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Sri Lankan Captain Arjuna Ranatunga proudly raising the World Cricket Championship Cup – Photo by Popperfoto

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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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Cricket and Sri Lanka's Image

No one will begrudge Sri Lanka's victory in the World Cup. They deserved it and got it. They started the tournament as 33-1 outsiders but have been crowned as the new world champions in cricket, a feat achieved with almost universal acclaim, when they convincingly beat the Australians by seven wickets with 22 balls to spare. The headline in London's Daily Mail, 'World Beaters With a Smile' summed up the praise sport commentators showered upon the Sri Lankan team following its magnificent victory over the most accomplished cricket side in the world today.

Sri Lanka, promoted to test status only a few years ago, has been engaged in an eternal quest for identity among cricketing nations. Always treated like a little brother of the two neighbouring cricketing giants of South Asia, India and Pakistan, the little island has now joined the big league on sheer merit. Aravinda de Silva scoring a brilliant unbeaten 107 with characteristic flair steered his team to a confident win thus claiming the Man of the Match Award. Sri Lanka's prolific opener, Sanath Jayassuriya, received the Award of the Most Valuable Player of the tournament.

The tournament and the superb performance of their team offered a rare opportunity for the Sri Lankans to rejoice in their moment of glory forgetting the conflict and violence that has characterised the island for over a decade. All night revelry and spontaneous celebrations that spread like bush fire across the island and the well deserved red-carpet welcome at the airport for their returning champions reflected the feeling of pride and exhilaration among the people.

Internationally Sri Lanka's name sadly has, up to now, been linked with the ethnic conflict and the resulting almost interminable violence accompanied by brutalities of various kinds. Despite its attraction for tourists who are no doubt fascinated by the island's natural beauty, the image that the country has been presenting in recent years is one of unremitting violence, death and destruction. For the moment, however, the island's cricketers by their impressive performance have put the island's image on a different and more attractive level internationally.

On the contrary, if one were to examine the recent period in the island's history, it reveals a contemptible commentary on the role played by politicians in powerful positions, prelates on elevated pedestals masquerading as defenders of the nation, language and religion, and newspaper editors and columnists, abandoning the cardinal principle of journalism that facts are sacred but comment is free and abdicating their role as impartial guardians of the public interest, pandering to power hungry politicians and engaged in catering to the base prejudices of the people. Over the years by their collective acts of commission and omission they contributed in no small measure to the present state of internal affairs of the country, particularly in relation to ethnic relations, and its abysmally low international stock.

A case in point is the much publicised recent gathering of a large number of Buddhist monks which demanded that the government should immediately abandon its devolution proposals because the proposals would ensure that 'the country, the nation and its principal religion would be destroyed'. They deny that there is an ethnic problem and say that the war should be continued until 'terrorism' is eliminated. Here is a body of persons who profess to follow the teachings of the Buddha – the original exponent and apostle of ahimsa – who advocate the continuation of a violent war which has already claimed literally thousands of lives! These priests should realise that their actions have not only brought disaster and destruction, but also discredit upon themselves and to the international image of the country. Living in luxury in their temples endowed with vast areas of productive cultivable land deriving enormous income and driving around in their limousines without adhering to the precept of simple living with the aim of achieving Nirvana, they peddle their exclusivist narrow chauvinist bigotry without realising that their own image in the eyes of every informed foreign commentator without exception is that they have been the primary cause of the ethnic problem and that they continue to be an obstacle to ethnic reconciliation in the country. Little do they realise that it is the announcement of the political package for devolution by the present government in August last year and improvement in its human rights record that have contributed to the enhancement of its international goodwill and support. The answer will become self evidently obvious if only these priests were to ask themselves the question as to what contribution they themselves have made by their actions to earn such goodwill and support for their 'country, the nation and its principal religion'.

On the contrary, never has so much positive been achieved for the image and recognition of the country by so few by their dedication and commitment to the sport of cricket as the smiling and dazzling cricketers have done. The sure way of retaining and building on what has been achieved by just eleven men is for all those responsible to work towards bringing an end to the ongoing debilitating and destructive war and resolving the problems facing the country and its people through a resumption of negotiations among concerned parties.

DEVOLUTION PACKAGE BEFORE SELECT COMMITTEE AMIDST OPPOSITION

From Rita Sebastian

Described by political analysts as the last chance for peace in the island wracked by a bitter and bloody ethnic conflict for over a decade, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform began its deliberations on 7 March on the legal draft of the government's devolution package to reach consensus on power-sharing with the Tamil and Muslim minorities.

The key players in the 23-member committee, besides the government, are the main opposition United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil and Muslim political groupings.

No issue in Sri Lanka's contemporary political history has generated such an acrimonious debate as the devolution package.

The deliberations began against a backdrop of strong opposition from a powerful section of the Buddhist clergy. Around 2,000 monks from across the country gathered at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall on 5 March, to express their opposition to the devolution proposals.

The Buddhist clergy is split in the centre over the devolution proposals. Those supporting the package, said recently, that those opposing it should suggest an alternative.

An outspoken critic of the government's proposals, the Venerable Maduluwewa Sobitha who addressed the BMI-CH meeting said that they had come together at a decisive moment in the country's history to protect the motherland.

He echoed the sentiments of former President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge that there was "no Tamil problem, only a terrorist problem." And it was the government's duty to first restore law and order in the country before it sought to put a political package on the table. The government's proposals, warned Rev Sobitha, would only lead to a break-up of the country and destroy communal amity.

The scholar-monk, the Ven Walpola Rahula also expressed his concern over the break-up of the island, which he said was the only Buddhist country in the world.

A key speaker at the meeting the Ven Chandananda of the Asgiriya chapter who also holds strong views on the package sees the union of regions as envisaged in the package as federal in con-

cept and therefore unacceptable to them.

At the initial stages of the Select Committee discussions the Minister of Justice, Prof G L Peris, the main architect of the package, will strive to keep out all contentious issues. He is on record that consensus must first be reached on the political structure, matters relating to the powers of the Governor and the Board of Ministers of the Regional units.

Although the main focus is on the devolution of power to the regions, there will be other issues that will be deliberated by the Select Committee. They include fundamental rights, language and the powers of the judiciary and the Executive. Some initial discussions have already taken place on the system of representation. There have been suggestions to make adjustments to the system of proportional representation as it exists now.

According to a member of the Select committee, with the government being in the majority in the committee, and the support of the Tamils and Muslims being assured, there will be no difficulty in the proposals being accepted. However, the support of the main opposition United National Party is critical to the whole exercise for without its support the proposals will not be able to secure a two thirds majority in Parliament.

Although some hawks in the UNP are opposing the package, political observers feel that the UNP has still not made

up its mind about the package. President Chandrika Kumaratunga lashing out at the UNP at every opportunity, for its sins and omission and commission during its unprecedented 17 year rule, has irked most members of the UNP.

The UNP's constitutional expert K N Choksy however has been entrusted with the job of making amendments to the package.

Although the government has told its coalition allies that the People's Alliance Government must speak with one voice on the devolution proposals, it is unlikely that the Democratic United National Front (Lalith faction) led by his widow Srimani Athulathmudali will subscribe to that.

Srimani Athulathmudali has already begun quibbling over various provisions of the package. Her main area of concern, however, is the unitary concept of the constitution which she feels is going to be devalued by the union of regions making it easy for a region to secede.

And the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress President, M Ashraff is demanding his pound of flesh as well. His argument is that if the Tamil demand for a northeast merger is conceded, then the Muslims should be given a separate unit themselves, carved out of the Muslim dominated areas in the eastern province, namely Muttur, Samanturai and Ampara.

What the country needs today, according to Ashraff, is "a new Tamil leadership who have the courage to stand up to the LTTE and negotiate with the government and the Sinhala parties with self-respect."

The deliberations that have begun, is the first phase in the devolution exercise and no one can predict how long it will take before brought before Parliament.

Military Stalemate At the Front

More than two months after troops captured the Tamil Tiger stronghold of Jaffna, Sri Lanka's ethnic war seems locked in a stalemate with authorities bracing for more guerrilla attacks in the capital, according to observers in Colombo. "Defeating the Tigers is going to be a long, drawn-out process and the capture of Jaffna was only a first step," defence analyst Vinod Moonesinghe is quoted as telling the press.

The military is taking delivery of more attack aircraft, helicopters and patrol craft in a major arms buildup which is part of efforts to militarily contain the Tamil Tigers. Increased rebel attacks in the east and last month's suicide bomb

attack on the Central Bank in Colombo, which killed up to 90 people, have belied expectations of an early end to the war.

"People in the south are totally demoralised. The fact the government played up the capture of Jaffna so much led people to believe the war was basically over. The capture of Jaffna was necessary but not sufficient," Mr. Moon. esinghe said.

According to military officials, the bulk of the troops who took part in the capture of the Jaffna town, from where the Tigers ran a virtual mini-state in the Jaffna peninsula, were tied down protecting the area from guerrilla infiltration. "We do not have enough troops for

major offensives in other theatres," said an army officer in charge of operations against the LTTE. Plans to open an overland supply route to Jaffna through Sri Lanka's northern mainland, currently under LTTE control, had been delayed by the need to counter stepped-up rebel attacks in the east, he said.

