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Displaced: A Tamil refugee bringing her sick child to a clinic in Vavuniya in north Sri Lanka

- ★ **Battle for Jaffna – Only a Temporary Setback**
– LTTE Leader
- ★ **Muted Celebration to Mark ‘Capture’ of Jaffna**
- ★ **The Language of Belonging and Bloodletting**
- ★ **Confronting Anti-NGO Hypocrisy & Hysteria**
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– President Kumaratunga
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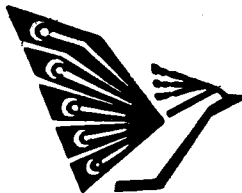
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*I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it.*
- Voltaire.

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NEWS REVIEW

Calm before the Storm? : Even an absence of the usual fighting between government forces and the LTTE in northern Sri Lanka seems to be a matter for worry and concern among security circles in Colombo. Since the first week of December and after the 'capture' of Jaffna by government forces, there appears to be an unusual lull on the military front. 'Operation Riviresa' formally came to an end on 2 December and since then neither the army nor the LTTE has launched any major attacks on each other in the north.

A military spokesman said that the relative calm across the island's northern areas meant that the Tamil Tigers were getting ready for something major. 'This silence by the LTTE is not good. They have to do something to regain credibility which they have lost by losing Jaffna. They must be preparing for some massive attack on isolated military posts or something major or spectacular', he said.

Meanwhile security has been intensified in Colombo and its suburbs amid fears of revenge attacks by the Tigers. Parliament's public gallery was closed on the order of the Speaker for security reasons. The police have requested the people to be wary of 'suspicious looking persons or packages' and are carrying out a thorough check of all vehicles going to Colombo from the embattled Northeast. The government is also reported to be considering the creation of security zones around state-run electronic media institutions and other sensitive establishments.

Police carrying automatic weapons routinely check resident's papers and key road are cordoned off. Stringent checks have been initiated at government offices and installations, the airport, the port and entry points to the capital. Houses, lodges and hotels and even work places are constantly raided and searched for suspected 'Tigers' and in this process the Tamil people living in Colombo are often made victims of harassment, intimidation and detention.

Some Tamil sources speculated that the lack of any military operations by the Tigers in recent days was due to the fact the Tigers have a full job on their hands in seeking to assist the resettlement of the people who have been evacuated from Jaffna to the Wannai areas.

As Colombo remains tense in anticipation of the LTTE backlash, an analyst said, 'It may not happen soon, but it will certainly happen. When the

Tigers strike, they make it count for something'.

Evacuation of Civilians: No one anticipated that the LTTE would encourage the evacuation of the civilian population from Jaffna in the face of the military offensive.

Was the evacuation of civilians en-mass from Jaffna ever a part of the LTTE's military strategy? It would seem that they had no such plan and were taken aback by the quick and determined advance by the troops despite suffering heavy casualties. The Tigers did not encourage the people to leave so long as the troops remained at Punnalaikadduvan, some 10 kilometres from Jaffna town. However, when the troops advanced from Sirupiddy to Neerveli and then towards Kopay, alarm bells must have rung – had the troops gone from Kopay junction through Kaithady and based themselves at Navatkuli, the path to Thenmaradchi would have been blocked. Therefore, the moment the troops crossed Neerveli, the Tigers decided to evacuate the people before the path to Thenmaradchi was blocked.

'Eelanatham' published from Kili-nochchi has given an explanation as to why the Tigers asked the people to leave Jaffna: 'We are engaged in fighting to resist the army's advance towards Jaffna. In this situation to protect our people from mass destruction it became necessary to evacuate them. In the present situation, the evacuation of the people is a historic duty. That duty has been accomplished by the Tigers. Because of this step, the people might have faced some difficulties. However, this step was inevitable. It is our responsibility to ensure that there is no obstacle to our counter-attack and the people do not become victims of mass destruction.'

As if to underline that the evacuation of the people is not going to be temporary, most of the remaining civilian infrastructures also have been shifted. The Jaffna University has been shifted to Chavakachcheri Hindu College and to Kilinochchi, Jaffna Teaching Hospital to Manthikai in Point Pedro, branches of the Hatton National Bank, Commercial Bank and the Bank of Ceylon to Manthikai, Nelliady, Chavakachcheri, Meesdalai and Point Pedro. A statement from LTTE's London office stated that the Tigers have set up and opened a 'Bank of Tamil Eelam'. New account holders

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'The Battle of Jaffna – Only A Temporary Setback'

– V. Pirabhakaran

The following is the text of the Martyr's Day Message dated 27 November by Mr. V. Pirabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE.

Today is Martyr's Day, a sacred day in which we cherish the memory of our heroes who have sacrificed their precious lives for the cause of the freedom of our nation. Our martyrs have died for the liberation of this land so that our people could live in our land with freedom, dignity and security.

This is our land, the land in which we were born, grew and live, the land which bears the foot prints of our forefathers, the land in which our culture and history are rooted. Our martyrs have died for the objective that this land should belong to us. They have died for the cause of liberating this land from the shackles of alien domination and transforming it into an independent sovereign nation.

In the sacred war of liberating our homeland our heroes have made supreme sacrifices which cannot be described in words. Extraordinary deeds never before happened in the history of the world have taken place in this land, for the freedom of this land. The ideal dream, the spiritual yearning of those thousands of martyrs who have created this heroic legend will be actualised one day.

Today the war of aggression against our land by the enemy has reached a phenomenal scale. Having mobilised all its military power and having utilised all its national resources, the enemy has launched a massive invasion on the Jaffna soil. Our traditional land of ancient historical glory is being systematically destroyed by the enemy's firepower. The intense shelling that rains down unabatingly has wiped out the face of Jaffna. The fundamental objective of this war of aggression is to destroy the economic resources and the cultural heritage of Jaffna thereby uprooting the national life of the people.

This war is not, as the government claims, against the LTTE. This war is against the Tamil people, against the Tamil Nation. The objective of this war is to destroy the Tamil Nation. This racist war of

Sinhala chauvinism has a long history. It has been going on before the birth of the LTTE. It was started by Chandrika's father. Now, Chandrika's government has given total expression to this racist war. The strategic objective of this war is to annihilate the national identity of the Tamils by destroying their life and property and their land and resources.

Wearing a peace mask and pretending that she was committed to a peaceful resolution of this conflict, Chandrika was able to cheat the Sinhala people and the world and assumed political power. Having taken the reins of power she staged a drama of peace negotiations. We extended our hands of friendship seeking a peaceful solution to the Tamil National question. To promote the peace process, we released the prisoners of war as a gesture of goodwill. During the peace negotiations we neither put forward stringent conditions nor rigid demands. We requested Chandrika's government to lift the economic embargo and the restrictions on travelling and to create conditions of normalcy. We requested the government to alleviate the suffering of our people who have been subjected to extreme difficulties without the basic needs of life. But Chandrika's government was not prepared to concede even these meagre concessions. As the talks prolonged fruitlessly for over a period of six months we realised an important fact – that Chandrika's government was not interested in peace nor in a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Since primacy was given to military concerns throughout the negotiations it became very apparent to us that the Chandrika regime was seriously considering the military option.

The monumental scale in which the invasion has been launched on Jaffna amply illustrates the politico-military objective of the government. The strategy aims at the encirclement and occupation of the densely populated vital area of the Tamil homeland and to proclaim to

the world that Jaffna society is 'liberated'. But this strategy of Chandrika's government has turned out to be a disaster since the people of Jaffna city and Valigamam region evacuated the area before the encirclement by the army. This massive exodus has demonstrated the fact that the people of Jaffna, in a unanimous stand, have expressed their opposition to the government war effort and absurd reasons attributed to it. This mass exodus has impressed upon the Sinhala Nation and the world that the people and the LTTE could not be separated. Therefore, the Chandrika regime has failed to achieve the political objective behind the Jaffna offensive.

We are relieved that our people have safely escaped from the military siege and the political trap behind it, yet we are deeply sad about the enormous suffering and pain they are subjected to as a consequence of this mass displacement. It distressed us deeply that our people have had to vacate their traditional villages where they lived for centuries and leave their houses, lands and property and become destitutes. Yet, we consider such tragic experience and suffering as a tremendous contribution by our people to the cause of national emancipation. This mass exodus proclaims to the world that our people are determined to live as free beings with self-dignity and that they are prepared to face any form of suffering to be independent rather than subjecting themselves to the domination of the aggressor.

The Sinhala military devils may hoist victory flags in depopulated Jaffna which has been reduced to rubble. The Sinhala chauvinistic gangs in the South may light crackers in jubilation assuming that they have captured the kingdom of Jaffna. Chandrika may send peace signals believing that military hegemony has been achieved. In these circumstances we wish to make it absolutely clear that as long as the Sinhala army is occupying Jaffna the doors for peace will be firmly closed. The LTTE will not participate in the peace negotiations imposed at the point of a gun subjecting itself to military pressure. This is the message we wish to address to the Chandrika regime. It will be nothing other than political stupidity if the Chandrika government thinks that it can bring about peace and political settlement by occupying Jaffna and uprooting hundreds

of thousands of people. The invasion of Jaffna is a gigantic historical blunder made by Chandrika's regime. As a consequence of this act the Colombo government has closed all avenues for peace and plunged the entire island into grave conflictual situation.

There is absolutely no truth in claims made by the government controlled media that the LTTE has suffered heavy casualties and that it has been weakened by the offensive on Jaffna. In the battle of Jaffna, we have neither suffered heavy casualties nor been weakened. It is the armed forces that have suffered more casualties than the LTTE.

We have fought efficiently within our capability against huge military formations with formidable manpower and firepower which advanced along a geographic terrain advantageous to them. Though we fought under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions we did not suffer heavy casualties. Neither our manpower nor our military structure is affected in anyway. The army's strategy to entice us into a conventional war to destroy our manpower did not work. In the battle of Jaffna we faced a set-back. It is a temporary set-back. We faced serious set-back during the Indian military occupation. But we were not defeated. In the end, it was the Indian army which faced defeat. Therefore, today's set-back will turn out to be a victory tomorrow.

Sri Lankan army has overstretched its feet on the Jaffna soil. It is not a difficult task to conquer territories by mobilising large formations of troops. But it will be a difficult task to hold the territories captured. This is the historical reality faced by the aggressive armies all over the world. The Sri Lankan army will soon learn this historical truth.

The Sri Lankan state is attempting to determine the political destiny of the Tamils on the basis of military power. It assumes that it can impose an inadequate solution on the Tamils by military hegemony and territorial aggression. Such a military solution underlies Chandrika's conception of 'war for peace'. Any Tamil with self-dignity will not accept such a solution. To frustrate this government's scheme and to advance our liberation struggle, we are left with only one alternative. We have to strengthen our military structure and intensify our struggle. It is only by strengthening the milit-

ary power the Tamils could freely determine their political destiny. It is only by strengthening our military power we could live with security, we could gain our lost territories; we could return to our homes as free men.

The task of building the military power of the Tamil Nation has become the inevitable historical necessity today. This is crucial for the survival of the Tamil Nation. Our Nation has been forced into a necessity to struggle for survival. The young generation of Tamils cannot escape from this national duty, from this call of history. Any delay in this task will endanger the existence of our Nation. Therefore, I call upon the younger generation to join our liberation movement without delay.

'How long can they hold Jaffna'

As the Sri Lankan Army sought to wrap up its offensive on Jaffna, the LTTE's International Committee General Secretary, Lawrence Thilakar, was confident that the fall of Jaffna would not be a serious setback to the rebel outfit. Speaking to Raman Nanda in London over the telephone, Paris-based Thilakar charged that India was waging a proxy war against the Tamils.

How serious a setback will it be for you if Jaffna falls?

I don't see it as a setback for us. For the Sri Lankan military it will be a tactical advantage, getting into the Jaffna peninsula. But the question is, how long can they hold the territory. In doing so, they are going to lose the eastern area and that's a very contested area. On the other hand, the government's other objective is to kill more LTTE fighters, sympathisers, artists and intellectuals. But they cannot do that as the people have fled from the advancing army. All the government achieved was to kill civilians by aerial bombardments and artillery shelling. As far as winning the hearts and minds of the people is concerned in that also it's a total failure.

How long will it take you to reclaim Jaffna?

We are there. We will always be there. The government troops will be resisted every inch. And what I can say is, the government cannot stay there for a long time with the limited number of troops that it can deploy there indefinitely.

The earlier the youth join our movement the quicker we can achieve the objectives of our struggle.

We call for the support and solidarity of the world Tamil community at this critical time when we are faced with a genocidal war all alone without any external assistance. We appeal to the people of Tamil Eelam living abroad to champion the cause of our struggle and assist us in all possible ways.

On this sacred day when we remember our martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for national freedom and attained historical immortality, let us pledge to commit ourselves to the cause for which thousands of our freedom fighters laid down their lives.'

Given the LTTE's recent setbacks, what kind of rethinking has been going on among the top leadership?

As a guerrilla organisation we have to continue with the guerrilla resistance as long as the Sri Lankan Army is in our areas and as long as they continue with the aggression and attacks on civilians.

Some time back, a ceasefire was broken off. Then there were indications that talks could begin.

I think the government should behave in good faith, which is not there. There are indications of a genocidal attack on the civilian population. I want all people, not only organisations like the UN, UNHCR and other international aid and media organisations, to be allowed into the area. Some kind of a genuine move must be undertaken by the government rather than merely paying lip service. On the ground, the government is doing everything contrary to what it says. The troops must withdraw to their earlier positions; people should be allowed to go back to those areas and the government should allow food and other things to reach them.

Are you concerned that under the present circumstances in Sri Lanka, Tamils may feel more inclined towards other Tamil parties?

These parties are on the payroll of the government. Even among these parties there are differences of opinion. For example, one party is working closely with the Sri Lankan

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'Govt. Still Committed to a Negotiated Solution – President Kumaratunga

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga answered several questions on the offensive against the LTTE and the Government's attitude to the settlement of the ethnic problem in an interview with Colombo's Sunday Observer of 26 November. This is a slightly abridged text of the interview.

Question: Many people are wondering how it is that an army that was in difficulty for so many years has suddenly been so successful and transformed the military strategic situation in its favour in so short a time. After all, they are the same troops and the same generals. What do you think brought about the change?

Answer: I think it is clear political direction. One should not blame the army for the difficulties it went through in the past. Our forces had learnt their lessons and they knew what had to be done and what could be done. But they did not have the proper political direction. In the past they were under the direction of a corrupt regime and a discredited regime which had no clear vision of a solution to the ethnic problem. Our Government is implementing a political solution to the problem, not a military solution.

Our peace initiative has given us credibility in the eyes of all communities in the country and in the eyes of the world. With that confi-

dence we have been able to take decisive action to defeat the enemies of peace. Under the leadership of my Deputy Defence Minister, Colonel Anuruddha Ratwatte, our forces are operating with a new determination and discipline. He has played a vital role in ensuring the success of our military effort. Col. Ratwatte allows nothing to stand in his way in his efforts to provide what the security forces need. Given our backing, our soldiers have done wonders. In the battlefield, our officers have led from the front. The success of the operations is due to the careful planning and tireless work of our military commanders and their staff. The entire world is watching the forward march of our troops.

Q: The security force operations have weakened the LTTE militarily. Does this mean that the Government will now think purely in terms of pursuing a military solution or is the door open for negotiations under certain conditions?

A: We have made it very clear

that we recognise the fact that even if we defeat the LTTE totally, the problem is not over. There has to be a negotiated political solution.

Q: But will you have a dialogue with the LTTE?

A: I have said earlier that we are ready for a dialogue under certain conditions that we will put forward in good time. We have indicated these conditions previously. We will be open to the LTTE to come forward to discuss with us, but only under very strict, well defined conditions. One condition is the laying down of arms, at least symbolically. A second condition is the beginning of political negotiations within a limited, specified time and, a third condition must be a commitment to the concluding of negotiations also within a specified time, either way.

Q: Moves to resolve the national question in Sri Lanka took a long time coming and came about largely due to the application of countervailing military force by the Tamil nationalist movement. The country's political institutions, as well as the national political leadership, have shown in the past an inability to produce a solution. Moves to devolve power came about only after the pressure of the separatist insurgency. The pressure of the separatist insurgency has now been weakened, but do our political institutions have the capacity and will to continue with the devolution process without that pressure?

A: Yes, our Government does.

Q: But does the Sri Lankan political establishment, as a whole, have the capacity and the will to go ahead with the radical reform that is required and, indeed, that you have put forward in the 'package'?

A: Yes, I think so, I believe so.

Q: I am talking of the opposition parties as well.

A: Well even, if they don't, I think we are strong enough to carry it through.

Q: The devolution proposals are before the country at a time, right now, when the intensified war situation has noticeably changed the public mood. In the South, the success of the security forces offensive has seen a greater focus on military action. What kind of public response do you anticipate with regard to the devolution initiative?

A: I think that the people realise that, just as we are able to win the

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armed forces. The other party, EPDP, is working with the government. These people – after having served their use – may be thrown into the dustbin (by the government).

The LTTE denies responsibility for Rajiv Gandhi's killing. How do you explain India's indifferent attitude towards the LTTE and a decline in support in Tamil Nadu?

India from the start wanted to manipulate things by setting up various groups and trying to impose a solution. India never wanted to recognise our right to self-determination. This is the basic problem. The Indian government is very secretly waging a kind of proxy war against us. It has some inner fear that the people in Tamil Nadu will react if it does so openly and there will be a backlash. India also

feels that if our right to self-determination is recognised, then the people of Tamil Nadu will also react. That is the main reason for India working against us, our struggle. We have the problem of genocide, we have a right to assert for self-determination. In the case of Tamil Nadu, they face no such problem. The situation in Tamil Nadu is quite different from Sri Lanka. We want India to treat these two problems differently, in a different perspective. There is a possibility of cooperation and renewal of friendship between the LTTE, the Centre as well as the state government. (We have seen cooperation earlier). India and the LTTE, they can decide on their own. But India is instead waging a proxy war through the Sri Lankan government, and the people of Tamil Nadu are feeling let down.

(Courtesy: *Outlook*, 6.2.95).

war, in order to successfully resolve the ethnic conflict, we must have a political solution. The majority of our people have clearly indicated that they have understood that success in the war does not mean that we have succeeded in overcoming the overall problem. Success in war means the military defeat of the LTTE. But success in war will not bring permanent peace until there is a political solution to the problems of the Tamil people. There must be a definite political solution if we are to definitely have peace.

Q: If the military successes have changed the public mood in the South is there a danger that there will be backsliding on the radical reforms proposed in the devolution package?

A: I don't think so. There will be some noise from the chauvinist groups who have suddenly come out of their hiding places, not having lifted a finger to help in this war which they have been promoting all the time. They have sent their sons abroad to study and to live overseas. They have not contributed five cents to the war efforts neither in money nor in work. Now they are raising their heads on the backs of the soldiers who have committed themselves so courageously and who have sacrificed their lives, and on our backs as we risk our own lives to solve this problem and bring peace. These chauvinist groups will make some noise. But I don't believe the people will be fooled by them, because the people know who they are.

Q: Have any foreign governments made any proposals for third party mediation? What is the Government response to such overtures?

