lives and property of its citizens. Military action will certainly meet at our hands with a military response, State Minister for Defence, Mr. Anurudha Ratwatte, told Parliament on 12 May during debate to extend the State of Emergency.

The following are some salient points from his long speech:

★ The genuineness of the government was reflected in the offer to commence reconstruction work without the slightest delay in the North to substantially mitigate sufferings of the people. It was prepared to utilise substantial resources to put this work in hand immediately. Cement, rollers, heavy machinery and even two generators to restore electricity were despatched. The LTTE did not permit the commencement of these reconstruction works and persistently obstructed by insisting on a variety of conditions being fulfilled before the most basic of humanitarian work could be commenced.

★ The underlying aim of the government was to ameliorate the living conditions of the people. The economic embargo was the cause of immense misery and deprivation. The government took action to remove the embargo in respect of all goods with the exception of eight items which had direct military implications. The 7-year ban on the transport of fuel was also lifted. When the government came to know of the delays and other administrative problems with the goods physically reaching the North, prompt action was taken to remove these obstacles.

★ Appreciating the difficulties faced by the people as a result of the ban on fishing in Northeastern waters, the government was prepared to remove the restrictions on fishing

throughout these waters, except in a very small number of clearly designated zones in close proximity to army camps in the north. The government took this action despite the risk it posed to the Navy personnel who had taken the brunt of attacks by Sea Tigers.

★ Ever since January, throughout the exchange of letters with the LTTE, the President indicated that the government's political proposals were ready, and called upon the LTTE to suggest dates for entertaining the proposals and reacting to their substance. What the government desired most of all was the commencement of a political dialogue which would have enabled the underlying issues to be viewed in perspective and to be discussed in depth. The LTTE used every subterfuge and strained every sinew to obstruct the commencement of the political dialogue.

★ LTTE's chosen instrument for aborting the peace process was the imposition of condition after condition, knowing full well the acceptance of which was impossible. Two of the conditions were the total dismantling of the Pooneryn camp and

the insistence that LTTE cadres should be given the right to carry arms in the East. On the Pooneryn camp issue, the government agreed to move it by 600 metres, and said no further action could be taken prior to the commencement of political talks. The demand that LTTE cadres should be given the right to carry arms was totally incompatible with the entire basis of the cessation of hostilities agreement. It was no different from demanding that the Sri Lankan army should have the right to carry arms in the areas of the North under LTTE control.

★ The LTTE's decision to attack two naval craft anchored in Trincomalee harbour in flagrant violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement and to resume violent hostilities even before ascertaining the content and scope of the political proposals made by the government represented the high watermark of unreasonableness and cynicism and reflective of callous disregard of the political process.

★ The government is certainly not at war with any section of its people. It always believed that the peace process is indispensable to the well-being of the Sri Lankan community as a whole and, whatever setbacks might occur from time to time, this cherished goal would inspire the government forever.

MIRJE Appeals to LTTE and Government

'The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) is concerned and perturbed by the situation that has arisen following the withdrawal of the LTTE on April 19th from the negotiating process and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The military actions initiated by the LTTE have now led to a renewal of the war.

'MIRJE was fully supportive of the government to initiate and carry through a negotiating process to end the war and to find a solution to the ethnic problem. MIRJE believe that the LTTE action in withdrawing from this process is unjustified in terms of the progress of the talks and therefore condemns it. However, it is equally our duty to warn the government and the people that some aspects of the government reaction are hasty and ill-conceived and do not bode well for the future.

'The government had begun to lift

the embargo on the transport of certain specified foods to the North even before the peace negotiations had begun. The proposal to re-open land routes to the peninsula was also based on consideration of the hardships faced by Tamil civilians. However, with the renewal of hostilities, the government has not only reimposed the embargo on a large range of goods and banned transport across the Kilaly lagoon, but it has also totally banned fishing along coastlines of the north and east. Large number of Tamils have also been arrested in Colombo and its environs. These are actions which once again serve to blur the distinction between ordinary Tamil civilians and members of the LTTE; they hurt the livelihood and well-being of Tamil civilians which should be the prime concern of the government.

'MIRJE appeals to the government to reconsider these measures.

BREAKDOWN OF TRUCE FOREIGN REACTION

European Union

This act (attack on naval boats) constitutes a serious violation of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE that nothing in the on-going peace negotiations between the two parties could justify. It can only go against the aspirations towards peace of the people concerned and the necessary search for a negotiated solution.

Following the very regrettable attack by the LTTE on April 19, the European Union requests them to cease these violent activities and hopes that political negotiations will begin on the dates proposed.

It urges the LTTE to give a positive answer to the peace initiatives of the Sri Lankan government and start with it negotiations on the elements of a political solution'.

Canada

A statement issued in the name of the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Andre Ouellet, said:

'We are dismayed at the precipitate actions of the LTTE and at the further loss of life. We call on the Tiger leadership to reconsider its decision and return to the pursuit of a negotiated settlement. The LTTE has taken a step backward, given the fact that peace had held in Sri Lanka since January without major incidents. Through it all, the Government of Sri Lanka has demonstrated a strong willingness to respond to many of the concerns of the LTTE.

Mr. Ouellet noted that the Government of Sri Lanka has indicated that it is still willing to engage in the peace process despite the latest developments. He commended this courageous approach, which reflects a commitment to achieving a just and lasting solution to the ethnic discord in Sri Lanka. This is the only approach that offers a future for Sri Lanka.

'Canada remains committed to peace in Sri Lanka and has been actively supporting the peace process. A Canadian peace observer has been in Sri Lanka since January at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. Norway and

Netherlands have provided peace observers as well'.

United States

The United States deplores the April 19 LTTE attack on the Sri Lankan naval vessels and April 20 attacks on army bases and offers its condolences to families of the victims.

The LTTE decision to resume hostilities threatens to deny the hope of the people of Sri Lanka for an end to the decade-old war. The LTTE must bear the responsibility if the peace process ultimately breaks down.

'We request the government of Sri Lanka to persevere in its courageous effort to find a political solution and urge the LTTE to join seriously in this task now. We urge the LTTE to join fully in discussions on political issues, as well as on economic ones'.

Australia

The Australia Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, said in a statement issued on 24 April:

'The Australian government strongly condemns the attack by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on Lanka naval vessels at Trincomalee on April 19 and an attack on an army camp in eastern Sri Lanka on April 22.

'These attacks, which caused the deaths of a large number of Lankan military personnel, represent a unilateral decision by the LTTE to end the cessation of hostilities between the government and the LTTE that had been in force since January 8.

'I welcome the government of Sri Lanka's statement on April 19 indicating that despite the severe and unjustified provocation of the Trincomalee attack, the government remains committed to peace and will not be diverted from its goal of seeking a sustainable political solution to the ethnic conflict in the north and north-east of the country.

'The Australian government calls on the LTTE to return to the negotiating table and refrain from any further acts of violence, which can only lead to a renewal of the tragedy of the past. The vast majority of the people of Sri Lanka have indicated their support for peace and reconciliation and the LTTE will bear a heavy responsibility if the opportunity for a peaceful solution to the conflict opened by the election last year of the Kumaratunga government is ultimately lost'.

Pakistan

The Government of Pakistan has been dismayed at the recent breakdown of the peace process in Sri Lanka. The unilateral decision of the LTTE to break the agreement on the cessation of hostilities will result in a severe deterioration of the situation. LTTE's arbitrary withdrawal from the peace process will severely damage the hopes to end 11 years of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and is a cause for concern for all those who wish to see the return of normalcy and peace.

'Pakistan commends the efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka to find a negotiated settlement of this issue and express the hope that LTTE will rejoin the peace process for the sake of stability in the region and the wellbeing of all the communities in Sri Lanka'.

Japan

The Government of Japan reiterates its hope that Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict be resolved through peaceful talks, enabling the rehabilitation of the northern and eastern regions, where this protracted conflict has reportedly caused deterioration of the economy and worsening of the living environment, and considers it regrettable that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has recently abrogated the agreement on a cessation of hostilities and the door to peace talks is threatened to be closed.

'The Government of Japan supports the sincere efforts of the Sri Lankan Government towards peace and earnestly hopes that the LTTE will return once again to the negotiating table to attain lasting peace'.

Indonesia

The government of Indonesia is deeply concerned at the resumption of hostilities in Sri Lanka following the attacks against the Sri Lanka government vessels at Trincomalee on April 19 and against an army camp in the Eastern part of the country on April 22.

'The attacks constitute a unilateral act by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in violation of the cease-fire agreement which it had earlier agreed to with the government.

'The government of Indonesia reiterates its firm support for a peaceful dialogue to find a sustainable solution to the long-standing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

'In this context, the government of Indonesia wishes to express its appreciation for the endeavours of the Sri Lankan government towards a peaceful solution to the conflict and at the same time calls upon the LTTE to return to the process of dialogue and refrain from further acts of violence.

'The government of Indonesia is of the opinion that any further acts of violence will only lead to the renewal of the tragedy that has already brought immense suffering to the people of Sri Lanka'.

LOCAL REACTION

Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando, Anglican Bishop, Colombo.

'I am disappointed with Wednesday's dawn attack on the naval boats by the LTTE. I'm disappointed but do not despair as any peace process is bound to have its ups and downs.

'We fall at one time and subsequently we must also get up and go forward. Despite the present setback, we have to keep one thing in mind. That is to go forward.

'War is not an option that is open to us. I am indeed glad that the government has taken a firm stand on this matter and had issued a statement with regard to this matter'.

Hindu Council

'The Hindu Council of Sri Lanka, a federation of Hindu Societies, is deeply distressed at the violent turn of events in the peace process. While we regret the LTTE action, we commend the Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga Government for its restraint and resolve to go ahead with the peace process.

'The overwhelming desire of all sections of the people for peace was reflected in the Parliamentary and Presidential elections. The government should go ahead with the peace process despite setbacks and publish without delay for the benefit of the people the package of proposals for a political settlement of the Sinhala-Tamil problem, which has bedevilled relations between the two major communities since independence. It is our fervent wish that the government proposals would ensure unity by granting autonomy to the Tamil areas to enable the people to manage their own affairs in the context of a united Sri Lanka.

'The Sinhalese and the Tamils have many religious and cultural ties in common and have lived in Sri Lanka for over two thousand years. Let us build on these links and work towards peace with justice to all'.

S. Sampanthan, TULF

'Whatever has happened, the objective of peace should remain firm. We can't simply abandon the peace objectives and think there are other processes to evolve a solution to the ethnic crisis.

'None of us were going to be deceived just because the peace process was going on smoothly. Let us not have any illusion on this matter. We could only do one thing and that is to pursue peace.

'One should not come any conclusion that the LTTE has been insincere following Wednesday's attack. We do not know the reasons behind this attack. The LTTE's explanation may or not be acceptable to us, but we cannot arrive at a conclusion to say that the LTTE is not sincere.

'The government should remain committed to peace as this is what the whole nation expects'.

Rauf Hakeem, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress

'We would like to inform the LTTE that it has acted in an irresponsible manner and this was not something which was expected from the LTTE, even after holding four rounds of peace talks.

'At the outset of the peace process, the SLMC had its reservations. Nevertheless we backed the PA government because President Kumaratunga attempted sincerely to put an end to this bloody war. But the peace process was rather disappointing.

'There was no significant opposition from any quarter for the peace talks between the government and the LTTE. We do not know why the LTTE should have to pull out of the peace process and the truce. The recent attack is clearly indicative of the LTTE's ultimate aim to expand its power-base. One issue was fundamental to the SLMC and it will not allow the government to permit the LTTE cadres to carry arms in the eastern province. We are vehemently opposed to it.

'Despite the resumption of hostilities by the LTTE, the government at this juncture should not forget the fact that it has a greater responsibility to implement the devolution

package. The recent attack should not at any cost hinder the implementation of the constitutional reforms'.

Douglas Devananda, Eelam Peoples Democratic Party

'We are not surprised at the turn of events or the attack on the naval boats. Observing the way in which the peace process was proceeding between the government and the LTTE, we knew that the process would one day come to an abrupt end. But it had come sooner than we expected.

'We do not blame the LTTE. Instead we blame the government because I personally informed the government and the President, of the LTTE and its motives and intentions. However the government thought peace could be achieved by negotiating with the LTTE only.

'There are two problems facing the north and east. One is the problem of the LTTE while the other is the problem faced by the Tamil speaking people. I strongly feel that the government went beyond limits to meet the demands of the LTTE but not attempted to meet the aspirations of the Tamil people.

'The government should now place its political package before the Tamil parties in Parliament and go ahead with a concrete solution of the ethnic problem'.

Vasudeva Nanayakkara, MP

'I condemn the LTTE's violation of their agreement with the government to cease hostilities. When I visited Jaffna recently as part of the Peace and Democracy Movement, we appealed to the LTTE to continue with the peace process.

'The LTTE has turned the peace process into an outright war. If the government would take a line of action with the co-operation of all ethnic communities and parties, they will be able to compel the LTTE to abandon their recourse to violence and return to the negotiating table. The government should also take precautions to ensure the safety of the innocent civilians of Jaffna'.

M. Sivasithambaram, TULF

'The people of the country have always yearned for peace. This recent attack, although unfortunate, does not in any way detract from their desire for peace.

'It is the duty of the LTTE and the

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'No Fundamental Difference Between Present and Previous Regimes

Interview with LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran by BBC Tamil Service journalist Ms. Anandi Suriyapragasan in Jaffna on 27th April.

Question: Mr. Prabhakaran. Why did you decide to withdraw from the peace negotiations and from the cessation of hostilities at a time when there was hope in the country that peace would be restored in the North-east and the Tamil problem would be resolved?

Answer: We made this painful decision at a time when our people had lost all hope that peace would return to the Tamil homeland and the Tamil problem would be resolved. At the beginning we entertained a hope that peace and normalcy would be restored and the Tamil national question would be resolved by political negotiations. Based on this belief we entered the peace process and agreed for cessation of hostilities.

In the peace negotiations we argued that talks should proceed stage by stage and that the urgent and immediate problems of our people should be resolved at the early stages of the dialogue. The Government agreed to this.

The Tamil people have been subjected to enormous suffering as a consequence of the economic embargo, fishing bans and the blockade on traffic imposed by the previous Government. In the peace talks, we requested nothing other than the removal of these bans to alleviate the suffering of our people.

The Chandrika Government which came to power with the pledge that justice would be done to the Tamils, should have, on its own, removed the injustices imposed on our people. But the Chandrika Government did not do so. Instead of viewing these issues as constituting the problems of the Tamil people, the Government took them as specific demands of the LTTE. Furthermore, these issues were approached within a military perspective. We were told that these issues were linked to national security and any attempt to resolve them would spark off military repercussions. We were disappointed with this response. It was under these circumstances we gave an ultimatum to the Government. We pointed out that the continuation of the

- LTTE Leader

peace negotiations would serve no meaningful purpose if the problems of our people are not resolved. As a consequence of this pressure the Government assured us that it would remove the bans. We extended our deadline for three weeks to allow time for the Government to implement its pledges. But, the Government delayed the implementation of its decisions and postponed the resolution of other issues. We felt that the Government was not sincere and truthful in this matter. It committed an act of bad faith as the previous Sinhala Governments. It is because of this, we and our people have lost faith in Chandrika's Government. Therefore, we came to a decision that no meaningful purpose would be served in continuing the peace negotiations.

Question: Why did you decide to discontinue the peace negotiations even though President Chandrika lifted the economic embargo and removed the ban on fishing and offered several concessions?

Answer: I wish to make a point here. That is, giving pledges and implementing those pledges are two different things.

It is true that President Chandrika gave us pledges. But she has not taken constructive measures to implement them.