The other factor is that more troops have been deployed to protect Colombo after the January 31 attack on the Central Bank devastated part of capital's financial core. That attack and the subsequent discovery of another truck bomb raised fears of more Tiger strikes in Colombo. The city is now under a siege mentality with increased checkpoints, roadblocks and armed patrols. Military intelligence officials say they believe the Tigers are now going for economic targets, having failed to resist the army in conventional warfare in Jaffna.

Moonesinghe said he believes the military could have freed up more troops from Jaffna if it had immediately followed through with its success and cleared the rest of the peninsula, especially Point Pedro port where the LTTE's navy, the Sea Tigers, have their base. "Once the military holds Point Pedro, the LTTE's naval ability in the Jaffna peninsula will be considerably reduced," he said. "Similarly, the navy will have another base to operate from and it will be easier to control the flow of rebel supplies to the east.

While the government and the military top brass are contemplating their next move, reliable reports from the north indicate that the LTTE has recruited to its ranks literally thousands from among the student population displaced from Jaffna and who were evacuated to the Kilinochchi and Vanni areas. The new recruits have been put through an intensive training regime with the intention of deploying them in future operations. Strengthened numerically with these additional young men and women, it is said that the LTTE is making preparations to mount major military assaults on the main Sri Lankan military bases - the Pooneryn camp, Elephant Pass and the Palaly airbase.

In the meantime, it was announced by officials that on 8 March security forces detained 35 persons with alleged LTTE links Tamil Tiger suspects in a pre-dawn raid in Colombo and recovered several guns, grenades and ammunition. They also claimed to have found hundreds of identity cards, passports and the official seals of police officers in charge of city police stations in what appeared to be an operation in a forgery operation of a considerable scale. Among the weapons found were three assault rifles, six rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), 18 hand grenades, about 500 rounds of

ammunition, and twelve cyanide capsules.

A large contingent of Tamil Tigers killed 23 police, including 15 commandos, on 11 March after luring them out of their post in eastern Sri Lanka. It was the highest death toll in weeks of skirmishes between the rebels and the armed forces, which captured the rebels' major northern stronghold Jaffna last December. The police were acting on information that a large group of Tigers had gathered for an attack in the village of Vellaveli in eastern Batticaloa district. After arriving at an open space between two paddy fields, they were ambushed by some 300 Tigers. Two commando inspectors and a sub-inspector were among the dead. Twelve constables, seven reserve constables and a reserve sub-inspector were also killed. Four policemen were wounded. The Tigers lost 20 men in the encounter following the arrival of military reinforcements. The LTTE in a statement issued from London said that on 13 March, in a joint operation against the Tamil villages in the East, the Sri Lankan air force fighter planes dropped bombs on the Tamil residential areas in and around Vellaveli while the Sri Lankan military forces rounded up the surrounding farming villages. The Sri Lankan military sources claimed that LTTE camps or positions were attacked while the innocent Tamil civilians abandoned their homes and fled in fear.

The police in the meantime have issued a warning that Tamil Tiger guerrillas were posing as Buddhist monks and asked the public to be vigilant, state radio said on 29 February. The Broadcasting Corporation quoted police chief W. Rajaguru as saying that the Tigers had trained a group of about 20 cadres, fluent in Sinhala, Tamil and English, to operate disguised as monks. His warning came as police tightened security in Colombo following alleged intelligence reports that the LTTE was planning further attacks in the capital.

Meanwhile newspapers from Colombo have published detailed reports, quoting police sources, about the alleged connection that 56-year-old Ramalingam Dharmalingam who was arrested last month had with the LTTE. On 9 February, nine days after a suicide bomber drove a truckload of explosives into the Central Bank, killing 90 people and wounded 1,400, police arrested Ramalingam Dharmalingam, a 30-year veteran of the civil service working in the government Labour Department at the time of his arrest which followed from information given by a Tiger suspect who has been in the custody of the police.

Police have released little information about Dharmalingam's alleged activi-

ties. But the Daily News quoted Bandula Wickremasinghe, a high-ranking investigator, as saying that incriminating documents found in two suitcases in Dharmalingam's room prove that he was involved with the Tigers. "Many eyebrows will be raised at the heights from which the Tiger support comes," the state-controlled Daily News wrote in an editorial. "If there is one lesson from the incident, it is that we should report to the authorities any strangers who have come to lodge with us." Such reporting by newspapers are likely to increase the fear among the tens of thousands of Tamils living in the south of the island who are already victims of indiscriminate arrests on the flimsiest of suspicion.

It is said that a Buddhist monk, Shantha Shobana, was the first to grow suspicious of Dharmalingam. The monk recognized a newspaper picture of a Tamil guerrilla who allegedly detonated explosives concealed in a handcart piled high with coconuts in Colombo last August, killing 21 people. According to the monk, the guerrilla had been a frequent visitor to his temple, where Dharmalingam lived. The monk tipped off police, but they showed no interest. Why would Dharmalingam, an assistant labour commissioner, befriend a suicide bomber? Six months later, a Tiger suspect allegedly told stunned police during interrogation about Dharmalingam's connections with and activities on behalf of the LTTE in Colombo. He was also the brother-in-law of the former commanders of the LTTE, Kumarappah, who committed suicide along with 11 others by biting the cyanide capsule when they were taken into custody by the Sri Lankan navy in September 1987.

Police said, at first, Dharmalingam denied everything. But a week after his arrest, police dug up two large plastic dolls buried in the Dharmadhutha temple at Narahenpita, where he shared a room with three unsuspecting Sinhalese. Hidden inside the dolls were 16 grenades and the detonators for two rockets that were found close by. Dharmalingam has been living in the room at the temple for over ten years.

Police intelligence believe that they had made a major breakthrough with the arrest of Dharmalingam. They also think that the arrest of two Tigers who escaped death on the mission to attack the Central Bank on 31 January may yield another intelligence bonanza. Rarely have commandos of the Black Tiger unit, trained in suicide attacks, been captured. When threatened with capture, most consume cyanide capsules that they wear around their necks. Following confessions by the two, police claim that dozens of other suspects were arrested.

It was 5 December 1995. Little did I know that it was a red letter day for Sinhala Buddhist patriotism until I found myself surrounded by a mob on Model Farm Road at Borella around 13.15 hours. I was harassed by these patriotic citizens of Lanka because they suspected that I might be a threat to the "nation's security." It was from them that I learned that Jaffna had been "liberated" and that the Lion flag had been hoisted in Jaffna town by the victorious Sri Lankan army. This was an occasion not only for celebration but also to watch out for possible attacks in Colombo by Tamil Tigers, and I had aroused the suspicion of the local vigilance group by the mere fact of being a Tamil. On that day and at that moment of nationalist hysteria, it did not seem easy to prevent some people from crossing the border of sanity and rationality into a realm of paranoia and fantasy.

Model Farm Road (MFR) was an unfamiliar territory to me although I am an agricultural economist by profession; and, moreover, my business on this road had nothing to do with model farms either. I had an appointment at 13.00 hours with a person (whom I shall call Kam) living down that road to discuss some ideas I had about a research project. The meeting was arranged by an old friend. I had some difficulty finding Kam's house. This was due to my usual absent-mindedness. I thought I had the address slip in my pocket but I discovered only after reaching MFR that I had, as I usually do with slips with addresses and telephone numbers, left it on the desk in my hotel room. But I remembered my friend mentioning one landmark near Kam's house, a Buddhist temple. So I was quite happy when I saw the temple. I stood in front of it and looked around and decided to knock on the door of the house that was nearest to me just to find out if anyone there knew Kam's house. As I got to the door I was amused by a sticker on it which read: "Jehovah's Witnesses, Don't knock. We are Catholics." A Catholic home opposite a Buddhist temple and a gentle warning to Jehovah's Witnesses! Is that not peaceful coexistence in practice? I dared to knock as that warning did not apply to me, an atheist. But there was no response. Perhaps there was no-one inside, or did my knock sound like that of Jehovah's Witnesses?

As I turned away from the door, I noticed some people standing in the tem-

AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEFENDERS OF THE NATION

N Shanmugaratnam

ple's compound looking at me. I asked a passer by if he knew Kam's house. He pointed at one down a by-lane and I went there and pressed the bell. I was only two minutes late and that did not call for an apology. But there was no answer from Kam's house either. A man, who appeared to be a housekeeper, came through a side door and said that Kam had gone out for lunch. After waiting for about fifteen minutes, I decided to go back to the main road and call a taxi to return to my hotel. And then the whole drama began to unfold and I had my first taste of the latest wave of fear and patriotic fervour in a neighbourhood of casual workers, unemployed youth and lumpen proletariat.

I stood on the side of the main road some fifty metres away from the temple, took my mobile telephone out of my shoulder-bag and called a taxi. While doing this, I discovered that a group of people were watching me from about ten metres away. As I looked around, I saw more people looking at me from their houses and compounds. I did not know that I had come under the watchful eye of the Civil Defence Committee (CDC) whose task, I learn later, was to look for strangers in the neighbourhood and report their presence to the police. The group that was ten metres away was only five metres away now. They were looking hard at me. I knew that I was in trouble. Some of them moved closer to me and asked "Oya kaudha?" (Who are you?). I answered in Sinhala: My name is Shanmugaratnam but quite unconsciously switched to English and asked back "What's the Matter?" Of course, by mentioning my name I had revealed my ethnic identity.