A: There have been no specific offers, only general offers to help. At the moment foreign mediation is not on the cards. The international community has immense confidence in the peace initiative of the Government and our ability to carry it through.

Q: What is the Government going to do about the large population of people who have been forcibly displaced by the LTTE in the Peninsula?

A: We are taking all measures to provide them with food, medicines, shelter and other immediate needs. We are doing this knowing full well that the LTTE is also grabbing some of these supplies as they have always been doing. When Operation Riveresa was launched we asked people to stay in their homes and

assured them that we will look after them. We have made arrangements to look after the population in the re-captured area. But as you know, the LTTE suddenly acted to force the people out of these areas. Many civilians who have made their way south have told us how the LTTE forced the people out of Jaffna. The LTTE is quite ready to manipulate the civilian population. They will sacrifice the civilians in order to maintain their power.

Pomposity

Q: Will you be taking action to bring the displaced people back to Jaffna?

A: That is indeed what we are doing. We want the people to come back to the safety and comfort of their homes. We are going to do everything possible to ensure that they can settle into their normal lives in Jaffna and all other areas. I have personally supervised the setting up of the ministerial task force which is now in readiness to quickly restore civil administration and restore public utilities, such as electricity, roads, distribution of supplies and also the reconstruction of buildings and other facilities. We have already set up a new hospital in a newly cleared area outside Palaly which is now serving cleared areas around Jaffna. We will re-start the schools and university.

We are deeply concerned for the displaced population and we will do everything possible to bring them back as fast as possible to their homes. We cannot allow them to be ruthlessly pushed around by the LTTE. The international community has indicated its confidence in our humanitarian measures and has assured the Government of any help that is needed. In fact some prominent American human rights activists I met in New York during my recent visit asked me how we had managed to change things for the better in such a short time. My reply was that we had the political will to do what had to be done.

The LTTE is doing much lobbying internationally, but they have not succeeded in persuading any government to support them. For the first time our embassies abroad are active. We send them daily reports and they issue bulletins providing correct information about the situation here.

Q: There has been speculation that with the completion of the current offensive and the taking of Jaffna, the

Government will go for snap elections. Do you have any such intention?

A: We have no such intention. The people have given us a mandate to fulfil within our tenure in power. We intend to serve our full term and fulfil that mandate.

Q: Certainly a year of Kumaratunga presidency has been refreshingly different from the pomposity and authoritarianism of past presidencies. But still, some people, at least, will be asking whether it will be the start of a further year of an executive political office which your government had promised to abolish within months. Do you still intend to abolish the executive presidency?

A: We gave a promise to the people and we will fulfil that promise. We mean what we say. We intend to bring constitutional amendments to affect this as early as possible. We have given this assurance repeatedly. These amendments will include both the abolition of the executive presidency as well as the devolution package. As soon as they go through the Parliamentary Select Committee process, we will present the entire set of amendments. They are under discussion at the moment at the select committee level.

Q: So you will bring amendments at the same time to implement both presidency reform as well as the devolution package?

A: Well, they are both amendments to the Constitution.

Q: You do not envisage an entirely new Constitution as such?

A: No. There will be fairly extensive amendments to the present Constitution.

Q: Will Sri Lanka continue to remain a 'Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka' or will there be a change of nomenclature?

A: That is left for the Select Committee to decide. Those are details as far as we are concerned.

Q: The 1996 budget was an unexpectedly 'light' budget - that is, it did not place too many new economic burdens on ordinary people, as many had feared because of the military expenditures. Is there a possibility that the burdens, such as price increases, will come gradually in the coming months?

A: Not necessarily, unless there are unforeseen circumstances. We

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Muted Celebration Marks 'Capture' of Jaffna

from Rita Sebastian, Colombo

They brought the war into your sitting room with the daily video clips on state television. You heard the gunfire and saw the blood. But you were witness to only one side of the war story, except when occasionally you saw the bodies of Tigers killed in battle. It was a war tailor made for the generals. There were no witnesses. The media was barred from the battlefield.

Fortyeight days later it seemed all over. Jaffna was 'captured' and the national flag hoisted in the city centre. The military had insisted in the run-up to the 'capture' that there would be no official flag hoisting. It was dismissed as media hype. There was nothing to celebrate because so many lives had been lost, they said.

But others in the defence establishment thought otherwise. It was for the armed forces their hour of glory and there had to be some tangible manifestation of that. The backdrop to the ceremonies, the destroyed and damaged building was a telling cameo of that war ravaged land. In Colombo, the celebration

was muted. The euphoria did not spill onto the roads, or exacerbate racial tensions. The fire crackers that exploded were few and far between.

But banners across city streets and walls plastered with posters paying tribute to President Chandrika Kumaratunga, soldiers and defence deputy Colonel Anurudha Ratwatte said it all. And in parliament, the kissing the hugging and the garlands for Minister Ratwatte made him the hero of operation 'Riviresa'.

The hoisting of the national flag was followed in Colombo by the President's address to the nation. The single thread running through her speech was 'one country, one people'. 'We have reconquered the right of all peoples of all communities to live in brotherhood within a united Sri Lanka.'

She listed her government's victories as the support of the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils to her peace programme, and the complete solidarity of the smaller ethnic groups like the Muslims, and

Sri Lanka's changed image internationally.

But there was a note that jarred during the 'victory' celebrations at the Presidential Secretariat, President Kumaratunga's commitment to a fair and just deal for all communities went by the board when the Tamil translation of her speech came from somewhere in the background, hardly audible because of the 'chatter' of a hundred voices within the Secretariat. Promises will seem so empty unless President Kumaratunga sees to it that not only is justice done but seen to be done as well.

The incident was particularly unfortunate because the Tamils already feeling 'hurt and humiliated' over the word 'capture', the terminology used for the dislodging of the Tigers from Jaffna saw the very negation of what the President was promising.

And also quite intriguing was the reference to Jaffna as 'Yapa patuna' the ancient Sinhalese name for the city. There was no need to resurrect something from the dim past, not in this instance.

The battle for Jaffna took heavy toll of both life and property. Official statistics put the death toll at around 500 security personnel, most of them soldiers, killed and over 1,000 wounded. The Tiger casualties were estimated at over 1500 killed and hundreds more injured. The Tigers of course have disputed government figures.

That was the tragedy of newsmen being barred from the war zone. They were left with hardly any choice in reporting the war. There were the daily defence ministry press releases, and from the London offices of the Tigers came their side of the story.

And with the local media virtually crippled by a censorship on military related issues, truth became one of the main casualties.

And since the war is not over, and the theatre of operations already moved to the eastern province, the defence establishment that did not ban newsmen from travelling east could now put strictures on travel to the east as well.

Although President Kumaratunga said, 'We must not crow over our military victories. Let us fill our hearts with humaneness, for all wars however savage they may be must be won by human dialogue' there are still those who feel that the gun is the ultimate weapon.

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have formulated a budget emphasising on incentives for economic development - something no government has done in the past in the context of war.

Q: In this new atmosphere of relative media freedom, both the Government and society as a whole, seem to be finding it difficult to adjust to the 'ather, unbridled behaviour of the media, especially the private sector media. Some sections of the media are making use of their new-found freedom to strongly criticise the government for anything they perceive as an error. How do you view this development? Do you regard it as an abuse of freedom or do you consider it as some thing which politicians and society must put up with as part of the growth of democracy?

A: No, I think media freedom means that the media has every right to criticise the Government and individual members of the Government - including the President.

The only thing is that there are some instances of misuse of this freedom in which outright lies have been published or broadcast. As long as they criticise according to factual evidence, even if they hold a totally different view from that of the Government, they have a right to say what they want. Even when they express views different from that of the Government, they have a right to say what they want.

But when they concoct things then we have the right to take action within the law. They can have all the freedom they want. But we also have the freedom to go to courts and take the maximum possible action to obtain redress. And that is what I am doing.

But we don't think that we should take measures to restrict the media's right to publish what they want. That is not our style of politics. We want to build democracy and the freedom of expression. All we ask is that journalists exercise their freedom with a sense of national responsibility.

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are joining the Bank in large numbers, the statement added.

Foolish Act? :An army spokesman described the evacuation of civilians from the Jaffna area as LTTE's 'biggest foolish act' because it left the field wide open for soldiers to engage the LTTE upfront without having to worry about any possible heavy civilian casualties. One factor which had always prevented the army from launching major operations against the LTTE in Jaffna was the fear of causing massive civilians casualties because they always operated under the protection of a 'civilian human shield', military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe said.

'Many people believed that capturing Jaffna would cost a lot of civilian lives or that the LTTE would use civilians as a human shield as they had done in the past. But for whatever reason, the LTTE forced the civilians to move out and we were able to capture LTTE controlled areas without causing civilian casualties,' Munasinghe said.

Reaction of Non-LTTE Tamil Parties:

To be charitable, the reaction of the non-LTTE Tamil parties and groups who by and large operate from Colombo is ambivalent, opportunist and self-contradictory.

On the one hand they articulate the belief that President Mrs. Kumaratunga is genuine in her efforts to solve the ethnic problem; the LTTE should not have unilaterally broken the peace process and resumed armed hostilities; and that the Tigers have not been and are not interested in any negotiated settlement and their sole intention is to seek a separate state in which they would be the only ones to wield power. On the other hand, these Tamil parties are apprehensive about government forces militarily confronting the Tigers in a serious and sustained manner which inevitably result in Tamil civilian casualties. They also entertain the fear that if government forces succeed in militarily subjugating the Tigers, then Sinhala chauvinist forces in the south would become emboldened and prevent the Chandrika administration from implementing the political package substantial devolution of powers which has been offered.

Therefore, unable to politically or militarily confront the Tigers and incapable of playing a decisive role in the developing political or military situation, as a matter of ritualistic exercise these parties call for ceasefire and negotiations with Tigers. Some cynics

say that these parties, because of the treatment the Tigers have meted out to them in physically eliminating their leaders and banning them from operating in the Tamil areas of the north-east, secretly hope and pray that the Tigers would be annihilated by government forces. But for political reasons they have to indulge in this ritual of making platitudinous statements which serve little meaningful purpose.

Recruitment: It is reported that the LTTE has commenced an intensive recruitment drive among the displaced people to join as Tiger cadres. The 'Voice of Tigers' radio announced that large numbers of students, including Jaffna university students, teachers and from other sections of the population were joining the LTTE. 'Despite the fall of the city, the LTTE will continue its war through guerrilla attacks on government forces. The military may enter Thenmaradchi and Vadamardchi after capturing Jaffna city. The only way we could resist this attack is to increase our strength and this is possible only if all those young men and women over 14 years join the LTTE. Those youth who are among the displaced people from Jaffna should join the movement immediately,' the leader of the political wing of the LTTE Mr. Tamil Chelvan was reported to have told a meeting in Thenmaradchi in late November according to the radio.

'The displaced people must not think that the situation will return to normal in a few days. It is to the extent of the increase in the strength of the Tigers that the situation will improve. Therefore it is in the hands of the people to increase the strength of the Tigers. The displaced youth should immediately join the movement in their several thousands,' a statement broadcast on the LTTE radio said.

'Everyday hundreds of youth are joining the LTTE ranks to participate in the struggle to liberate their motherland. Yesterday 50 youths took the oath of allegiance in Vanni alone. School teachers, high school students and even men with families are signing up for military service with the LTTE', a statement dated 6 December from the LTTE's headquarters in London said.

The LTTE's operational base has reportedly been shifted to Kilinochchi from where leadership is functioning though the location from which Pirabhakaran is directing operations remains unknown. Most of the LTTE's weaponry and logistical equipment have been shifted to the Wannai, and it is believed that the Tigers are seeking to establish almost a parallel adminis-

tration in these areas as they did in Jaffna.

The Wannai areas north of Vavuniya have been under Tiger control for years, particularly after the Indian Peace Keeping (IPKF) departed in March 1990. Even when the IPKF took military control of Jaffna, Mannar and other northern areas, the Tigers had their operational bases in the eastern parts of Wannai including Mullaitivu.

Though the Tiger leadership and the bulk of its cadres have got out of the Valikamam and the areas around Jaffna town, it is thought the Tigers in small groups would continue to remain or enter from outside and mount guerrilla attacks upon the army within the captured areas. The aim would be to prevent the forces from consolidating and expanding their control throughout the peninsula.

Tigers in the East: Military analysts and journalists who have visited the eastern province of Sri Lanka are of the view that the LTTE has vastly increased in strength and brought more areas under its control after the government moved a considerable number of troops from the east to bolster up its offensive in the north.

In interviews to foreign journalists, Sivagnanam Karikalan, the Tiger leader in the east, said that their cadres would defend Jaffna to the last man and that their suicide squads were waiting to exact a heavy price from the army. 'They may capture it, but we will make them pay dearly. Even if they capture Jaffna, we will take it back,' he said from his operational base located in Batticaloa across the lagoon from the town.

Asked whether the LTTE would ask for or accept a ceasefire if offered, Karikalan said that it would not happen. The government would have to first return land captured by the army in the recent offensive and rehabilitate the tens of thousands of people displaced. He accused the government of offering talks on the one hand and trying to use the military to force a solution on the Tamils. 'The government wants to use the military to subdue the Tamils and then thrust a solution on us. That we will not accept,' he said.

Conceding that the Tigers had not officially responded to the government's political package, he said. 'We have still not received the proposals. Without the LTTE's consent, there cannot be any settlement. But if they want a military solution, we are ready for it. We are ready for a full-scale war.'

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Karakalan denied that the Tigers were responsible for the recent string of massacres of Sinhalese civilians in the east of the country which have attracted widespread international condemnation. He suggested that pro-government Tamil groups might have been responsible. But Father Harry Miller from Batticaloa said that the Tigers were capable of any brutality. 'They are outlaws, they recognise no laws except their own, and they will do whatever they need to do to get whatever they think they can get. They do not observe anybody's laws but their own.'

Army Recruitment: The Sri Lankan military recently launched a mass campaign to recruit an additional 10,000 soldiers to its ranks. Brigadier Ananda Weerasekera, Director of Training, said that additional troops were needed to fight the LTTE more effectively and to consolidate and stabilise the army's presence in the captured areas.

The cabinet recently decided to amend service procedures in the military to enable the government to continue to keep in service, senior army officers who reach normal retirement age, for an unspecified number of years. The reason for this measure is said to be that the military are in short supply of experienced senior officials many of whom have been killed in action or assassinations in recent years.

The government also has decided to grant amnesty to all military personnel who had deserted or been absent without leave from the service provided they returned to work on or before 15 December this year.

Plight of Refugees: There aren't enough buildings, either public or private, to accommodate the refugee population either in the Vadamaradchi and Thenmaradchi areas or the Kilinochchi and Wannai areas to which they have gone. Most of them are in makeshift camps without basic sanitary facilities. The rural Kilinochchi district which has permanent population of more than 100,000 is now flooded with the influx of people from the peninsula. 'Kilinochchi is now full of people. Day and night there is movement all round. The refugees first register themselves and then seek temporary shelter. They are looking here, there and everywhere for the next meal. They go in search of relatives and friends. Some are looking for small houses to rent. Lots of people are looking for cadjans and timber to erect small huts. A pair of cadjans is sold for Rs.20. Those who do not have money

are compelled to camp under trees. At Kilinochchi a kilo of vegetable of any kind is Rs.125 and a cake of soap is Rs.75. Essential goods are not available in shops. A mixture of cooked rice and dhal is served in refugee camps. Even children and pregnant women are treated no differently.' (Veerakesari, 26.11.95). If this was the situation during the last week of November, the present plight of the people with the further influx in the following weeks must be immensely worse.

The people who were first encouraged to leave Jaffna town and adjoining areas and move into the Vadamaradchi and Thenmaradchi areas are again being asked to move into the Wannai areas. There has been a daily movement of thousands of people from these areas seeking to cross the Jaffna lagoon at Kilali to go into the mainland to Kilinochchi and Wannai areas. In spite of the various restrictions imposed to prevent people leaving areas under the control of the LTTE, many and mostly who have relations or friends have gone to the south of the country. Many more are seeking to go through Vavuniya to the south of the island, particularly to Colombo and adjoining areas. Those Tamils who have managed to go to Colombo say that the LTTE has imposed a ban on all Tamils between the ages of 10 and 35 leaving the areas under their control; and others are required to pay up varying sums of money as a precondition for leaving.

They also say that those who manage to reach Thandikulam near Vavuniya in the army controlled area with a view to going to Colombo also face severe hardship by being subjected to intensive questioning and search. People are made to wait for at least three days until they obtain details in the form of 'sponsorship letters' containing names and addresses at which they would be residing once they reach Colombo. In many cases, relatives from Colombo are compelled to travel to Vavuniya to obtain clearance from the authorities for their displaced kith and kin to be able to travel to Colombo. One person said, 'A once proud people who could have walked anywhere with their heads erect, they are today reduced to the position of having to beg for "passes" from either side.'

LTTE's rehabilitation unit, the Tamil Refugee Organisation, has been put in charge of settling the arriving refugees who are said to be directed to pre-designated plots of land where improvised sheds have been erected. Zinc and asbestos sheets ripped off from buildings in Jaffna have been taken across the lagoon to provide cover for the refugee shelters.

The LTTE has announced that each family of the displaced people from Jaffna and moved into the Wannai areas would be allocated a parcel of land and provided money for cultivation.

There is inadequate facilities to meet the medical needs of the refugees in all places to which they have moved. For example, in the OPD of the Govt. hospital in Chavakachcheri, hundreds and hundreds of people stand daily in queues to be treated. There are neither beds nor space in the hospital to accommodate the patients. Temporary sheds have been erected in the adjoining compound to admit some of the patients with serious illness. There is an acute shortage of medical supplies. Some of the doctors and other medical staff who left Jaffna hospital are reported to be working here.

Serious shortage of food supplies of all kinds is common to all areas and people are said to be surviving on half a pound of bread and kanchi each day.

The government has allowed the UNHCR, ICRC, FORUT OXFAM, CARE, WORL, VISION and a few other international organisations to provide much needed assistance to the refugees. A central warehouse has been set up at the government Vavuniya Secretariat from where relief assistance is reported to be channelled. The Tamil daily, *Veerakesari*, has reported that the UNHCR has set up a warehouse at Kilinochchi for the receipt and stocking of food, medical and other supplies needed for the displaced people and that the government has allowed the despatch of lorry loads of supplies to this warehouse.

The Commissioner General for Essential Services and Secretary to the Rehabilitation Ministry Mr. M.N. Junaid told pressmen that the vessel Lanka Kalyani left Colombo on 29 November carrying an unprecedented 10,000 tons of food and other essential supplies to Jaffna. In the past the highest ever quantity sent did not exceed 9,000 tons. 'With the exodus of people from Jaffna, the population there had been reduced to 170,000 and in fact we should have sent a smaller quantity than usual,' he added.

In the meantime a statement from the ICRC office in Colombo said that, though the ICRC had shifted its Jaffna office and operations to Point Pedro some weeks earlier, the safety zone around the Jaffna Teaching Hospital was continuing to be maintained and that they would proceed there when the need arose for them to carry out their humanitarian tasks.