In the past the Tamil people have been betrayed several times by previous Sinhalese regimes. Agreements were made but not implemented. Pacts were signed and abrogated. This is our history. Chandrika's Government is not an exception. We stipulated a deadline to the Government to provide a time-frame to implement its decisions and pledges. As we anticipated, Chandrika's Government delayed the implementation of its decisions. The Government did not take our deadline seriously. They tried to evade it. It is wrong on the part of President Chandrika to claim that she has given concessions to the LTTE. We did not ask for any concessions but raised the problems of our people. The rights that were denied to our people should not be categorised as concessions.

Question: Don't you think that you should have been a bit patient

since the delay in the implementation of the lifting of the economic embargo could have been caused by administrative hurdles?

Answer: We have showed enough patience. We could say that we reached the brink of tolerance. In so far as the day to day problems of the Tamil people are concerned the Government dragged its feet for more than six months. On these issues, there were four rounds of talks and more than forty letters exchanged.

Furthermore, we gave a two week deadline and that was further extended to three more weeks. Do you think that this period of time is inadequate? If there was a genuine will on the part of the Government it would have lifted the bans and proceeded with the implementation within 24 hours. I think that if the Government had been sincere there would not have been any delays or difficulties.

Question: What do you feel about the Government's decision to reimpose these bans?

Answer: This action has made one thing very clear. That is, in so far as the Tamil issue is concerned there is no fundamental difference between the present Government and the UNP regime. This Government is perpetuating the injustices committed by the past Governments. I do not see any difference between both Governments in their strategy to seek political gains by imposing economic and military pressure on the Tamils. If this Government has a genuine concern for the welfare of the Tamil people it should not have re-imposed the bans. This action demonstrates the fact that the Government is only concerned to secure the interests of the military and to utilize problems and predicaments of the Tamils to seek political advantage.

Question: Under the terms and conditions of the Declaration of the Cessation of Hostilities, you should have given 72 hours notice if you wished to terminate the agreement. Why didn't you give that period of time.

Answer: We have given the Government ample period of time. A period of five weeks was given to the Government since the first deadline which was later extended. The Government chose to ignore the meaning and purpose of our ultimatum and now attempts to lay the blame on us.

Question: Several foreign Governments have condemned you for

having terminated the peace negotiations and the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. This has given rise to a view that the LTTE is opposed to the peace process: What do you say to this?

Answer: We are fully aware that the international community is genuinely concerned about the Tamil issue. We are also aware that the world community wants the conflict resolved through peaceful means and a political settlement reached. I think that accurate information with regard to the problems, difficulties and setbacks that arose in the negotiating process has not reached the outside world. Some foreign countries have chosen to condemn the LTTE on the basis of the one-sided story provided by the Government without recognising the legitimacy of our position. We deeply regret the haste in which the Governments have issued condemnations before studying the issue in depth.

Question: President Chandrika has made it clear that she is determined to pursue the peace process with or without the co-operation of the LTTE. What is your response to this?

Answer: If it is practicable to achieve peace without the co-operation of the LTTE, let her continue her effort.

Question: The International Secretariat of the LTTE in London has issued a statement recently that the Tigers have not closed the doors for peace. What steps do you expect the Government to take to resume the peace initiative?

Answer: Our doors for peace are still open. It is true that we are dissatisfied and disillusioned with the approach of the Government. Yet, we have not lost hope in the peace process. We are convinced that the Tamil national conflict can be resolved by peaceful means. It is the Government which should take initiatives to resume the peace process. As a constructive measure the Government should lift the reimposed bans on economic items and on fishing and should ensure implementation. This action should be viewed as fulfilling the needs of the people rather than as concessions granted to the LTTE. If Chandrika's Government makes favourable decisions on the other issues we raised, and is prepared to implement them, we will be prepared to cease all hostilities and return to the peace process.

'No More Logic to Carry on the War'

— President Kumaratunga

In one way, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's ascent to power in Sri Lanka conforms cruelly to the subcontinent's paradoxical history of flourishing democracies amid assassinations and the trend of an orphan or a widow taking over the mantle of a slain leader. Chandrika's father, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, was assassinated in 1959 when he was President, her film star-politician husband Vijaya Kumaratunga in 1988. Her mother, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was disenfranchised and hounded for more than a decade after she lost power.

In another way, the 50-year-old Chandrika stands apart from the other legatees of the subcontinent's violent democracies. She sought, and secured, a mandate for peace with the majority Sinhala's ethnic rivals, the Tamils. This was the centrepiece of her election campaign and it brought her a landslide 62.5 per cent vote. Never in the history of the region has a leader or a political party used peace as an election plank in such a manner — rarely indeed in modern world history, except perhaps the ruling coalition in Israel, which sought a vote for rapprochement with the Palestinians. She was brought up in Europe in the heady days of the students' movement and liberalism, traits that she imbibed first at the Sorbonne, where she studied, and later at London where, hiding from the violent, right-wing Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) activists who had assassinated her husband, she worked on a Ph.D thesis on political violence in Sri Lanka. She had friends in Amnesty International and other civil-rights groups in Britain and many of her Sinhala critics say that, by the time she came to power, she had begun to identify so strongly with the Tamil cause as to have become 'dangerously equidistant' on the issue. Chandrika, however, says she was only trying to emphasise that hers was the Government of 'all of Sri Lanka'.

But survival is not easy for peacemakers on Sri Lanka's ethnic battleground as was proved by the events of last week, much to Chandrika's bitterness. The truce be-

tween her government and the LTTE collapsed when the Tigers sank two navy gunboats (a fourth of the Sri Lankan navy's entire gunboat fleet), wiped out a military camp killing at least 30 soldiers, and destroyed a police post killing another six. With the gloves off Chandrika, too, was left with no option but to send her army into battle.

The resumption of war has brought out of the woodwork in Colombo all the sceptics of the I-told-you-so school, many of whom had dismissed Chandrika as no more than a 'bleeding-heart liberal wishfully employing a Sorbonne style in Sri Lanka'. She vehemently contests that description, but deep down, the resumed fighting has shattered many of her beliefs, hopes and, most of all, the ambition to grow into a figure who would be remembered by history for settling with peace what apparently stronger men, and armies, had failed to sort out with arms.

Some of that bitterness and disappointment marked the exclusive two-hour interview with Senior Editor **Shekhar Gupta** at Temple Trees, her official residence in Colombo. Excerpts:

Q: How do you look back on your six months as President?

A: To be very honest, we can be happy about what we have achieved. We got a clear mandate to repair democracy, which had been very severely damaged. We have restored the right of speech, freedom and the right to not be killed. Despite grave continuing threats and pressures, we have not misused the vast emergency powers.

Q: But surely the security situation has not improved and you might have to fall back on those powers soon.

A: We could have fallen back on that mode. There were problems as soon as we took over. The UNP (United National Party) and the JVP caused strikes not just in the public sector but also in crucial areas of foreign investment. It was very easy to go back to emergency reg-

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ulations and arrest everybody. We used the method of dialogue. Even with the Tigers, our approach has been very different. We have treated them as equals. We hoped that the human aspect would prevail. Yet we did this without betraying the armed forces as the previous government had done. They would talk to the Tigers, give them arms and money, and tell the armed forces to fight them.

Q: Doesn't it now look as if there was some wishful thinking behind your approach?

A: No. We had a mandate for peace - 62.5 per cent of the people had asked us to bring peace. So we negotiated without any preconditions. We did not ask them to lay down arms. The Indian Government insists on certain conditions before talking to such groups. Benazir Bhutto has also said that she will not talk to (extremists) unless they lay down arms.

Q: Do you agree with your critics who call you a bleeding-heart liberal who miscalculated?

A: We had no choice. We had to fulfil the mandate. We did our best to alleviate the problems of the Tamil people. We lifted the blockade, we even conceded the demand for lifting the ban on the supply of fertilisers, wires and batteries. In the hands of skilful people, you know, that adds up to an explosive device. We lifted the fishing ban totally while knowing that this would be very bad for our navy.

Q: But didn't the navy pay the price for this ultimately, with the Tigers sinking two gunboats last week?

A: The two boats that were sunk were supposed to have been secure in the harbour. I have set up a court of inquiry to go into this. It looks as if there was quite a lot of negligence on the navy's part.

Q: Do you now regret conceding so much?

A: No. We had to do all this even when the Tigers did not reciprocate. We sent shiploads of free rations and fuel for the people of Jaffna which the LTTE grabbed.

Q: How bitter are you?

A: Not at all. I did not expect anything else from the Tigers. It is the most ruthless and most effective guerrilla organisation in the 20th century. But that doesn't mean we're saying that they are useless,

so we must kill them. So we tried our best, keeping in mind that we were dealing with a merciless megalomaniac who was has killed every single person who was opposed to him. Even the way he decided in cold blood to kill Rajiv Gandhi. And they were nurtured, fed, financed and armed by Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. He just decided to bump Rajiv off. And I was also personally very much aware that if he did not get from me what he wanted, I would be the first person on his list. On that count now, there is no doubt.

Q: In hindsight, would you have handled the LTTE differently?

A: I have been asking myself this question last week. I cannot think of any other way I would have handled it given the commitments we had taken on. Except, perhaps, on one score which I cannot mention yet. But, politically, it would have not been possible to change that either, because we have an electorate in the south. We are not dealing only with Pirabhakaran and the LTTE.

Q: When you started the peace process, a lot of people said the Government doesn't know who it's dealing with. That it's going out on a limb. Do you think they were right?

A: No, because every other kind of thing that was used had not succeeded. There is no other way possible apart from going for an all-out war against the LTTE with an army and armed forces which were not the best trained and not at all equipped. For 11 years, the past government had waged a war and the armed forces were very badly equipped. And the Tigers know all the details about this. You know, as far as military equipment goes, I don't know what happened to all the money that was spent, the billions and billions of dollars. A lot of it evidently hadn't gone into buying what was necessary.

Q: So you had no option.

A: We were certainly not going to go into an all-out war. Second, even if we wanted to, we were not properly equipped. And we thought, well, let us try something which nobody had tried till now.

Q: And you thought there wasn't very much to lose anyway? If you get into discussions for a few months, and it didn't work out...?

A: Yes. Exactly. But the feeling was that if it doesn't work out, well, then we cannot rule out other op-

tions. But we did not say it. We can't say it. So we thought let us tell them for the first time there is a government that is willing to consider them as our equals and consider very favourably their requests, except the one for a separate state.

There was another calculation. The people of the north desired peace desperately, like never before, because they felt that this time if there is peace they will not get licked by the government in power. You see, the chemistry had changed. Though we knew that the LTTE, and especially Pirabhakaran, is paranoid about peace. He's terrified of peace.

Q: Are you saying the chemistry had changed but the psychology hadn't?

A: It seems like that. Then, you see, the psychology also changes when external factors play on it. We knew from our intelligence that the LTTE was very seriously divided. There was the Mahatya group which was saying you should be flexible with this government. This is why Mahatya has disappeared now. Whether he is alive or not we don't know but he's not allowed to operate.

Q: What is your analysis of Pirabhakaran and his psychology?

A: Apparently, he had stated to somebody in discussions: 'I have killed so many of my own people, how can I live in a situation of peace?'

Q: If you look at it from his point of view, what guarantees does he have?

A: Maybe you are right. But there are solutions to these things and we wanted to discuss with him within a framework of a devolutionary package while he could still keep his own security guards who, you know, could perhaps be paid by the state.

Q: But if you think of it from his point of view, what is his charisma unless he's fighting a war?

A: But, of course, in a situation like this where a war has dragged on for 12 years, people get tired of war. They want to live normal lives. He also has two young children. And as I said, the pressure of his own people who want to live normally. And look at people like Anton Balasingham, his main spokesperson, making statements like they are willing to go in for a federal solution as an alternative to Eelam.

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Q: The Tigers have complete control of the place. All they need is foreign recognition, but you can't help them with that. So what can you offer them as a bargain?

A: The first thing is that they can live peacefully. Without getting bombarded from the air and sea and shot at from the ground. And I think that this is a strong, very strong point in favour of peace.

Q: Suppose they don't attack your forces and carry on just running their own administration in the north and the east. Then what do you do?

A: Well, that was the situation there for about eight months. So, in fact, some people felt we shouldn't have pushed them to discuss the political package. We should have allowed them to go on with the administration and keep on building bridges to pacify the people and deal with whatever Pirabhakaran's mental problems were.

Q: What mental problems?

A: Fear of peace. His desire for power, as I told you, and various other things. There must be very serious mental problems if you polish off all your lieutenants.

Q: Then how does one explain Premadasa's assassination? He was talking to them.

A: He was another man who needed psychiatric treatment pretty seriously. You see, in his case he wanted the Indians out first. His hatred of Indians was more than his hatred of the LTTE. And he thought he could manipulate the Tigers to get the Indians out and continue to manipulate Pirabhakaran with money and arms and all this, and then do what he wants.

Q: Where do you see India in this equation now? Is it neglecting the problem?

A: I think the Indian Government is taking a very right attitude saying it is your internal problem and hands off as far as the Indian Government is concerned, which is quite right. Why do you say neglect? It is not the Indian Government's business to solve our problems unless we ask them.

Q: It was seen like that for a long time.

A: That's very wrong. The Indian Government is very concerned as a friendly neighbour but they have taken the very clear decision that they shall not interfere unless the

Sri Lankan Government wants them to. And even then I think they would think ten times before that, which should be the correct attitude.

Q: How did the extradition factor play in all this? Do you think that is the concern in Pirabhakaran's mind?

A: That could very definitely be one fear and we had a very major newspaper group which has been sabotaging the peace process. They misreported your foreign minister as having said that I was coming to India and that I would discuss the extradition problems with your prime minister, which was utterly and truly false. It was not even on the agenda.

Q: Did you get any feelers from the Tigers checking on this?

A: Well, we sent them a copy of the correction that I sent to the papers denying all that. But they don't work like that. They don't trust others. I had serious problems.

Q: But isn't the whole thing hypothetical - how do you extradite Pirabhakaran unless you've caught him?

A: Exactly.

Q: But why this fear then?

A: In a situation of peace, he must be thinking that it will be easier to catch him. In a situation where he would have to become a democratic politician, he would have to be seen, he would have to go about. I don't think Pirabhakaran can see that anything can exist in the world different from the way he sees it.

Q: You mean his view of the world is absolutely firm and cast in concrete?

A: He is incapable of seeing that there are other people who are able to think and feel differently. We thought that maybe he would understand that there is a possibility of a Sri Lankan Sinhala-based government being human. But I don't think he understands that. Yet, it's worth trying.

Q: Weren't the risks large?

A: The only risk was that I would get knocked off. I knew this right from the beginning. We were trying to do something that didn't suit him. Then, the first reaction would be to kill me off. It has already started. They began reconnoitering and spying on me about three to four months ago. But as I have constantly said, people do not exist in a vacuum. In fact, Anton Balasingham said this about two months ago

to a French journalist who interviewed him.

Q: You think that the fear of your government gaining popularity in the north was on Pirabhakaran's mind when resuming hostilities?

A: They were very worried about it. They had these posters that were issued during elections, they used to keep them inside their houses along with the deities and they used to light lamps saying that this person is going to bring us peace. And they called me by the name of some goddess that they worship. There were Chandrika bangles and Chandrika bracelets. So it became a myth-like thing which was particularly terrifying Pirabhakaran. Everything went against his accepted view of the world. I am sure that he couldn't possibly accept that a woman can be leader, a Sinhala woman at that, and that a Sinhala could talk peace. All the factors that helped the Tigers get sympathy, money and arms in the past don't exist any more. We have removed all the black marks. The LTTE has no more logic to carry on the war now supposedly on behalf of the Tamil people, except for the personal likes and dislikes of a handful of LTTE leaders.

Q: Where do you go from here?

A: We are not going to take it lying down. But we are still trying to avoid going into an all-out war which would mean a lot of civilian casualties. But because of the way the Jaffna peninsula is, if you have to defeat the LTTE there, you have to launch an all-out attack and the place will be wiped out.

Q: Is that possible? Can the Sri Lankan forces do it?