What are you doing here? Somebody asked. I explained that I had come to see a person and since he was not there I was trying to call a taxi to get back. "There is a taxi here, why don't you take this?" asked a man in Sinhala pointing to a three-wheeler that was parked nearby.

"I prefer a car taxi." I replied in English.

"Sinhala katha karanna baridha?" (Can't you speak Sinhala).

I replied in Sinhala that I could speak some Sinhala although I am a Tamil. By now the crowd had increased to about twenty around me and several others had gathered at some distance away. I also noticed some women and children standing in front of their houses and watching the scene.

"Show us your ID?" asked one man.

"No, I will not show my ID to you, only to a policeman or to someone who is authorised to check a person's ID." I flatly refused but offered them my hand phone and asked them to call the police if they wanted someone to check my identity. None of them would touch my phone. The man who wanted to see my ID looked at the phone with grave suspicion. Did he think it might be some other device? Some in the crowd showed signs of agitation while some others in the innermost circle around me kept looking hard at me. The others were passive onlookers. But the situation was getting tense and situational leaders were emerging.

"So you won't show your ID?" said a tall bearded man in a pair of shorts and a T-shirt. I refused again but this time I tried to mention my age and my position in a foreign academic institution and the fact that I was in the country as a consultant to a well known development agency. The leaders became more aggressive and at this point I began to feel that the crowd was turning more hostile. One man said, "We know that so many Tamil academics are Tiger supporters. Don't you think that we don't know about that professor in Jaffna University who designed underground buildings for the Tigers. We have to hand you over to the police. Today is a day we cannot take chances. Jaffna has fallen and the Flag has been hoisted there. We have to be watchful of elements that may want to create troubles here. The nation's security..."

"Look, here is my phone, call the police or any other government authority you like." Again they did not take my offer. Someone proposed that they should bring the hamaduru (the Buddhist priest) to the scene and two persons set out in the direction of the temple. "When the hamaduru comes, he will have to show his ID," said the tall bearded man whose face was turning stoney. He was actually addressing the little crowd around

him. They nodded in agreement and Stony Face was now emerging as the leader. I was hoping that they would use my phone and call the police as I felt I could deal with the police better than with the lumpen proletariat of Borella masquerading as the local CDC. For once I felt that I might be safer with the state apparatus than with a crowd whose behaviour was becoming unpredictable. Something within me said that once in the hands of the police I could use my contacts and sort matters out quickly. How strange, a man like me who had been writing and speaking against the police state was now wanting to get the police to save me from the "people!" But the point is that I was dealing with men driven by two contradictory impulses, both depriving them of their ability to be rational and reinforcing their hostility towards me. On the one hand, they had become intoxicated with heavy doses of the chauvinist triumphalism supplied by the media and the demagogues of Sinhala nationalism ever since Operation Riveresa began. On the other, their minds were filled with fear of Tamil terrorism, a fear that was not without justification but made them excessively paranoid. The result was a temporary paralysis of their human capacities to reason out and analyse. I felt inadequate to communicate with them as my ethnic identity disqualified me. To these people, I represented the "Other" which had lately been stereotyped by some local level "defenders of the nation" as terrorists or their aiders and abettors.

Yet I did try to engage in a political dialogue. I got an opening when a boy started talking like a propagandist on Rupavahini about the threat to the nation's security and so on. "Rate arakshawa..." he began. It sounded as though he was about to make a speech on the security situation in the country. I cut him short when I put my hand on his shoulder and said in Sinhala "putha (son), you are a Sinhalese, I am a Tamil but both of us are Lankans and you must recognise that I have the same rights as you. If you all want to harass me because I am a Tamil, or suspect that I am a Tiger because I am a Tamil, there is no point in talking about a united country..."

The boy chose not to continue with his speech, but Stony Face took one step towards me and stood straight making it clear as to who was in charge. But I did notice a smile on some faces. Perhaps, they were amused by my Sinhala and my valiant attempt to make a little speech, or maybe they saw my point!

I thought I should at least let some friends know what was happening to me. I called the only number that I could recollect at that moment and it happened to be that of two friends living in Co-

lombo 7. The one who answered the phone said that they would come to MFR immediately and also asked me to tell my self-appointed interrogators that she would like to talk to them on the phone. When I conveyed this to the men around me, Mr Stone Face was the first to open his mouth, "we don't want to talk to your friend, all we want to do now is to hand you over to the police," I repeated, "call the police or give me the number, I will call."

As I looked away from the crowd in frustration, I saw the Buddhist monk steadily walking towards me from the temple. He was accompanied by three or four persons. He looked quite young, maybe in his twenties. It is not so easy to gauge the age of a Buddhist monk but this one looked really young. As he moved closer to me I had a clear view of his whole self draped in the saffron robe. What an unpriestly expression on his face, what a mismatch between the face and the robe, I thought as he walked towards me through the crowd with his eyes sharply set on me. The hamaduru kept waving a passport size photograph all the way and held it right in front of my eyes as he came close to me and stopped. The picture was too close to my eyes and I had to take a step back to be able to see it properly. Yes it was his photo and he turned it and showed the attestation on its back. Apparently, the Bhikku was the leader of the CDC. He wanted to see my ID and I showed him my passport and told him that I wanted the police called immediately. When I offered my phone, the bhikku did not want to touch it but mentioned a number which I dialled only to get an engaged tone. The bhikku said that he would go back to the temple and call the police from there.

I was quite upset when I first saw the expression on the priest's face. It was not one of compassion (karuna) but of anger and militancy. I had hoped that the bhikku would behave differently, at least more sensibly. But his demeanour had more in common with that of the mob that had taken me hostage than with anything sensible. I know that there are some bhikkus who are different, who are for peace and devolution. Unfortunately, this one was not one of them. He appeared to belong to the mainstream of the Sinhala Buddhist clergy. I felt that I had already been tormented for an hour or so but it was not more than half an hour. I realised this when I looked at the time as I saw Kam driving in with my old friend, Kalu. Kam stopped his car when he saw me and seeing Kalu there was a pleasant surprise to me.

Kalu came out first asking "Shan, is there any problem?"

"Yes, these people are harassing me

just because I am a Tamil."

"Don't talk like that. Let me deal with them."

Kalu told the crowd that he had known me for many years from my student days at Peradeniya and that we had been colleagues at a government institute for several years. They did listen to him but said that they had some doubts about the explanation I have as to why I was at MFR. Kam's presence and Kalu's intervention helped to make the crowd calm down, and now the 'balance of power' appeared to be shifting in my favour! In his good old inimitable style Kalu tried to make me laugh and did succeed when he said "machan, when I saw you in the midst of this crowd, I thought you were addressing them, you know... like in your younger days!"

I saw LJ arrive. He got off his car and presented himself to the crowd holding his ID in his hand. He only mentioned his name, but that was enough to reveal his position too. Again to my pleasant surprise, he was accompanied by my old friend Sisira whom I had not seen in fifteen years. Like Kalu, Sisira told the crowd that he had known me for many years. In a couple of minutes, the Borella police arrived in a jeep and a motorcycle. By this time, the crowd had become much bigger. The scene looked like a public meeting that had been disturbed by some trouble makers. Some women and children, who were watching the happenings from their house compounds, now moved towards me perhaps to take a closer look at this stranger with a greying beard and wearing a dark brown kuruta and who was spotted and cornered by the vigilant men of their CDC as a possible threat to life and property. LJ spoke to the police. He asked me to get into his car and I did. The priest stood there rather quietly for a while, and then went up to the police and spoke to them. A policeman told LJ that I should be brought to the police station to make an entry. LJ told him that I would travel in his (LJ's) car. At Borella police station, a policeman took down my name and address. LJ took them to his home and offered some Scotch saying, "you really need a drink now after all the ordeal you have been through." Some other friends were also there. We sat down and I related the whole episode to my friends. At the end of my story one of them remarked, "you know what would have happened to you if you did not know someone like LJ. You would have probably been locked up in a cell at Borella police station. Is this the way to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people, and don't we know that self-styled patriots and local thugs have got into the so called Civil Defence Committees?"

THE WORLD CUP - A REVIEW

* An unprecedented wrangle broke out even before the World Cup tournament began when Australia and West Indies refused to go to Colombo to play their matches against Sri Lanka because of "security considerations" for the players in the wake of the suicide bomb attack which left the capital's commercial heartland devastated and resulted in the death of 90 and over 1000 injured. No amount of persuasion, cajoling or outright attacks could change the minds of the Australians or the West Indians who understandably placed a high premium on the personal security of their players.

The Sri Lankans were annoyed primarily for three reasons. Firstly, they along with India and Pakistan were joint hosts of the whole tournament, and as one of the hosts there was a feeling of insult inflicted by the Aussies and the Windies. Secondly, the cricket authorities in Colombo had made elaborate and expensive arrangements for the matches to take place in the island, and if the scheduled matches did not take place, they would lose a lot in monetary terms. Thirdly and probably more importantly in political and economic terms, the refusal of the two teams to turn up in Colombo for the very reason they had given would have provided a propaganda coup in political terms to the Tamil Tigers, and confirmed the perception internationally that Sri Lanka is an insecure place for tourists. After all the island depends to a considerable extent on tourism for its hard currency earnings and any act of discouragement of tourists visiting the country would adversely affect it economically.