Foreign Reaction: The European Parliament, in a recent resolution, ex-

pressed deep concern at the plight of the civilian population in northern Sri Lanka displaced by the current hostilities and called upon the European Union and its Member States 'to support relief operations both through the relevant NGOs and through direct assistance to the government in its efforts to aid the refugees.'

The resolution while welcoming the government's peace proposals which 'contain wide-ranging constitutional reforms, including more extensive devolution to the provinces and a merger of restructured north and east provinces, which have a wide spectrum of democratic political opinion including parties representative of the Tamil minority', called upon the Sri Lankan government 'to ensure that the civil rights of the Tamil population are respected and that the perpetrators of any abuses are prosecuted.'

Condemning the recruitment of children to the ranks of the LTTE, and noting that the administration imposed by the LTTE over the Jaffna peninsula had been based on force rather than on any popular legitimacy, the resolution called upon its member states to closely monitor LTTE offices operating in their territory to ensure that LTTE agents respected the law and took no part in intimidatory terrorist activity.

Call for Calm and Stern Action: As the 'capture' of Jaffna by the army became imminent, there were fears that extremist elements in the south who in July 1983 unleashed an orgy of anti-Tamil violence would make a similar attempt not only to inflict violence against Tamils but also thereby embarrass the government.

However, government and opposition parties including many non-governmental organisations closed ranks and made public statements exhorting people to ensure that any orchestrated outbreak of violence against Tamils living in the south was prevented. The ruling party at a special meeting of its parliamentary group called for shoot-on-sight orders to be given to the police and security forces if unruly mobs tried to create violence under the guise of celebrating the entry of the army into Jaffna. A Defence Ministry statement said that all police divisions had been instructed to bring any unruly or violent behaviour under control with the sternest of measures.

State Minister for Defence, Col. Anuruddha Ratwatte warned that pseudo-patriots and card-board heroes who incited violence or attacked Tamil civilians would be rounded up and packed off to the frontlines in Jaffna to

fight the Tigers. The main opposition United National Party called upon all its MPs, Provincial Councillors and all its branch members to actively engage themselves to ensure that no violence was perpetrated on Tamils in the south. Most religious and other organisations also appealed to the people to remain calm and not to resort to any acts of violence.

In an address to the nation on 23 November, President Mrs. Kumaratunga said that the troops had 'defeated the enemies of peace' who were thought to be invincible. 'I wish to stress that the end of this war does not mean peace. WE have to establish civil rule in the North. We have to convince the people of the North that the administration of the Sri Lankan government means the end of the evil of terror and the dawn of a free and prosperous life. We have to resolve the grievances of the minority community which had prevailed since independence. We must negotiate a lasting solution. Only then could we ensure true peace for us and our children.'

'I request every citizen to celebrate our victory calmly and peacefully. The war effort was not against Tamil civilians but against a ruthless group of terrorists who do not want peace. We must in no way harass the Tamil community by word or deed. I have instructed the security personnel to deal severely with any member of the public who uses this critical period to intimidate any member of the Tamil community or to incite any form of violence.'

Thondaman's Tribute: Cabinet Minister and leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, S. Thondaman paid a tribute to the President when reacting to her address to the nation. In a letter to the President Mr. Thondaman said, 'I wish to express my deep sense of appreciation at the statesmanlike manner in which the nation was addressed by Your Excellency. The exhortation for calm was reassuring. The concern shown for the sensitivities of the Tamil community has been well received by all. It is heartening to note that Your Excellency is fully alive to the implications that could flow from the tortuous military operations in an embattled area. I would consider your address to the nation as conveying a message to all the people that peace and harmony are priority concerns of the government. It has also been made clear that disregard of the law would be met with stern action. A preemptive warning of this nature is unprecedented and this is a tribute to Your Excellency's foresight... The sentiments you have expressed are a reaffirmation of your dedication to

safeguard the Tamils and inspire confidence.'

Govt. Moves in Jaffna: In the wake of the 'capture' of Jaffna town and the areas of Valikamam by the security forces, the government appears to be taking steps to restore some form of civil administration in those areas.

As many as 1,500 policemen, including 61 officers, are reported to be enlisted with a view to restoring civilian administration. Police stations are to be set up in various places in addition to the presently existing ones at Kankesanthurai and Kayts.

In a further bid to re-establish the civilian administration and bring back the people who had been evacuated, plans are reported to be afoot to undertake reconstruction works relating to public buildings, roads and restore public transport.

President Mrs. Kumaratunga made a startling disclosure to the media recently that the bulk of the Rs.350 million sent to the northern Jaffna peninsula monthly to pay government employees, teachers and pensioners was channelled into the coffers of the LTTE. 'The former government did not find out to whom they were paying these monies, except that it was sent to the Government Agents who were controlled body and soul by the Tigers,' she said.

For 13 years, the government was paying Tiger cadres, not government servants, accusing the former government of not only providing the Tigers with arms (to fight the IPKF), but funding them and feeding them. So was it surprising that they should be described by the foreign media as the most organised guerrilla group in the world?', she asked.

And it is the payments due to government employees, teachers and pensioners that would be used to bring people back to Jaffna, for the government has decreed that those entitled to these monies collect their dues from the Administrative Secretary in Jaffna.

The President also offered talks with the Tigers and an amnesty and safety for them provided the LTTE lay down their arms and end violence. 'I invite all members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to lay down arms and end violence. The government will offer you an amnesty and your safety,' the President said. She also appealed to those displaced and now camped outside the Jaffna peninsula to return to their homes. 'Although some of you may have agreed to accept the authority of a terrorist regime, you may have had no other alternative previously.'

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'Only Substantial Devolution Will Convince Tamils'

- TULF Leader

by Lakshman Gunasekara

The entry of government forces into Jaffna city does not mean the end of the ethnic conflict, points out Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) President M. Sivasithamparam. Neither does the dislodging of the LTTE from Jaffna greatly diminish the military punch of the Tigers, he argues. Stressing the need for political reform, the veteran Tamil leader indicated that quick moves to legislate devolution would enable the TULF to campaign for the Government's package among the Tamil people. 'We are still pinning our faith on the President's commitment to a political solution,' he said in an interview on Friday.

Question: The Sri Lankan State actually began implementing devolution as a solution to the problems of minorities, only after, and because of, the military pressure by the Tamil separatist rebel movement. The recent armed forces offensive against the LTTE has caused a weakening of that military pressure on the State. Does the Sri Lankan political establishment have the will to pursue devolution without this pressure?

Answer: I don't agree that devolution was the result of military pressure by the Tamils on the State. The first proposals for any devolution was as early as the Donoughmore Constitution. Subsequently, the principle of devolution was inherent in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact and the Dudley-Chelvanayakam Pact. There was no military pressure at that point of time. Of course, subsequently, the fact that the youth had taken to arms, certainly was a factor which compelled the Sinhala government to come out with proposals for devolution. We do not know how far the military pressure of the LTTE has been weakened by what has happened in Jaffna. But the President has repeatedly said that she is keen to solve the ethnic problem. It was as a solution to the ethnic problem that she put forward the devolution proposals. She has, since then, also been saying that she is keen to have those proposals in legal form and to have them im-

plemented. I do not think that any weakening of the military strength of the LTTE will make her change her mind.

Q: But is the President's individual commitment to devolution adequate? There seems to be growing sentiment among the Sinhalese, subsequent to the government offensive's success, that there may be no need to have any more political reform.

A: If any Sinhalese feels that way, they are gravely mistaken. The entry of troops into Jaffna is not the end of the strife. Nor is it even the beginning of a political solution. So, if the Sinhalese think that with the entry of troops into Jaffna the ethnic problem is solved, then they are making a very very grave mistake. This could even damage relations between the Tamils and the Sinhalese even more than has happened in the past.

Q: Do you think that both mainstream Sinhala parties, the People's Alliance and the United National Party, will co-operate in implementing political reform?

A: As far as the PA is concerned, they have already put forward these proposals, and I take it that they were drawn up with the consent of, at least, the leadership of the PA. Many ministers have publicly endorsed the proposals presented by the President on August 3. So, I assume that the PA will go ahead with implementing these proposals by presenting them in legal form to the Parliamentary Select Committee, and thereafter, the Parliament and the country. As far as the UNP is concerned, they have not rejected the proposals. What they are saying is that while they are not against devolution of power, they want to wait till the legal form is put forward by the Government before deciding what to do. I feel that if the UNP is made to believe that the minorities, that is both the Tamils and the Muslims, are in favour of these proposals, they will think twice before rejecting the proposals, because if they do so they will be forfeiting the support of the minorities for all time. I am sure the UNP leadership

may be also keen to project an image of being fair to the minorities.

Q: The LTTE has already rejected peace talks. What are the prospects for any talks in the future?

A: One cannot say exactly what the LTTE's thinking is. If we look at such movements in the world, whether it is the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the Irish Republican Army or the African National Congress, you will see that at some point of time, they have come to the negotiating table. But the Tamil people must be convinced that the Government is serious and sincere about implementing the proposals of August 3. If that happens, I feel that the LTTE may come for talks.

Q: What can be done about the large population pushed out of Jaffna city by the LTTE?

A: I don't know whether it is correct to describe the exodus of people from Jaffna as being the result of their being 'pushed out' by the LTTE. There may have been a certain amount of coercion by the LTTE. But there is also no denying the fact that the Tamil people had legitimate fears of danger to themselves, judging by the action of the military in the past in both the North and the East. So, that motivation was also there for the exodus, quite apart from any coercion by the LTTE.

Q: Do you think that if the fighting dies down, at least in the Peninsula area, the displaced population might begin to come back?

A: If there is a ceasefire, and if the Tamil people are satisfied that the Government is indeed putting forward a political solution, the people who have moved out might move back.

Q: I was looking at the difficult conditions on the ground and the natural desire of people to go back where they were living; that even if there is no ceasefire all-island, if the fighting dies down in the North (although it may flare up in the East), this might be an opportunity for those who want to go back to their homes, and businesses and fields?

A: I say once again that the Tamil people who are displaced today must be satisfied that the Government is serious and sincere about a political settlement. The people will naturally wonder whether there is any use in going back and risking undergoing again the kind of suffering they have undergone in the past

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because of the conflict. So, whatever the Government may do about the fighting, it must be coupled with a satisfactory progress on the political front.

Q: But the ordinary people who are displaced are not necessarily that politically mobilised to want to remain in their current condition. If there is a situation of relative calm, at least in the Valikamam sector, and if there is an impressive programme of rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoring of civilian administration, might there not be a spontaneous desire by the people to go back, irrespective of the long term political prospects. How will the TULF approach that kind of development?

A: The Tamil people know what they want. They want a political solution. They did not go through all these years of suffering without coming to this realisation. So, whatever other attractions the Government might offer, unless the people are satisfied that there is also going to be a political solution, I am doubtful whether the Tamil people who have been displaced will move back.

Q: The virtual dismantling of the semi-State structure run by the LTTE in the Valikamam sector and the weakening of their political hegemony in that area, leaves a kind of political vacuum there. What are the prospects of the non-LTTE Tamil political organisations resuming activity there?

A: Speaking for the TULF: we will certainly not resume unless there is a political solution. When we start political work, what are we to tell the Tamil people? What we must be able to tell the Tamils is: 'Here is a political solution, now let us make it work'. We must be able to at least say that. Otherwise, there is no point in our going and doing politics in Jaffna.

Q: Doesn't the TULF then run the risk of leaving room for the younger, former Tamil militant groups like the PLOTE, TELO and even EPDP, who might take the opportunity to go there and build their constituencies?

A: They have tried that in the past and not succeeded. If they go into Jaffna without a political solution, the Tamil people won't go along with them. Given a political solution, everyone will be ready to go and work.

Q: But a political solution could take time – if not years, at least many months. Till then, do the displaced

people in the North have to remain as they are?

A: The ultimate solution is a different matter. But there must be evidence that the Government is moving in that direction. The first move in that direction would be to place the legislative form of the devolution proposals before the Parliamentary Select Committee. Then the people will know that here is something substantial.

Q: Does it mean then that if there is that kind of demonstration of intent on the part of the Government, the TULF will be ready to give leadership at a civilian political level in Jaffna?

A: That depends on the content of the devolution package. If there is any dilution of powers, if there is any going back on what has already been promised, then of course the TULF will not be a party to any such programme.

Q: As far as the proposals go today, do you find them a good basis for a settlement?

A: They are a good basis for a

settlement. There are a few very important matters to be settled, but certainly it is a basis for a settlement. One matter still to be finalised is the unit of devolution.

Q: If, in the coming months, despite hostilities, perhaps in the East, the Government does place devolution legislation in Parliament, acceptable legislation that is, will the TULF cooperate by providing civilian political leadership in the North?

A: It is not a question of leadership. What matters is whether the Tamil people accept the proposals. If the package is a reasonable one which we can accept, the LTTE will campaign among the Tamil people that they should accept it. But it should be a reasonable set of proposals which must include the unit of devolution. We are still pinning our faith on President Kumaratunga on the basis of what she presented on August 3. I must emphasise that both sides, the Government and the LTTE, must seriously consider a ceasefire.

(Courtesy: *Sunday Observer*).

Haven for Human Traffickers

Bangladesh has become a haven for human traffickers smuggling out young women and children to foreign countries, a study has revealed.

The study, conducted by the voluntary organization, Bangladesh Children Rights Forum (BCRF), has found that more than 400 women and children are smuggled out of Bangladesh every month, mainly to Pakistan and the Persian Gulf, for purposes ranging from prostitution to serving as camel-racing jockeys.

The BCRF study titled 'Child Trafficking and Sale' said that 'the human traffickers were working in connivance with a section of the Border Security Forces of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. In the latest incident, the police rescued 62 children from a fishing trawler trapped near Jhalakathi in southern Bangladesh in the cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal earlier this month. The police impounded the trawler and arrested 15 traffickers. The trawler was reportedly headed for India.

In another incident, police rescued 12 women and children from a ferry station near Dhaka. The police said they have held four members of a gang that was planning to smuggle out the 12 to Pakistan through India.

The police said a woman member of the gang admitted that she was a permanent resident of Pakistan who often came to Bangladesh in connection with the human trade. She said Pakistani agents were willing to pay 100,000 taka (about \$2,500) for a child.

The study said Bangladeshi boys and girls were comparatively cheap to buy. It was for this reason that international traffickers had chosen Bangladesh as the source for the 'human trade'.

In most cases, the study said, children and women were procured from persons known to the traffickers. Various tactics were used by the traffickers. One common tactic was the promise of marriage with a job and a better life.

Quoting Bangladeshi prostitutes arrested in Karachi last year, the study said they were brought to Calcutta through Benapole and then taken to Karachi via Amritsar. 'They crossed the borders on foot at night. Inside India and Pakistan, they travelled by train', it said.

The study said that 12 Bangladeshi boys, who were rescued in Bombay in 1993 while heading for Dubai to be used as jockeys in camel races, were repatriated to Bangladesh last month.

The Escalating War

by Adele Ann Balasingham

The stage is set for decisive battles in the Jaffna Peninsula. Ironically this unprecedented military confrontation between two armies represents a face to face showdown between two seemingly incompatible ideological and political positions. On the one side the battle-hardened and furiously determined guerrilla units of the LTTE are poised to defend their traditional and political stronghold. On the other side, the modernised conventional army of the Sri Lanka state is equally as determined to wrest control of the LTTE territory and administration and to militarily impose its authority over the entire area. This extremely tense military situation is the climax of months of military posturing by the state forces prior to this final showdown for military and political supremacy in the region.

The current escalation of the ground war in the densely populated Jaffna Peninsula is the ultimate unfolding of the government's strategy to solve the ethnic conflict. For the government, the successful prosecution of the war in the Tamil heartland, is, quite clearly, the pillar on which political measures to finally solve the ethnic conflict are seen to rest. Col. Ratwatte, the Deputy Minister of Defence and darling of the chauvinist elements in the south, has stated just that. In very frequent recent statements of thanks to donors of the State's National Defence Fund he has repeatedly and consistently expressed the view that the prosecution of the war to its conclusion is the primary objective of the government at the moment and nothing will deflect it from its course. He further elaborated that only when the war is concluded will political programmes be formulated and implemented.

It would be easy and simple to dismiss Col. Ratwatte's statements as placatory words to dogmatic opponents of any form of devolution to the Tamils. But the frequency and obvious confidence with which he enunciates his bellicose statements lead to different conclusions. Col. Ratwatte is not only Deputy to the President on defence matters but is increasingly seen as the Minister of War. As a top ranking Minister in the government he is obviously a key formulator of policy and his

views must therefore have the sanction of the President. But unlike the sophisticated Form in which the President articulates her strategy, Col. Ratwatte's comments have exposed the hypocrisy behind the President's dual approach of war for the LTTE and peace for the Tamil people. Her military solution is stripped of its political pretensions. Her oft repeated slogans of 'war for peace' and her 'white lotus movement' are simply icing on the military cake War in the northeast - despite civilian casualties - and a political solution when the war ends is a more honest articulation of the government's conception and strategy for a solution to the ethnic conflict.

Nevertheless, despite the expose of the government's real strategy by one of the most influential Ministers, the President has to be given full marks for her efforts in political deception. While the people in the northeast have never been in doubt that the government is committed to the military solution, Mrs. Kumaratunga's articulation of the dual approach of war and peace and her expressions of concern for the Tamil people caught up in the war has mesmerised the south and enchanted the international community. By throwing a set of political ideas into the southern arena for discussion and debate the President has engaged the people in a heated controversy and successfully deflected the attention of the population away from the gravity and horror of the war in the northeast. The image of a President, hand raised and holding the Buddhist symbol of peace, has further swayed the imagination of the people and stunned their thought processes into silence on the major contradiction of her slogan 'war for peace'. Contributing further to this collective illusion of peace amongst the population in the south is the total censorship on reporting news - other than government news on all matters relating to the war. Censorship has thrown a woolly blanket over the people cushioning them from the effects of war, not only on their lives, but the nightmare and tragedy of the people of the northeast.

The international community too has been lured into the President's fold and appears to have chosen to ignore the war in the north and its

catastrophic effects on the lives of the civilian population. A crucial player in this deceptive art of political duplicity and hypocrisy is the Foreign Minister Mr. Kadirgamar. Mr. Kadirgamar, a Tamil, allows himself to be used to promote the interests of the Sinhala state. On October 2nd, while the Sri Lankan military forces were engaged in a major military push Operation Thunder Strike - into the Jaffna Peninsula the 'Honourable' Minister was addressing the United Nations and informing the representatives of the world's nations of the government's sincere efforts and commitment to peace. While the military apparatus was, day and night, raining down artillery shells on residential areas, killing and maiming the young and the old, the sick and the healthy, the rich and the poor uprooting and destroying their livelihoods in seconds; while tanks blasted homes and buildings to pieces and bulldozers razed villages, crops and trees and piled up fertile soil into security bunds, Mr. Kadirgamar had the audacity to step onto the podium at the United Nations, address the international audience and lament the government's concern for the civilian population, its concern for food supplies, its concern for children in war and its concern for human rights.