A: Of course it is possible. That is what the IPKF tried to do. The point is, if this Government gives the orders to wage war, we won't go back on our word on that either, unlike the previous governments who told the army to fight but cut private deals with the Tigers.

Q: Do you believe allegations that Premadasa supplied arms to the LTTE while the IPKF was still fighting them?

A: Yes. Arms and Rs 200 million from the treasury, out of secret funds which don't have to be accounted for. Billions of rupees have gone out of that fund.

Q: How do you assess your two

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predecessors, Premadasa and Jayewardene?

A: Disastrous. Both were disastrous for Sri Lanka.

Q: Who was worse?

A: Definitely Jayewardene. Because he started everything which was horrible. Premadasa only continued it. He was more dangerous because he was smarter, more suave.

Q: Did he take Rajiv for a ride?

A: He was the dirtiest of politicians. But he was one of the most shrewd. He could lie like a Trojan. He could have taught Machiavelli how to write his book.

Q: So you agree that he fooled Rajiv?

A: Jayewardene actually gave them (India) the rope to pull out and hang themselves with. By then India was so deeply involved they had to somehow unravel this thing. So Jayewardene set the Indians and the LTTE against each other, washed his hands of it and sat back and had a good laugh. And Rajiv Gandhi paid for it with his life.

Q: And Premadasa?

A: He was killed for different reasons. The Tigers perhaps felt he did not keep his part of the bargain.

Q: But even that is no conclusive logic as to why they would kill Rajiv and expose themselves to opprobrium in Tamil Nadu.

A: This is where the other factors come in. They were just paranoid when they saw the possibility of Rajiv coming to power. They are very much like the Corsican mafia. Once they swear vengeance against somebody, they kill him.

Q: But in terms of timing, politically, wasn't it a disastrous move to kill Rajiv?

A: I think anyway it was a disastrous move to kill Rajiv. I really think he was a decent man. I don't think they thought the Indian Tamils would turn against them. But he was getting so much support in Tamil Nadu that they feared him. They must have thought they will finally get the support of the Tamil Nadu government and the people anyway (even after killing Rajiv).

Q: Do you worry about the India factor while talking to the Tigers now?

A: We had the confidence that the Indian Government has sufficient statesmanship to realise that the solution to terrorism in the north is more important than having one

Misconceptions and Anxieties In a Time of Change – II

by Dr. S. Narapalasingam

(Continued from last issue).

The Singaporean Experience

The question whether the western-style democracy is the most suitable system to promote political stability and social and economic development in low income countries, like Sri Lanka, may be justifiably raised. The Singaporean experience is considered to be a paradigm of a small former colonial country achieving sustained high economic growth and high standard of living within a short period. The political system that facilitated the rapid development is very dissimilar to that in Sri Lanka. This multi-racial country's dynamic, impartial, responsible and judicious leader, Lee Kuan Yew, ruled in an authoritative manner for the very purpose of ensuring discipline, efficiency, unity, allegiance and equality. Meritocracy was the established system that underpinned the various structures of his government.

Singapore was fortunate to have had a leader of this stature. Many would have succumbed to the temptation to abuse such authoritative powers for serving their own or group interests. The way Singapore evolved to become one of the high growth economies of Asia with enduring social stability is unique. Despite its con-

tinued aversion to western-style democracy, it attracts foreign capital. Lee Kuan Yew's successor, Goh Chok Tong also follows faithfully the same enlightened policies of the veteran leader, which explain its persisting social stability, high standing in international financial markets and high economic growth. Sri Lankan leaders had aspired to imitate the economic success of Singapore, without realizing the above important background that contributed to the success.

Recently the governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, described the rule of law as the guardian angel of the colony's decency and the engine of success. His comment, 'freedom under the law is not a mere slogan but it is the history and way of life of the Hong Kong people', is significant. The strict adherence to the rule of law has in fact helped its market economy to flourish. His recent emphasis on guaranteeing certain political freedoms to the Hong Kong people seems to have been not well received in Singapore and not surprisingly in mainland China.

Election Promises

Promises given to the electorate are in essence contracts between the voters and their political parties represented by the elected candidates.

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person behind bars, however heinous the crime committed by him.

Q: Did you get any signals like that?

A: Some signals.

Q: Was your view based on these signals or your assessment?

A: Both.

Q: There is a cynical point of view that the resumption of fighting is good because Pirabhakaran as a bad guy is politically more convenient than Pirabhakaran as a good guy while India demands his extradition.

A: How can anyone who killed so many people be a good guy? But you have to be realistic. The man today controls one-third of our country, two-thirds of its coastline. Whether one likes him or not, one has to deal with him. But we can accept Pirabhakaran as the democratic

leader of the north if he gave up terrorism and turned the LTTE into a political party.

Q: Do you worry for your life?

A: Fear is a word I do not know, when I took over this responsibility I knew what this would mean. The only thing I am worried about is that I have two children who are very attached to me. Apart from that there are no fears.

Q: Are they interested in politics?

A: They hate it.

Q: What do you think of Narasimha Rao?

A: He is a very wise, erudite and old man who looks at the world very philosophically.

Q: But he must feel a bit strange, surrounded by young women leaders in his neighbourhood.

A: Why, he must feel good about it.

(Reproduced by kind courtesy of *India Today*, 15.5.95).

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These are often concrete in the form of party manifestos, which are published and distributed widely before the elections. The perception that not much debate takes place in Sri Lanka with regard to written undertakings promised in the party manifestos and similar formal pamphlets (e.g. From J.R. To You, distributed by the UNP leader before the 1977 elections) but thrown to the winds after getting elected on deceitful promises, leads to the following conclusions.

1. There is a convention between all major parties in Sri Lanka not to discuss the previous election promises, as the subsequent apathy and contempt are their common tactics.

2. Voters themselves are sceptical of election promises; yet are anxious about their fulfilment at least in the short term. The current anxiety concerning the promises of the PA government relates to this phase.

3. This scepticism appears to prevail even amongst leading political analysts as inferred from the absence of commentaries on unkept election promises.

Guaranteed Ethical Rule

In practice, there is no political system that automatically assures freedom, social justice and prosperity. Sri Lankans know of government committed to democracy but ruling unethically. There is also evidence to show that strict but benevolent rule, despite greater restrictions on freedoms, can be beneficial to the progress and well-being of the society as a whole. What contributes primarily to the sustained ethical rule of governments is the attribute of being responsible. Being responsible means 'liable to be called to account, answerable; morally accountable for actions'. The eminent civil servant, Stanley Jayaweera, in an excellent contribution on 'Who is a responsible human being?' published in *The Island* of 26/2/95, has given illustrations of irresponsible actions of past Sri Lankan democratic leaders. He has affirmed the perception that the various problems confronting the people and the country today are 'due to the utter irresponsibility of the vast majority of politicians who have bluffed the people, masquerading as their servants and what is worse, as their saviours.'

Given the political history and realities in Sri Lanka, it is foolhardy to assume that a succession of responsible leaders in either community would be at the helm to ensure equity and prosperity to all its members. The risk associated with this uncertainty is

great in dictatorships and minimal only in true democracies. Without the citizens' right to depose corrupt leaders and change unpopular governments by peaceful means, any system of government has inherent dangers, if not in the short term but definitely in the longer term. Responsibility of human beings in an imperfect and today's increasingly materialistic world cannot be let to the whims of individuals alone. Regulatory mechanisms, which inevitably are complex, are necessary to ensure that all, especially those wielding power act responsibly.

Watchdogs of Ethical Rule

The tendency to govern unethically even in countries whose governments claim to be committed to democracy is facilitated by restricting or denying certain basic rights such as the freedom to air or publish opposing views and criticise the elected governments. Examples of such restraints imposed either overtly or covertly by the 'democratic' governments of Sri Lanka are abundant. People have the right to demand transparency and accountability from elected governments. The observance of ethical principles in managing the affairs of the State depends crucially on the vigilance of all the citizens. Governments need to be constantly reminded of their obligations to the people. One effective way of testing the popularity of governments during the intervening period between two successive elections is through b-elections. This opportunity was denied to the Sri Lankan voters by their elected representatives, particularly after extending their term of office to 6 years. In retrospect, the negligence of the voters together with the restrictions on democracy had significantly contributed to the undemocratic behaviour of past governments of Sri Lanka. People have only to blame themselves for allowing governments to suppress their democratic rights and govern ruthlessly putting some of their powerful members' selfish interests before common interests.

As stated at the very outset, the freedoms people are entitled to in democracies are not absolute. In as much as the governments are expected to govern responsibly, the people too have certain responsibilities towards the State. For example, people cannot demand classified information from the government, if its revelation would be harmful to the national interest. The mass media should not misuse the freedom to spread disinformation that will undermine the credibility of politicians, parties and even governments. The free media to

be accepted as a watchdog of democracy must act responsibly. In the real world, governments, politics, businesses etc. and individuals all require some form of involuntary control to ensure that they act responsibly. It is precisely this necessity that lends itself to excessive controls by irresponsible governments intent on abusing the ruling powers for narrow or opportunistic reasons. Obviously, it is impossible to specify where the line should be drawn to have the minimum of unavoidable controls in democracies without denying the fundamental human freedoms. Certainly, excessive controls impinging on fundamental human rights as in a police state are unacceptable. In this regard, the role of democratic institutions outside the government control such as the judiciary and private non-partisan organizations in ensuring justice and fairness cannot be overemphasized.

Education also has a vital role in increasing awareness among citizens of their fundamental rights and in their becoming an effective watchdog of ethical rule. Had this process been initiated a long time ago, politicians would have behaved more responsibly not only in giving promises to the electorates but also in keeping them. If the circumstances have changed making it difficult to fulfil the promises, the people have the right to know about these changes.

The recent emergence of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights groups, mothers movement, anti-censorship group, peace activists etc. in Sri Lanka is an indication of the important role that conscious citizens will play in frustrating the irresponsible actions of politicians. There is, however, a dire need to give additional momentum to these collective efforts. Some courageous prominent as well as ordinary persons had paid the ultimate price with their lives in the course of exposing the mistakes and injustices, despite the known threats they faced from those wielding powers. The right to point out the mistakes of governments at all levels, their unkept promises and deficiencies in the system and to change peacefully governments that have lost the confidence of the people must remain the cornerstone of any political system, in which the will of the people is sovereign. Without this right, any system will eventually end in tyranny or anarchy.

Tamil Homeland

The Tamils in Sri Lanka claim the Northern and Eastern parts of the island to be their homelands and want

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SAARC AND SRI LANKA

Shadow Over the Summit

by T.N. Gopalan

The eighth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which concluded at New Delhi on May 4, unequivocally condemned all 'acts, methods and practices of terrorism' as criminal and the leaders deplored such acts for 'their ruinous impact on life, property, socio-economic development and political stability as well as on regional and international peace and co-operation'. The downing of two Sri Lankan aircraft by Tamil Tigers cast an invisible shadow over the summit.

Addressing a post-summit press conference, the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, said: '... the situation in Sri Lanka in the last few days is causing concern, it ought to cause concern not only to the SAARC but every peace-loving country. The type of weaponry that is coming into the hands of individuals is frightening...'

However, apart from vaguely talking about 'combatting terrorism, including trans-border terrorism',

the Indian side would not commit itself to any specific course of action that would pit it directly against the LTTE, and that was in effect fending off some apparently desperate overtures from President Chandrika.

A visibly distraught Chandrika made it to the New Delhi summit, despite the serious developments back home in the shape of the spectacular missile attack on two Lankan military aircraft, only because she was apparently hoping for renewed Indian involvement in the ethnic tangle. But then, as it turned out, she only drew a blank except for some pious sentiments and comforting words.

While interpretations might vary over the type of missiles acquired by the Tigers, the fact remains that the very supply-line to the forward posts is in danger and the Lankan army lives in mortal fear of having its camps in the north being strangled to death.

Whatever the fancy options the Lankan military establishment

might be contemplating, the President herself perhaps thought there could be no better way of countering the Tiger threat than dragging India into the conflict all over again, in some form or other.

But then once bitten, twice shy, India would not like to get trapped in a no-win situation. According to reports, Chandrika did try to suggest to Rao that the LTTE posed as much a threat to India as it was to her own country and hence the need for the bigger neighbour to chip in with 'some help' in tackling the 'menace'.

However, Rao, aware of the serious consequences of stepping into such a potential mine-field as Sri Lanka's especially of the possible opposition from his own military heads apart from the political fallout of such a precipitous move, neatly skirted the issue, only offering his deep sympathies and promising not to allow the Tigers to develop any roots yet again on this soil.

Chandrika herself took part only in the inaugural session and returned to Colombo after a brief meeting with Rao. She skipped the one-day retreat of the heads of the SAARC as also the closing session. Disappointed as she is with the Indian response, she seems to be

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to preserve this region as such for all times. In so far as the North is concerned this position is widely accepted but it is contested with regard to the East by the Sinhalese. Attention has been drawn to the differences between the Sinhalese and Tamil perception of the history of the people of Sri Lanka (Ref: As mentioned earlier). Both sides cite historical information to support their stands. The early history of the people of Sri Lanka is slanted and controversial.

The disagreement seems to depend on the benchmark period chosen to justify the two opposing positions. The data in the early censuses (which is more scientific than the preceding historical information) provides indisputable evidence of the distribution of Sri Lanka's population by ethnic groups in different provinces. This shows clearly that the inhabitants in both the Northern and parts of the Eastern provinces were predominantly Tamil speaking people (including the Muslims in the Eastern province). On the other hand, if the census date of recent years after large numbers of Sinhalese families were settled in the Eastern

province under the various colonization schemes of the State, are analyzed then the demographic pattern of this province is obviously different showing areas of Sinhalese concentration.

Both the USA and Australia are countries occupied by relatively very recent migrants from Europe. The natives were the American Indians and the Australian Aborigines. Will the present inhabitants there admit that the lands their ancestors migrated to are not theirs? If one traces the roots of other races far way back in history, it will be seen that their ancestors originated from different countries. The fact that both the Sinhalese and Tamils have their ancestral roots in India is not disputed. A sensible approach without getting into very ancient history is suggested to settle the boundary of the Tamil region. In line with international practice to be considered a native of a region, it is not necessary to go far back beyond a reasonable time in history as for instance the period before the Portuguese landed in Ceylon as the first Western colonial power. It is relevant to note that under the Portuguese and Dutch rule, the Tamil-

speaking territories of the North and East maintained their administrative separation from the rest of the island. It was the British, who brought all territories in Ceylon under one central administration. However, the present realities consequent upon state-sponsored colonization of Sinhalese in parts of the Eastern Province cannot be ignored. For instance, the proportion of Sinhalese in Seruvila, Kantalai, and Tambalagamam in 1981 was 58%, 83% and 58% respectively. The administrative district of Amparai created in 1963 had 20% Tamils, 38% Sinhalese and 42% Muslims in 1981.

The Muslims in the Eastern province have an understandable fear of being marginalised in a regional government dominated by the Tamils. The Tamils jointly need to win their confidence by concrete actions and by secure guarantees that will allow them to exercise, if they so desire at any time, the same right of regional 'self-rule' which the Tamils in the North-East region have been demanding for nearly three decades. However, such fragmentation of the minorities in Sri Lanka is not advisable from both political and economic considerations.

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contemplating seeking military help from other quarters.

According to some observers here, her regime is toying with the idea of seeking Chinese help to counter the LTTE which could in turn provoke India to come forward with its own support, in some concrete form, even if not direct military involvement, but definitely a stepped up interaction.

It is also said that the RAW is yet to reconcile itself to the Lankan fiasco and could be up to some more mischief on that front.

Be that as it may, the LTTE missile attacks have had their impact on India in other ways too. To wit, all Indian Airlines and Air Lanka flights to and from Sri Lanka have stopped overflying the Jaffna peninsula.

Though jet aircraft fly at heights not usually in the range of ordinary missiles and hence there is no imminent threat to aircraft operating in the region, the decision not to overfly Jaffna has been taken.