The refusal of the two teams, particularly the Australians, to visit Sri Lanka was subjected to severe criticism not only within the country, but also abroad particularly in the UK press. In a damning editorial, *The Times* in London said Australia's current crop of cricketers lacked courage and diplomacy and that the West Indies would never have joined the boycott if Australia had not set such a "craven example". "They have upset the organisation of a complex tournament and handed a propaganda victory to the murderous Tamil rebels who hold Sri Lanka to ransom," the editorial added. Even the weekly *Economist* and other daily tabloids in the UK joined in the attack on the Australians.

In response to criticism heaped on Australia, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said, "To be attacked by English tabloids is a badge of honour I wear with pride." Denying that the decision of the Australian Cricket Board not to go to Sri Lanka had resulted in strained diplo-

matic relations with Colombo, Mr. Evans said, "There is an acute sense of disappointment that the Sri Lankan government has and the people have, not only about being denied access to a cricket match, but about being painted in the eyes of the cricket-following world as a country in which terrorism can be rewarded," and added, "I have had a good relationship with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister...I have been a bit surprised at the intensity of the language that Sri Lankans have used," but he understood the strong feelings in the country on the issue.

* A positive fallout from the cancellation of the matches with the Aussies and Windies was the visit to Colombo of a joint Indo-Pakistan cricket team to play a friendly match with the Sri Lankans. The coming together of India and Pakistan, uneasy neighbours who have fought three wars since independence in 1948 and still locked in battle over the disputed Kashmir issue, was regarded by political commentators as a significant political development besides the demonstration of the developing solidarity among three south-Asian nations. Pakistani players, including their captain Wasim Akram, playing in a team with an Indian captaining it was in itself considered very significant.

* The headline writers in London enjoyed a field day after England was subjected to a humiliating defeat by Sri Lanka. The tabloid *"People"* hailed the five-wicket quarter-final defeat by proclaiming "What a Load of Lankans!", adding: "The end of the world came with barely a whimper from England when Mike Atherton's losers were slaughtered at Faisalabad." "It's Over and Out," according to the *"News of the World"*, which like the *"Sunday Express"*, pondered about the positions of captain Atherton and team manager Ray Illingworth, who according to the latter, was "fearing for his future". The much more respectable broadsheet Sunday *"Observer"* opted for "England's Disgrace", reflecting: "From W G Grace to disgrace seems a fitting epitaph to English cricket today...A five-wicket pummelling by Sri Lanka, until recently the makeweights of the international game, provided England with their homeward passage from Pakistan after another inglorious performance in the World Cup." Meanwhile, according to the Sunday *"Independent"*, the players are "Hapless, Hopeless, Humiliated." The paper added: "England are on their way home from the World Cup, and judging by the standards of recent performances, no one

will be more relieved than the players themselves."

* India erupted in joy as Indians danced in the streets, fireworks lit up the night sky and usually packed cinemas were virtually empty as the country celebrated the World Cup quarter-final triumph against arch-rivals Pakistan. "Victory," screamed a banner headline in the *"Asian Age"* newspaper. "India Whips Pakistan," said the *"Pioneer"*. "Azhar's Men Snatch a Dream Victory," said the *"Hindustan Times"* making the reference specifically to the Indian team's skipper Mohammed Azharuddin who led India to a 39-run win against Pakistan. "We don't mind if India loses to Timbuktu. But India has to beat Pakistan," cricket fan Haji Mohammed was quoted as saying by the *"Indian Express"*.

* Pakistani cricket fans smashed television sets and one committed suicide amid national gloom over Pakistan's defeat by arch-rivals India in the quarter-finals match after Pakistan lost to India by 39 runs in the southern Indian city Bangalore on 9 March. Distraught at the defending champions crashing out of the tournament, college student Jaffer Khan fired his AK-47 Klashnikov (one wonders how and why he came to possess it) into his television screen and then turned the gun on himself in the town of Mardan in North West Frontier Province, according to a report in the Urdu-language *Jhang*. A front-page cartoon in the English-language *"Frontier Post"* showed a row of freshly-dug graves with a sign reading "A plot for each player" - a reference to incentives of land and cash offered by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari to Pakistani cricketers if they retained the Cup. The Urdu-language paper *"Nawa-e-Waqt"* quoted a Moslem religious cleric, Maulana Naqshbandi, as blaming the débâcle on what he called Pakistan's "obscene" imitation of Indian culture. He also said Pakistan could not expect to win anything as long as it was governed by a woman. "Any nation which made a woman its ruler never prospered,"

said Naqshbandi, apparently ignoring England's quarter-final humiliating defeat by Sri Lanka, whose Prime Minister and President are both women. Wasim Akram, the Pakistan's captain who did not play in the match due to illness came in for much abuse in Pakistan and was even accused of having committed a "war crime" against the country and people of Pakistan by not playing even if was indisposed.

* The Sri Lankan team was awarded the World Cup semi-final against India after crowd trouble prevented play from continuing at Eden Gardens in Calcutta

on 13 March. Match referee Clive Lloyd took the players off the field when bottles and other missiles were thrown from sections of the 100,000 crowd. A subsequent attempt to restart play was unsuccessful. Security staff battled to restore order and the players reappeared from the pavilion 20 minutes later, but the umpires felt unable to restart the match.

After Sri Lanka scored 251-8 in their 50 overs, India had collapsed from 98-1 to 120-8 when the trouble started. Indian captain Mohammed Azharuddin, whose decision to field after winning the toss was to backfire spectacularly on a pitch that took spin to an increasing degree, did not attempt to excuse the home supporters. "You all saw what happened out there," he said. "None of us are proud of it."

Sri Lanka reverberated with fire crackers and people took to the streets singing and cheering to celebrate their team's victory over India in spite of the abandonment of the match due to crowd trouble somewhat overshadowed the gloss of the victory. People began singing on the streets as Sri Lanka were awarded.

In Calcutta city, angry cricket fans burnt the effigy of captain Azharuddin and set afire posters and banners hailing cricket heroes and the World Cup. Outside the stadium, many beat their chest in the Indian habit of mourning. Groups of fans gathered on street corners in Calcutta shouting "Down with Azharuddin" and "Down with India." The "Asian Age" under front page banner headline "India Fall From Grace at Eden" said "Before the match, Sri Lanka's players had high security. After the match, India's players needed that security...After four days during which the egos of Indian players had been bloated by adulation, India were destroyed by a display of classic team effort rather than individual brilliance. Sri Lanka were superb. Officially Sri Lanka won by default. The fact was that they pulverised India in every department of the game."

Amidst all the fuss and bother about cricket, space expert and writer Arthur C. Clarke, who has made Sri Lanka his adopted home, made no secret of his boredom with World Cup cricket but his criticism was with the speed of the game and not its intellectual standing in the order of the universe. A news report datelined 10 March stated that he 78-year-old Sri Lanka resident as dismissing the game as the "slowest form of animal life." "As one who enjoys watching this elegant game for a maximum of 10 minutes, I repeated the old and good-natured pun that cricket is the 'slowest form of animal life'," Clark the author of "2001 - A Space Odyssey" was quoted as saying. The English-born

Clarke told the press that he could not understand why "apparently grown men" spent so much time chasing a leather ball.

In the meantime, former Pakistan test cricketer Qasim Omar confessed on Australian television on 10 March that he had been involved in bribery during his career and claimed that authorities in Pakistan had turned a blind eye to the practice. Omar, who played 26 tests for Pakistan, said on commercial station Channel Nine's 60 Minutes programme that he had "thrown" his wicket in the 1984 series in Australia after being offered a bribe. He claimed he had allowed himself to be bowled by Australian pace bowler Geoff Lawson during the drawn Boxing Day test in Melbourne in return for an undisclosed sum from bookmakers. Omar told the programme he was ashamed of his actions but claimed his dismissal had not put Pakistan in danger of losing the match. "Of course, I did wrong," Omar said. "But I can't say I shouldn't have done it at the time. I was doing it thinking my team wasn't in danger, I was going to accept the money and carry on. "But when I see the situation today, when I hear the stories that lots of money is taken to lose games, that's where I think I'm wrong." Omar told the programme he had been an agent for bookmakers who wanted him to bribe top Australian batsman Greg Chappell during Pakistan's 1984 tour of Australia. He said he had been

unable to bring himself to do it because Chappell was his idol. "...I was told by a bookmaker there's a big chance that Greg Chappell is going to smash our bowling and is going to score lots and lots of runs. "(The bookmaker said) so is there any way you can go and tell him that in each innings he fails, or at least in one test match, he's going to be paid \$US25,000. "But I couldn't. When I saw him I just lost the courage to talk to him because he was my idol," Omar said. Omar alleged "four or five" players from India and Pakistan had accepted bribes from him when he acted as an agent for bookmakers and claimed authorities in Pakistan were turning a blind eye to the problem because high profile players were involved. He also alleged that a well known England bowler took 1,000 pounds (\$1,500) from his (Omar's) bookmaker for deliberately conceding a boundary in the first over of a test. "Up to 15 test players have taken bribes from me - some of them very big names, who played for Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, West Indies and England," Omar is quoted as saying. "I was the middleman, the Mr Fixit. I told them what the bookies wanted, they did it and I paid them after the game."