Whether or not the international community will break out of its illusion regarding the Sri Lanka government is a question which only time will answer. In the meantime the lived experiences of the people of the northeast are more consistent with Col. Ratwatte's statement than anything the President has ever presented. The people are being subjected to war and the political proposals have never been officially presented to the North. In other words, despite all the statements about political packages and solutions, nothing of that nature has reached the north and the strategy of war as a solution to the conflict is in the full throes of implementation.

Tragically, however, the government's military option has little chance of either ending the war or solving the conflict. Even in the hypothetical event of a military takeover of the Peninsula the war will not end and political solution will not therefore be implemented according to Col. Ratwatte's scheme of things. On the other hand also, strategies for capturing territory,

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militarily weakening the LTTE and then opening a dialogue from a position of strength is not constructive thinking either.

Although it appears that the immediate military objective of the State forces is to take control of the Jaffna Peninsula the possibility of realising such a task is also open to question. There are many contingencies that could derail the plan. The bottom line is therefore, the capture of large areas of territory and to militarily weaken the LTTE by engaging them in combat and inflicting heavy losses. Having achieved these proposed military objectives the government probably entertains the idea that a chastened and damaged LTTE will be like putty in their hands and be more disposed to political negotiations and

decisions. Such a line of thinking is parlous. One does not need to be a professor in psychology to understand that a weakened liberation movement that has lost large areas of territory and a people subjected to horrendous acts of cruelty and oppression by a government would not be constrained to engage in a dialogue with their tormentor. What is required is new thinking and a fresh input of constructive ideas to solve this ethnic conflict. The government of Mrs. Kumaratunga must surely realise that the war is, day by day contributing further and further to the creation of conditions for the prolongation of the conflict and even sharper divisions between the State and Tamil people. Contrary to what the State believes the shocking physical traumas inflicted on the civilian population during

military operations and the gross violation of the people's human dignity are not matters that can be soothed away or forgotten after a military takeover and control of the people, but will remain as tender scars, easily broken down to expose deep, painful wounds.

In theory and practice, the current strategy of Mrs. Kumaratunga's government, which aims at subjugating the Tamil people and destroying the LTTE will be counter-productive. War begets war and repression will lead to determined resistance. Time is still available for the Colombo government to find radical alternatives for a resolution of the conflict before plunging the country into an abyss of prolonged war and endless violence.

(Courtesy of 'Inside Report', Jaffna, October 1995).

Political and Military Objective of the Govt's Jaffna Offensive

by D. Sivaram

How will the fall of Jaffna town determine the general course of the conflict in Sri Lanka? To understand this in the correct perspective one has to examine some of the things which the government hoped to achieve by undertaking the largest military offensive in the Eelam Wars. It will also throw some light on how the Liberation Tigers are going to fashion their political and military response to the government's concerted attack on what they (the Tigers) have always perceived as their traditional stronghold.

The military planners of the government hoped to achieve the following objectives in launching the Jaffna operation. These objectives were political as well as military. Firstly, the series of operations aimed at retaking the peninsula which began with 'Leap Forward' was intended to demonstrate to the international community that the *de facto* separate state which the LTTE had established in the north is not militarily tenable. The government was quite alarmed that the lifting of the stringent regulations on travelling to the Tiger held areas of the north during the peace talks had given rise to much publicity for the *de facto* state run by the LTTE in the peninsula. Journalists, peace makers and Sinhala intellectuals were coming back from Jaffna with re-

ports of how the Tigers were successfully forging a new nation state in the north. A group of western diplomats who went to Jaffna on a fact finding mission also appeared to have been somewhat impressed by the structures of civil administration established by the LTTE. In short the government was beginning to be secretly concerned that the peace talks were helping the Tigers gain the much needed political credibility with the international community for ultimately legitimising the *de facto* state of Thamil-eelam and making it *de jure*. The severe restrictions imposed on travel to the north which since the beginning of Eelam War Two had prevented sections of the western diplomatic community in Colombo that were openly or privately keen to visit Jaffna from securing permission to enter Tiger territory. The denial of permission to an American diplomat in early 1994 despite insistent appeals by the ambassador under the UNP government is a case in point. It was pointed out by some senior officials who handled the matter at that time that granting such permission would set a precedent which could ultimately impinge on the country's sovereignty.

Needless to say this had already become a major area of concern for the Indian government as well. Delhi's policy on the Sri Lankan Tamil

question, as succinctly enunciated by J.N. Dixit in 1989, has long been underpinned by the principle that an independent Tamil state in the island would ultimately constitute a threat to its security, unity and integrity. Senior Indian policy making bureaucrats still tend to believe that the state of Tamil Nadu which has the longest history of secessionism in the Indian subcontinent may be affected by the emergence of a sovereign Tamil state across the narrow Palk Strait or even by the prospect of such a state being established in the Tamil dominated regions of Sri Lanka.

The government in Colombo was quite aware of Delhi's concerns. It was therefore quite sure that it would have the tacit but crucial and substantial support it needed from India for achieving the main political objective of the series of military operations which was aimed at bringing Jaffna under its control again. So, while Colombo needed the Jaffna offensive to demonstrate to the world that LTTE's *de facto* state was militarily untenable, Delhi, it may be said, needed its successful completion to strongly impress upon its own Tamil population among whom the secessionists sentiment was showing signs of rearing its head again, that the dream of a sovereign Tamil state was nothing but a dangerous folly. The Indian attitude is one of the main reasons why the government was prepared to go ahead with the offensive despite the strong reservations expressed by some of its best professional commanders about its suc-

cess. It must be pointed out here that many of the problems outlined by those commanders still remain quite valid and may determine the ultimate outcome of the military effort in the north. (Of these A.M.U. Seniveratne who was the Overall Operations Commander at the time was relegated to the volunteer force and Devinda Kalupahana one of the brilliant strategists of the Sri Lankan army who was Director of Planning at that time was packed off to Batticaloa).

The corollary to the first objective, of course, was the blow the fall of Jaffna town could deal to the morale of the Tamil community as a whole, inevitably impacting, it was assumed, on the support base of the Tigers both in Sri Lanka and abroad. It has been asserted by many and sundry military strategists for many years since the beginning of Eelam War Two that the Tamil population would lose faith in the Tigers if they could not prevent the fall of Jaffna this in turn, they said, would lead to the rapid shrinking of the LTTE's recruitment grounds and expatriate support — two key elements of Prabhakaran's staying power.

The second objective — though necessarily not in this order — was the destruction of the LTTE's revenue base which has generally been considered essential to sustaining the LTTE's large military and administrative structures. The Liberation Tigers constitute a major military challenge to the Sri Lankan security forces not because, as many tend to believe and assert, they are a very ruthless guerrilla force but because they have been able to efficiently mobilise vast resources to set up and run their military organisation like a conventional army. The LTTE's main revenue base was of course Jaffna. It had a dense population and a thriving economy — an indispensable revenue base for generating the resources needed for sustaining a large military and administrative system. It appeared at that time the Tigers were winning the Eelam war on another front by establishing and running a bureaucracy which comprised a large number of paid civilians and which was fast replacing the government's own civil administration in the peninsula and many parts of the northern province. The capture of Jaffna it was hoped, would lead to a sudden and irreplaceable loss of crucial resources required to maintain

the LTTE's conventional military power and administrative capability. This in turn, according to the proponents of this view, could reduce the Tigers to an 'average' guerrilla force confined to a cheaply manageable low intensity situation. The plausibility of this objective has very much been in question from the beginning in view of the tendency on the part of the civilian population in the peninsula to desert en masse from areas captured by the army. When people thus move out of an area and settle — temporarily or permanently — in Tiger controlled territory they would constitute, once conditions stabilise, a revenue base, though diminished in size as a result of displacement and destruction of property.

The third objective was a purely 'technical' one aimed at overcoming a major tactical and logistical disadvantage faced by the army in the peninsula since the beginning of Eelam War Two. The problem was this: the army had to defend itself and operate in the peninsula mainly from the Palaly, Kayts, and the Karainagar on one side and the Elephant Pass and Pooneryn camps on the other. The former set of bases, though located close to each other, could link up only by air and sea. Even minor military efforts required arrangements which inevitably tied down crucial naval and air power to logistical work. For example troops from Kayts going on leave to Anuradhapura had to be ferried to Karainagar and then to KKS to reach the Palaly air base to be flown to their destination. Rushing reinforcements in the face of major Tiger threats also posed a significant problem. This was noted with great concern by the northern commanders who reported on the Pooneryn and Mandathivu debacles. The problem, it was clear, could be surmounted only by connecting the three areas by land. This linking could be established only by securing three strategic points on the peninsula proper which at that time appeared to be firmly under Tiger control. These points were — a) The Ponnalai causeway, b) Aralithurai and c) Pannai causeway.

These places, in the army's view, had to be brought under control and be linked up safely and securely with the Palaly base. Once the army accomplished this at whatever the cost, it was said, the logistical burden on the army would ease greatly and help it tremendously to concentrate its resources on offensive op-

erations into other Tiger held areas of the peninsula.

The fourth objective is one that the army had tried to achieve on many occasions in the past with little success except in the battle for Elephant Pass in 1991. It arises from a long standing belief among western military strategists that an enemy would concentrate his critical military strength and resources in one place and thereby expose them to easy destruction (an effort which otherwise might be drawn in space and time) if something considered strategically crucial — a town, a line of supply, a stretch of coast etc., — to him is substantially and really threatened. The success of a war among other things is chiefly determined by the destruction or neutralisation of the enemy's military assets. Therefore it was hoped that an army operation to take Jaffna town would compel the LTTE for both political and military reasons to pour a sizeable and crucial portion of its military assets into a concerted defence effort. This, some planners assumed, would help the army with its superior artillery and airpower; destroy Tiger manpower and arsenal with ease in one place and within a short time. This did no doubt work to some extent, but not to the extent of dealing a decisive blow to the backbone of the Tiger military machine.

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Confronting Anti-NGO Hypocrisy and Hysteria

by Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu

The military offensive is bringing a particular type of politics to the fore which will restrict rather than expand political space for conflict resolution. It is jingoistic in character, laced with paranoia and viruperative in its expression. It hits all the populist notes of sovereignty, patriotism and popular prejudice to conjure up an image of an island besieged by unfriendly foreign foes determined to deny it the satisfaction of solving its own problems.

Reading the press, one could run away with the impression that there is to quote a favoured phrase, an 'alternative government' in this country which is made up of 'alien' non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They, with their local lackeys and quislings, have an independent agenda that is decidedly unfriendly to the majority Sinhalese community of this island.

Indeed they are unfriendly to the extent that they could be a Trojan Horse, a veritable Fifth Column planted to operate on behalf of the LTTE terrorists. The legitimate government of the land must bring this alternative government to heel. They must be held strictly accountable for their actions and finances and not allowed a wide latitude to besmirch the good name of our country, especially in this hour of military success.

Unless they behave they will face the righteous anger of our bureaucrats and our people and the experience will be extremely unpleasant. Once here, we have the capacity to thrash them into cramped rooms if necessary, where they can hatch their vile plans in discomfort, chastened if not chastised by spontaneous expressions of democratic wrath and red-blooded patriotism.

As we all know this has happened already. The NGO Forum had to scurry to and fro pursued by ardent patriots before it could meet. There were Sri Lankans with solid credentials in the human rights, civil and political rights movement who were harassed as foreign agents and as traitors to this land in this populist blood sport. Alleged subversion of our land was put paid to by blatant thuggery and intimidation. What

was the purpose behind it and what are the consequences?

According to our patriots, the NGOs are guilty of exaggerating the humanitarian crisis in the north in order to halt the offensive and to obtain more funds for themselves on the basis of these inflated figures.

The latter relates to straight forward deceit – they need cash to stay in business and will not think twice about exploiting any available opportunity to do so. The facts of the case are immaterial. A crisis is a bonanza. Their bona fides as 'do-gooders' are thereby sullied by their need/greed for cash. This is the 'NGOs as carrion' thesis, which has not been missed by their local detractors.

I do not know about the finances of the entire NGO community to cast aspersions on their integrity or provide them with a clean bill of health as far as their finances are concerned. My association with a number of them has left me with no doubt that they are honest and sincere and that the 'shoddy carrion thesis' is sheer nastiness. As for the exaggeration of the figures regarding the humanitarian crisis in the north, in the context of the offensive who was and is impartial or absolutely accurate on this score? There is a humanitarian crisis in that a large number of Sri Lankans are suffering and there is no absolute guarantee that the government has the ability and resources to alleviate that suffering, sooner rather than later. We need their help.

As for the political agenda of the NGOs in wanting to halt the offensive and prevent the defeat of the Tigers, what is the real evidence for this? Beyond wanting to provide relief, what is the evidence that the entirety of the NGO community are Tiger sympathizers? One cannot expect them to be partisan and yet perform their job. They have to stand by principles and by people rather than parties to the conflict.

My fear is that the attack on the NGOs is an indication of an alignment of forces that has been emboldened by the offensive to eliminate the political space for the devolution

package. They are not in a generous mood, have never understood ethnic conflict and appear to be pathologically incapable of transcending the bonds of majoritarian democracy that has created our current crisis.

Moreover, they really operate from the simplistic premise that we have a terrorist problem and once the LTTE has been dealt with militarily, there is no need for a political settlement. In effect, their point is that there is no discrimination and therefore no need to go further than the institutions and processes already in existence.

According to the editorial of this newspaper last week the NGOs are guilty of propagating the myth that Sinhala Buddhists were killing Tamil Hindus and of broadcasting a distorted image of the Tamil struggle for a homeland. Consequently the world has not been told that the true homeland of the Tamils was in South India which has 60 million such people.

Those Tamils who overflowed here about a thousand years ago, have always enjoyed a status similar to the indigenous people of this country, the Sinhalese.

What is politically worrying about this is that these people who have rushed to defend the offensive from being halted before it succeeds, are at variance with the government who ordered that offensive, on the role of the LTTE in conflict resolution and a solution to the ethnic conflict. The Government has not categorically ruled out a role for the LTTE in the future and the President has emphasized that the offensive is not a substitute for devolution and a political solution, for what she still sees as an ethnic problem. She we badly need to restore a sense of perspective on what is happening in our nation and state building enterprise before extremism is allowed to wreck it beyond redemption.

As this column has argued, by its primary reliance upon military force for conflict resolution, the Government has raised unreal expectations of its capability in this regard. The offensive is not the end and it could well be the beginning of a further phase of prolonged and tortuous conflict. The Government needs to be especially wary that it does not fall prey or captive to forces that do not share its long-term perspective on this conflict, but rather are fervently opposed to it. The President must be careful, not to allow those who not so long ago were accusing

her of selling out this country because of her vision of a democratic and pluralist Sri Lanka, to shrink the political space she requires to achieve that goal.

As for NGOs, it is high time that it was accepted that they are part of the architecture of an interdependent world and that they exist because states cannot and in some cases will no longer perform the tasks they were originally intended for. Rather than a conspiracy, NGOs

are a necessity in a world in which states at various times, have moved from being protectors and providers to predators. They have been at war with their own people and have been unable to satisfactorily provide for their enjoyment of the good life.

This is why NGOs have come into being and will continue to be necessary. Moreover, the work of NGOs has provided enough ammunition for political parties against governments and in the fight for rights.

The hypocrisy and hysteria of the anti-NGO forces has to be confronted. It is quite simply dangerous and part and parcel of our national crisis.

The President and the Government have their work cut out for them in fashioning a political coalition for power-sharing.

The sooner they commence this exercise the better or else they will find that their room for manoeuvre is very tightly restricted.

Sri Lanka Unlikely to See Peace in the Near Future

by M.R. Narayan Swamy

The outbreak of Eelam War III on April 19 did not come as a surprise to most Sri Lanka watchers. But it stunned many who had expected the high-pitched peace offensive launched by President Chandrika Kumaratunga after she had assumed office to act as a kind of guarantee against further conflict in the blood-soaked island nation.

Although Kumaratunga is now dismissed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as 'blood-thirsty' and a 'flesh-eating vulture', there is little doubt that she was concerned about the plight of Tamils and keen for a negotiated settlement of the dragging ethnic conflict.

Kumaratunga and her late husband, Vijaya, a film star turned politician who was assassinated by the JVP in February 1988, were among the few Sinhalese who dared to defy Sinhala chauvinism and speak sympathetically about the Tamils and even the militants in the mid-80s.

With such credentials, her peace efforts generated widespread hope and enthusiasm among the mass of Tamils, including those in Jaffna, which the LTTE administers as a *de facto* independent homeland.

No wonder the Tigers resumed a dialogue with Colombo, after the previous one dragged on for 14 months during the regime of President Ranasinghe Premadasa. The question is, though, why did the LTTE start fighting again.

The LTTE has its share of grievances. It now says that Kumaratunga was never sincere about peace, that she was secretly preparing for war while pretending to talk

peace, that she had proved to be just another cunning Sinhala chauvinist, and that her condemnation of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE chief, as a megalomaniac and the rebel organization as a mafia only proved that she never trusted the Tigers.

In such an atmosphere, the Tigers ask, can there be any trust, and in the absence of trust any worthwhile settlement?

While the deep ethnic divide that plagues Sri Lanka cannot be erased by Kumaratunga, it is difficult to believe that she had a secret agenda when she decided to go for peace talks with the Tigers. Indeed, her decision to partly relax the embargo on a wide variety of goods going to the LTTE-held north was not to the liking of the Lankan military and Sinhala-Buddhist hardliners, who advocated that the Tigers should be militarily crushed before any talks.

Some people thought that the assassination of presidential candidate Gamil Dissanayake by the LTTE would force her to call off the negotiations. She was cautioned that she was committing a blunder by talking to the LTTE, which, some said, could never be trusted.

If the cessation of hostilities had continued the credit would have primarily gone to Kumaratunga. The resumption of hostilities, on the contrary, has enormously damaged her political standing.

The LTTE's stunning attacks on the Lankan Navy, Army and Air Force since April only proves that the militants were the ones secretly and meticulously preparing for war. The government has been shown as unprepared, and according to some

circles, probably unfit to fight. It is little wonder that the LTTE, not Colombo, has faced international flak over the renewed fighting.

From its modest birth in 1976, when it was a ragtag group, the LTTE has had an astounding growth. Doubtless it is the most well-armed and most fanatical insurgent group in the world today.

The group probably did not have more than 50 full-timers in July 1983, when its annihilation of an army patrol near the University of Jaffna triggered countrywide killings of Tamils, focusing international attention for the first time on the Tamil ethnic conflict.

Within four years, thanks partly to the covert assistance from New Delhi to Tamil guerrilla groups, the LTTE ballooned numerically and qualitatively, and was able to take on the Indian Army in Sri Lanka's northeast. After suffering serious reverses at the hands of the Indian troops, the LTTE showed remarkable political intelligence by shaking hands with an obliging Premadasa which insured the exit of the Indians.

Today Prabhakaran's group controls one-third of Sri Lanka's land area (including almost the whole of the north), two-thirds of its winding coastline and runs a *de facto* government in Jaffna (with its own police, courts, jails, radio station, visa system and intelligence wing).

The LTTE's fighting strength is believed to be 10,000-strong, and although it is desperately looking for more recruits, this is enough to bog down the Sri Lankan army in Jaffna indefinitely. While LTTE guerrillas still indulge in sneak attacks, they now also launch brigade-strength offensives.