All civilian aircraft now fly over Trichy en route to Madras or Colombo. Also all pilots have reportedly been advised to climb to a height of at least 25,000 feet within 80 nautical miles after take-off from Colombo.

According to some other sources, consequent on the detour, the aircraft on the Colombo-Madras sector are flying 14 minutes more and carrying an additional tonne of aviation turbine fuel. How far the resulting financial burden on the airlines concerned would affect the viability of the route remains to be seen, though the I.A. management seems to have expressed its unhappiness over the 'uncalled for and knee-jerk' response of the higher authorities on the matter.

Security also has been beefed up further, what with the passengers being photographed prior to boarding.

The fear-psychosis induced by the Tiger strikes has also affected the repatriation process. In the wake of the improved situation in the island after the coming to power of Chandrika, the state and central governments in India had sought to accelerate the repatriation of the Lankan Tamil refugees accommodated in various camps in Tamil Nadu.

Around 8,000 persons were sent

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'Bombay' Troubles India

T.N. Gopalan

April was not the cruellest of months for the Indian politician but only for a film-maker from Tamil Nadu.

Well, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was reeling under successive election defeats in March and April, but the internal rebellion against his leadership of the Cong-I was very muted, and he continued to bumble his way through.

On the other hand, the gifted film director, the young Maniratnam, had a tough time getting his latest handiwork, **Bombay**, released in theatres across the country and then had to face charges of going soft on the Hindu communalists.

The film, made in Tamil, but dubbed into at least three other languages including Hindi, focuses on the tension in the relationship between the two major communities of India, the Hindus and the Muslims and makes a passionate plea for communal harmony.

Maniratnam had received rave reviews for his previous political film of sorts, *Roja*, which deals with the Kashmir issue. First made in Tamil and then dubbed into Hindi, it proved a smashing success — apparently the film's not-so-subtle justification of the official stand on Kashmir and the denunciation of the 'Muslim terrorists' has a lot to do with the tremendous ovation it received in the North. Whatever it was, **Bombay** which was to turn the limelight on the riots in Bombay, the city, in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, also aroused a lot of expectations all over the country.

Also as in the case of *Roja*, in which the music set by the new rage among the young, A.R. Rehman, proved a great hit, the audio cassettes of the songs of **Bombay**, topped the sales charts everywhere, further whetting the appetite of the film fans and critics.

But Maniratnam got into troubles even as he was getting ready for the release of the film, originally scheduled, significantly, on January 26, the Republic Day.

But then the Censor Board too understood the significance of the release of the film at that juncture — for the elections to the Maharashtra Assembly were only a couple of months away, and the Cong-I was

not expected to do well in the state mainly because the party had antagonised the minorities by the way its government had handled the riots and all that which followed in their wake. How the film would affect the voting pattern in the Muslim community and how the rabidly communal Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena supremo, who too had been turned into a character in the film, would react, the censors did not know and they did not want to take any chances. They simply passed the buck on to the Maharashtra government allegedly in view of the sensitive nature of the issue the film handles. Predictably the outgoing Pawar regime sat on the matter till the March elections.

Meantime Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, whose company had reportedly bought up the distribution rights for the North for a whopping Rs.2.5 crores, entered the picture and he arranged a special screening of the film for Thackeray.

Apparently it was here that Maniratnam committed a colossal blunder. The great artist, never known to compromise on the standards he has set for himself in film-making, allowed his commercial interests to overtake his creative instincts and self respect — he caved in before almost all of the imperious demands of that arch Hindu fanatic.

One of Thackeray's well-publicised and most notorious objections was that Tinu Anand who plays the role resembling Thackeray is seen as overcome with contrition in the aftermath of one of the riots. 'There is no question of any remorse or any penitence', he was quoted as saying, 'The Sainiks (the Sena cadres) had done nothing wrong. They were only retaliating...'

When he meekly gave in to the diktats from Thackeray, Maniratnam virtually ruined the effect of those powerful sequences wherein rival community leaders are seen egging on their followers to acts of violence. Not only that he was allowing the film's quality to suffer, he was also laying himself open to the charge that he was appeasing the Hindu fundamentalist forces, granting them the status of 'super censors'. Further the fact that he did not come forward to confer any such veto power on any Muslim leader

was another sore point with his critics.

Whatever it was, after a lot of heart-burning and nail-biting and amid some critical acclaim from those who had had a preview of the film, **Bombay** was released first in the South only in April. But it was the turn of the Muslim organisations to protest against the unjustified portrayal of the minorities as the marauders. In as many as four out of the five riot sequences shown in the film, Muslims are shown as the aggressors and the Hindus as the victims. But it was the Muslims who suffered the worst during the Bombay riots in 1993, claimed a Bombay-based Urdu journalist.

The screening was suspended in many places including Hyderabad and Bangalore following protests from the Muslims. In some places like Pune and Nagpur where the film was released subsequently the theatres concerned were vandalised. To add to his cup of woes, the Sainiks took over the job of providing security to many theatres.

Actually the film is indeed a resonant cry for sanity, and for those who are not familiar with the intimate details of the Bombay riots, the film would not be seen to suffer from any bias. A Hindu boy from Tirunelveli and a Muslim girl marry against the wishes of their parents and settle down in Bombay where the hero is employed as a journalist. After two children are born to them, the riots overtake them, but in the process the divided families are reunited. Though the fathers of both the hero and the heroine perish in the course of the riots, and the children are almost lost to the rioters, good sense ultimately prevails.

In the original uncensored version, the Hindu leader representing Thackeray is indeed seen at his worst, what with his inciting statements and arrogant gestures. And even as it is seen now, every act of aggression by one community is balanced by another instance of assault by the other. Any way the demolition of the Babri Masjid is clearly portrayed as having sparked it all off. Well, some sequences seem to reek of average Hindu prejudice. But over all, the impact is overwhelming secular – but the Bombayites would not agree. The film is running into problems everywhere barring Tamil Nadu. An indication of how vicious the atmosphere has become on the communal front. A large number of secular journalists and

activists including noted film star Shabna Asmi have frowned upon the film in varying degrees.

But Maniratnam has only to blame himself if his secular credentials are being questioned even by those of unimpeachable integrity. He had always managed to squeeze in such of those features which could prove a draw in the box-office even while preserving the creativity in him. And now he has sought to be too clever by half by pandering to the communal elements even while seeking to project a secular message – predictably he has not only failed,

but also tarnished his own image in the process.

When the Hindu communalists went to the court against *Tamas*, a TV serial revolving around the Partition holocaust, two judges of the Bombay High Court snubbed the petitioners, saying, 'To dissect each and every scene is a mistake. The overall impact is what matters. *Tamas* says: 'Remember what has happened do not let yourself fall prey to fundamentalism. . . Use your own head, learn from the past, live like brothers and may the past never be repeated'. Amen.

TAMIL NADU NEWSLETTER

Jayalalitha's Head on the Block? Governor Sanctions Prosecution

by T.N. Gopalan, Madras

The queen is on the run. In a dramatic reversal of roles, it is her subjects who are clamouring for her head now.

For the 47-year-old Jayalalitha Jayaram, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, used to having even her most whimsical and irrational decisions executed without so much as a murmur, it could indeed be a strange experience to have to run for cover.

But certainly Governor Channa Reddy's green signal to that political maverick Dr. Subramaniam Swamy to prosecute Ms. Jayalalitha on corruption charges seems to have unnerved her so much that she is resorting to all kinds of stratagems to tide over the crisis, appealing to the courts, sending frantic messages to the Prime Minister, getting her cadres to organise hysterical demonstrations against the Governor and so on.

This is the first time in the history of Independent India that a Chief Minister has had to face the embarrassment of being tried for corruption while in office or even is confronted with the prospect of such a trial.

Unlike in the past, the Madras High Court has failed to oblige the angry Chief Minister with any interim stay on the Governor's orders, and she is going about tearing her hair, ranting and raving about the 'sinister and diabolical designs' of the Governor to have her democratically elected government dismissed through unconstitutional means,

while the Opposition is baying for her blood, demanding her resignation on 'moral grounds'.

Ultimately the lady could come out unscathed, not that the courts would exonerate her but simply that a victory-starved Prime Minister Narasimha Rao could decide to bale her out and she could come up trumps in the next year's General Elections, sweeping aside Channa Reddys, Subramaniam Swamys and corruption charges in the course of her victorious march towards the Fort St. George.

But then that is all into the future. Right now the imperious lady is spending sleepless nights over what could happen if and when Dr. Swamy's complaint against her is taken on file in any of the courts designated for the purpose of conducting trials under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

She is resorting to desperate stratagems to stave off the prospect of stepping down from office, albeit temporarily, in order to face a trial against her.

On the one hand she is said to be sending fervent appeals to the Prime Minister through some private channels, pressing him not to set up any special court to try her, transfer Channa Reddy and rein in his hatchet man Swamy even while promising the Cong-I a lion's share in the next year's Lok Sabha elections, but on the other hand her party cadres

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are staging noisy and ugly demonstrations against Dr. Reddy, evidently at her instance, the State Assembly has passed a resolution demanding recall of the Governor and she is going about lashing out at the 'inert PM' - a twin-track carrot-and-stick policy, aimed at bludgeoning the Centre into submission.

Now the problem for Jayalalitha is that while the proverbially indecisive Rao could even oblige her by default, say by not instituting a special court, but the moment any of the Designated Courts decide to take up Swamy's complaint, her position could become untenable.

For these so-called designated courts are nothing but ordinary sessions courts whose presiding judges are appointees of the state government. And the judges themselves will have little option but to admit a case preferred by Swamy since he is armed with the necessary Governor's sanction. In such an eventuality, it would be difficult for even such a morally insulated personality like Jayalalitha to continue in office - nothing could be more ludicrous than a Chief Minister finding herself in the dock in a sessions court. And hence her current manoeuvres.

Jayalalitha is also unnerved by another factor at this juncture, viz. the perceptible change in the attitude of the courts to her.

Times were when the Madras High Court seemed all too ready to oblige her, granting stays on any kind of case against her - she had to merely ask for one and she would be given that without much of a fuss, whatever the issue and whichever the bench concerned.

But now it has refused to intervene in her favour, leaving her to stew in her own juice.

It may be recalled that for two years now Dr. Swamy had been trying his best to convince the courts on the disqualification petition against the Chief Minister - his case is that she had contested an Assembly seat and won when a contract between the Jaya Publications in which she is a major partner and the state government subsisted, a very strong ground indeed for disqualification, according to legal experts. The case is yet to go before the Central Election Commission, such has been Jayalalitha's ability to make effective use of the courts in her cause.

And when she sought an injunc-

tion against Mr. T.N. Seshan's biography on the ground that it contained slanderous remarks against her mentor MGR, the High Court sat on a Sunday to carry out her wishes - and thus when several injunctions had already been slapped against the book.

But now a two-member division bench of the Madras High Court has firmly ruled against going into the alleged factors which allegedly motivated Channa Reddy into sanctioning the prosecution.

One of the two judges in the bench had also been part of another bench which had dismissed a petition from the DMK challenging the previous Governor Bhisma Narain Singh's denial of permission to prosecute her, saying a Governor's decisions in such matters were not justiciable.

Holding that the sanction to prosecute the CM was the 'exclusive function of the Governor to be exercised by him in his discretion', the Court had this to tell the petitioner's counsel who had cited a sloka from Bhagwad Gita to the effect that disgrace was worse than death to a man of honour - the disgrace referred to in the sloka was one arising out of failure to do one's duties. It did not mean that infamy or ignominy would arise out of allegations. There was no question of disgrace of the petitioner at this stage as the charges of corruption against her were only in the stage of allegations.

For a good measure it also pulled up the Chief Secretary for coming before the Court and contending that his government would face legal and practical difficulties in implementing the Governor's orders, saying that he had better get the necessary clarifications from the Governor himself. The slap could not have been more resounding for the Jayalalitha regime which is now appealing to the Supreme Court on the matter.

It is still not known whether Governor Reddy had the PM's prior sanction before passing his orders on Dr. Swamy's petition to him. Perhaps he had acted out of sheer pique, angry as he was with Mr. Rao for failing to play ball with him on the matter of bringing round the recalcitrant Jayalalitha.

Originally Reddy had replaced Bhisma Narain Singh, an unabashed admirer of Jayalalitha, as Governor only because the Centre had wanted to rein the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, just as Swamy was set upon his task of tarnishing her

image with the blessings of Mr. Rao, but midway the latter got cold-feet, reeling as he was under electoral debacles everywhere - the frustrated duo have now chosen to strike back.

The Centre too went out of its way to disassociate itself with the Governor's decision, thus perhaps giving Jayalalitha some hope.

And hence perhaps she set herself on a course of embarrassing Channa Reddy in every way she could, having his convoy greeted with rotten eggs and chappals, sponsoring rallies in which he was denounced in hysterical terms, getting a resolution passed in the Assembly demanding his recall and, hold your breath, charging that he had misbehaved with her at the Raj Bhavan once.

While speaking in the Assembly, she mournfully recalled that when she called on him once in 1993, he had 'misbehaved' with her, though she left teasingly open the actual import of her remarks, for she went on to say he had hurled abuses at her and kept harping on that aspect.

For those who know Channa's ways, it was easy to refer what Jayalalitha was hinting at. However, the sensational allegation failed to get off the ground, except for some strong condemnation of the CM by the opposition for her unseemly remarks. She also chose not to follow up the matter - if she had, it would have assumed serious dimensions.

But it is not as if the opposition has been able to derive much of a mileage from her discomfitures. For one the bandh called by DM, and endorsed by the rest of the Opposition including the Cong-I evoked a poor response from the people - except for the closure of shops and establishments on 4 April, the bandh day, normal life in the state continued in its own usual gear, proving that the people at large are yet to be drawn into any great moral crusade against a corrupt government. For them it is nothing but yet another ugly chapter in an endless power struggle.

Secondly the opposition could not agree on a common candidate against the AIADMK for the Pudukkottai Lok Sabha by-election (since cancelled).

All the same it will be hard times ahead for Jayalalitha, if the Supreme Court too fails to come to her rescue. And if Swamy succeeds in setting up a trial against her in any court, Jayalalitha's head will be on the block.

Religious Conversions of Tamils To the Government Religion

by Ratnajeewan H. Hoole

From the columns of *Tamil Times* (15 February) it would appear that there are strong views held among Tamils that Christian conversions were for financial gain - 'souls sold' for a soupson (sic) of sour-soup' and 'a mess of pottage'¹ - and that one who has converted out of his ancestral faith² has 'betrayed his forefathers'. These charges impute a poor character to the Christians (and, by extension, the Muslims), who form such a sizeable section of the Tamils that the charges deserve to be examined closely. It is the purpose of this article to do that. We will see that belonging to the 'government religion' was the general tendency among Tamils until the British introduced freedom of conscience and that the charge of changing religion for financial gain does not stand up generally to close scrutiny.

So, did the Christians convert for a soupcon of sour soup? This question must be posed in context. If Christians did convert for money, is such conversion 'the preserve' of the Christian? Addressing this first, we know that the Saivite revival of AD 600 to 900 was achieved by peaceful conversion only initially and then, as the adherents got strong, by outright force, force that included the forcible conversion of Buddhist shrines into Hindu ones³ and with it, Buddhist nuns into Devadasis. The latter part of the process also included the conversion of kings which was followed by the forcible conversion of the subjects. Professor R.C. Majumdar states that debates between religions were 'on the express condition that the vanquished should either adopt the religion of his opponent or forfeit his life and surrender the property of the religious establishments, if he had any'.⁴ Nilkanta Shastri⁵ too affirms that this was integral to the process of mass conversions. The Saivite leader Appar for example,⁶ won over the king and hence the king's subjects. In the case of Gnanasampanthar, following a debate, he converted the Pandyan king Sundara and his subjects from Jainism, and 8000 Jains, presumably those who refused to convert, were killed by impalement, an event that is celebrated to this day at the Madura temple.⁷ The Chola dedication to Saivism completed this process.