* For the first time, Sri Lanka will meet Australia in the Cricket World Cup final. In their present form, Sri Lanka should have a fighting chance to win the Cup.

- RASA

"No Solution for Years if Govt Proposals Fail"

Sri Lanka's Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister recently said a devolution package for the Tamil people was the last chance to find a political solution to the country's ethnic crisis for the next 20 years.

Professor G.L. Peiris, a key figure behind many of the proposals, said there were bound to be hurdles as the legal draft fights its way through an all-party parliamentary select committee, parliament and then a national referendum. The package is due to be part of a new constitution that would also see the abolition of the executive presidency, electoral reforms and guarantees of fundamental rights. "There are stumbling blocks of different kinds," he told a cabinet press conference. "The first is the polarised nature of Sri Lankan politics which has been the principal reason why a solution has been difficult to arrive at over the years." But now, he added, there was wide recognition on all sides of the need to lift the problem away from confrontational politics and find some kind of consensus. He said it would not be useful to consider failure. "I am bold to announce that if this fails, for the next

20 years there will be no political solution," he said. "Everyone is aware of the need for a political solution... There is a spirit of goodwill. Minorities realise that extravagant demands will be impracticable."

The peace package offers wide-ranging executive and legislative powers to Tamils. Right-wing Sinhalese and many Buddhist monks criticise the plan for in effect breaking up the country and rewarding the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have fought for homeland in the north and east since 1983. The main opposition United National Party, which has 85 seats in the 225-seat parliament, can block the plan, which needs to be passed by a two-thirds majority in parliament. The ruling People's Alliance, which knocked the UNP from 17 years in power in 1994, has 113 seats. The government's proposals were placed before the parliamentary select committee on March 7. The UNP has yet to make its views on the package known but Peiris said UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe had made clear the UNP regarded the ethnic crisis as a national rather than party-political problem.

WILL DEVOLUTION LEAD TO SEPARATION?

by Dr.S.Narapalasingam

Scare-mongering

The ongoing debate on the legal draft of the devolution proposals in the Sri Lankan newspapers and in the INTERNET has not introduced any significant new arguments against the package. The same old illusory reasons, which sabotaged previous attempts to devolve powers continue to be advanced. By retaining central control over all the major affairs on which the safety, security, identity and the social, cultural and economic advancement of the minority communities depend, it is presumed that separation could be prevented! In the final analysis, their objections can be pinpointed to the single factor viz; the regional distribution of the population in the country, in which the major part of the North-East region is almost exclusively inhabited by the minority communities - Tamils and Muslims. The present increase in the proportion of Sinhalese living in the Eastern part is largely due to the various colonisation schemes implemented by successive governments after independence. However, it is unrealistic to assume that this demographic change can be ignored in determining the regional structure for the devolution of powers. The apparent ethnic basis of devolution is obviously due to this demographic feature of the North-East region.

There are some "patriots" not directly affected by the civil war in Sri Lanka, for example the members of the Australian Centre for Sri Lankan Unity (ACSLU - the name itself is contradictory), who are spreading reasons against the Government's devolution proposals which are misleading and mischievous. They have their counterparts among the Tamil expatriates. The extremists (more appropriate to call them "unrealistic persons") on both sides are criticising the proposals from a different historical perspective, ignoring the present realities with regard to the demographic pattern of the North-East region. The only logical conclusion that can be drawn from their unwillingness to accept the present reality is that either side believes that its own historical position can be forced on the other by continuing the war to the finish. The human and economic costs of this course of action seem irrelevant to them. More importantly, they have failed to realise that after incurring the enormous costs this path would only take

them to a dead end, as a conflict of this nature can never be resolved militarily. The longer the war continues, the polarisation of the Sinhalese and Tamils will be exacerbated further. The views of the ACSLU are not different to those of the Sinhala Arakshaka Sanvidhanaya (SAS). (Reference is made to excerpts from the SAS statement published in the SL Sunday Times of Feb. 25). The former has laboured a lot using (a single year's and not time relative or series) statistics selectively and considerable rhetoric, citing statutes and policies not implemented and distorting events, to conclude that discrimination against the Tamils is only a myth!

The arguments against devolution are full of contradictions, repeating over and over again the same point in different rhetoric, namely, that "the Devolution proposals have given the separatist Tamils the opportunity of creating a racist Tamil state by relatively peaceful means". They think all Lankan Tamils are separatists! The irony is that while steadfastly holding on to their racist arguments, they have accused the Government of trying to create an apartheid system through the devolution of powers to the regions identified on ethnic basis. In their chauvinistic arguments to establish the supremacy of Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka and their generosity that permits other ethnic and religious groups to live in the island, they have condemned not only the Tamils but also "certain Church and religious groups, the traditional Trotskyite and Communist groups, and a section of the Sinhalese". The Sinhalese who support the Devolution proposals have been referred to originally as "Post Bandaranaike Sinhals", and later this has been replaced by the term "neo-Sinhals". The definition of "neo-Sinhals" provided by the advocates of the supremacy doctrine, is given here verbatim. "Not merely those who had grown up under the education policy associated with the language reforms of the late Mr. Bandaranaike, but more importantly those who (1) share the view that devolution is the solution to the alleged ethnic problem (even if only along the lines set out in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact), and (2) adopt a narrow interpretation of the Language Policy of 1956 as implying that Sinhala to the exclusion of English and Tamil

should immediately be the major language of communication and education for the country".

Misinterpretation of facts

An illustration of the consternation and contradictions in their arguments can be discerned from the comment: "A curious anomaly of the neo-Sinhala position is that they have completely abandoned the Sinhala Only policy of their founder. What passes as language policy in Sri Lanka is an effective policy of parity of status between Sinhala and Tamil and English ruling the roost in all but official designation. Thus the wheel seems to have turned full circle and the situation which prevailed in British times and in the pre-Bandaranaike era has been established". Some may wish that this claim is true! Being far away from Sri Lanka, they can be excused for being unaware of the feelings of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, many of whom believe that a sort of an apartheid system has prevailed after 1956 not merely in respect of language, education and employment but also in other spheres on which their safety, security and national status depend.

Another curious meaning given by these exponents relates to "Tamil Eelanu". To them this means "Sinhala Land which is taken over by Tamils"! Another contradiction lies in their aim to establish Sri Lanka as a unitary state so as to prevent "an end to two millennia of proud history of SL as a non-racist Nation", while advocating a racist policy of starving the Tamils in the North by not supplying food, medicines and fuel. They have stated: "In the light of the proven ability of the LTTE to raise funds to obtain such military hardware there is no justification for the SL Government to feed and supply the so-called 'civilian population' of the North, when this should be an obligation of the LTTE. There are plenty of international precedents for such a course of action, e.g. US embargoes against many countries (Cuba, Iraq, etc.)". Are they accepting that the North is a separate nation like Cuba and Iraq?

They even want the present policy that gives the latitude to "the Western humanitarian groups to conduct their openly biased activity" to be revised! They may not be aware that some Tamils also, despite all being branded as

separatists, were shocked and saddened by what they saw on their TV screens of the inferno caused by the bomb blast on January 31 that killed and injured many innocent people and damaged the Central Bank and the surrounding buildings in Colombo. Perhaps seen by those jaundiced eyes from "down under", such horrible violent acts are not

symptomatic of the gravity of the ongoing civil war in our motherland and the imperative to seek a political solution to the conflict has also not dawned yet.

The Tamils have resisted early attempts to introduce a federal system in Ceylon and even after independence the Tamil electorate initially rejected those politicians who advocated federalism and separation. The discriminatory policies of successive governments of Sri Lanka together with acts of violence unleashed on them forced them to demand autonomy so as to escape from the oppressive majority rule facilitated by the unitary constitution. The Tamils were driven into this position by the indifference of SL Governments to their welfare, safety and security concerns and any community in similar circumstances would have reacted in the same way. The need for a distinctive (sub-regional) unit in the Eastern Province was felt by the Muslims only after their safety and security were threatened by the actions of the LTTE. Unfortunately lessons have not been learnt, as the actions of SL Governments have continued to alienate the Tamils more and more against the State.

Ethnic and Regional Factors

The spatial factor which the Sinhalese critics of the devolution proposals want to ignore or reject is relevant to the present discussion for the reason given below. If the different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka were spread evenly right across the whole country, regional discrimination that targets a particular ethnic group (to the point of treating its members as aliens) would be difficult. Further, the tendency for political parties to advocate racially biased policies to win elections will be minimal. It is precisely this regional factor that influenced political parties to function along ethnic lines after independence, including the two major political parties whose names imply that they are not communal.

Since the pronouncement of the Sinhala Only Policy in the mid-fifties, the rivalries between the two major political parties in Sri Lanka have been dictated almost exclusively by the strength of their Sinhala chauvinistic and anti-Tamil stance expressed publicly by them. The affirmative actions of past governments in favour of the majority Sinhalese at the expense of the minority Tamils in accordance with such public pronouncements were also a significant part of the strategy to discredit the party in the opposition. Party politics have stood in the way of recognising the rights of the Tamils as equal citizens in a multi-ethnic society. It sabotaged previous attempts to devolve power and still threatens to wreck the present devolution pro-

posals. The need for a bipartisan approach to resolve the national crisis that has already caused so much misery and loss to all the people in Sri Lanka and impeded its economic growth and development has never been so great as at this very moment.