With all this, what could Prabhakaran have gained by agreeing to a permanent truce and settlement with Colombo?

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To his credit, he has never wavered from his commitment to the concept of Eelam, an independent homeland comprising the sprawling northeast. This steadfastness continued despite intense Indian government pressures when he was based in Madras for almost four years until January 1987.

But Prabhakaran refused to budge, and went on to destroy other Tamil groups like the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization when he felt they might side with New Delhi and agree to a compromise.

Indian External Affairs Ministry officials who dealt with him during that period maintain that the supremo was never enthusiastic about giving up fighting, although he tried to cloud his feelings at times.

The LTTE has rightly or wrongly come to believe that Eelam can be achieved. After almost two decades, the goal seems possible. A perusal of LTTE literature shows that the Tigers are supremely confident on this score.

Talks are useful to the LTTE only if they suit its interests. It has no faith in Sri Lankan politicians. No tangible solution, it thinks, is possible within the framework of united Sri Lanka.

That is why Prabhakaran refused to see then President Junius Jayewardene when Indian authorities flew him to Bangalore from Madras in November 1986 during the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

That is why the LTTE refused to tone down its demands when New Delhi arranged the first direct contact between Tamil militant groups and the Sri Lankan government in the summer of 1985 at Thimpu, Bhutan.

Both times, Rajiv Gandhi was upset with Prabhakaran. Only in the face of India's determination to go ahead with an accord with Sri Lanka in July 1987 did Prabhakaran appear to relent. The appearance, however, quickly faded away. And once the Indian army quit Sri Lanka, the LTTE saw no point in continuing its bonhomie with Colombo. The LTTE will do anything it thinks necessary for the sake of Eelam, regardless of the consequences. It is bothered about its goal, not about international opinion.

Prabhakaran has mastered the art of coming out of the tightest

corners. When his men faced disaster in 1987 as Sri Lankan troops marched on Jaffna, he played ball with India. When the Indian army began to breathe down his neck, he did a perfect about-face and warmed up to Colombo.

Everyone thought that Prabhakaran would be isolated when the India-Sri Lanka Accord was signed and the Indian army landed in Jaffna. Today the Accord is dead.

And just as Prabhakaran again seemed isolated internationally over his decision to resume fighting last April, his roving, Paris-based emissary, Lawrence Thilagar, managed a cozy meeting in Washington with Timothy Carney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs. It was the first official contact between the LTTE and the U.S. Administration. The problem in Sri Lanka is that there is no meeting ground for Colombo and the LTTE. The maximum the government can do for the LTTE is to grant autonomy. But the Tigers care nothing about autonomy. They firmly believe that Sri Lanka comprises two nations, Sinhala and Tamil, and that the two nations cannot co-exist.

Autonomy and however much Kumaratunga or anyone else could be able to grant would mean the acceptance of a united Sri Lanka. This is anathema to the Tigers. After having travelled so far, Prabhakaran is unlikely to retreat.

Rajiv Gandhi and Premadasa thought they could bring around the LTTE. But the group is not looking for power sharing; it wants absolute power, and that, too, as an independent, sovereign nation.

It seems convinced that it can keep on fighting until Sri Lanka capitulates. Its stunning attacks in Colombo, including the assassinations of leaders like Amrithalingam, Premadasa, Wijeratne and Athulathmudali, point to its dangerous strange hold on the capital.

And as the LTTE advances towards its goal with an unmatched ferociousness, Sri Lanka seems to be faltering. Even if Lankan troops manage to capture Jaffna, the Tigers would take to the jungles to carry on what they do best - fighting a classic guerrilla war.

Sri Lanka is unlikely to see peace in the near future. How the war will end is something perhaps no one can predict today.

AN INDIAN MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

Sri Lanka's Last Chance for Peace

by General K. Sundarji

Going by news reports, the Sri Lankan Army appears all set to enter Jaffna city. I am overcome by a sense of *deja vu*. The Sri Lankan Army had captured Vadamaratchi, having flattened out much of it, and the next phase was to be Jaffna. It was 1987; our Tamils in Tamil Nadu were busy burning Central government offices, attacking railway stations and post offices and generally signalling their solidarity with the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The question then was: 'What would happen in Tamil Nadu if Jaffna were to fall?' We were in South Block and the 'omniscient' were unveiling their assessments while the 'omnipotents' were pretending to listen - this was generally par for the course. The intelligence community said: 'Once the Sri Lank-

an forces launch their attack against Jaffna, it will fall in 20 days and with more destruction than in Vadamaratchi; the reaction from Tamil Nadu will be cataclysmic, and we may need to deploy four Indian army divisions to maintain law and order in Tamil Nadu'.

Junior ministers did chair these discussions but the viewpoint of the absentee big boss was articulated by the mouthpiece, generally a bureaucrat, who was at that time acknowledged as the reigning oracle. 'We believe that we have to do something and cannot stand by and watch. We can either barge in and help develop a Cyprus-like "solution" by establishing a virtual Eelam or "persuade" Sri Lankan President Jayewardene to give the Tamils a fair deal. What ought we to do?'

The signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord; the despatch of Indian troops to the Jaffna peninsula; the brief honeymoon with the LTTE, their perfidy, the subsequent fighting and capture of Jaffna city; the defeated Tiger licking its wounds in the jungles; the return of normalcy to Jaffna city and the peninsula; the holding of elections; President Premadasa secretly 'treating' with the LTTE, offering them succour and demanding the recall of the IPKF – all this is recent history and need not be recounted here in any detail.

The fall of Jaffna city to the Sri Lankan forces now would also have a profound geopolitical and psychological effect on the situation. What are these likely to be? What is the probable upshot? Much is going to depend on the statesmanship that President Chandrika Kumaratunga displays and the wisdom with which her government acts. There need be no doubt that the mass of the Tamil civil population is sick and tired of the war and would like an honourable peace with generously granted autonomy in the north and the east.

It is equally clear that the LTTE leadership is unsure of itself about handling peace unless it is on the basis of an Eelam that it can run dictatorially on its own terms. It would, therefore, prefer to continue the war, however fair, generous and honest Kumaratunga's offer of autonomy might be. Nonetheless, the key will not be the attitude of the LTTE, but that of the Tamil people. Will they return to Jaffna and help in the return to normalcy once the battle for Jaffna is over? Will they be able to resist the threats of the LTTE as they did after the Indian liberation of Jaffna?

The psychological effect of the fall of Jaffna is bound to make the Sinhalese right wing, including the Buddhist clergy, believe that there is little requirement now for the grant of any autonomy to the Tamils. They may also come to believe that a hardline solution can be rammed down the throat of the 'defeated' party. Even moderate Tamils, who constitute the bulk of the population, are bound to be dismayed at the loss of Jaffna owing to hurt pride and the fear that the Sri Lankan Government might impose a hardline peace.

The LTTE, meanwhile, will continue the war in a different manner. They will keep insurgency alive and fight a rural guerrilla war from their jungle bases, along with urban acts

of terrorism in Jaffna and other northern and eastern towns under the control of the Sri Lankan armed forces and possibly Colombo as well. On the political plane, they will exploit the anticipated Sinhala right-wing backlash in propagandising the Tamils into not cooperating with the Sri Lankan Government. This propaganda will, undoubtedly, be assisted by acts of terror and vengeance against the so-called collaborators among the Tamil population. The LTTE and its sympathisers in other parts of the world will also capitalise on stories of human-rights abuse by the Sri Lankan security forces in the liberated areas. I have no doubt that some would be based on reality and much on exaggerated and manufactured data.

Still, there are some basic differences between the situation – and the Tamil population – in 1987 and that which exists now. Eight years ago, when the Indian Army conducted operations for clearing Jaffna, some civilians did indeed flee their homes so as not to get killed in the crossfire. However, most of them stayed in Jaffna itself in temple and church compounds. The Indian Army did its best not to hit these areas with artillery or mortar fire. The population believed in the fair play of the Indian troops – at least there was no cause for doubting their impartiality – and this made for confidence. Today, the picture is vastly different.

The LTTE, by coercion and propaganda, compelled the bulk of the population to evacuate Jaffna. It portrayed this internationally as a sign of Tamil solidarity where the citizens of Jaffna would rather become homeless refugees than live under Sri Lankan rule imposed by their military. The evacuation of the population could also be exploited by accusing the Sri Lankan military of indiscriminate bombing, shelling and mortaring of innocent civilians. This, I believe, is a major tactical blunder on the part of the LTTE. The propaganda victory in the international arena, if there is one, will be a pyrrhic victory. The situation on the ground has turned in favour of the Sri Lankan armed forces with its heavier supporting fire power. The constraints that a resident civilian population would impose have been removed.

One of the arguments used by the LTTE to secure civilian evacuation is the plea that they have to defend their positions by shooting in all

directions and that civilians would be in grave danger. This has worked in favour of the attacker rather than the defender. The absence of a civilian population, that needs to be looked after by the attacking forces whilst still fighting the battle, has decreased the strain on the Sri Lankan Army, simplified matters and permitted them to concentrate on the LTTE, with no holds barred.

It is almost certain that the population of Jaffna will return after the fighting has died down. The Sri Lankans have re-established their authority in the town and the LTTE has not open presence. This will indeed play a decisive part in the return of normalcy. The population would perhaps be more resentful of the Sri Lankan forces than the LTTE for their forced evacuation and the resultant privations. However, there would be a realisation that Sri Lankan fire did not directly cause the death of too many people. If the forces behave with restraint and treat the Tamil population fairly, the fear and resentment – built up over decades of civil war – will begin to fade.

The cooperation of the people, their attitude towards Sri Lankan authority and their defiance of LTTE diktats would depend upon the generosity of Sri Lankan policy after the organised 'conventional defence' of the LTTE ceases and the guerrilla phase begins. A generous, fair and clearly set out political offer to the Tamils, along with firm counter-insurgency action against the LTTE guerrillas, could, I believe, win back the hearts and minds of the Tamils. Can the Government of Sri Lanka take such a decision and make it stick in the face of opposition from Sinhala chauvinists? Will the opposition parties in Sri Lanka desist from politicising the issue and fanning Sinhala fanaticism?

Assuming that all these difficulties are surmounted and a really good and fair offer made, will the Tamils believe in the honesty of purpose of the Sri Lankan Government? Will international or regional guarantees be required? If so, what forms should these take? These are issues to be discussed in the days to come, and a lot will depend upon the answers. There is absolutely no doubt that the fall of Jaffna will present another opportunity, perhaps the last, to the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil people for an honourable negotiated settle-

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Election Commission Blocks Rao's Poll Move in Kashmir

by T.N. Gopalan

They asked for azaadi (freedom). This man would offer only autonomy. 'How much?' they wanted to know. 'Well, sky is the limit,' he promised, but finally delivered something so pitifully small that the azaadi-seekers were outraged.

All that he gained in the process was that his image of a hopeless ditherer now stood transformed to that of an unreliable negotiator.

Such then is the story of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's attempts to extricate a mascot from out of the Kashmir tangle only to come a cropper.

The nation seems to be living through some tragic times when unscrupulous manipulators pass for great statesmen, and finally it is the people who pay heavily for it all.

Professing to sort out the Kashmir mess and also fulfil the aspirations of the agitating Kashmiris, Mr. Rao announced from Ouagadougou, the capital of the African republic of Burkina Faso, that elections would be held to the Jammu and Kashmir state legislative assembly in December next and that the Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord of February 1975 would be implemented.

The elected representatives of the J & K people could then sit down for talks with the Centre on the modalities of implementing the accord.

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ment to bring this long-drawn-out civil war to an end. Failure to grasp this chance will not only mean calamity in Sri Lanka but also impact adversely on the region. I believe that India should do all it can to facilitate a settlement, and it is in a unique position to reassure the Tamil people regarding the good faith of the Sri Lankan Government. Will our opposition parties desist from politicising the issue? Will the political parties of Tamil Nadu desist from supporting the LTTE? These again are crucial questions, and the track record of our political parties has thus far been dismal in this regard. One can only hope that a statesman-like approach will be adopted this time round by all parties.

(Courtesy: *India Today*, 30.11.95).

Well, if they so want the new CM could call himself Wazir-e-Azam (Prime Minister).

Apart from his commitment not to abrogate Art.370 by which Kashmir enjoys some special privileges – precisely on which grounds the Hindutva brigade is demanding that the article be repealed – there was nothing in the Ouagadougou offer to enthuse any self-respecting Kashmiri and everyone who counted for anything in the valley rejected it with contempt.

Not even Mr. Sheikh Abdullah, son of Sheikh Abdullah and on whom the Indian hopes of salvaging the situation in the valley still lies and with whom Mr. Rao had held prolonged consultations before coming up with his package, would have anything to do with it.

He is demanding the restoration of the pre-1953 status – the agreement between his father and Mr. Jawharlal Nehru the previous year by which provisions of the Indian constitution did not automatically apply to J & K, but subject to approval by the state assembly and the state government was invested with all residuary powers of legislation, confining central jurisdiction to defence, communications and external affairs.

Incidentally the July 1952 agreement was supposed to have been enshrined in Art.370 of the constitution. Rao then would uphold in theory the validity of the article but would not implement it in practice – implementing Art.370 would in effect be going beyond the Mrs. Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord.

(Many legislations had been enacted between 1952 and 1975 by which the autonomy of J & K was remorselessly diluted and whittled away).

Without the restoration of the pre-1953 status there was no way Farooq's National Conference was going to stick its neck out and participate in any elections, he made it clear.

Farooq's own credibility as a representative of the Kashmiris was open to question, and when he himself chose to cry off, the very election exercise threatened to degenerate

into a total farce.

However, the Election Commission saved the day for all concerned by refusing hold elections on the ground that conditions in the valley were far from conducive.

The EC's authority to take such a momentous decision has already been questioned in the supreme court.

The Rao government, for its part, swallowing its dismay, has reiterated its determination to further 'consolidate the situation, reduce the room for doubts on whether the atmosphere was conducive and thus restore the democratic process and institutions in the state'.

However, no force in the valley, barring of course Farooq himself, is prepared to allow any elections to be held there under the present circumstances lest they would give some kind of a legitimacy to New Delhi's rule.

Fulminated JKL leader Yasin Malik, 'We will see to it that no Kashmiri goes to vote and we will go to any extent to see that this farcical election is rendered null and void. . . we want azaadi – total freedom, freedom from both India and Pakistan. . .'

Putting the issue even more succinctly, Mr. Syed Ali Shah Geelani, acting chairman of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, (APHF), said, 'The security forces can herd people into polling booths and force them to vote. But this will not be a permanent solution. . . All we are demanding is that you ask the awam (masses) what they want. We will accept their verdict whatever it be. We know that neither our gun nor that of the security forces to solve the issue. . . But we have no other option left. . .'

Evidently Rao's idea was to force an election down the throats of the unwilling Kashmiris a la Punjab, steeling himself against possible devastating attacks from the militants and even wholesale boycott and thereafter bargain for peace with the elected representatives, however fraudulent the elections might prove to be.

If such a strategy could not work in Punjab, why not in Kashmir too, he should have thought.

So far so good. But then the timing of it all is easily suspect. No one in his senses could have mooted elections in Kashmir during a freezing winter.

How the government was propos-

ing to counter the challenge of the various militant groups, the Pak designs – Pakistan could increase tension on the border, tying up the Indian forces – and possible non-cooperation of the state government employees and so on it was never made clear.

Without a broadly acceptable package, genuinely democratic elections cannot be held in J & K. But apparently Mr. Rao's hope was that the very act of holding elections could prove a feather in his cap and could endear him to the masses, well in time for the next general elections.

It looked like the PM was prepared to subject the already harried Kashmiris to large-scale carnage in his cynical pursuit of electoral fortunes. As leading analyst K. Subrahmanyam put it, 'In essence, the election preparations have all the complexities of a major military operation. The J & K elections are likely to be the costliest elections both in terms of per vote expenditure and even aggregate expenditure.'

More than most it was Mr. Farooq Abdullah who felt terribly let down. The very man who had squandered away his father's legacy and who paved the way for the virtual liquidation of the democratic processes and who played a no less significant role than the wooden-headed rulers from New Delhi in effectively alienating the Kashmiris from the rest of the Indian Union, was pulled out of his self-imposed exile in London, and the centre seemed to offer him some straw to clutch at and redeem himself in the public eye.

But Mr. Rao in the event could not muster up enough courage to offer a reasonable package which Farooq could in turn try and sell in the valley. But then it was not to be.

By itself the 1975 Accord was not all that bad. It did reiterate the primacy of Art.370 and empowered the J & K government to decide to review the laws made by the parliament or extended to the state after 1953 on any matter related to the concurrent list.

However neither Farooq the father nor the son seriously pursued such an option, and now it is widely perceived as a manifestation of Indian imperialism since the then ageing Sheikh had been arm-twisted into signing on the dotted lines by Mrs. Gandhi.

And these are days when round-the-clock vigil has to be kept by the

Indian army to prevent Sheikh's grave from being desecrated.

Under such circumstances it would have been sensible on the part of the Indian government to offer Farooq something concrete to work on. While New Delhi might have been hoping to do a Punjab or Assam, perhaps a more appropriate parallel would be Jaffna. So much are the people alienated and so strong is the militancy.

A number of opinion polls conducted in the valley recently clearly show that the Kashmiris are for seceding from the Indian Union, whatever the consequences. Some fundamentalist sections are pitching for merging with Pakistan but very few are for remaining within Indian Union. For all the ills afflicting this country, the Kashmiris would be more comfortable with the Indian ethos than with the fundamentalist intolerance and sectarian strife plaguing Pakistan. The Kashmir sufism is considered one of the most syncretic and tolerant religious traditions in the world. The Kashmiris refused to go with Pakistan and had actually resisted invasion

by the latter, it may be recalled here.

Blunders committed ever since the time of Jawaharlal Nehru – did he not go back on his agreement with Sheikh and arrest him barely a year later on mere apprehensions that the latter was planning secession – have contributed to a situation wherein India has become thoroughly discredited and come to be seen as an oppressor nation.

The cost of keeping a subjugated and humiliated people as a part of the country is becoming increasingly prohibitive. As noted writer and human rights activist from Jammu, Mr. Balraj Puri, observes, 'The cost would be in terms of suppression of the democratic character of the Indian state, its secular and moral basis, the civilizational values of the nations as well as its international prestige.'

'An intelligent and rational ethnic policy is necessary for a country like India not only to deal with fissiparous tendencies within but also as a source of inspiration and cultural influence for its neighbours', says Puri.

Tamil Nadu Wakes Up On Lankan Tamil Issue

by T.N. Gopalan, Madras

It is not yet a storm in the state. But it was much more than a case of leaves stirring.

At last the leaders of Tamil Nadu shook themselves out of their long, deep slumber and organised a 12-hour bandh on Nov. 30 protesting at the continuing killings in Jaffna and the sufferings of hundreds and thousands of displaced civilians and also demanding that the Centre intervene in the crisis and put an end to the misery of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The response of the people was very heartening and the bandh was total. Transport services were crippled and both private and government establishments declared a holiday. Even the airport authorities rescheduled the flights for the day so that no plane arrived or left Meenampakkam during the bandh period.