Thus we see that being of the 'government religion' has been a part of the Tamil ethos, at least from the Saivite period, a good part of the

conversions having been achieved, if not at the point of a sword, at least with elephants on either side ready to tear the nonbeliever into two halves.

It is in this context that we must examine the conversion to Christianity of the Tamils, which, it would appear, followed a similar path, although there is little evidence of the same level of violence. Initial conversions were, like in the Saivite revival, peaceable and from the heart. The earliest converts to the Roman Church were from Mannar who, having heard of the work of Francisco Xavier across the Palk Straits among members of their own caste, the Paravas, invited him over to preach to them around AD 1543.⁸ The king of Jaffna, Chaga Rajah, reacted by massacring 600-700 converts in December 1544. In so doing the Raja was going by the principle that the religion of the subjects was the religion of the sovereign and a change of religion threatened the sovereign. For, after the treaty with the Portuguese he declared, that '... the people were getting rebellious and were casting off the religion which whether for good or evil was the one they had inherited from their fathers and which they had so far observed. Religion, he pointed out, was the very soul and salvation of kingdoms, and the object of the converts was to rob him of his kingdom [my emphasis]. As for the Portuguese themselves, he had no cause of quarrel with them'.⁹

By 1619 when Jaffna was annexed by the Portuguese, there were already 12,000 converts in Jaffna, which number rapidly expanded thereafter - from 1624 to 1626, the Franciscans alone baptized 52,000 souls and 'among them all the nobility of the kingdom ... the three Modaliars ... and the greater part of the Bragmanes ... with their wives and families'.¹⁰ By 1634, 'nearly all natives [were] Christians' in Jaffna according to Portuguese reports and this is affirmed by Tikiri Abeyasinghe on the basis of several sources.¹¹

Thus we see that once again, the Tamil were following their tradition of moving to the religion of the government. After 1619, like with the Saivite revival, inducements and disabilities were applied to encourage conversions. This was based on an order of March 1546 from the king of Portugal to his Viceroy at Goa, embarrassed by the idol worship going on in his territories. The letter demanded that all

idols be smashed and those practising idolatry be severely punished, while new Christians be exempted from press-gang service and taxes.¹² Thus it was that foreign Brahmins who refused to convert were banished, and temples demolished, just as Buddhist temples were destroyed during the Saivite revival (Mosques, being free of idols, were allowed to function, but were levied a tax to support the Dominicans). But unlike in the Saivite revival, there was no large scale confiscation of property,¹³ nor, according to Tennent, 'does it appear that any actual compulsion was employed'.¹⁴ Similarly, there was no massacre of Hindus like the massacre of the Mannar Christians, or the Buddhists and Jains earlier (massacres did occur, but in the context of punishment of rebels - 40 Aaraachis fighting for the king were decapitated in Kopay in 1560¹⁵ and 800 'Wadakkaru and Moor troops' and the king whose head was exposed on a pike for some days in 1591¹⁶). The soldiery tended to loot, but such looting was directed equally at the Christians and the clergy were at odds with the soldiers on account of this.¹⁷ Again, the looting is only one side of the picture. On the obverse we even see affinity between the citizenry and the Portuguese regime. The first Captain-Major of Jaffna, Phelipe de Oliveyra, always argued with Goa for reduced taxes and had 'genuine sympathy for the poor in Jaffna'.¹⁸ He lost his life through a 'flu contracted during a storm that swept through Jaffna in 1627 pushing the sea long distances inland, when he stood out in the gale risking his life and carrying women and children into the sanctuary of the church. He appears to have been married to a Tamil from his instructions to her from his death bed not to do any loud wailing (oppari) as was the custom.¹⁹ So loved was he by the people of Jaffna that he came to be known as the Apostil of Jafanapatao and as Pilippu Raja, and on his death, the Modaliars of Jaffna asked the Portuguese not to appoint another Captain-Major and instead to simply have his portrait which by itself, according to them, would keep the peace in the kingdom.²⁰

Those who did not like the new order, presumably those who were genuine Saivites, moved to the Vanni, resulting in a redistribution of the Jaffna population.¹ Thus ironically, it is those of the Vanni - whom Jaffna Tamils hold as low - who are the descendants of those who were the genuine adherents of Saivism, while the ancestors of practically all of today's Jaffna Tamils converted to

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Christianity. Perhaps the latter were following the Tamil tradition of belonging to the government religion, but conviction was a strong element in some of the conversions as seen by the refusal of the Mannar converts to turn apostate. Qeyroz describes the conversion of the Queens of Jaffna by Friar Antonio de Santa Maria.²² The process involved long debates about the religious choices over a period, with the Queens showing appreciation for the precepts of the new religion, but not being moved enough to change; and then suddenly one day, one Queen, moved to ecstatic tears, converts and begins to preach to her sister, the other Queen and she too converts. The most convincing of the aspect of sincerity is the conversion of Changili,²³ who clearly had nothing to gain at the point of his conversion. He had been banished to Goa, tried and sentenced to death. There he and his wife were baptised and he said that he had been convinced at a tender age by the preachings of Friar Pedro de Betancor, but had not sought baptism because he wished 'to remain with his own'. Thereafter, uttering 'the sweet name of Jesus' he was decapitated. He had refused to have his hands tied as was customary to avoid any possible panicky struggle, and declared that he went to his death with pleasure and it was better to 'be a Christian coolly than a Pagan king'. Other members of his family even entered holy orders.²⁴ To suggest that these converts had no religious experience and converted for 'soup' is to attempt to rewrite history.

Subsequent to the advent of the Dutch, who were more intent on their mercantile interests, there was a change. The Dutch Protestants were virulently against the Roman Catholics (because of their historical animus towards the Roman Church, as well as their rivalry in colonial expansion).²⁵ In fact, a proclamation of 1658 forbade, on pain of death, the harboring of a Roman Catholic priest.²⁶ Although they had some natural Protestant antipathy towards Hinduism, they did not put down Hinduism the way the Portuguese had. Their only insistence on belonging to the Protestant religion was when they made certain appointments such as of Muduliyaars and Muhaandirams, and prohibitions against Hindu worship applied only in the townships.²⁷ At this point, it is interesting that the genuine Catholics - large numbers of them - went underground, while the 'Government Catholics' largely went over to Protestantism in name, while they relapsed into Hindu practices at home. In addition, there were some who were

genuine converts to Calvinism through the efforts of those like Baldaeus.²⁸

Thus by 1684, Jaffna had 180,364 Protestants in a population of 278,759²⁹ and by 1785 200,233 Protestants.³⁰ Allowing for the large numbers of Roman Catholics and Muslims who refused to convert, it would appear that practically all Hindus had again converted. This phenomenon again underscores two points: i) a not insignificant part of the conversion to Roman Catholic Christianity was genuine, and ii) the Tamil practice of belonging to the government religion was deeply rooted; although it was possible to revert to Saivism under the Dutch, few did so in public. This would appear to be consistent with the teaching that 'to become rich should be one of the major aims' of the good, Saivite Vellalah as taught by Navalar.³¹ For we also hear from Tennent that '[the] Sinhalese exhibited by no means the same alacrity as the Tamils in accepting in succession the conflicting doctrines of the Church of Rome... and those of the Church of Holland' and that 'even Brahmans... unwilling to forego the prospects of dignity and emolument... made a ready profession of Christianity'.³² As Tamil Hindus were falling over each other to become Protestant Christians with this alacrity described by Tennent, there was 'not a single instance on record of a Moorman or Mahomedan who had been induced to embrace Christianity'.³³ Given that the Moslems and Roman Catholics did not convert in the face of Dutch oppression, the conversion of Hindus shows an aspect of choice in their embracing Protestantism, whatever their reasons were.

With British rule came a new concept - freedom of conscience in religion.³⁴ Three hundred new Hindu temples were built in Jaffna during the first year alone of British rule in Ceylon, often at company expense.³⁵ The benefits of being Christian were now relatively few, except for some scholarships in the mission schools and employment as mission school teachers.³⁶ With the absence of benefits, those Protestants who were not genuine Christians reverted to Saivism. As with the Saivite revival and the Roman Catholic conversions, there were conversions to other Protestant denominations for benefits and there were conversions out of genuine religious experience. Sometimes, the religious experience was a negative one with Hinduism (which was in a sorry unrecognizable form at the time, characterized by practices like those of the Vannarponne physicians described

below,³⁷ which practices were mere vestiges after 300 years of Christian suppression), prompting conversion out of it. At other times, it was a positive experience with Christianity that led to conversion into it. Just as there were those who converted to get a training teachers job in a mission school, there were many others who as a result of conversion lost ancestral property and were humiliated and chased out of their homes during British times, showing the strength of conviction that moved the converts. Two documented cases in point are the conversions of i) The Rev. Canon S.S. Somasundaram with privileges and extensive lands at the Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple, who lost all his material inheritance as a result of his conversion to Christianity with no palpable gain.³⁸ He was, for his apostacy, tied to a tree, with chilli thrown in his eyes, and banished from his village of Karuhampanai, and ii) one Srinivasam of a temple in Point Pedro who on his conversion gave up his extensive inheritance. As described by him, the conversion was because '[t]he absurdities of Hinduism appeared to me in their true light and the glorious truths of the Gospel began to gradually unfold themselves to my view'.³⁹ It is noteworthy that the hostility to conversions arose only with the Hindu revival half-way through the British period - the large-scale conversions of all Hindus being a distant memory, the time was ripe for rewriting history, claiming that the Hindus had always been Hindu.

We will now consider if it is indeed a wrong thing (betrayal) to change religions as claimed in these columns. To this end let us examine the lives of the Hindu revivalists, the Aalvaars and Naayanmaars. We know⁴⁰ that Thirunavukkarasu (Appar) went from Saivism to Jainism and came back to Saivism. Thirumalisai went from Jainism to Buddhism and Saivism before settling down as a Vaishnavite. Thirumangai changed his religion to Vaishnavism to marry a Vaishnavite's daughter. Surely we would not say that they 'betrayed [their] forefathers'? Why then is conversion to Christianity a betrayal? Indeed, to argue a little differently, consider 3 examples of 'our' previous religious beliefs: i) Those of the lower castes are inferior and dealings with them would pollute us; ii) Sex as a part of worship⁴¹ achieves heaven (moksha), and iii) Through child sacrifice to Siva as Rudra, maidens may be seduced and enemies cursed.⁴² In all these instances, we have now abandoned these practices (at least, so we say to the

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outside world). But in so doing, have we betrayed our forefathers?

It would seem clear from the foregoing that simple assertions that Christians converted for soup and the double standards being applied to Christians and Hindus in judging their motives for conversions, are the trademark of an effete society that lapses into hurling insults as it loses its members. In fact such insults in these columns are a continuation of the calumny that new Christians faced in the British period when they converted. The real picture is that conversions happened for a mixture of reasons ranging from the noble to the ignoble and that conversions to the 'government religion' for material gain have been part of the Tamil ethos from the Saivite period. It would appear that today's Roman Catholics and Muslims and non-Jaffna Saivites – as well as Protestant Christians who have shown resilience in the face of defamatory charges like these meant to harass and humiliate them – are perhaps the only communities⁴³ among the Tamils that have held on to their faith in times of adversity, visibly demonstrating its tenacity.

Notes

¹ All 4 of the critiques to my piece of Dec. 15 on biographies had this imputation. I shall not address the other aspects of those critiques here since my object there was to make Tamils think. I have given extensive references in that piece and, I believe, the interested readers are adult enough to make up their minds on the issue by consulting those references.

² One needs to consult Changam literature to recognize the animistic nature of the earliest stratum

of Tamil religion, although Brahminical influences such as sati (for example, Puram. 246: 11-15, where Pootha Pandyan's widow is burnt) and caste are seen to be just entering Tamil life at the time.

³ N. Shastri, *History of South India*, Oxford, 1958, pp.422-423.

⁴ Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, *Ancient India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960, pp.427-9.

⁵ N. Shastri, p.416.

⁶ N. Shastri, p.412.

⁷ R.C. Majumdar, p.430, N. Shastri, p.413.

⁸ Paul E. Pieris, *Ceylon, the Portuguese Era*, 1913, Vol. 2, p.98.

⁹ Paul E. Pieris, Vol. 2, 1913, p.95.

¹⁰ Father Fernao de Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, Lisbon, 1688 (Fr. S.G. Perera's translation into English, Colombo, 1930), p.659.

¹¹ T. Abeyasinghe, *Jaffna Under the Portuguese*, Colombo, 1986, p.54.

¹² Paul E. Pieris, pp.104-.

¹³ T. Abeyasinghe, p.43.

¹⁴ Sir J.E. Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon*, 1850, p.25.

¹⁵ Paul E. Pieris, p.168.

¹⁶ Paul E. Pieris, pp.261-2.

¹⁷ Paul E. Pieris, p.171.

¹⁸ T. Abeyasinghe, p.47.

¹⁹ His marriage to a Tamil woman would be consistent with the policy decision from Lisbon to have Portuguese marry into well-to-do Tamil families as a means of control, rather than have Portuguese settle in Jaffna; it was felt that Portugal could not produce enough settlers to control Jaffna effectively (T. Abeyasinghe, p.26). While there is little direct evidence of the extent to which this policy was effected, we catch glimpses of it through by-the-way references like this and the number of light-skinned and light-eyed persons among Tamils. Indeed, the fact that Tamils of the Vanni who avoided the Portuguese are, with some exceptions, darker skinned than the Tamils of Jaffna and Batticaloa which had Portuguese settlements, might well be explained in part by this policy.

²⁰ Queyroz, pp.647-652.

²¹ T. Abeyasinghe, p.60.

²² Queyroz, pp.686-.

²³ Queyroz, pp.690-1.

²⁴ T. Abeyasinghe, p.23. It has been suggested by cynics that the Portuguese had an ulterior motive in this, since once the members of the royalty entered holy orders, the royal line was discontinued. Although there is no direct evidence of this, even if it is true, the evidence is that the converts were sincere.

²⁵ J.E. Tennent, 1850, p.40: A statue of St. Thomas was taken, its nose cut-off, nails hammered into it, and then it was fired by a mortar into Portuguese positions during the siege of Colombo.

²⁶ J.E. Tennent, 1850, p.41. A plakaat of 1715, prohibited Catholic gatherings and baptisms.

²⁷ K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, Hurst & Co., London, 1981, p.196.

²⁸ Phillipus Baldaeus, *True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon*, CHJ, 1959 (Reprint).

²⁹ J.E. Tennent, 1850, pp.73-74, quoting letters from Adrian de Mey, prefect of the Malabar College at Jaffnapatam.

³⁰ K.M. de Silva, p.196.

³¹ Arumuga Navalar, *Palapatam* (Lessons for Children), Jaffna, 1871 (Reprinted in 1885, 1886 and 1916), Vol. IV, pp.23,46. It has been held in Hinduism that all three of the trimurti – that is Artha (wealth), dharma (righteousness, caste-duty, justice etc.) and Kama (sex) – have to be pursued with vigour in life. There has been no agreement as to which is foremost (Encyc. Britannica, Chicago, 1989, Vol. 20, p.581). For

a more detailed discussion, see S.R.H. Hoole, 'The Tamils: The Problem of Identity and Religion', *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2, pp.88-135, 1992.

³² J.E. Tennent, 1850, p.45.

³³ J.E. Tennent, 1850, p.64.

³⁴ This also explains the absence of whole-sale conversions of the Tamils in India, as in Sri Lanka, since they were mainly under the British.

³⁵ Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, 'Arumuga Navalar: Religious Reformer or National Leader of Eelam', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 26, No.2, 1989, p.236.