The existence of Sinhalese and Tamil nationalism and regionalism is real and it is deceptive to pretend otherwise. Both the ethnic and regional factors have prevailed in Sri Lankan politics even before independence. The successive post-independent governments have all given prominence to them in civil administration and economic development. One has only to look at the various official forms that seek racial identity and examine the language and education policies as well as the development policies, programmes and projects implemented after independence that emphasised these divisions. After all these years to suggest that there is no regional dimension to the present crisis is like trying to hide a whole pumpkin inside a plateful of rice! Any viable solution to the national problem (regardless of the name given - ethnic, Tamil, separatist, Eelamist, etc.) must take into account these two inter-related factors.

Democracy in Pluralistic Societies

In the name of democracy, many centralised polities have maintained a de facto authoritarian rule, keeping the gap between the people and the rulers very wide. Attention is drawn here to one of the "Leaders" published in the Economist of Feb.3rd - 9th 1996, in which it is stated;

"....it is hard to deny that in Africa, parties tend to divide the voters along ethnic lines. Under a winner-take-all system, an African election is seldom an expression of national will and may be a prelude to civil war.

That is something South Africans need to remember as they devise their new constitution. At present the ANC has such a huge majority that after a winner-take-all poll South Africa would become in effect a one-party state. That would risk alienating several powerful minorities. Therein lie the seeds of so much African instability. What is common to the (admittedly rare and fragile) African success stories is the principle of inclusion. So far the successes have depended on the attitude of wise leaders like Nelson Mandela who have tried to include as many groups as possible in government. This principle is too important to be left to leaders' whim. If African constitutions are to work, they have to ensure that minorities are represented in government. The alternative is discord, division and may be war."

No sophisticated analysis is needed to

conclude that the abandonment of this principle by Sri Lankan leaders is the main reason for the catastrophic situation in which we find ourselves today. **Adherence to this principle is important even under a decentralised power structure.** In the modern world, with rising awareness of the value of democratic principles right across the world and all segments of societies, people are clamouring for greater democratic freedom. Devolution of powers is the means that is available to meet this aspiration without sacrificing the territorial integrity of sovereign nations.

Choosing the Right Option

The need to change the constitution, devolving powers to the regions arises from the recognition of the present realities in Sri Lankan society, which the previous governments have ignored. Under the basic premise of retaining the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka as one united country, there are three options with regard to her constitution. These are:

(1) Ignore the present realities of multi-ethnic (speaking two different national languages), multi-cultural and multi-religious groups domiciled in different regions along ethnic lines and impose a centralised system of governance where the will of the majority community prevails throughout the country;

(2) Ignore the present realities of multi-ethnic (speaking two different national languages), multi-cultural and multi-religious groups domiciled in different regions along ethnic lines and impose a centralised system of governance, limiting the size of the unit of devolution to a smaller unit than proposed in the original package and the powers of administration to minor matters; and

(3) Recognize the present realities of multi-ethnic (speaking two different national languages), multi-cultural and multi-religious groups domiciled in different regions along ethnic lines and establish a decentralised system of governance with powers and the unit of devolution as agreed mutually by all ethnic groups and the present adversaries through negotiation.

A case has been made out by a few eminent persons for the Devolution Package and the related constitutional arrangements to be confined exclusively to the North-East region on the grounds that there is no felt need for regional autonomy among the mass of the Sinhalese people. (Reference is made to the article of Rev. Dalston Forbes, OMI in the SL Sunday Observer of Feb. 18). This suggestion falls within the ambit of this option. However, the unit of devolution should not be imposed but agreed upon taking cognizance of the wishes of the

Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities in the broad contiguous regions (not small units numbering as many as 225 suggested by some!), where they are predominantly domiciled. This is essential for lasting peace in a united Sri Lanka.

The first two options entail imposing a system against the wishes of the minority groups and, therefore, cannot remove the root cause of the problem that has threatened the integrity of the country and caused enormous suffering and loss to all Sri Lankans regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliations. There is no guarantee that through suppression a sizeable disgruntled section of the population can be controlled by the centre and any future threat to the unity of the country avoided. Cohesion of the State cannot be brought about by imposing a unitary constitution without the consent of all ethnic groups. In fact, this very method has endangered the cohesiveness of the Sri Lankan society.

Both the 1972 and the 1978 constitutions of Sri Lanka were imposed without the consent of the Tamil people. Their unitary character meant in practice, that there was only one ethnic group which mattered in enacting laws and in policy making and implementation. Governments acted with impunity in so far as the Tamils were concerned, as they felt they were not accountable to the Tamils. On the other hand the 1948 constitution, which preceded these two was accepted by the Tamils in good faith, despite its unitary nature. But it too failed to safeguard the interests of the Tamils contrary to what was believed initially, as the underlying principles of the constitution based on equal treatment to all ethnic and religious groups were blatantly flouted. The present opposition of all the Tamil groups to a unitary constitution stems from this very conduct of successive governments.

In the light of the above facts (not a figment of any imagination), the third option is the logical one that has the chance of becoming a permanent constitutional frame that will keep the people and the country together. **As a matter of fact any meaningful devolution of powers is impossible under a unitary constitution.** The inherent contradiction is obvious and needs no elaboration. The framework presented by the present Government recognizes the realities mentioned above and is significant in that it has also considered the growing inter-dependence of the economies of democratic countries and the imperative to be an integral part of the global structures. **It is futile to look backwards in the rapidly changing world as those wanting to live in an outdated polity will have to be pre-**

pared to accept the consequences of internal unrest and the attendant economic backwardness.

The Burning Question

In order to explain vividly the reasons why there is only a conditional

answer to the question raised in the title of this article, attention is drawn to the analogy of the mutual understanding that keeps a married couple happily in union with a constitution of a multi-ethnic nation. The purpose of the latter should be the same, assuring all the groups to live harmoniously without fear for their safety and security by respecting the mutually agreed collective and individual freedoms and rights, which

in turn would enable them to direct their efforts towards achieving the common goals and to share the benefits of their endeavours equitably. The mutual affection and trust are the corner-stones of a successful marriage.

The past constitutions of Sri Lanka may be said to correspond to marriages of convenience in that these were drawn and/or used primarily for the political and economic advantage of the majority community. This is precisely why the unitary constitution has lost all credibility, despite all the theoretical arguments of the dogmatists who insist on keeping it.

By actions that give rise to hatred and distrust, any marriage can be broken. This is what appears to be the **modus operandi** of those demanding a separate autonomous state in the North-East region. Undoubtedly, some of the retaliatory actions of the security forces also strike at the very foundations that keep the partners in union. The latest incident of extra-judicial killings by the security forces condemned by both the Amnesty

International and UTHR (JB), in which at least 24 Tamil civilians were brutally murdered and many more injured occurred on 11 February '96 in the village of Kumarapuram, Killivetti, Trincomalee district. According to UTHR (JB), among those killed were 7 children under the age of 12, the youngest being 3 years old. The Government had expressed its shock and acknowledged the possibility that the army could have been responsible. It had promised to bring the perpetrators of this horrendous crime to justice but the scars of such atrocities will linger in the minds of the people. The medieval method of dispensing justice by extracting eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth has no end and no civilized society can tolerate such a practice.

The vicious cycle of attacks and counter-attacks by the warring parties, besides causing tremendous loss to human life and national wealth that belongs to

all ethnic groups, has eroded the very concept of one people, one nation and a centralised government which has been envisioned by the leaders of all the communities at the time of independence. Since the latter is not as visible as the former, many seem to ignore its relevance to the need for a new contractual arrangement that will prevent the divorce. Those advocating either of the first two options, by virtue of the majority community possessing the controlling powers want a relationship between the communities similar to that between a domineering husband and a docile wife, who is constantly maltreated and deprived of the comforts enjoyed by the husband. The difference between the two options being that in the second case, the husband is willing to grant some concessions, which elevates the status of the wife a little above that of a slave. In the new world even women in remote rural areas want the same rights as men within and outside the home. Movements for women liberation have emerged all over the world.

Likewise in modern politics, chauvinism of any group in a multi-ethnic country has become unacceptable. Minority groups with distinct ethnic, cultural and regional identities are no longer prepared to be under the absolute control of another powerful group with different orientations; they too want liberation. However, enlightened minority groups are aware of the disadvantages of complete separation and the advantages of peaceful co-existence with the majority group, under an arrangement that enables their members to live with the same rights as those in the majority group without any erosion of the above identities. The formation of economic and defence unions even among the developed and powerful countries is due to the recognition of the advantages (if not the imperative) of joining forces to face the new challenges of the twenty-first century. A constitutional framework for a **union of different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka** is provided in the devolution proposals of the present Government. The union of regions is only a corollary to the union of the ethnic groups and is necessary for the purpose of administration and development of the regions and for the retention of the identities mentioned above.

Conclusion

It is time for all to realise the present realities, which have been elaborated in this paper and look forward instead of looking backwards all the time. The third option in which power is devolved to the regions does not necessarily imply eventual separation. All the ethnic groups

(Continued on page 29)

Who was Behind Vijaya Kumaratunga Assassination ?

Was Vijaya Kumaratunga, the film actor-turned politician husband of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, done-away with because he was a threat to the political leadership at that time?