The southern railway administration got mud on its face, seeking to maintain its services, but was finally

forced to cry off in the face of a determined opposition.

The successful bandh which passed off peacefully was a personal triumph for DMK leader M. Karunanidhi for it was he who was behind the call and succeeded in making even his political foes including Chief Minister Jayalalitha fall in line.

The event attracted nationwide publicity and put the Lankan issue back on the agenda of the state. The last time the state had witnessed a bandh in support of the Lankan Tamils was in July 1990 when Karunanidhi was in power.

After the Rajiv assassination and after Jayalalitha became Chief Minister this was the first time that a bandh was organised in solidarity with the island Tamils.

An interesting aspect about the bandh was that nowhere was a single slogan raised or a poster

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pasted hailing the LTTE or Prabhakaran. Everywhere the stress was only on the sufferings of the Jaffna Tamils in general. There were not even voices supporting the call for a separate Tamil Eelam – and this despite the fact that most of the nationalist organisations are composed of avowed Prabhakaran supporters.

That was because those who organised the demonstrations knew that hailing Prabhakaran would be inviting trouble, besides the people at large might not appreciate such a stance. Anyway the choreographer, Mr. Karunanidhi, was not willing to push for any pro-Tiger line. Put pressure on the centre and make it intervene in the crisis was his refrain throughout.

The one politician who revels in the role of an uncompromising Eelamist and Tiger-cheer-leader, V. Gopalasamy was completely overshadowed by the crafty erstwhile boss. He could not bring out his cadres on to the streets on the bandh day evidently because DMK men were already out in strength, picketing railway stations and so on. He had to content himself with issuing some rabble-rousing statements.

In many places the refugees were even allowed to take out processions denouncing Chandrika.

Enthused by the overwhelming response to the bandh, the Tamil nationalist organisations are said to be planning to further intensify the agitation and Karunanidhi himself is reportedly not averse to such moves.

If the sufferings in the Jaffna peninsula increase and no steps for a political solution are initiated, the temperature in the state could go up and the Lankan tangle could even become an election issue.

The Sri Lankan media Minister and cabinet spokesman Mr. Dharasiri Senanayake is reported to have described the bandh as an 'ill-informed' exercise and regretted that the political parties here were 'acting on a false premise'.

As Mr. S. Guhan, a retired IAS official and who has acted as advisor to the Karunanidhi regime, told this correspondent, 'the ethnic ties are too strong to be sundered by some mishaps or tragedies. As reports of problems in Jaffna keep filtering in, political parties would definitely shed their inhibitions and take the matter to the streets. . . it would be

difficult for the Centre to ignore such developments. . .'

● Meantime in other developments the southern districts are marred by serious conflicts between the dalits (the untouchables) and the intermediate castes, notably the Thevars, a very militant community whose stocks are on the rise under the Jayalalitha regime.

Sasikala, though herself a kallari by origin and hails from Thanjavur district, is said to be assiduously promoting the cause of the Thevars, a kindred sect – in fact it was at her instance the two castes and agambudiyars, another intermediate com-

munity, have been banded together and are to be called officially the Mukkulathor, a honorific generally made much by the Thevars only.

The Pallars, the dalit segment inhabiting the south, are locking horns fiercely with the Thevars and the administration has been seen to be siding with the latter, resulting in police action against dalit hamlets.

Chief Minister Jayalalitha is said to be caught in a cleft stick, as it were, unable to either protect the dalits or rein in the Thevars or at least her confidante. The situation seems to have ominous portents for the polity.

Nasreem Denied Indian Visa

Controversial Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen, who is hiding in Germany from Islamic fundamentalist wrath in her country, has been denied an Indian visa.

Nasreen, who applied for a visa at the Berlin office of the Indian Embassy in Germany last month, has not been granted for the time being. Nasreen is in Germany on a fellowship.

The sources said her visa request was referred to the government in New Delhi which in turn advised against acceding to it for the time being. One source made a distinction between being 'denied' a visa and 'not being granted' a visa for the time being. Privileged sources in New Delhi explained that the government had 'legitimate concerns over granting her a visa' in view of 'sensitivities of communities.' The reference to communities was apparently meant to describe Muslims who, it was feared, could disapprove of her presence.

Nasreen had to leave her country in August last year following threats to her life from orthodox Islamic groups in Bangladesh who sharply rebuked her for propagating a 'libertarian' and independent lifestyle. They particularly objected to one of her novels, 'Lajja' (Shame), in Bengali that sympathetically portrayed the plight of minority Hindus in her country after nationalist Hindu groups in India demolished the disputed Babri mosque structure in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh in December 1992.

Nasreen has been eager to visit India, a country she is said to 'love', partly to meet with relatives and friends, expected to come from Bangladesh. News reports have said she was denied an earlier visa request in January that she made to the Indian Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden.

Although there was no official com-

ment in New Delhi over nonissue of a visa to her, some political sources said Nasreen's visit ahead of India's general elections sometime early next year 'is fraught with political consequences.'

'In that sense she is in the same boat as Salman Rushdie,' one source said, describing how the two writers in the midst of violent controversies because of their books could disturb political equations in India.

But government sources played down the denial saying 'it is a routine matter. Governments have their own reasons which need not necessarily be spurred by politics. There are reasons of law and order too.'

There has been little popular reaction to the reported denial. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had earlier criticized fundamentalists for hounding Nasreen, has not reacted. Nasreen said last year that she disapproved of Hindu fundamentalists as much as she disapproves of Islamic clerics in Bangladesh.

Past Copies of Tamil Times

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The Language of Belonging and Bloodletting

by Ram Manikkalingam

The language of belonging lends itself to bloodletting. The rhetoric of nationalism favours war, and that of war, nationalism.

On April 19, Tamil nationalists easily justified the Tigers' violation of the ceasefire and rejection of negotiations. And today, Operation Riviresa, the Sri Lankan Army's largest offensive in the North, runs the risk of giving Sinhala nationalists a new lease of life.

Tamil extremists rejoiced at the collapse of the ceasefire on April 19. They resorted to perverse justifications of Tiger intransigence. Food was not sent to the North, they claimed, while the Tigers took the fresh stocks and released the old ones to the Tamil people. Take away the Pooneryn army base, they called while the Tigers purchased SAM missiles in the international arms bazaar. Let us strut around with our AKs in the East, they clamoured, as the Tigers recruited hundreds of children and took them North.

Tamil extremists were emboldened by the string of Tiger successes. Two ships were sunk and two Avro transport planes were downed in a week. A series of camps were attacked and destroyed in the East. A separate Tamil Eelam, they thought, was around the corner. Tamil extremists cheered in Toronto, London and Paris. But Tamils in Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa did not.

They knew better. From bitter experience they braced themselves for the inevitable and inexorable government military response. They also knew that the Tigers would flee and they would be the first victims of war, whether as refugees, the injured or the dead.

Operation Riviresa was launched on October 17. The Army has reached the outskirts of Jaffna. The Tigers retreated and took the people with them. Having boasted that 'Eelam' was around the corner, the Tigers now have to admit they are no closer to it than they have ever been. The Tamil extremists are hard-pressed. Having justified war as a complement to negotiations on April 19, they need to backtrack and call for peace. They have short memories.

In the euphoria of the post-ceasefire victories, they forgot that however big a stick the Tigers use, the Sri Lankan state has always been able to respond with a bigger one. Unfortunately, it has taken Operation Riviresa to remind them of that reality.

If the Tamil extremist rhetoric of nationalism justified war on April 19, the rhetoric of war surrounding Operation Riviresa is giving rise to Sinhala nationalism.

Operation Riviresa has led to premature rejoicing about a permanent military victory. The baying of Sinhala extremist hounds has become more and more audible in the past two weeks. Emboldened by the scent of victory in the North, they are going after those who have advocated a just peace in the South. These Sinhala extremists suffer from as acute a case of political amnesia as their Tamil counterparts.

In September 1990, they thought the war was over once the Army recaptured the East. They decided that a political solution could be permanently shelved as they sought an all-out military one. Imagining they had defeated the Tigers, they ignored the Tamils. But the Tigers were not defeated and the Tamils still remained.

The Eastern offensive did not end the war. It only set the stage for a new phase. And since a political solution was ignored, this phase was no less bloody than the previous one. They are about to repeat the same mistake. The Sinhala Protection Society, The Society for a Unitary Sri Lanka and a host of other organisations with similar names have perked up with the offensive in Jaffna. They are excited by the military victories that may help them evade their political failures.

Their position is clear. Sri Lanka is a Sinhala country and devolution dilutes this by politically recognising its multi-ethnic nature. So they will intensify their campaign against the proposals.

Sinhala extremists were dispatched to the margins of Southern politics by the Sinhala people. The Sinhala extremist political current was debunked and its representa-

tives defeated in the parliamentary elections in August 1994. With the rise in nationalism that inevitably accompanies the rhetoric of war, they have hit upon Operation Riviresa as their chance to re-enter the mainstream.

But President Kumaratunga effectively put an end to this in a hard-hitting interview on November 23. Chandrika Kumaratunga rejected Sinhala extremist praise for carrying out Operation Riviresa: 'They did not help us pursue peace, nor have they lifted a finger to help us wage war.'

She reiterated the People's Alliance's strategy: 'They (Sinhala extremists) do not accept the presence of a Tamil problem. . . and we (the People's Alliance) do'.

The previous day, the Deputy Minister of Defence, Col. Anurudha Ratwatte, took on Sinhala extremists as well. Calling for communal harmony in the South, he threatened that 'pseudo patriots who incite communal violence (against Tamils) will be rounded up and sent to the front to fight the enemy.'

These interviews were timed to ensure communal peace in the aftermath of the recapture of Jaffna or bomb attacks by Tigers against civilian targets in Colombo. They were also designed to distance politically the PA Government from Sinhala nationalism and relegate the extremists to the margins of Southern politics, whence they come.

Finally, they signalled a government shift from the rhetoric of war that has been dominating Sri Lanka for the past two months to the rhetoric of politics necessary to pursue constitutional reform.

President Kumaratunga's commitment to constitutionalise radical proposals for regional autonomy is the only bulwark between a democratic multi-ethnic Sri Lanka and permanent war. She needs to initiate a political offensive against Sinhala extremism close on the heels of her military one against Tamil extremism. She should brook no delay in pursuing the political proposals to their conclusion: a new federal Constitution for Sri Lanka.

Only the language of national reconciliation that will accompany such an effort can heal the wounds caused by war and pave the way for a permanent peace.

Nationalism is about the political

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protection of one's cultural community. War is about men killing men, women and children. If protecting one's cultural identity is the end, pursuing peace ought to be no less valid a means than waging war. But the tragedy is that for Sinhala and Tamil nationalism it still is not. In Sri Lanka, the language of belonging continues to lend itself to blood-letting.

Ram Manikkalingam is with the Department of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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Today you have been offered the supreme opportunity to free yourself from the bondage of intolerance and terror. There is no need for your children to sacrifice their lives any more. You and your children can live in dignity and in peace as noble citizens of Sri Lanka,' she added.

Government plans for the battered Jaffna peninsula included restoration of electricity, reconstruction of damaged buildings and the top priority was to get the 1,000-bed Jaffna Teaching Hospital back to operation.

Attempt to Enslave: Predictably the LTTE summarily rejected the President's offer accusing her government of trying to enslave the Tamil people.

A statement from the LTTE's London office said that the government's sole aim was to bring back the people to army controlled areas and enslave them by trying to bring them under its own control. 'To defeat the scheme of the government, the LTTE advises the displaced people to proceed to the Vanni mainland. By doing this the Tamils are gaining liberty...and a prosperous future.'

The Paris-based international spokesman for the LTTE, Mr. Lawrence Thilakar, said that the refugees would not return to Jaffna camps south of lagoon and live under army occupation. 'The LTTE is supplying free boats, bus transport and medical

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SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION

The Milk Hoax

When the Faith Held People in Thrall

by Sukumar Muralidharan

A miracle wrought in stone and milk. A nation held in thrall for a whole day.

Stone takes a variety of sizes and shapes. Some of these, conditioned over centuries in the crucible of nature, display a regular crystalline or granular structure. These variants, which are amenable to a degree of polish, lend themselves to several practical applications, one among which is the sculpting of idols. Stone idols often constitute the centrepiece of ritualised religious observances in different social milieus.

Milk – a light fluid, chemically inactive under normal circumstances – is the basic element in the nutrition of new-born mammals. Those of a fastidious disposition might insist that milk is not a homogeneous liquid, but an emulsion, or a fine blend of fluids and particulate matter.

Pour milk over a stone object and it trickles off – that is the law of nature. There is no known physical law by which milk can permeate the tight crystalline structure of stone in ambient conditions.

On September 21, idols from the Shaivite pantheon – notably of Ganesha, but also of other deities such as Nandi and Parvati – were reported to be imbibing the fluid in copious quantities. The word probably went out from the national capital – there is yet no firm identification of the place where reports about this preternatural phenomenon started. Before noon that day, the rumour had gone around the

globe. Telephone lines buzzed with enquiries from across the world about the miracle manifesting itself in India. And in temples across the country, throngs of devotees queued up to make a votive offering of milk.

The evidence of the senses cannot be dismissed out of hand. One person's sensory experiences could conceivably mislead, but when shared across a large population, they are not quite so easily repudiated. It is immaterial how many people undertook the trial and came away convinced that stone idols of Ganesha were indeed imbibing milk that day. It is sufficient to know that a large number were. That would put the moral pressure on the scientific community to account for it in a credible manner, or else to concede that it did indeed belong to the realm of the inexplicable.

The difficulty is that when transposed to the domain of science, the phenomenon lends itself to a fairly routine explanation. Fluid flow must obey the gravitational pull of the earth – the only apparent exception is when the phenomenon known as surface tension creates a capillary action. Plunge a narrow tube into a body of fluid and in apparent violation of the law of gravity, fluid in the tube will rise above its level in the surrounding body. A wick in an oil lamp obeys the same principle, creating the conditions for a slow-burning flame. It is a fairly mundane phenomenon, but when draped in the aura of novelty it is one

that can cause a transient sense of wonderment.

This explanation was indeed preferred midway through the day of the 'miracle'. But it won few takers among the faithful. The crowds continued to grow at various shrines across the country. The earlier rumour, that the spectacle would only last till 1 p.m., was revised as the day wore on. The miracle was given till 6 p.m. to run its course. But wonderstruck crowds continued to mill around idols till late in the night, partaking of the ephemeral wonder. It was close to midnight when temple priests forcibly shut the door on the miracle. The deities presumably had had their fill of the votive offerings. And so too, seemingly, had the priests gained enough by way of material offerings.

The scientific explanation advanced on the day of the miracle was premised upon the axiomatic acceptance that the force of gravity must finally triumph. Whatever the optical impression conveyed by the forces of surface tension, the milk ultimately had to trickle along the contours of the idol and form a pool at its base. Beyond a point, the accumulation of milk would have punctured the illusion of a miracle.

The scientists who intervened on the day of the miracle obviously considered this a self-evident proposition. But they did not bargain for the camouflage options that were available to the perpetrators of the milk hoax. The typical pattern in Delhi was to periodically shower the idols with flowers and rose petals which would drop to the floor, covering over the accumulation of milk. And every so often, a devotee would, in a mood of extreme ardour, pour a substantial quantity of milk over the idol in ceremonial drenching, or *abhishekam*.

Since it was nobody's case that the milk offered as *abhishekam* would be

imbibed, there was little lost in conceding that it was accumulating on the floor. Once on the ground, it served the important function of concealment, blending homogeneously with the dietary offerings of milk. Idols are normally situated in well-drained sites, since ceremonial bathing is a frequent element of Hindu ritual. In time, the milk would have flowed out of the vicinity.

The mood of the moment was such that only a rigorous material audit of the amount of milk offered and the quantity flowing down to the pedestal of the idol could have established that the miracle was founded on rather watery premises. An escape hatch was always open — the true men of faith could argue that the milk accumulating at the base of the idol was not commensurate with the quantum offered.

Science and faith seldom blend without friction. Observation, control and replication constitute the foundations of scientific experimentation. The psychosis of a miracle is founded upon mass illusion and the prior specification of a narrow domain of applicability in space and time. September 21 was the day vouchsafed for the miracle. It was the day when millions, under the moral pressure to conform, willed themselves into believing that stone idols were drinking milk. On any other day, the believers might have been willing to attribute the same phenomenon to the force of surface tension. But so too would they insist that there was a difference of both magnitude and kind between the two. While no milk gathered at the pedestal of the idol on September 21, it was quite clearly doing so on all subsequent days.

Certain of the other preconditions of the miracle were of a fairly transparent nature. It was claimed, for example, that the idols would only take in raw milk. Once boiled, the fluid would not conform to the demands of the divine palate. As with much else that day, this piece of wisdom was again attributed to a direct transcendental intervention. But, for the sceptics, the considerations were altogether unambiguous. Once boiled, the fat content in milk crystallises out as a creamy layer. And an offering of boiled milk could conceivably contain some amount of cream, which would adhere most inconveniently to the surface of the idol.

After all the subterfuge, the ultimate weapon in the armoury of the cabal that perpetrated the hoax was that of faith. Some who went as sceptics came away as believers. Some who went as believers came away unconvinced, their ears resonating with the

murmurs of assembled devotees about the shallowness of their belief. It was a defining example of the operation of the mob psychology. Each person had to conform or bear the odium of being branded unworthy of divine benediction.

What precisely happened that day of September 21? The efficiency of the new network of communication ensured that the word reached remote corners of the country in good time. In a context of ideological vulnerability, of moral categories collapsing in a world of growing complexity, the rumour fell on the fertile soil of human credulity. Finally, mob psychology took over and the matter snowballed into a global phenomenon.

The key element in unravelling the mystery would be to trace the initial impetus for what is perhaps the greatest mass hoax the country has ever seen. Enquiries by Sanal Edamaruku of the Indian Rationalist Association seem to suggest that the first sparks were lit in Hardwar on the evening of September 20. That evening, he says, a group of sadhus in the temple town made an announcement that deities from the Shaivite family would drink milk the following day. Shortly afterwards, milk disappeared from the town. The sadhus who set off the rumour, Sanal Edamaruku insists, were the same who had come to Delhi a few days prior to join a demonstration in support of Chandra Swami, the beleaguered political operator and part-time godman.

This, suggests Edamaruku, clearly indicates that the milk hoax was hatched by Chandra Swami in a desperate attempt to arrest the decline in his political fortunes. And the slogans that were raised in the godman's Delhi ashram on September 21 lends credence to this viewpoint.

There are others who insist that Chandra Swami's undue haste in taking credit was no more than an afterthought. To these ranks belong the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which would like to portray the events of September 21 as a genuine manifestation of divine grace.

Giriraj Kishore, a senior VHP functionary was among the most effusive. The 'milk miracle', he claimed, proved that the dawn of a genuine Hindu nation was imminent. The next century, he insisted, would belong to the Hindu faith. But in the midst of these effusions, Giriraj Kishore could hardly conceal his irritation at Chandra Swami's claim to the authorship of the miracle.