³⁶ While Hindus have traditionally resented such scholarships, the Christian community's view is that they were based on designated contributions from home-churches for the education of a co-religionist; no less parochial than Tamils from outside Sri Lanka sending charitable contributions to Tamils as opposed to the Sinhalese or those in want in their new home countries. As for mission school employment, it was legitimate for Christian schools to seek Christian teachers in fulfilment of their mission to provide a Christian education. And what could the mission do if Hindus pretended conversion to get jobs? As is well known, many of those who dissembled conversion in our times to get teacher-training, have since reverted to Hinduism.

³⁷ See footnote 42 below.

³⁸ S. Kulandran, *A Life Sketch of Canon S.S. Somasundaram*. ACM Press, Jaffna, 1970.

³⁹ File No. C. CE 071/1-12 on The Rev. Fr. Elijah Hoole, Church Missionary Society Archives, University of Birmingham.

⁴⁰ N. Shastri, pp.411-413.

⁴¹ A belief held by those on the bakti path (marg) as well as those on the Vedic Dharma marg or Gnana marg. See N. Shastri, p.421-422. Occasionally the cult, especially of Radha, tended to degenerate into erotic excesses. This was particularly true of the followers of Vallabhacharya (1479-1531), a Telugu Brahmin and founder of a system called suddhadvaita which exalted bhakti above knowledge. . . . The highest ambition of his followers was to become gopis and sport eternally with Krishna in his Heaven, an ideal which in practice degenerated into gross eroticism. For those on the Vedic Dharma marg see Brhadaranayaka Upanishad VI, 4.2-3: 'Prajapati (the Lord of Creation) . . . created woman. When he created her, he honoured her below. Therefore one should honor woman below. He stretched out for himself that stone which projects (the Siva lingam). With that he impregnated her. Her lap is a sacrificial altar; her hairs the sacrificial grass; her skin, the somaprasa. The two lips of the yoni are the fire in the middle. Verily, indeed, as great as is the world of the person who performs the vajapeya sacrifice (the drink of strength), just as great is the world of him who practices sexual intercourse knowing this. He takes the good deeds of women to himself' (my emphasis). cf. the Devadasis of Maviddapuram.

⁴² J.E. Tennent (*Ceylon*, 4th ed, 1860, Vol. 2, p.990) calls this a 'general' 'universal' belief of the Jaffna Tamils and refers to an 1848 case in Vannarpoonne (sic) where some physicians were engaged in running a home for unmarried pregnant women whose newborns and other kidnapped children were then decapitated for use in the Saivite ceremony. The case came to light following a complaint investigated by the government. It was believed that the head of the child was most efficacious for love potions and cursing enemies when it was cut off for this express purpose; but heads from corpses also could be used.

⁴³ It is perhaps not without significance that these very same communities are also generally dismissed as low-caste by Jaffna folk. That Jaffna folk dismiss Batticaloa folk as those who indulge in sorcery (chooniyaam) was made possible only because Jaffna was largely purged of chooniyaam during its Christian period. (Even in Jaffna, chooniyaam through tossing coloured pumpkins into enemy houses was a recent practice that this writer has seen several times). Navalar's harangues against the Pattini worship of Batticaloa and dismissal of Pattini as a Jaina goddess of the Chettiar caste are worthy of note.

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back in March-April, leaving behind 55,000 persons in the camps. The state government was hoping to increase the tempo in the latter part of the year and wind up the camps in the next couple of years or so.

But now with the break-down of the cease-fire in the island and letters from those already repatriated to the refugees here dissuading them from opting to return in the near future, the repatriation process has indeed suffered a set-back. Whether the authorities will also contemplate improving the conditions in the camps, one has to wait and see.

Taking Forward the SAPTA

Apart from the glib commitment of the participating nations to 'eradicate poverty' in the region by 2002 A.D., and eradicate illiteracy two years earlier and the tall talk about environmental degradation and empowerment of women, the summit is reported to have made substantial progress in the matter of the SAPTA (SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement).

Already the first round of negotiations between the member nations in this regard since the Dacca summit two years ago have been completed. The New Delhi declaration agreed that all necessary steps to ratify the agreement will be taken expeditiously and the SAPTA will become operational by the end of this current year.

The leaders hoped that the operationalisation of the SAPTA will herald the beginning of a new and significant process of regional co-operation.

While inaugurating the summit, Mr. Rao said: 'Our objective must be to work practically towards a free market of the countries of the region and integrate our economies to enhance their range and dynamism and our collective strength in the global trading community.'

Almost all the leaders who took part stressed the economic aspect of the meet - in the new era of liberalisation the SAARC countries would be tempted to work for ever more advantageous trade terms by first arriving at a better understanding among themselves, ignoring the political differences for the moment.

Pakistan which also took part in the meet chose to adopt a relatively low profile.

BOOK REVIEW

Engaging With The Causes and Consequences of Violence

LIVING WITH TORTURERS and Other Essays of intervention: Sri Lankan Society, Culture and Politics in Perspective by Sasanka Perera; (published by International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, pp.90, 1995, Rs.150).

Reviewed by R.L. STIRRAT

Professor of Anthropology, School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex.

Violence is an increasingly popular topic in the academic world. Yet it has to be asked whether or not this is simply related to an increase in violence throughout the world, and what, within the academic world, are the stimuli which have led to more and more academics jumping on the band wagon. To some extent it could be argued that the writings of many academics are little more than a scholarly version of the increasing interest in violence shown in films, particularly those produced in the United States. One of my own colleagues, at present completing yet another monograph on 'communal conflict', admits to a more general fascination with violence in all its forms; to what approaches an addiction to representations if not the reality of violence. Another complains that the discourse of international human rights agencies leads to bland 'technical' descriptions of violence rather than an exploration of the full horror of torture and death. What started off as intellectual interest in specific problems have become, for them and I suspect many others, something akin to a voyeuristic fascination with a pornography of violence.

Such issues are of course particularly evident in the writings on violence by academics from countries in the North. What I have suggested as a voyeuristic and pornographic interest in violence can best be sustained when the analyst is at a safe distance from the events described, or where the academic through colour and nationality, and of course a return airline ticket, can observe in safety the violence of others. This indeed is a form of contemporary orientalism in which violence has to be added to the list of characteristics of the 'other' and if not associated with 'race' is all too often conflated with 'culture' or a close synonym. For those working within contexts of violence, academic voyeurism is not such an easy option. For them, violence cannot be associated with a distant 'other' but rather has to be addressed as part of their lived

experience. Not surprisingly, understandings of violence which assert the primacy of culture are much less popular in such contexts than in the countries of the North. Violence, its causes and consequences, has to be engaged with rather than treated simply as spectacle, or as an object to be interpreted, explained or otherwise distanced.

Sasanka Perera's collection of papers, *Living With Torturers*, is firmly within this second tradition. Although not only concerned with violence, the most moving and most significant essays are concerned with the present conflict between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE, and the aftermath of the conflict between the state and the JVP. 'Written from the inside', these essays are aimed at a non-specialist audience and represent once more one of the strengths of a section of the Sri Lankan academy: the willingness of writers to address their comments to the general public rather than limit them to a narrow academic audience. The result is this volume which in the main consists of previously unpublished papers.

Cry for justice

Two of Perera's most powerful essays address the problem of how the survivors of terror can deal with the past. In one, from which the title of this volume is derived, he discusses how the living can cope with the continued existence of the killers and torturers of their kin. Drawing not only on Sri Lankan materials but also parallel situations from Latin America, he points out that whilst there may be a cry for justice, it is extremely unlikely that such justice will be achieved and that whilst there may be 'show trials' for an audience of international human rights organisations and major donors, the likely outcome is a general amnesty which leaves their victims with the problems of coping with the past; not only with the death

Continued on page 26

Continued from page 25

of loved ones but the continued existence of their murderers on the streets and in the villages of Sri Lanka. In such a context, argues Perera, recourse to the world of the gods, spirits and ghosts may be the only solace available to those seeking justice.

The opening essay deals with similar issues. The discovery of mass graves at Suriyakanda in January 1994 provides a starting point for a discussion of how those who are left deal with the disappeared. As Perera points out, the lack of a body 'subverts' the normal expression of grief in contexts such as Sri Lanka. What the discovery of the bodies provided was, for the kin of the disappeared, the necessary first stage in mourning the past and constructing the future. Whose bodies they actually were is in a sense immaterial. What was and is important is that the survivors can believe that these are the remains of their loved ones and deal with those remains accordingly.

The other nine essays range widely across the cultural terrain of contemporary Sri Lanka. These provide elements of the context necessary to engage with the violence and its aftermath dealt within the two central essays previously mentioned. Running through them all is a continual meditation on the nature of post-colonial society and the role of the academic in such societies. One group of essays deals with both sides of the present conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan state. The final paper in the book concerns what he sees as the 'silence' of Tamil intellectuals and their failure, with notable exceptions, to address the violence and terrorism of LTTE rule in the north. In another paper, he attacks what he sees as the 'subversion' of the Tamil conscience through the appropriation and transformation of the Elara myth by a section of Tamil activists, whilst a fascinating essay deals with the ways in which the Ravana story has been used by both Sinhala and Tamil factions.

Sense of identity

Yet perhaps of much greater importance are Perera's attempts to reformulate his own sense of identity in contemporary Sri Lanka; of what it means to be Sinhalese; of what it means to be Buddhist. One of the early essays deals with the vexed issue of 'patriotism'. Here, Perera takes issue with those 'self-confessed patriots' who ac-

cuse others with whom they disagree as 'unpatriotic'. In contrast, he argues that dissent is an essential ingredient of patriotism, and that this is part of the tradition of Buddhist ethics. Narrow definitions of patriotism are, he implies, 'unpatriotic' within the Sinhalese tradition in that they deny this essential element of the Buddhist tradition.

Similar themes are addressed in two other essays. One of these centres on those who would deny that Sri Lanka is a plural society and seek to assert the hegemony of Sinhala Buddhists to the extent of writing of such entities as 'Sinhala Buddhist Muslims'. The second is a detailed discussion of the controversy surrounding Tambiah's *Buddhism Betrayed?* Whilst pointing out that there are weaknesses in what TAMBIAH HAS WRITTEN, Perera defends his right to publish the book and castigates many of the critics whose position is one of narrow chauvinistic patriotism and who attempt to deny the right of a non-Sinhala Buddhist to write about Buddhism. Yet equally seriously, Perera points out that most academic writings on Sri Lanka are in English and thus not accessible to the majority of Sri Lankans who are unaware of many of the debates about history, myth and collective identities which have taken place in the academic world over the past decade or so.

This in some ways is the crux of the problem. The world of academics is a global world, and to participate in this world necessitates writing within a particular set of conventions in world languages for a world audience. Yet as Perera points out, this can involve a form of language imperialism, and in post-colonial societies language can become a method of social exclusion used by local elites to protect their position. For engaged academics in countries such as Sri Lanka, the problem is not just one of making academic debates accessible to non-academics, but also making these debates accessible to those who do not have command of international languages. The difficulties for such an undertaking cannot be underestimated. In the preface, Perera writes that originally he had planned to publish such interventions in widely accessible newspapers and journals, but even 'the most liberal and radical editors in one context turn out to be ruthless censors in another'. The problems of ensuring access to non-English readers would be much greater. One can only hope that this collection is soon translated into both Sinhala and Tamil.

READERS FORUM

GANDHI AND THE FOUR VARUNAS

I READ with interest N. Shanmugaratnam's review of the book, *Hindi, Hindi, India* by S.V. Rajadurai (TT, April 1995). The reviewer has identified the author Rajadurai as 'a Marxist intellectual from the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu'. According to Shanmugaratnam, this Marxist intellectual has criticised Gandhi for never rejecting the vedic hierarchy of society into four varunas, namely Brahmin, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra.

Though I do not endorse the distinction based on the 'four varunas', when one views the human society in anthropological terms related to power distribution, it becomes apparent that the division of four varunas existed (and still exists) in all the human societies of five continents. In terms of power distribution, the members of any human society can be categorised under four groups, which are roughly equivalent to the four varunas of Hindus. These are.

- 1) power holders (royalty in good old days, but heads of state and their coterie in this century)
- 2) power sharers (military commanders and members of the Intelligence Agency of every nation)
- 3) power peddlers (bureaucrats, media moguls, chief executive officers of business enterprises and mafia bosses)
- 4) powerless (ordinary citizens)

These four 'castes' exist in almost all the nations, irrespective of the political system (democratic or socialist or dictatorial) that is practised. Even in the so-called 'classless societies' promulgated by Lenin and Mao in this century, these four 'castes' existed. The Politbureau members, who owned dachas, were the power holders. The generals representing the armed forces and the top echelon officers of the KGB belonged to the power sharing caste. The editors of the now-disgraced *Pravda* newspaper represented the power peddling caste. Majority of the peasants represented the powerless caste. Power holders, when pushed from their pedestals (due to palace-plotting) become power peddlers. Thatcher and Gorbachev are good examples of this transformed caste, who join the lecture circuit and earn a quick buck by other deals such as syndicated columns and book publishing.

So I believe that Gandhi was more pragmatic in realising that the vedic hierarchy of four varunas cannot be

outrightly rejected in any human society, because of the power equations they represent. On the contrary, Ambedkar was naive in standing for 'genuine democratisation'. Which country exists in this globe where there is such a 'genuine democratisation' and which has abolished the caste order?

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5-16-305 Tsukimicho,
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Japan.

CHANDRIKA AND THE LTTE

ADELE Balasingham's article under the title **Chandrika the LTTE and the Tamil Conflict** (TT, April 1995), is, despite its seeming intellectual bent, an attempt to fight the truth. Through several false positions stated as truths there is in it an attempt to present the peace process as a solo enactment by Chandrika, and by debunking it, to knock out the whole peace process itself from the Northern mind.

Adele acknowledges Chandrika's impact on the Tamil mind. To do less would have affected her own credibility. She says that in the run up to the Presidential election Chandrika's special characteristics relevant to that time, 'generated a great deal of optimism amongst the Tamil community in the north and east'. This she relates to the expectation of these people that Chandrika could 'offer a political solution that would satisfy the aspiration of the Tamil people'.

The impact of Chandrika on the Tamil people is a fact and it is not surprising that Adele should take cognizance of it. But what she goes on to state, once more as fact, is surprising. She states, 'However the euphoria and expectation of the Tamil people when Chandrika assumed the Presidency have slowly disintegrated into disillusionment.' As reason for this she states:

'Her approach to the national conflict, her handling of the LTTE in the negotiating process and her attitude towards the sufferings and hardship of the Tamil people indicate that she is unrealistic and unskilled in the art of dealing with complex and serious issues.'

She fathers on the Tamil people as reason for their disillusionment what is no more than her own judgement.

In Adele's presentation of events and moods there is wanting the perception that there has been change in the attitudes to the ethnic problem

on both sides - taking these as peoples and not as armies. In its statement published in the daily papers of March 7th 1995 the claim is made by the PA government that the most important achievement of its policy towards resolving the ethnic conflict is, 'the acceptance that the solution is not war but a political settlement.' It also attributes to Dr. Anton Balasingham a statement made on behalf of the LTTE that 'they are willing to accept extensive devolution of powers as an alternative to separatism.' It is obvious that the reaction of the Tamil people to the peace process has affected the LTTE.

Adele has a simplistic way of equating the Tamil people with the LTTE. She writes on this score, 'The Tamil people's politics is the politics of armed struggle for self determination. The commitment, determination and preparedness for extraordinary feats of self-sacrifice by the organisation conducting that struggle - the LTTE - is unmatched in the world today.'