The Special Presidential Commission, appointed by President Kumaratunga, to probe the assassination has by implication hinted at the involvement of a hidden hand, and that the two suspects charged with the killing, Lionel Ranasinghe and Tarzan Weerasinghe, were mere tools orchestrated by a "higher authority."

The Commission which began sittings in April 1995 examined 71 witnesses. The report handed over to President Kumaratunga on Thursday, was made public today.

Vijaya Kumaratunga was gunned down by two men on a motor bicycle outside his home in Colombo in 1988, at the height of the left-wing Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) insurgency. It was believed at the time that Vijaya was killed by the JVP for his support for the Indo-Lanka accord of 1987 and the 13th amendment to the Constitution which devolved power on Provincial units.

The three-judge Commission comprising Justice P Ramanathan, Justice Sarath N Silva and High Court Judge D Jayewickreme adduce other possible reasons for the assassination.

According to the Commission's report, the political background behind the killing and the manner in which the investigation was stifled create doubts about the actual hand behind the killing.

"It is questionable why hand-picked officers of President Premadasa who were at the helm of affairs at the Criminal Investigation Department did not embark on the obvious line of investigation, when they found the two assassins had no personal motive for the killing. On the contrary they allowed the suspects to disappear."

The two hand-picked Police officers were Chandra Jayewardene, Director CID and Amarasena Rajapakse DIG, CID.

The Commission which analysed the political and the possible motive refers to a meeting Vijaya had with Ranasinghe Premadasa who was the Prime Minister at the time. Premadasa is said to have

told Vijaya to join him. Vijaya had declined and went on to form the United Socialist Alliance (USA).

The USA had decided to field Vijaya as their Presidential nominee when he was assassinated. According to the report Vijaya had obtained the support of some of the youth in Premadasa's home constituency, Colombo Central, and some of his supporters had mysteriously disappeared.

The report also refers to a meeting former President Jayawardene had with Vijaya, where he had indicated that if Vijaya could find a solution to the country's ethnic problem based on devolution, Vijaya could well lead the country. Premadasa, says the report, had heard of the meeting.

The report also queries whether the two CID officers would have "perpetrated such illegalities" without the knowledge and support of the Minister, who was Premadasa, and the state Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne.

The Commission has recommended the appointment of a permanent quasi-judicial independent commission which should be empowered to inquire into complaints relating to such inaction, abuse of authority, suppression of material and partiality on the part of the police.

At the early stages of the Commission inquiries the daughter of Premadasa, Dulanjali Jayakody, wrote to the Commission saying that attempts were being made to implicate her father in the assassination and therefore she sought permission for a lawyer to look after her father's interests.

President Premadasa himself was assassinated by a suspected LTTE

The Commission's report on Vijaya Kumaratunga's assassination has been criticised not only by Premadasa loyalists, but by well known Sri Lankan lawyer Desmond Fernando, Vice President of the International Commission of jurists and the International Bar Association.

According to Mr Fernando "press excerpts of the Commission Report bring into sharp focus the unfair nature of the proceedings."

Mr Fernando has drawn attention to the fact that Sri Lanka has been condemned by the Human Rights Commit-

tee of the UN for using Commissions like the SPC.

According to Mr Fernando, the proceedings of the Vijaya Kumaratunga probe were unfair because "the judges hearing evidence were neither independent nor impartial, as they were selected by the Executive, which in this case was the President." This, says Fernando, can be contrasted with the general rule that is followed, for example, in the Supreme Court where judges hearing special cases are nominated by the head of the judiciary, namely the Chief Justice.

What the UN Human Rights Committee had to say on the Special Presidential Commission's Inquiry Act is that "the Special provisions of the act which accepts the evidence, otherwise inadmissible in a Court of Law and which stipulates that any decision adopted by a Commission established under the Act is final and conclusive and may not be called into question by any court or tribunal, are matters of serious concern in view of the fact that the findings of these commissions can lead to a penalty of civic disability imposed by Parliament on those subject to investigation."

Fernando has called for the repeal of the Special presidential Commissions Act of Inquiry. Sirisena Cooray, a former United National Party Minister, who was a close confidant of President Premadasa, in a strong reaction to the Commission Report has put the record straight by refreshing the minds of the Commission Judges that the first probe into the Vijaya assassination got off the ground during the tenure of President J R Jayawardene and that the Minister of National Security at the time was Lalith Athulathmudali. The Commission judges had said Premadasa was the Minister in charge, and his deputy Ranjan Wijeratne, Minister of State. Besides, says Sirisena Cooray, Premadasa became President only ten and a half months later and in 1988, the year Vijaya was assassinated, it was not decided as to who was going to be the UNP's Presidential nominee for there were two other contenders from the UNP for the Presidential stakes, Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake besides Premadasa, and also the possibility of Jayawardene amending the Constitution so that he could continue for a further term. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume, says Cooray, that Vijaya's popularity or his candidature did not cause Premadasa any heartburn.

"The object of the report is crystal clear. To exonerate the JVP and pin it on Ranasinghe Premadasa and Ranjan Wijeratne. To achieve this aim the report presents a number of arguments which are remarkable for their inanity and naivety", says Cooray.

Imagined Communities

BULLETS AND BORDERS

As I write this, Chechen separatists and their civilian hostages have been pounded to pieces by the Russian army in the village of Pervomayskoye. Some, to the Russians' chagrin, have escaped, many have died, hostages and fighters alike smashed to bloody pulp, and if necessary to see their hostages die - for the sake of something they prize more than life: a country of their own.

Across the other side of Africa, three women sit in the middle of the Algerian desert. They have eyes only for their work. They are sewing a large brightly-coloured carpet: greens and reds and yellows and blues on a black background. In the middle are the Arabic words: Al watan aw al mowt. A homeland or death. These are Sahrawi women, whose people have been fighting a 22-year battle to wrest their piece of desert from Moroccan rule.

And in the rugged mountains of the Pyrenees, Basque separatists gather to discuss a new strategy - one which this time will involve negotiations rather than bombs.

All three groups of people are prepared to risk their lives in order to win a country of their own.

Nationalist struggles have a long history, but the quest for nationhood - often using the tools of violence and, like the Chechens, enduring an even greater violence - is today at flood level. This is hardly surprising. The nation-state has become the main form of human political organisation. Nationalism can and does succeed - though the price can be very high.

More and more new countries are being born. The disappearance of communism alone created 20 new states to add to the existing 165 members of the United Nations.¹ It would seem that our world is becoming increasingly fragmented into smaller and smaller nation-states, built around a common language, religion or creed.

**The nation-state is on
its last legs -
but people are still
prepared to die for
their country.
Nikki van der
Gaag finds out why.**

So the nations who have been hoping and battling for recognition for decades - or sometimes even centuries - have some justification for intensifying their struggles for a state of their own.

Motivations may vary, but in a world characterised by a 'crisis of ideologies', this resurgence of nationalism is hardly surprising. The demise of traditional belief-systems, including the communist one, has left a feeling of hopelessness and chaos. This makes the siren call to 'national identity' all the sweeter. To claim such an identity is to locate oneself in the world.

Definitions

A Nation is a group of people from the same region of origin who share a common history. They probably share a similar culture and tradition and may speak the same language.

A State is the main political authority within a sharply defined territory. But it is an abstract idea since it is independent of rulers - who can be replaced - and of the people who live there. Its authority often rests on a written Constitution.

A Nation-state (which we also call a country) in theory assumes that everyone living there belongs to the same nation. In practice this is generally no longer the case. The nation-state forms the basis of international political divisions. There are currently 185 nation-states. At least 15 of these have been created since 1990.

Nationalism is the ideology which holds the nation and the state together. It takes many forms but often involves a semi-mystical attachment to the 'homeland'.

So what is this elusive 'national identity'? Is it inherent in each of us, or an artificial creation? Is it true that 'a man [sic] must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears'?² Benedict Anderson, in a fascinating study, defined a national community as an 'imagined community'. It is 'imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.³ Neither language, nor ethnicity nor religion, he argues, are sufficiently held in common to explain what a 'nation' really is.

Nationalism, then, 'is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist'.² Politicians are adept at planting such inventions or imaginings in the minds of their people, especially in times of loss or crisis or change. National liberation movements in Africa during the 1950's and 1960's needed to re-invent themselves as nations in order to shake off the shackles of colonialism. As Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia put it at the time: 'Our aim has been to create genuine nations from the sprawling artefacts the colonialists carved out.' In 1958 Jacques Rabemananjara, the Malagasy nationalist, made another fine distinction: 'One thing's certain, in today's political vocabulary the word nationalism means, generally, the unanimous movement of coloured peoples against Western domination. What does it matter if the word doesn't really describe the phenomenon which we like to apply to it? What fired the activists was never an imagined spectacle of the beauties of the nation-state, but the promise that the coming of the nation-state would strike away the chains of foreign rule and all that these had meant in social and moral deprivation.'⁴

Another way of helping to create an 'imagined community' is to use the past to shore up the present. Rooting the community in former glories - imagined or not - helps foster a spirit of optimism in the present. Thus Simon Bolivar in Colombia, Juan and Evita Peron in Argentina, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi in India, are all used as icons on which to hang the emotions of current nationalists. In former Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic linked old stories about Croat atrocities with promises of Serbian greatness to fill the emotional and economic hole left by Tito's

death. The ultra-right nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy continually harks back to Russia's former greatness to harness current discontent. It is often thus: one ideology of repression replaces another.