Other observers are inclined to lay the entire hoax at the doorstep of the

VHP. The CPI(M) Polit Bureau, for instance, saw the event as an orchestrated build-up to the VHP's ritualistic Ekatmata Yatras, which are scheduled to climax during the Dasara observances, and kick-start the BJP's campaign for the next general elections. And by all accounts, the VHP's network of influence is sufficiently widely dispersed for it to start off a mass hysteria on this scale.

Statements of some sobriety and responsibility came from unexpected quarters. Orissa Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik was among the first to debunk the rumours and call for an inquiry into the channels of their propagation. The Union Home Ministry similarly took a serious view of the event, seeing it as the precursor to another phase of communal mobilisation and adventurist politics. In its rapidity of diffusion, the event highlighted how the politics of rumour still retains a certain potency. This is something that the Home Ministry had been made unpleasantly aware of in June 1994, when totally unfounded reports of President Shankar Dayal Sharma's demise swept the country alongside a variety of hypothesis on why the news was being kept under wraps. The official enquiry into that episode, conducted by the Intelligence Bureau, is yet to reach a definitive conclusion.

The official media did its bit to clear the air. Doordarshan's Hindi news digest on September 21 provided an ocular debunking of the miracle, with telling footage of a shoe-smith feeding milk to his tripod. The spectacle had been organised by scientists of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), who have since devoted considerable energy to the popular diffusion of the material basis of the supposed miracle.

But with all the hysteria having subsided, troublesome images do linger. Lawyers from Delhi's trial court have threatened the CSIR scientists with legal action for allegedly causing grievous hurt to the sentiments of the religious majority. A young woman lawyer from Patna, who undertook the job of demystifying the hoax with great avidity, has faced intimidation from the local unit of the VHP, which insists that it will visit the fate of Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen on her. Those who would like to stand by rationality and fairplay in public life might view the milk hoax as a passing aberration. But it could well turn out to be one episode in the resurgence of the new politics of religiosity.

(Courtesy of *Frontline*, October 20, 1995).

BOOK REVIEW

Sri Lanka Tamils – Ethnicity and Identity

Edited by Chelvadurai Manogaran and Bryan Pfaffenberger.
Published in 1994 in the USA & UK By Westview Press. Pages 241.

Review by Dr. Narapalasingam

All the contributors, who are well known for their expertise in the relevant fields, deserve to be praised for their in-depth research and painstaking work that have gone into the preparation of the different but related studies and the compilation of this volume. The need for such an integrated approach to analyze first all aspects pertaining to the distinct ethnic identity of Sri Lanka's Tamils and then their legitimate demand for liberation from central rule, hitherto, dictated by Sinhala nationalism has been perceived for a long time. The publication of this volume has gone a long way towards filling this lacuna.

The reader will be impressed by the enormous statistics compiled, analyzed and used by the contributors to show objectively the discrimination experienced by the Tamils in all matters that affected their status as equal citizens, security, welfare and traditional right to preserve for all future generations of Tamils that part of the island which they regard as their homeland. The real fear of losing their distinctive identity and culture, which had withstood the intrusions of alien cultures and social customs under 3 different colonial regimes for nearly 4 centuries was felt after Ceylon became an independent nation. The relentless actions of institutionalizing and legitimizing the exceptional dominance of the majority community in the state and polity, facilitated by all the unitary constitutions of Sri Lanka and which finally led to the demand for a separate state by the Sri Lankan Tamils are described lucidly. The reasons for their dissent to have intensified from passive resistance to armed conflict are also explained clearly. The authors have also referred explicitly to the numerous sources of information they have used in their studies for the benefit of the discerning readers. Their courage to say what is right rather than what is appealable is also seen from the revelation of those findings which can be construed to hurt the Tamil pride or expose some myths.

The introduction written by **Bryan Pfaffenberger** gives an excellent overview of the book's contributions. The

concise account of the rise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) covers the period until the early part of 1993. This is in contrast to some other contributions which do not cover in any detail the developments after 1990. This is, however, not a serious deficiency to diminish the usefulness of the book. In any case, the political events of 1994 before and after the August general elections are crucial to the issues addressed and the need for further work is obvious.

A key theme of the introduction is the common tendency to read history backwards either in the interpretation of Sinhalese traditions or in recognizing group identity as practised by the caste conscious Tamils. Many observers see the origin of Sinhala nationalism in the descriptions given in ancient Pali texts of the heroic feats of leaders like Dutthagamani, who expelled the Tamil invaders and restored righteous rule to the island. In this regard, he cites the work of R.A.L.H. Gunawardene in which the latter had written that there were Sinhalese who stood with the Tamils against Dutthagamani. This legend is (mis)read, claims the writer, to portray the leader as the prototypical defender of the Sinhala language, the Buddhist faith, and the Sinhalese race and the war itself as representative of the struggle against the Tamil ethnic group. It was only a struggle against a particular group of Tamils considered then to be unrighteous rulers. Until the rise of militancy which dismantled the well entrenched caste barriers in Jaffna, neither the 'low' caste Pallars and Nalavars themselves nor the 'high' caste Vellalars considered the former to be 'Tamils'. The 'low' caste Tamils are said to have their ancestral origin in a part of south India different from that of the Vellalars.

Sinnappah Arasaratnam's study on Sri Lanka's Tamils: Under Colonial Rule, is an appropriate precursor to the other studies in the book. Chronologically and succinctly covering all major historical events, he has presented the social, cultural and economic life of Sri Lankan Tamils, during the rule of Tamil kings in the North followed by the successive rule of the

Portuguese, Dutch and finally British colonial masters. His presentation will captivate the interest of the reader and is an invaluable reference material. As admitted, the history of the Tamils in the Jaffna peninsula is more comprehensive than that of Tamils in Batticaloa. The author has explained how the Tamils in the North and East evolved as separate socio-economic communities. Although the Tamils in the peninsula had strong cultural and economic ties with south Indian in the 17th and 18th centuries and to a lesser extent later, the Jaffna society had evolved differently from that in present Tamil Nadu. The various factors that contributed to the change from mainly an agricultural but yet self-reliant economy to one dependent mainly on remittances from outside Jaffna, after the advent of British rule, can be discerned from this study. The reader should not ignore here the terrain that separated the peninsula from the rest of the island, economic conditions and the size of the population at that time. Under the Portuguese and Dutch rulers, 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 the island under one central administration.

Dagmar-Hellmann Rajanayagam explains in her study titled 'Tamils and the Meaning of History', how the Sri Lankan Tamils perceive their history and how they use it. She has also drawn attention to the differences between the Sinhalese and the Tamil perception of history. To the Sinhalese their history is the history of Sri Lanka. One cannot disagree with the author on her assertion that historical events in Sri Lanka had been written with different motives, which did not promote national unity and peaceful coexistence between ethnic communities but ethnic strife. The controversies mentioned by her relating to the history of the people of Sri Lanka as written and interpreted by different scholars will continue unabatedly until eternity. It seems non-controversial to give emphasis to scientific data available in censuses and other similar sources to substantiate the various claims of the Tamils. Here too, as **Amita Shastri** points out, one must be careful as questionable methodology has been used by some contemporary Sinhalese historians to refute the Tamil claim that large parts of the Eastern Province are part of Tamils traditional homelands.

Both **Chelvadurai Manogaran** and **Amita Shastri** have used census data to show beyond any doubt the designs

of the successive governments to change the demographic pattern of the Eastern Province in favour of the Sinhalese by settling Sinhalese families in the Tamil areas through various colonisation schemes funded and executed by the State. The findings of the empirical analyses are also presented strikingly using relevant diagrams.

They have dealt with the consequences of successive government's colonisation policies to the long-term future of the Tamils in the North-East region; the former in great details, while the latter has examined them from the economic perspective. All the major development programmes implemented by successive governments benefitted mainly the Sinhalese leaving the Tamils to concentrate on the poorer and more arid areas and to depend largely on their own resources. The unfair balance of power was further exacerbated against them in the interests of social peace in the Sinhalese areas and promoting Sinhala nationalism.

The age-old and commonest strategy known to 'divide and rule' a group that has the potential to defy the supreme authority of the ruling class, has also been used by the governments of Sri Lanka at various times to prevent the emergence of the collective identity of Tamils as a single ethnic group. **Amita Shastri** draws attention to the consistent attempts of the centre 'to delink the Muslims of the Eastern Province from the Tamil autonomist demand through concrete material enticements to pro-centrist positions.' The rigid caste system that divided the Tamils in Jaffna and the lack of sufficient integration of the Jaffna and Batticaloa Tamils were made to unite all Sri Lankan Tamils in the North and East, irrespective of their caste, religion and area so as to confront the powerful pro-Sinhala polity in its persistent effort to marginalize the Tamils. The relevant studies in this book also emphasize the importance of this unity, essential to wield political power in dealing with any government in Sri Lanka at all times even under a federal system of government.

Amita Shastri's observations on the emergence of Eelam as an economically viable concept are brief but yet provide the rationale for the insistence of the Tamils to unify the Northern province and part of the Eastern province into a single unit. The topography, population trends and importantly the productive potential of these regions, especially that of Trincomalee must be considered to understand this determination.

Jeyaratnam Wilson's study on -

The Colombo Man, the Jaffna Man, and the Batticaloa Man: Regional Identities and the Rise of the Federal Party - discusses the role played by the Tamil leaders based in Colombo, Jaffna and Batticaloa in the politics of the island since 1917. Starting from the political leadership of Colombo Tamils, the evolution of Colombo-Jaffna leadership and later the Jaffna-Batticaloa leadership, in the wake of the developments that emerged detrimental to Tamil interests, can be seen from the chronological descriptions provided by him. Two observations are advanced by the writer. First, the credit for this unity is to the Federal Party and its revered leader S.J.V. Chelvanayagam. Second, 'the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora' has emerged as the equivalent of 'the Colombo Man' in economic terms with tenuous links with Jaffna or Batticaloa.

The study on caste relations and caste conflict in Jaffna by **Bryan Pfaffenberger** gives the reader a feeling of guilt, if he or she has roots in Jaffna. The new generation of Tamils may find it hard to believe that slavery, untouchability and apartheid based on caste existed in Jaffna, unless they read this book. The disclosures concerning the degraded, inhuman and draconian ways the Vellalars had treated the 'low' caste Tamils - Pallars and Nalavars - and how they prevented upward mobility of the latter in the Jaffna society by enforcing extralegally, numerous sumptuary restrictions on them will stir the conscience of any reader. One cannot fail to notice the analogy between the discriminatory practices of the powerful Vellalars described in the study and those of the Sinhalese-dominated governments, which hurt the politically powerless Tamil community. Ironically, it was the Vellalars who vehemently protested first against state discrimination which made them second class citizens.

Bryan Pfaffenberger, highlights the fact that although the Federal Party which initiated the campaign for Tamil unity succeeded in creating an electorate united behind the politics of ethnic confrontation, beneath the surface of unity inter-caste animosities smouldered. It was the ascendancy of the LTTE with its commitment to socialism and the use of coercive methods not only to achieve the political and social objectives but also to assert its position as the ultimate liberator of the Tamils that succeeded in liberating the 'low' caste Tamils. This observation tends to support the canon of liberation movements worldwide that in situations where a powerless group is unduly oppressed

by the might of another exceedingly powerful group or the state as in this case, only militant confrontation is effective. The reader may ponder about the validity of the belief that the end justifies the means!

Dagmar-Hellman Rajanayagam in her study - The 'Groups' and the Rise of Militant Secessionism - comes to the conclusion that the commitment of the LTTE to a political system based on one party rule and socialist ideology, will preclude the acceptance of a federal system based on democratic traditions.

This view apparently is not shared by others as can be discerned from the concluding chapter written by **Jeyaratnam Wilson** and **Chelvadurai Manogaran**. They believe that the LTTE can be drawn into the political mainstream by finding a suitable alternative for an independent sovereign Tamil Eelam. They have also recognized the imperative to work out the details of an acceptable system of governance with representatives of the LTTE. In this regard, LTTE leader's BBC interview broadcast in March 1993, not dismissing outright a federal scheme, which is referred to in the introduction to the book is relevant.

This informative book is indispensable to all interested in understanding the Tamil revolt in Sri Lanka. It is also invaluable as a reference book on Sri Lanka's Tamils.

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supplies. We have given them land to cultivate and land to erect cottages. Already various institutions have been established and we hope to set up businesses,' he added. Alleging that government forces were trying to starve the people into returning home, Mr. Thilakar said, 'It would be like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.'

'Due to the appeal made to the displaced persons by the LTTE, large numbers are daily flocking to the Vanni mainland. The Valikamam residents who had recently come to Thenmaratchi have welcomed the advice of the LTTE. There is no safety or prosperity in the land-starved Thenmaratchi area. The open lands of the Vanni are there for settlement. Fertile and quite healthy, the settlers have plenty of land to choose from. The travel facilities offered by the LTTE helps them immensely,' a statement dated 6 December from the LTTE headquarters in London said.

It would, therefore, seem clear that the Tigers would resist any move on the part of the people to move back to Jaffna even if the government were to reconstruct Jaffna and offer attractive facilities for their return to their original homes.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Tamil Hindu aunt seeks partner for niece, 33, slim, fair, 5'4", graduate. Send horoscope, details. M 820 c/o Tamil Times.

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Jaffna Tamil Catholic mother seeks doctor or other professionally qualified bride, 25-35 for son, 38, US citizen, executive in major American bank. Religion immaterial. Indian Tamil considered. M 823 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couple on their recent wedding.

Nihaldaran son of Mr. & Mrs. P. Nadarajah of 64 Temple Lane, Kokuvil East, Kokuvil, Sri Lanka and Lingeswari daughter of Dr. & Mrs. V. Ramadas of 11 Kathleen Avenue, Alperton, Wembley, Middx., on 1.12.95 at Sri Murugan Temple, East Ham, London E12.

OBITUARIES



Mrs. Ratnambiga Sambasivam of Vaddukoddai East, Teacher; beloved wife of Mr. Sambasivam, Research Officer, Dept. of Fisheries, Sri Lanka; loving mother of Gaithiri, Sharmini, Subo and late

Somanath; daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. Karthigasu (Maniam) of 'Chithamparam', Vaddu-East, Vaddukoddai; daughter-in-law of the late Mr. & Mrs. Somasundaram of Sithankerny; sister of Jogeessvaran (UK), Rajeswaran (Singapore), Gnanesvaran (Canada) and Indradevi (UK); sister-in-law of Sothimalar, Srivevy, Vasanthi and Srikantharajah; niece of late Mr. S. Navaratnam, Inspector of Schools, Moolai and Mrs. Navaratnam (UK), passed away peacefully on 12.11.95 and funeral took place at her residence in Vaddukoddai.

Members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who extended their sympathy and support. - 6 Newby Drive, Ipswich. Tel: 01473 273798/22 Lapstone Gardens, Kenton, Harrow. Tel: 0181 909 1713.

Mr. V.K. Mylvaganam of Malakam, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Annapoorani; loving father of Kandiah, Sivagnanasundaram, Sangarappillai, Thilainadesan, Kirupendiran, Selvaranee, Sivamany, late Ponnany; father-in-law of Josephine, Saratha, Pushpavathy, Kumaraswamy, Theivendiran, Nanda and Chandrika; grandfather of Menaka, Surekah, Sureign, Sangeetha, Pathumanapan, Senthooran, Aingaran, Piriayatharishini, Kasturi, Suganthini, Rajani, Ganendiran, Gajanthan and Mayuresan expired on 29.11.95 at Sarasalai, Chavakachcheri and was cremated on 30th November. - 105 Essex Road, Leyton, London E10 6EG. Tel: 0181 925 8463.

Kandiah Kumaravelu of Chavakachcheri, (retired Chief Accountant, Irrigation Department, Sri Lanka); beloved husband of Bhagavathy; loving father of Saroja; brother-in-law of Nagaratnam Sivakolunthu and Nagendram Thanabalasingam; uncle of Yogavathy (Chavakachcheri), Sundharalingam (B.B.C.. Madras), Suntharavathanan (USA); grand uncle of Dr. A. Vasanthi (Medical Faculty, Jaffna University), Vathsala Vijayakumar

(Colombo), Subhadra-Sanchayan (USA), Sumish, Santhish (USA), Thatha of Mithula, Senthana and Seyon passed away in Colombo. Cremation took place at Kanatte on Thursday, 7th December '95. - 29 Hamers Avenue, Wellawatte, Colombo 6.



Mr. Vettivelu Dhevadhasan, Retired Authorised Officer, Jaffna Municipal Council, born 20.06.1942; beloved husband of Thavamanidevi, Pharmacist, Teaching Hospital, Jaffna; loving father of Konesakumar (London), Hamsha and Revathy; son of late Mr. & Mrs. Vettivelu of Tholpuram; son-in-law of the late Mr. Sabaratnam and Mrs. Sabaratnam of Vaddukoddai; brother of Mrs. Kamaleswari Parinpanathan, Mrs. Chandreswari Ratnasingham, Venkadeswarathasan (Easan) and Mrs. Rajeswari Sabaratnam passed away in Chavakachcheri on 3rd December 1995 and was cremated on 5th December. - 72 Standard Road, Hounslow, Middx. TW4 7AS. Tel: 0181 230 4962.

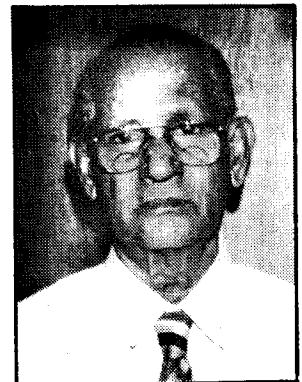


Chandra Ragupathy (Retired Teacher), beloved wife of Ragupathy (STH), loving mother of late Maya, mother in law of Arun, daughter of late V. Ariacutty & Mrs. Ariacutty (Colombo), sister of Jayendran (Germany), Indra (Colombo),

Mahendran (UK), late Vickneswaran, Rabindran (UK), late Subathra, sister in law of Christine (Germany), late Mahadeva, Dr. Maheswari (UK), Erin (UK), Somasundaram (Nallur), Gnanam Ramanathan (Colombo), late Mahendran, passed away on 26 November 1995 and was cremated on 3 December 1995, at South London Crematorium, Streatham. Husband & the members of the family thank all the relatives and friends who attended the funeral and sent floral tributes, messages of sympathy and assisted them in various ways. - 262 Wricklemarsh Road, Blackheath, London SE3 8DW. Tel: 0181 856 6859.

IN MEMORIAM

First Death Anniversary



In loving memory of Mr. Vellichorpillai Joseph (Nallayan) on the first anniversary of his passing away on 30th December 1994 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his wife Annamah; children Anand, Jean, Basil and Emil and their spouses; grandchildren and relatives. - 17339 - 85 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5T 0P7



In fond memory of Mrs. Rasamma Balasingam on the first anniversary of her passing away on 4th December 1994.

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her children, relatives and friends.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

January 1 Kaarthikai; Feast of Mary, Mother of God.

Jan. 3 Pirathosam.

Jan. 5 Thiruvembavai ends; Full Moon.