It may be idle to think that the LTTE could in the foreseeable future be isolated from the people of the north. But there is and can always be a significant distinction between the Tamil people and the LTTE. That the PA government itself is conscious of this distinction is to be expected. That where necessary it should reach out direct to the Tamil people without the mediation of the LTTE is also to be expected. The government's relaxing of the ban on goods to the north, the opening of the access roads, and the promise of more to come can be viewed as part of such an exercise. In fact on Adele's own measure of things the Tamil people have reacted positively to what they saw as Chandrika's attempt to get to them no matter what the Sinhala chauvinists might think. Could it conceivably be any different if the same attempt was made to get to the Tamil people independent of the LTTE? Adele is alive to the possibilities in this situation. Hence she presents it as Chandrika's duty as head of State to look to the needs of the Tamil people irrespective of the fact that they are conducting 'their right to self-determination and their support of the LTTE.' This acknowledgement itself though made for justifying a negative approach marks a degree of progress. This is a major admission which one could not have expected from any of the LTTE leadership just an year ago.

What Adele fears is expressed by her in the scenario she draws as part of what was Chandrika's Presidential polls strategy. She writes,

'It is generally assumed that Chan-

drika was not confident of an outright victory at the Presidential polls and anticipated that elections will be held in the north and therefore attempted to win the Tamil vote by offering pledges to resolve all the urgent problems coupled with extensive economic relief. Furthermore an yes vote for Chandrika from the Tamils in the north would certainly have enabled her to argue that she and she alone was the authentic representative of the Tamil people. Her political leverage over the Tamil population in the north would have been complete.'

Chandrika's political leverage in the north appears to be the major concern. It is certainly not impossible that Chandrika herself is pushing for this. Hence the attempt by Adele to isolate Chandrika as a factor and show her as no different from JRJ or DBW (why not RP?) except that she is subtle.

Adele shows no perception of the possibility that Chandrika herself has no alternative but to push forward her peace initiative. In the course of this if the LTTE blocks the path she would need to go over the head or heads of the LTTE and offer to the Tamil people peace in all its totality.

In this, the LTTE is certainly on the horns of a dilemma. What Adele reveals is this.

Batty Weerakoon, MP,

Colombo 8,
Sri Lanka.

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THE ROLE OF THE LTTE

IT would be of much importance and relevance for Tamils in particular, to evaluate the role of the LTTE, in Tamil affairs, past and present. This importance is heightened by the present state of affairs with negotiations for a settlement heading for a climax. The past too is of equal relevance, since the present is a consequence of the past.

Many and varied are the criticisms of the role played by the LTTE, based on individual and group perspectives, motivated by genuine concern, personal and group interests, and also from personal prejudices. This attempt is for an impartial assessment and evaluation, though dependent on circumstances and perspectives.

It would be agreed that the Tamil Community has been subject to discriminations and indignities, beginning in 1956, due to the rousing of communal passions particularly by politicians and Sinhala chauvinists, which in time permeated almost the whole Sinhala community, just as a little of fermented milk curdles a pot of milk. The rising hatred and discord was accentuated by leaders in power, and culminated in the holocaust of 1983. Tamil stooges in power in the North and East, helped to increase the resentment of the Tamils still further.

It would also be agreed, that peaceful agitations, appeals, and conferences have been of no avail, and in fact evoked a degree of arrogance, sadism and contempt on the part of the Sinhala community. This has been all too obvious. The result had been the rise of youth Tamil militancy, in the conviction that only by violent means, the rights of the Tamil community could be won. In the beginning, all Tamil militancy groups were dedicated to the cause of Tamil interest, but as was to be expected, group rivalries began, resulting in almost all the groups, being motivated by jealousy and power to oust the LTTE rather than serve Tamil interests. This led most militant groups to seek support of India or the Sri Lankan Government and fighting alongside the security forces, whilst benefitting from extortion from Tamils.

Violence, once launched, can hardly be circumscribed by good and evil, for all is fair in war and love. Much of the criticism of the LTTE has been directed to its acts of violence against civilians in particular and its opponents. It is to be noted that in modern times of conflict, violence is directed both as a measure of offence and also as a deterrent, which includes all forms of pressure on the opponent. Success or failure is the main criterion

for justification, irrespective of means and ends. No doubt the Gandhian creed is extolled, but hardly applicable in the modern world, as was so evident in the partition riots of North India.

It would also be of some relevance to quote the words of a black freedom fighter in the States, which has much relevance to the innumerable freedom struggles being waged in many parts of the world. To quote his words: 'The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground - they want the rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the roar of its many waters'. Those who decry the violence that has ensued with the freedom struggle, should do well to ponder on these words, and particularly on the violence of LTTE methods.

Politicians are rarely to be trusted to place national interests above their own, whatever be their proclamations, and so it is, in the case of the Tamil political party which has claimed to speak up for the Tamil cause. It is to be noted that they were not prepared to stay in the North or even in the South, but headed to India, reluctant to share the ordeals of the Tamils. Also by such move, they have placed themselves under obligation to India, which has openly proclaimed its hostility to self hood of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

As for the claims of, democracy in conventional forms, as being hindered by the LTTE, it would mean the intrusion of Tamil stooges, including the militant and political groups referred to above. It would be necessary to appreciate the need of the LTTE to prevent a stab in the back, or the destabilisation of their administration and structures. A party fighting with its back to the wall, in a do or die situation can hardly be expected to take chances on the grounds of democracy.

If motivation and dedication to the Tamil cause is the criterion, it is to be noted that the LTTE has displayed it in great measure, as would be seen from the thousands of young boys and girls who have sacrificed their lives, for a cause in which they will not live to share. What other party or group has displayed even a minor sacrifice for a cause to which they claim to be committed. On the other hand, many of the other groups have extorted from Tamils, and some have even been funded and feted by the Indians. There are also proclaimed Tamil votaries in the guise of intellectuals, who pose as

armchair critics, who have been unwilling to move even a finger to help the Tamils in their hour of need. Some may even seem to be self serving, having their own axe to grind against the LTTE or with an eye to benefits that would accrue to those who blunt Tamil unity and demands of a just settlement. There are also those unwilling to be practical in evaluating the circumstances that are compelling in a struggle with a vastly superior power.

If ability and efficiency be the criterion, and this must necessarily be so, with a minority struggling against an overwhelming majority, commanding the resources of the country, then the LTTE has obviously displayed it in full measure. A few thousand Tigers, had stood up against the fourth largest army in the world (Indian) compelling them to withdraw, and thereafter against the power and might of the Sinhala army of perhaps 100,000 men supported by sophisticated armour, a powerful naval and air force. The Tigers have been acclaimed as the most efficient and able guerrilla force in the whole world, by friend and foe. It is also to be admitted that it is unthinkable for a David to best a Goliath, without sacrificial courage and motivation.

Above all it is to be admitted that if not for the ability and sacrificial courage of the LTTE, there would have been no peace talks. The war weariness of the army, the desertation of soldiers unwilling to fight, and the present conviction that a military solution is not possible, is the only reason for the present willingness of the Government to talk of a settlement. Many Tamil critics have been wont to bypass this obvious fact, in their eagerness to intrude with advice and cooperation with the complexities of the peace settlement. An ex-president spoke out plainly when he asserted the Sinhala position on the grounds that 'there is no Tamil problem, but a problem of crushing Tamil militancy' (terrorists).

In the present stage of negotiations for a settlement, and into which a great many individuals, and groups are rushing in, it must necessarily be that dedication and commitment to the Tamil cause must be the final criterion, to be so considered. Those willing to play ball with the government by weaning the Tamils away from the LTTE and its commitment to negotiate a just settlement, must ever be suspect. The fear is that the other Tamil groups and individuals would encourage Tamils to be satisfied with 'the hiss of the oil rather than the oil cakes'.

Ontario,
Canada.

A. Tambalan.

SAMs – Add New Dimension To the Conflict

from Rita Sebastian, in Colombo

What the Sri Lankan Air Force dreaded, but perhaps never expected, became a frightening reality on April 28 and 29 when two aircraft were brought down by the LTTE using surface to air (SAM) missiles.

In Eelam War 1 and Eelam War 2, the Sri Lankan Air Force dominated the skies providing air cover for military operations on the ground and taking on rebel targets.

The attack on the aircraft however has brought a new dimension to the 12-year conflict. The airforce is reported to have been alerted to the possession of SAMs by the LTTE, but its high command seems to have chosen to dismiss it.

Although the earlier perception that the LTTE was a band of rag-tag fighters had been long dropped from the vocabulary of both the forces and the civilian population, there was always a doubt whether they could threaten the Air Force.

Having demonstrated their capability on the ground, as well as at sea, what was left to be challenged was the Air Force which they did with disastrous consequences by shooting down the two aircraft.

Continued from page 9

government to halt any further escalation of conflict which would lead to incalculable human suffering and misery. Both parties should resume direct political contacts to resolve the crucial outstanding issues'.

A. Sivajilingam, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation

The peace process was at a standstill when the LTTE attacked the naval boats. The government should not only talk to the LTTE to iron out the problems between them, but also should engage in talks with other responsible Tamil political parties.

The government must place its proposal in public to end the north-east crisis. The public do have a greater responsibility to find a solution to the problem. If a solution is agreed, the government should go to the extent of publishing it and taking action to implement it'.

Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai

The LTTE have time and again

With the mobility of troops and supplies to the camps in rebel held territory dependant largely on air transport, the government is placed in a serious situation.

In his recent book *Tigers of Lanka*, Mr. M.R. Narayan Swamy makes a revealing disclosure.

He writes: 'P. Neduraman, one of the LTTE's staunchest supporters in Tamil Nadu, recounts a bizarre tale. According to him, 10 LTTE cadres were trained in India for 6 months in 1986-88 in the handling of anti-aircraft weapons, with the promise that the weapons would be made available to them.

'When the LTTE asked them for the weapons, however, RAW insisted that they keep two retired Indian army officers as advisers. RAW then gave a list of 20-25 names of ex-army personnel reported to be residing in the Tamil Nadu districts of North Arcot and Dharmapuri and said that two of them could be recruited'. The rest of the story is told by Neduraman.

'Pulendran, the LTTE's Trincomalee commander, who was among those trained in anti-aircraft tech-

proved that they have no genuine desire to continue with the peace process since this would mean substantial reduction of the power of the LTTE in the North and East.

The LTTE's recent apparent peace moves have been mainly to placate the impatient Tamil civilians and the international community who have been intensifying pressure to bring a quick end to the ethnic conflict. The government should no longer be made scapegoats'.

Campaign for Peace and Democracy

The Campaign for Peace and Democracy is deeply disappointed by the LTTE attack in Trincomalee and its decision to break-off peace talks with the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL). We have consistently called on the GoSL and the LTTE to pursue the peace process irrespective of disruptions.

Our peace delegation has met with both parties to express our views on the peace process.

nology, came to me with a list and said it might create problems if he approaches these people directly so I agreed to go with him. For 3 days both of us went to each house in the list only to find that the names were all fake'.

Pulendran committed suicide in the infamous Pallaly incident during the time of the IPKF, but others who were trained may be among those who have survived the conflict so far.

Although much water has flowed under the bridge since then India's active involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict still remains a continuing debate.

Meanwhile, while military officials are shopping abroad for much needed military hardware, specially anti-missile mechanisms, the government has requested military assistance from the United States, India and some other countries.

But an all-out war does not seem to be on the government agenda with President Chandrika Kumaratunga still determined to salvage the peace initiative and put it on track again.

Already there is frantic behind the scenes lobbying by international mediators. Whether they will succeed in bringing the two sides to the negotiating table is yet to be seen.

The decision of the LTTE to opt out of the peace process came as a rude shock to President Kumaratunga. At first the government was not sure whether the attack on the two naval vessels in Trincomalee on April 19 was the beginning of Eelam War 3, or as the LTTE's international spokesman, the Paris based Lawrence Thilagar made known in an interview, it was merely a symbolic gesture over the LTTE's displeasure with the government over the peace negotiations.

But the attacks that followed made it abundantly clear that the LTTE meant business.

Political analysts are puzzled at the LTTE calling off the truce within such a short time. Clearly there was a legacy of distrust that neither side was able to overcome. Both the government and the LTTE continued preparations for war and reinforced themselves in the expectation that the peace process would collapse sooner or later.

And it did. And the victims once again will be the civilian population trapped between the two warring sides.

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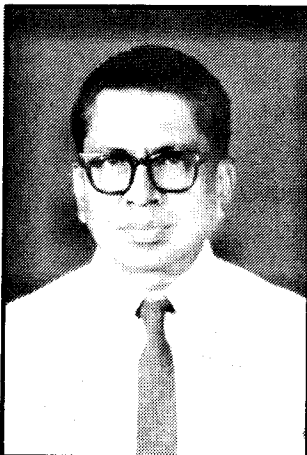
WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Varuna son of the late Mr. Ratnasabapathy and Mrs. P. Ratnasabapathy of 11 Albert Place, Dehiwela and **Kaushala Devi** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. T. Yogarajah of 18 Inner Fairline Road, Dehiwela on 14.5.95 at Hotel Sapphire, Colombo 6.

Kumaraswamy son of the late Mr. Gnaneswaran and Mrs. Maragatham Gnaneswaran of 112 Buckland Way, Worcester Park, Surrey, U.K. and **Rubaki** daughter of the late Mr. Ganeshan and Mrs. Y. Ganeshan of K 1/2 Bambalapatiya Flats, Colombo 4 on 17.5.95 at Seaview Hotel, Colombo 3.

OBITUARIES



Mr. Vyapuripillai Sivarajan (72), of Kantharmadam Jaffna (formerly of The State Plantations Corporation, Balangoda) last of 31 Rosecroft Road,

Southall, U.K., beloved husband of Annapooranam, only brother of the late Mr. V. Kandasamy Retired Principal of Sinnathamby Vidiyalayam Alvai, brother-in-law of Sellamma Kandasamy Retired Teacher Vadamarachi Hindu Ladies College, Pt. Pedro, very dear and loving father of Padmini, Ranjani, Mahendran and Vasanthi, devoted father-in-law of Chelvachandran, Verlkumar, Shivani and Uma Mahesh, affectionate paternal uncle of Dr. K. Ganeshalingam (Wales) and Bavani Balasingam, darling grand father of Sentouran, Aarani, Kabelan, Saiyijan, Janani and Saivickneish, fond grand uncle of Atchuthan and Anusha, passed away suddenly on Sunday April 30th, 1995. The cremation, well attended by friends and relatives, took place at the South West Middlesex Crematorium, Hounslow Road, Hanworth, Feltham, Middlesex U.K. on 4th May, 1995.

The family members extend their sincere and grateful thanks to all those who visited them, assisted in various ways in the funeral arrangements participated in the funeral rites, attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy. They much regret their inability to thank all concerned individually - M. Uma Mahesh, 31 Rosecroft Road, Southall, Middlesex UB1 2XJ.



Mrs. Ratneswary Navanathan, beloved wife of Chel-

liah Navanathan; eldest daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. A.S. Kandiah of Kondavil East; loving mother of Sivakumar, Shanthakumar (USA), Sukumar (Student, Medical Faculty, Colombo); sister of Mrs. Ratnasingham, Thirunavukkarasu (UK) and Mrs. Balasubramaniam; loving mother-in-law of Shalini; fond grandmother of Thanendra; sister-in-law of C. Rajakulasingham, Mrs. Jeyadevi Jesudasan, D.C. Jeyarajah (UK), D.C. Balarajah (Canada), D.C. Devarajah (UK), Mrs. Selvadevi Joseph and Mrs. Pushpadevi Arulanarajah expired in Colombo on 12.5.95. The funeral took place at the Kanatte Cemetery on 14.5.95 - D/8 Anderson Flats, Colombo 5.

Dr. K. Nithianan, dearly beloved husband of the late Sarojini; loving father of Shivanthi, Sivakumar, Shankari and Shivantharan; father-in-law of Sri Ranjan, Sue, Dr. Sivakumaran and Kim; grandfather of Sharmistha, Sandesh, Shanya, Sakishna, Shehan and Shantha passed away in Dallas, Texas on 17.4.95 and was cremated on 20.4.95 - 24 Barncroft Drive, Hempstead, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3TJ.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mr. Thambidurai Shanmugarajah**, Attorney-at-Law, J.P.U.M. of Kondavil East, Sri Lanka, on the first anniversary of his passing away on 5th May 1994.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Ananthavalli; loving daughter Sharmini; son-in-law Ranjit; loving grand children Praveen and Anjana - 102 Loutitt Street, Yellowknife, N.W.T., Canada X1A 3M5.