Jan. 6 Feast of Epiphany;

Jan. 6 7.00pm J.S.S.A. (U.K.) organises Fund Raising Dinner with light music by 'Geetha Vani' Music Group in Aid of Displaced Tamil Refugees in Sri Lanka at Walthamstow Assembly Hall, Forest Road, London E17. Tel: 0181 743 8289/399 7848/241 5881.

Jan. 14 5.30pm 'Tamil Concrn' presents Cultural Evening for Fund Raising to provide Humanitarian Aid for displaced Tamil Refugees in Sri Lanka at Battersea Town Hall, Lavender Hill, London SW11 5TF. Tel: 0181 458 4204 (Krishna), 0956 262684 (Venthan).

Jan. 15 Thai Pongal.

Jan. 16 Eekathasi; Feast of St. Jose Vaz.

Jan. 18 Pirathosam.

Jan. 20 Amavasai

Jan. 23 Sathurthi.

Jan. 29 Kaarthikai.

Jan. 31 Eekathasi.

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

Protest Against Sri Lankan Army Offensive: Thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils held a long vigil - from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. - at Burwood Park, Sydney to protest against the Sri Lankan army offensive in Jaffna and to remember those who had lost their lives in the war. At mid-day, several speakers including Australian politicians Mrs. Mary Easson, Federal M.P. and Mr. Paul Zammit, State M.P. for Strathfield addressed the gathering. Mrs. Easson said that she would take up the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils in the Federal Parliament. Hindu, Catholic and Christian prayers were also conducted. After nightfall those present held lighted candles and sang songs of prayer for the Tamils of Jaffna. The entire park was a sea of lighted candles.

A bucket was passed around during the day to collect funds for the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (T.R.O.). More than \$4,000 was collected that day. The collection campaign was continued through the Tamil Radio Programs in Sydney and over \$40,000 has been collected for the T.R.O. National Heroes' Day was celebrated on 9th December at Burwood Girls' High School, Sydney and a dinner to collect funds for the T.R.O. will be held on 17th December.

Lalgudi Jayaraman in Sydney: Carnatic music lovers enjoyed a rare treat on 5th November when the famous violinist Sri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman visited Sydney. The Wallace Theatre of the University of Sydney was packed that evening. Sri Jayaraman, his son Sri Krishnan and daughter Smt Vijayalaxmi played the violin to the delight of the audience. They were accompanied by the famous miruthangist Sri Karaikudi R. Mani. The audience were enthralled during the three hour recital and the artistes were given a spontaneous standing ovation at the end.

Medical Awards: The medical journal 'Australian Doctor' awards every year to doctors who have made a significant contribution in the field of community service. This year twenty doctors were selected from the whole of Australia and were presented with awards at a glittering ceremonial dinner at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Sydney on 1st December.

The twenty doctors and their spouses were present and many of them had come from places as far away as Perth. Two of the award winners were Dr. A. Balasubramanian of Sydney and Dr. V. Kulaendran of Perth. They were probably the first Tamils to win this award.

The Tamil Senior Citizens' Association incorporated in New South Wales and inaugurated in 1991 has a membership of 300. The association caters to the social, recreational and welfare needs of its members who are mostly those who had migrated to Australia in the latter years of their lives. The Tamil Senior Citizens' Benevolent Society is affiliated to the association and operates a self funded Death Donation Fund for its members.

The association in addition to providing relief to poor and socially disadvantaged persons, raises funds for charitable causes. In October '95, it organised a Food Fair to raise funds for the rehabilitation of persons displaced by the military offensive in North Sri Lanka. The profits realised amounted to over \$2,000, of which \$1,250 was donated to the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation for the needs of the displaced persons and \$500 was allocated to be forwarded to the Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa for the same purpose.

Book Launch in Melbourne

'Nenji Nilaittha Nenjanal' authored by the veteran journalist and writer Mr. L. Murugapooopathy was launched at a function held in Moorabbin Town Hall, Moorabbin, Victoria on 28.10.95, attended by a large gathering of well wishers and distinguished literati. Mr. Murugapooopathy was on the editorial staff of the Sri Lankan Tamil Daily 'Virakesari' and emigrated to Australia in 1987. The book is a vivid account of the author's experience with 12 prominent writers who are no longer living. The author is a prolific writer and this book is his fourth publication.

Mrs. Palam Luxmanan presided over the function and made the keynote speech.

The book priced at A\$7.50 is available from the author at 170 Hothlyn Drive, Craigeburn, Victoria 3064, Australia. Tel: (03) 9305 6246.

Dr. G.R. Handy - Pioneer Cardiologist - An Appreciation

Dr. G.R. Handy fondly and appropriately too, called George Rex (Georges were the reigning monarchs of Britain and Ceylon) by medical students of six decades ago was indeed regal in appearance. The word doctor is defined as teacher, cum clinician par excellence.

In the old medical school he was lecturer/demonstrator in physiology under the genial Professor Ellison, with Dr. A.C.E. Koch as junior demonstrator. Prof. Ellison,

the architect of the physiology department took on the teaching of the physiology of the special senses, reproductive system and histology and biochemistry together with practical physiology, biochemistry and histology.

The more clinical oriented aspects of physiology, circulatory, respiratory and the central nervous systems were part of the syllabus apportioned to Dr. Handy. The lecture theatre with a seating capacity for 100 had only 30 students comprising both senior and junior students; they were thus close to the lecturer's table usually mounted with experiments for demonstration during the lecture. The theatre was semi-circular, with well padded walls and floors.

The latter was to dampen the noise generated by the drone of the exhaust fans and the stamping on the floor by students. The lecture started at 3.00 p.m. The students would gather at the venue at about 2.45p.m. and take down verbatim a summary of the day's lecture put on the blackboard. This included line drawings, sketches and graphs in chalk. When the lecture starts the lights are dimmed so that the epidiascope pictures and lantern slides would be better seen.

From start to finish, for 60 minutes (not more, not less) Dr. Handy would hold forth, explaining the nuances of physiology - the science of the process of life without a scrap of paper before him. His lectures on the central nervous system were the climax of his teaching art. The basic anatomical pathways in the central nervous system were lucidly explained and the recapitulation of the numerous eponymous centres, nuclei and tracts were his forte.

Some of these were projected on the epidiascope preferentially because colour slides technology was still to be born. I possess some of these drawings to date and find there is little to add to them even today. He would trace the sensory input from the peripheral skin, joint, muscle and viscera to their termination in the central nervous system and trace the path of the outgoing commands to the effector cell or organ with extreme facility and clarity that the student felt that he was actually travelling in those pathways.

In the practical classes his skill in demonstrating experiments, helping the student to set up experiments were masterly. The experiments involved nerve-muscle preparation and heart, studying the effects of drugs, electrical stimulation and ligatures on the heart. All experiments had to be recorded on a rotating smoked drum in the form of a graph. He would advise, monitor and criticise each student's efforts individually.

This kind of tutoring (not spoon feeding) of the student went on in the biochemistry and histology practicals. In the latter the student had to stain and mount 100 slides. The technique was so good that some of the slides made nearly 60 years ago are still in good condition. *Pari passu* with his teaching chores he was himself a student preparing for the London MBBS as a prelude to sitting the MD London and the MRCP (Lond.) He would diligently attend the embryology lectures by Prof. W.C. Osman Hill, another master in teaching technique and a superb embryologist and comparative anatomist.

As years rolled by he went to England for his higher studies, a little delayed by the war. On his return he held various posts as physician. As resident physician, General Hospital, Colombo he had to be in charge of the blood transfusion services during very turbulent times for transfusion therapy. He had to do a Herculean task with crude instrumentation and technology that was in its infancy. As visiting physician he blossomed into a versatile and much sought-after clinician with a special bent for cardiology.

The spark that was in him for teaching was kindled into a flaming passion for teaching clinical medicine. His bedside teaching and ward classes were popular and eager students would form a close ring round him much like a rugger scrum. Equally, his bedside manner won him many affectionate patients from all over this country.

That is not all. He participated in the meetings of the Clinical Society of the General Hospital, Colombo – primarily meant for medical students, the Ceylon Medical Association, College of Physicians of Ceylon, the Ceylon Academy of Post-graduate Medicine, all of which he was president. He also pioneered cardiology in Sri Lanka and was the founder president of the Sri Lanka Heart Association.

In addition, he took an active part in all the social activities of all the medical associations and one must recall the signal service he did in maintaining the annual medical dance as the dance secretary. He showed unflinching interest in this great social event which not only shone as the dance of the year but also netted income for the Association.

Without sophisticated audio-visual teaching aids and without press button devices to scan the body for disease, he taught and doctored in a manner that is difficult to emulate at present. All his pupils, I am sure, adore him for his sincerity of purpose and his dedicated devotion to work and will be delighted to learn that in his name a ward is being donated to the Cardiology Unit of the General Hospital, Colombo. Well done dear Sir.

P. Sivasubramaniam.

Contributions are invited from those interested in the ward in his name. Donations are payable to Jaycey Trust Services (Pvt) Ltd., for G.R. Handy Trust, c/o Julius & Creasy, Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank Building, P.O. Box 154, Colombo 1.

Mylvaganam Paramanathan – An Appreciation

It is one year since the passing away of the late Mylvaganam Paramanathan, a well respected and great Science Master of Jaffna. It was very sudden and severely shocking. He was only 64 when the call came. Though it was untimely and unexpected, he died peacefully in New Jersey, USA, surrounded by his family, relatives and friends.

I consider myself privileged to have been closely associated with him as a friend and colleague for over a quarter of a century. Our friendship continued even after he left for Brunei and I migrated to Australia. I met him for the first time in 1954 when he joined the tutorial staff of his Alma Mater – Jaffna Central College. He was then a young science graduate of the Madras University, having obtained his B.Sc. degree offering Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. While at Jaffna Central College he obtained his Diploma in Education from the University of Sri Lanka. After serving Jaffna Central College in different capacities as Science Teacher, House Master, Staff Adviser to Advanced Level Union and Science Association, he joined the Specialist Government Teacher's Training College as lecturer in Biology and Integrated Science. During his stay in Sri Lanka as teacher and lecturer, Param and I spent most of our off duty hours in writing science text books in Tamil for the middle grades (Grades 6 to 8).

Param was himself a prolific writer. On his own, he has written text books in Chemistry and Biology for G.C.E. Ordinary Level and Advanced Level Classes. His books, though exam-oriented, were eminently readable and profusely illustrated. The topics were dealt with imagination and scholarly insight. All his books were readily accepted, approved and widely used through the country.

Param was a true nationalist. His enthusiasm for the mother tongue as a medium of instruction motivated him to sacrifice his leisure hours to the creation of Science Literature in Tamil. His books facilitated the transition of science education from English to Tamil. His efforts were appreciated by illustrious academics and national minded educationists like Cyril Ponnaperuma and Professor Eliezer.

His contribution to Science education extended beyond the publication of books. He chaired the Exam Council of the Northern Province Science Teachers Association (NPSTA) that drew up 'New Type' tests and conducted examinations in hundreds of schools to promote Science learning. Later, as President of NPSTA he was the first to convene an on-going research project on fresh water biology known as 'The Hydro Biological Survey'. He also organised a historic Jaffna Schools Science Exhibition to mark centenary celebrations of the Education Department of Sri Lanka. He served as Chief Examiner in Chemistry and Botany for the G.C.E. Advanced and Ordinary Level examinations.

It is said that teachers are born and not made. Param was by taste and tempera-

ment a 'Guru' and also professionally qualified to function as a Science Master. The lack of adequate promotion mechanisms in Sri Lanka for teaching excellence made him seek greener pastures where excellence would be recognised and rewarded. The Sultanate of Brunei offered him a teaching post in 1977 and he continued to serve in Brunei till his death. There in addition to class work he was much involved in the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school. His appointment at Royal Children's School earned him the direct attention and appreciation of the hierarchy.

Param was a man of exemplary character, a genius and genial personality and a gentleman to the full sense of the word. His popularity among his students, both past and present, was almost charismatic. He had a genuine interest in education and a true concern for his students and others dear and near to him. He was an intellectual humanist who lived up to the Tamil ideal.

**'The learned for more learning yearn and pray
As they see others enjoy what they themselves enjoy'.** (Kural 399).

There is always a devoted and understanding lady behind the success of a man. Mrs. Kiruba Paramanathan, herself an experienced teacher and an Emeritus Vice Principal of Vembadi Girls High School provided all the encouragement, assistance and a peaceful home conducive to Param's academic and professional achievements.

The Good Lord in his mercy has blessed Param and Kiruba in many ways. Their children – 2 daughters and a son, have completed their education, are employed and well settled in life. On his first death anniversary we join Kiruba, daughters Geetha and Sumi, son Chithiran and their families in thanking the Almighty for the life and services of our beloved Param.

N.S. Ratnasingham,

Emeritus Principal,
Jaffna Central College.

Nupura Kendra Presents Dance Extravaganza

Nupura Kendra School of Dance in Britain has been associated with dance presentations of high quality. The credit goes to Smt Subthra Sivadasan, who instills in her students a disciplined training, a devotion to the art and a sense of responsibility to the audience.

The shows presented by Smt Subthra – a student of Smt Balasundari Prathalingam and Adayar Laxmanan – are anxiously awaited every year and are always staged in aid of a historic Hindu Temple. This year's performance was in aid of Mamanga Pillaiar Temple in Batticaloa in Sri Lanka and was appropriately titled 'Mamanga Pillaiar'. The show went on board at the Ashcroft Theatre in Croydon. The programme opened with a Mallari and the audience was thrilled to see the Pillaiar Deity carried shoulder high in procession

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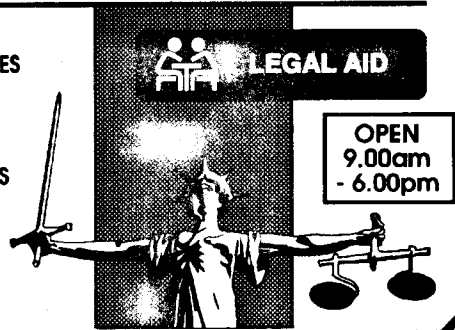
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by eight young dancers. (It is recalled that in an earlier performance a chariot (The) decorated with flowers was pulled by tiny-tots to depict the story of the Chariot Festival at the Koneswaram Temple in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.

Mallari was quickly followed by Varnam, Keerthanam and a Dance Drama – Ganesha Roopam – depicting how Pillaiar got an elephant head. After the Thillana was presented a Folk Dance. The Bangara Dance, from the Punjab, extremely popular in Asian gatherings in the U.K. was a happy choice for a Folk Dance. This item was an instant hit particularly with the teenagers.

Two Dance Dramas – Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Sivakamyin Sabatham – a complicated story of love, valour, courage and the might of an ancient Tamil Kingdom. Here again the dancers gave life to a Tamil Classic by the quality of their performance.



A scene from 'Snow White & the 7 Dwarfs'

Mr. Wimal Sockanathan, who compered the show in English and Tamil in his melodious voice in flowery language explaining each item emphasising the religious significance, richly deserves high compliment.

A total of approximately 60 dancers went on stage and it is extremely difficult to pin point any particular dancer for special mention, as all exhibited a very high standard of professional training.

The show is not without faults and cannot escape criticism. The excellent show was marred by very poor lighting arrangements. The audience and the stage were left in total darkness for about 15-30 seconds at the commencement of each item while the performance was already on. The orchestra was seen fumbling with scripts in total darkness. It is

hoped that these shortcomings could be avoided in the performance in 1996 which is being eagerly awaited.

Karthika.

Bharatha Arangetram of Bart from Netherlands



Nineteen year old, Bart Jacobs, born in Nijmegen, Netherlands had his Bharatha Natyam arangetram at the Tropical Museum Hall, The Hague on 22.11.95. He is a student of Smt Maduri Jeganmohan, under whom he had studied for 4½ years.

The repertoire consisted of the traditional items of a classical Bharatha Natya arangetram.

The highlight of the programme was the Shiva Thandavam in Revatha Ragam which Bart performed to a number of rhythmic variations. He was also able to perform the Karanas with ease due to the training he has had in Martial Arts.

Bart is at present reading for a degree in Economics at the University of Nijmegen. The accompanying artistes were Nathuvangam: Smt Maduri Jeganmohan, Vocal: Smt Ambika Thamootheram, Mirdangam: Sri S.V. Giridaran, Violin: Smt Komala Ramalingam, and Flute: Smt Usha Ramesh.

Russian Girl Excels in Indian Dance



Natalia daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Volodin of Moscow was fascinated by Indian Music and Dance from her childhood. When she was fourteen, she was fortunate to come under the tutelage of the versatile Guru Saradha Raguraman, an exponent of the Kalakshetra style of dancing.

After intensive training for five years, she had her arangetram at the Cultural Centre Muzenhof in the village, Leiderdorp on 11th November in the presence of a large gathering. She excelled in the Varnam in Devamanohari raga and the Thillana in Valji raga was performed with exquisite

grace. It is a dream come true for young Natalia, who will now impart her knowledge to children in Moscow.

She was ably assisted by the following accompanists - Nathuvangam: Saradha Raguraman, Vocal: Ambika Thamotheram, Mirdangam: S.V. Giridara, Violin: Komala Ramalingam, Flute: Usha Ramesh and Thambura: Stien Nowack.

Natalia's father Dr. Volodin is a famous scientist who is the author of many books on 'Low Temperature Physics'.

Professor Suriyakumaran Awarded United Nations Environment Prize

Professor Canaganayagam Suriyakumaran of Sri Lanka and the team of Dr. Norman Myers of UK and Dr. Peter Raven of USA have been awarded the 1995 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Sasakawa Environment Prize for their outstanding contributions to the protection and management of the environment. Dr. Misael Pastrana Borrero, Chairman of the Selection Committee and former President of Colombia said, 'In this 50th Anniversary year of the United Nations, it is most appropriate that this prestigious Prize be given to three individuals from different corners of the world. The committee wanted to demonstrate that individuals in both developing and developed countries are working in tandem to safeguard our planet.'

Professor Suriyakumaran, Chairman of the Centre for Regional Development Studies (CRDS) in Sri Lanka and a visiting Professor at the London School of Economics is a pioneer in the environmental field for shaping the nature of our responses to environmental challenges. He is greatly responsible for the new perception of multi-sectoralism with his observation long ago that 'environment is not a sector, but a dimension of all sectors.'



For more than 30 years, Professor Suriyakumaran has given his best to the environmental cause. He initiated the first steps in getting the Asian Development Bank to institutionalise the environment and provided concrete economic models

for environment/development cost and benefit systems. He fostered and encouraged the involvement of NGOs within the wider context of their societies, and has also played a key role in promoting global environmental programmes in the United Nations system. For his outstanding services to Asia, he was honoured by the King of Thailand as a Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Crown.

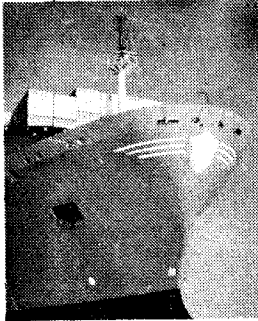
The UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize, worth US\$ 200,000 is considered one of the most prestigious environmental awards in the world.



Tamil Times wishes all its readers, contributors and wellwishers a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



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