In everloving memory of **Dr. Parameswaran Kandiah** on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 12.5.90.

Sorrowfully remembered by his wife Pathmasany and loving children Thayalan and Pathanjali - 29 Mounstan Close, Hartside Grange, Hartlepool TS26 0LR, U.K.



In loving memory of **Dr. Manohara Nadarajah**, formerly of Katsina, Nigeria and later Bedford General Hospital, UK on the third anniversary of his passing away on 29.5.92.

You are always in our hearts and in our thoughts.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your wife Indranee and sons Suthaharan and Vaseeharan. - 52 Mar-nham Crescent, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 9SW, U.K.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 29 9.00am Festival of Cricket organised by the Sri Lankan OBAs in UK at Norman Park, Bromley. Tel: 0181 884 0276.

June 1 Feast of St. Justin.

Jun. 2 Sathurthi.

Jun. 3 Feast of St. Charles Lwanga and Companions.

Jun. 9 Eekathasi.

Jun. 11 Vaikasi Visakam.

Jun. 12 Full Moon.

Jun. 14 Feast of Corpus Christi.

Jun. 18 11.00am International Tamil Foundation presents Panel Discussion on 'The Path to Peace' and Lunch at Dryburgh Hall, Putney Leisure Centre, Upper Richmond Road, London SW15. Speakers: Prof. James Manor, Dr. Arjuna Sittampalam, S. Sivanayagam and Adrian Wijemanne. For tickets telephone 0181 567 3221.

Jun. 22 Feast of Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More.

Jun. 23 Eekathasi.

Jun. 24 6.30pm MIOT presents Carnatic Vocal by Rajkumar Bharathi and Bharatha Natyam by Thanuja Bhavani Shankar in aid of Tamil Projects in Tamil Homelands at Kelsey Park School, Manor Way, Beckenham, Kent. Tel: 01322 666330/0181 460 5235.

Jun. 24 6.30pm Gana Kuyil 1995 at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley Middx. Tel: 0181 904 3937.

Jun. 27 Amavasai.

Jun. 29 Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Jun. 30 Feast of the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome.

At the Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London

W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171 381 3086/4608.

Jun. 5 7.30pm Dance Ballet on Saint Gnana Sambanthar by the students of Dr. Padma Subramaniam and Dhananjayans.

Jun. 18 6.30pm Bharatha Natyam by Lakshmi and Parvati from India.

Jun. 24 7.00pm Karnatic Flute by Shashank Subramanyam from India.

CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Provincial Elections

The NDP Socialist Premier of Ontario, Hon. Bob Rae is seeking another term of office. The elections have been called on June 8th and the other two major parties in the field are the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals. A fairly tight race is expected. Two Tamils are aspiring to be members of the Provincial Parliament. Krishnasamy Parthiban is the 'Liberal' candidate for Scarborough-Ellesmere and Gnanaki Balakrishnan is the choice of the ruling 'NDP' for Don Mills.

Senior Tamils' Centre

The Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario held its 9th A.G.M. on 29th April '95 at the Oriole Auditorium. The following were elected without a contest. **President:** Rosaline Rajanayagam, **Vice President:** Mani Pathmarajah, **Secretary:** Siva. S. Nathan, **Treasurer:** V. Eeswaranathan, **Past President:** (Ex-Officio) S. Tharma-

lingam, **Board Members:** Aloy Ratnasingham, C. Kanagalingam, T. Manickavasagar, S. Thiagarajah, Bavani Sivaramalingam and P.S. Soosaithasan.

Logan Senathirajah, the Canadian Chartered Accountant was re-elected Auditor. Rosaline is the first lady to head the S.T.C. Over 300 members attended the A.G.M. and 250 participated in the Congregational dinner that followed.

Sad Loss: Montreal in particular and the Canadian Tamils in general mourn the loss of Mr. S.A. Sivapatham, a prominent social worker who passed away recently. He was the Registrar of the Jaffna Campus, University of Sri Lanka.

Appointment: Murugesapillai Duraiswamy, President of the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada has been appointed a member of the Ontario Cabinet 'Roundtable' on anti-racism. The 'Roundtable' is a vehicle to implement the Ontario Government's Anti-Racism initiatives. Mr. Duraiswamy a senior administrator was Assistant Commissioner of Local Government in Sri Lanka.

Sivasakthi & Prakash to Entertain & Help Worthy Causes

Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan, the well-known Carnatic singer and Sri Prakash Yadagudde, renowned Bharatha Natyam dancer both teachers at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, are visiting Canada and in addition to providing excellent entertainment on their first visit to Canada, helping worthy causes. Their programme is as follows:

3rd June 6.00pm in aid of Ramanathan Old Girls' Association at Tuxedo Court, 18th Floor Scarborough. Tel: 416 289 3801/467 5221.

4th June 3.00pm in aid of Richmond Hill Hindu Temple at Temple Auditorium. Tel: 905 883 9109.

7th June in aid of Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre, 5178 St. Lawrence Blvd., Montreal, Quebec. Tel: 514 279 3545.

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Bharatha Natyam in Netherlands



The well known Bharatha Natyam dancer **Indra Devi** gave several recitals in some of the principal cities of the Netherlands. Her performances in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Nijmegen and Den Haag were well attended by Dutch, Indian and Sri Lankan residents of the Netherlands. She received a standing ovation at the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam where royalty and dignitaries were a part of the audience.

Indra Devi is a pupil of Smt Rajamani and Tanjore Kittappapillai. Sri Kittappapillai is one of the oldest nattuvanars of Tamil Nadu and is a descendant of the Tanjore quartet.

The accompanists were Nattuvangam: Sri K. Chandrasekaran (son of Guru Kittappapillai) Tanjore, Vocal: Smt Ambika Thamootheram (London), Mridangam: Sri S. Giridaran (Bangalore), Violin: Smt Komala Ramalingam (Paris) and Thambura: Smt Stin Nova (Holland).

Kokuvil Hindu Old Students Meet

Old Students of Kokuvil Hindu College, an old and reputed educational establishment in Jaffna, gathered at the Heath Clark Tertiary Centre, Croydon on 22nd April. The occasion was their annual cultural show, I could count well known figures from the London Tamil Circle, Medical and Legal Professionals, academics, and simple art lovers - mostly all of them past pupils and products of the K.H.C.

The programme opened with the School Anthem which transported the audience and made them to travel through time back to the days of their morning school assembly. Dr. P. Arumugaraasah - the President of the Association delivered an address of welcome followed by a Bharatha Natyam performance by Miss Jane Rasaiyaah a student of Srimathi Menaka Raviraj. The audience were treated to a violin recital by students of Thiruvarur L. Kothandapani, a veena recital by Sangeetha Vidwan Sivatharini Sahadevan and a Bharatha

Natyam performance by Miss Ahrani Bala-sundaram a student of Srimathi Malathi Jeyanayagam. The second half of the programme was comprised of Mellisai - light music presented by the 'Geethavani' Group. Almost all the songs were popular hits from South Indian Tamil Films.

The Chief Guest of the evening was Sangeetha Vidwan Saraswathy Packiarajah a former music teacher at K.H.C. who has today attained international acclaim. Srimathi Vidya Maheethan who acted as compere for the evening treated the audience with her melodious voice.

Although the Old Students Association in UK is still in its infancy its counterpart in Colombo celebrated its golden jubilee in March this year with an impressive show at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium and at the Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo. A bumper souvenir was published for this occasion and was sold at the Croydon function to raise funds. It was a colossal production magnificently presented and has very impressive articles and messages from the President of Sri Lanka, the P.M., the Leader of the Opposition, Minister of Education, the Mayor of Colombo, and various distinguished old boys - to name a few - Professor R.S. Thanabalasunderam, M.V. Theagarajah of Hutton National Bank, A. Sinnathamby and many others. The souvenir is a production that must be preserved by all old students.

Wimal Sockanathan.

Kalabhavanam Does it Again

Kalabhavanam Fine Arts Centre, founded just three year ago by a group of art minded friends in Croydon has acquired a unique respectability among practising musicians and music lovers in London. Besides vocal and instrumental recitals, special expositions on certain technical aspects like Pallavi singing, Griha Bedam, Dasavidha Gamakam etc., have attracted students and connoisseurs alike.

Their monthly chamber concerts by volunteering artistes have become sought-after events. The latest innovation is an experiment which unexpectedly proved a bonanza. On 26th March the mridangam maestro Somasundara Desikar, confidently entrusted his instrument to his young disciple Ranjith Kanagasundaram and himself gave a full length vocal concert; and on the 30th of April last the well known London violinist Thiruvarur Kothandapani left his instrument in charge of his colleague Gnanavaradan and himself gave a vocal recital.

Somasundara Desikar, son of the well respected senior Vidwan Iyakkannu Desikar, is a disciplined artist and tradition bound. He sang with a sure grasp of the raga bhava spiced with rhythmic adornments, revealing his early training. The common rule that a knowledge and practice in vocal music is a must for any instrumentalist is proved in the case of Somu's expertise on the mridangam. Thiruvarur Kothandapani followed Somu's singing faithfully and young Ranjith played on the mridangam with a mature handling. Muthu Sivaraja on the Ganjira and Chi-

dambaranathan on the morsung filled the bill as a team.

Kothandapani comes from the well known Thanjavur Nadaswaram dynasty in which the humming of Karnatic tunes is heard even among little children. Pani's vocal recital for Kalabhavanam that day reflected that dynastic legacy in the brigas and gamakas produced though at times the vocal cord refused to cooperate. A serious effort if taken by Pani to practice, we can expect some authentic renderings from him. Gnanavaradana on the violin is another Thanjavur strain through Alaveddy and Inuvil in Jaffna who displayed remarkable ability. Somu's rhythmic syllables were captivating. Chidambaranathan's morsung added colour.

Smt. Manorama Krishna Prasad, musicologist and member of Kalabhavanam paid a glowing tribute to the emerging team of artistes whose contributions to Kalabhavanam are well recognised and appreciated.

S. Sivapatha Sundaram.

Chithampara - J.S.S.A. Soccer Champions

The J.S.S.A. (UK) soccer tournament took place on 6.5.95 at Warren Farm Sports Centre, Southall, commencing at 9.30am in the presence of a large gathering. Mr. M. Francis who had played for the Sri Lankan National team from 1971 to 1979 and captained it in 1974 was the chief guest.



In the final match Chithampara became champions defeating Trincomalee Hindu by 2 goals to 1. Hartley was placed third. The challenge cups for these teams were distributed by the chief guest.

Anton of St. Patrick's scored the largest number of goals. Uthayakumar of Trincomalee Hindu was adjudged the man of the tournament and Thirukumar of Chithampara was declared the man of the match. Medals for these winners were presented by Shandy Ravichandan of Kreeda Sportswear.

Hindu New Year at London Sivan Temple

Devotees in large numbers thronged the London Sivan Temple at 4A Clarendon Rise, London SE13 to usher in the Hindu New Year. Besides poojas throughout the day on 14th April, there was a religious

discourse by Dr. Rajan Namasivayam, a Bharatha Natya Recital by Subha Dharshini daughter of Dr. & Mrs. S.T.S. Somsegar-am of Bexley and a Veena Recital by Sangeethaa Vidwan Sivatharini Sahathevan.



Veena Arangetram of Shobana

The Veena Arangetram of Shobana daughter of Drs. M. Sreetharan of 1 Lupin Close, Shirley Oaks Village, Croydon took place on 6.5.95 at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London W14, Shobana is a disciple of the versatile carnatic musician Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan and was presented by her after 5 years of intensive training. Smt Geetha Ramanathan Bennet was the Chief Guest and Dr. John Marr and Mrs. Pauline E. Davies, the Head Mistress of Shobana's school were the Guests of Honour.



Shobana delighted the large audience present with her excellent presentation of the melodious music from the Veena, ably accompanied by Sri M. Balachandrar on the Mridangam, Bangalore Sri R.N. Prakash on the Ghatam and Dr. Mythily Vimal on the Thambura.

Dinner, Dance & Miss New Year Contest



The Sri Lankan Sports and Arts Foundation had their Dinner Dance on 16th April at North Ealing Leisure Centre, Greenford, Middx. The highlight of the evening was the 'Miss New Year' contest. Miss Sarah Selvadurai was adjudged 'Miss New Year' and was crowned by Dr. (Mrs.) Quadsia Chandran, wife of the chairman of the foundation.

M.I.O.T. – Youth Forum

The Educational and Research Committee of the **Medical Institute of Tamils** hopes to hold a full day meeting on Medical and Allied fields for persons between the ages of 16 and 30, on Saturday 30th September 1995 at The Robens Suite, 29th Floor, Guy's Tower, Guy's Hospital, London Bridge, London SE1 9RT.

The Medical Institute of Tamils is a professional, non political organisation founded in 1989 following events in Sri Lanka and the dispersion of the Tamil people. It seeks to coordinate the efforts of health care professionals in UK and overseas to assist the Tamils living in their homelands and as refugees in other countries.

Those interested in attending this meeting are requested to contact the Coordinator, Mr. Suren Raymond, 204 Marvals Lane, Grove Park, London SE12 9PL. Tel: 0181 857 2742.

AUSTRALIAN NEWS LETTER

Carnatic Concert

Carnatic music lovers of Sydney were enthralled by the vocal music concert of Bombay S. Jayashri on 19.3.95 at Wallace Theatre, University of Sydney. This was

the inaugural concert presented by the newly formed cultural organisation, Pallavi which hopes to present more concerts by well known artistes and become an integral part of the Sydney music scene.

For over two hours, Jayashri transported the rasikas to a 'musical heaven'. Her wonderful voice mesmerised the audience and the ragas, kirtanas, neravals, swaras she sang were a joy to hear. She began the concert with a varnam in Saveri raga and followed with a song on Ganesha – Bhaja Manasa Vigneswara – in Bahudaari and sang several kritis in Telugu and Kannada. Raga, Thana, Pallavi was presented in Kalyana Vasanta and she sang several pieces in Hindi and Tamil – Javali, Meera Bhajan, Thillana etc – each one a gem.

Vittal Ramamurthy, a disciple of Lalgudi Jayaraman accompanied on the Violin, Palani Kumar was the Miridangist and Aruna Parthiban was the Tamura. Carnatic music lovers of Sydney are looking forward to the next Pallavi presentation.

Tamil Cultural & Educational Centre

The Saiva Manram Inc. celebrated the opening of their Tamil Cultural & Educational Centre on 14.4.95 at their new premises at 217 Great Western Highway, Mays Hill, Sydney. The Manram intends to use the hall as a place of worship till they build a traditional temple. Statues of Murugan, Pillayar, Nadarasar and Sivakamasundari were ceremoniously established in the hall, the Prathisdai ceremony took place in the morning and Thirukalyanam for Murugan was performed in the evening. Sangabishekam for Pillayar was performed on 15th and that for Murugan was done on the 17th. Large crowds of devotees participated in the celebrations on all four days which happened to be the Easter weekend holidays. There were cultural shows, lectures and colouring, poetry, educational and fancy dress competitions for children.

Abishekam at Sri Venkateswara Temple

Sahasra Kalasa Abishekam which is traditionally performed with 1001 pots of water on Good Friday holiday at the Sri Venkateswara Temple, Sydney every year coincided with Tamil New Year Day on 14.4.95. A large crowd of devotees sponsored the abishekam donating \$10 for each pot. On Sunday, 16th April a Sanga Abishekam with 108 sangus was performed for Sri Ganesha and after the pooja, the Utsava Murthy was placed on a traditional Pallakku and taken in procession around the temple in a Thandikai specially constructed by a group of devotees from Sri Lanka. Devotees from India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia participated in this festival.

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