Conflict

Conflicts today are more likely to be within states than between them.

- Of the 52 armed conflicts between 1989 and 1992, only three were between states. Most were in the countries of the South. During 1993, 42 countries had 52 major conflicts and another 37 had political violence. Of these 79 countries, 65 were in the developing world.
- In 1993 half the existing conflicts had been going on for 10 years or more. Some 4-6 million lives had been lost.
- In 1983 there were 9 countries from which more than 50,000 people had fled. By 1991 there were 31.
- In 1993 some 100 million people were living outside their country of citizenship.

Banal Nationalism

But the spirit of 'nation' is also kept alive by the stuff of everyday life. The sociologist, Michael Billig has a term for this; 'banal nationalism'. It is the nationalism of flags - waved and unwaved; of national anthems; of rousing language ('our country' or 'our nation'); of processions and celebrations to mark national days or battlefield heroics shrouded in the mists of time.⁵ Banal nationalism is the lingua franca that underpins our conscious and unconscious identity with nation. From Washington to Warsaw, it is the fodder on which the media and politicians so eagerly feed.

In times of crisis it can easily be turned into what Billig calls 'hot nationalism' - the rallying-cry that sends armies to war, or inspires separatists to struggle against insuperable odds. For the politician, having an enemy on whom to turn the guns diverts attention from domestic pain - as both Margaret Thatcher and George Bush found to their considerable advantage in the Falklands/Malvinas and Gulf Wars.

A victory gives your nation kudos. This is why war and bloodshed, conflict and death always play a special role in nationalist iconography. It is also a reason why women, as non-warriors and thus second-class citizens, are excluded from nationalist thinking - though of course they may support nationalist struggles. 'As a woman', wrote Virginia Woolf. 'I have no country. As a woman, my country is the world'.

Nationalism is an ideology which shuts other people out; which defines 'Us' against 'Them'. To call yourself Australian or Chilean or Sri Lankan is to draw a psychological as well as a physical boundary around yourself and those who claim the same national iden-

tity. The fact that 'We' are inside that boundary, or border, necessarily means that 'They' are outside it. And woe betide 'Them' - be they across the water, or within 'our' country but different from 'us' in creed, or origin or skin colour -

they seem to threaten our imagined community. We will show no mercy in the defence of 'our' nation.

Ethnicity

Of course not all conflict is based on national identity.

And neither is all nationalism rooted in ethnicity. Despite such pre-conceptions, less than ten per cent of all states in the United Nations consist mainly of one ethnic group. Most are polyethnic - Cameroon, for example, has 124 different languages and dialects, 4 different religions and over 200 separate 'tribal' groupings. Many have several large ethnic groups and some - Malaysia, Nigeria, Belgium and Canada among them - are divided between two main ethnic groups.

Nationalist struggles may draw their unity from a common oppression by a more powerful state, but in essence they still address 'imagined communities'. What binds them together are those beliefs that their leaders wish to emphasise as much as any real bonds, ethnic or otherwise; 'Collective memory is usually very selective memory, as likely to be myth as reality. What people choose to remember depends on their current situations and aspirations. Ethnic identity is powerful, but it is neither inevitable nor eternal'.¹

Some categorise 'ethnic nationalism' as purely destructive, atavistic and bloody - nationalisms, as one commentator put it, with 'brutal face' of the murderer and the rapist. Others eulogise them - the small against the large, the powerless against the powerful, peasants against kings, David against Goliath. As usual, the truth lies somewhere in between.

Our opinions on this depend once again on our categorisation into 'Us' and 'Them'. We like to think that 'we' are

patriotic and 'they' are nationalistic. Or we divide nationalisms into Civic virtue and Ethnic vice. Yet the price of civic nationalism can often be the marginalisation of ethnic minorities. Any nationalism may also bring to the fore the best as well as the worst in people: 'In an age when it is so common for progressive cosmopolitan intellectuals to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love'.⁶

So what then is all this sacrifice for? To what do the separatists, advocates of self-determination, actually aspire? The answer, more often than not, is a new country, with an independent state to crown their nation. And herein lies the supreme irony. For while separatists struggle and fight and die in order to carve out a country of their own, the 185 nation-states that already exist are growing weaker by the day.

A Borderless World

The power of global capital in the form of transnational organisations and institutions has made a nonsense of national economic decision-making. Back in 1974, when Barnett and Muller wrote their classic study: *Global Reach; The Power of the Multinational Corporation*, they saw the writing on the wall: 'The

Outsiders Inside

The majority of nation-states are multi-ethnic but indigenous and ethnic groups are often treated as second-class citizens.

- About 40% of the world's nation-states have more than five sizeable ethnic populations - one or more of which faces discrimination.
- Nomadic peoples are increasingly losing their traditional freedom to move between countries.
- Indigenous peoples living within nation-states are in greater danger of violence than their fellow-citizens. In Canada, indigenous people are six times more likely to be murdered than other Canadians.

Men who run the global corporations are the first in history with the organisation, technology, money and ideology to make a credible try at managing the world as an integrated economic unit... What they are demanding in essence is the right to transcend the nation-state and in the process to transform it'.⁷

Today, this transformation is common wisdom. Business Week in 1990 quoted W Michael Blumenthal, Chair of Unisys Corporation, to the effect that world corporations are becoming 'stateless'. They move factories and labs 'around the world without particular reference to national borders'.⁷

Capital too is free to flow in and out

of the country at the whim of international stock and currency markets. The amount of money that moves around the world in a single day is more than three times what a country like Japan earns through trade in an entire year. We live in what Japanese business guru Kenichi Ohmae calls 'a borderless world' where 'nation-states have become little more than bit auctors'.⁷ We talk of goods 'made in Britain' or 'made in Korea, assembled in Malaysia, sewn together in Taiwan and then shipped to the country where they are supposed to have been 'made'.

National governments have lost control over another crucial area of 'national' life - communications. Improved technology means that it is no longer possible for nation-states to exert strict controls over the information their citizens receive. In former Yugoslavia, for instance, people from Croatia, forbidden to write or telephone their relatives in Serbia, have been using the Internet to pass messages. In India, satellite television has brought soap operas from around the world into the homes of millions of people.

But communications and the media are dominated by a global culture which is increasingly Americanised. American English is the global language and the US sells its own culture as 'global'. A young market trader in Manila aspires to the same kinds of things as a taxi-driver in Moscow or a college stu-

dent... social or cultural networks in opposition both to the national state and to a wider continental or global culture'.⁹

Such networks are often formed as people try to wrest control from unresponsive governments. Everywhere, direct action - covered extensively by the media - is having results. Dam-building is halted by those prepared to risk their lives to save homes and livelihoods, road-building is stymied by dedicated environmentalists - and new countries are carved out by those who demand a separate national identity. New identities are being imagined.

Failure of the Nation-State

The nation-state has failed its people - failed to provide affordable education and health services, failed to look after its citizens, failed even to make the impact on the world stage that those citizens expect. Perhaps its greatest failure is its chronic inability to allow its people the right to take part in the decisions which are important to them. Governments and those who run them are increasingly seen as useless, corrupt - or just very distant.

In the words of the UN's 1993 Human Development Report: 'The nation-state now is too small for the big things, and too big for the small'.¹⁰

So what of the future? What will eventually grow out of the tatters of the nation-state?

The historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote in 1992 that: 'the world of the next century will be largely supranational... [and] will reflect the decline of the old nation-state as an operational entity'.¹¹ Others believe that the new entities of the twenty-first century will be based on small ethnic and tribal groupings.

There is no doubt that change is in the air. While we now seem to be ruled by an oppressive market - rather than an oppressive state - people are increasingly

challenging both, and finding ways to shape their own lives. But global problems increasingly need global and not national solutions: 'Famines, ethnic conflicts, social disintegration, terrorism, pollution and drug trafficking can no longer be confined within national borders'.¹⁰ The nation-state is being squeezed from above by the forces of in-

ternational capital and from below by the demands of its own citizens.

Alternatives

There are options other than a world of global supranational capitalism or total fragmentation. Decentralization may be an alternative to separatism. And technology can be a tool for positive change - for those who can afford it. Links are being made beyond national boundaries. People in former Yugoslavia who are against Serbian aggression are using the new document which outlines the Constitution for a Scottish Parliament in order to establish the basis for their own kind of multi-ethnic state. Even in the United States: 'The great majority of Americans increasingly have more in common with their counterparts in other countries than with the putatively American wing of a global ruling class... Americans may begin looking past national boundaries for alliances, especially with those just beyond our borders, physical (Mexico, Canada), or psychic (Western Europe)'.¹²

We are at present, as the poet Matthew Arnold put it, 'wandering between two worlds/One dead, the other unable to be born'. We know the old world of nation-states is dying. We have a chance to assist in the birth of the new one, to give it shape beyond the parochialism of nation, ethnicity, race or class. Let us be secure enough in our own imagined communities to recognise the value of other peoples' imaginings. Let us take that chance to create a world that is based on democracy, decentralism and tolerance - a world where a new internationalism is a real possibility.

1. States of disarray: the social effects of globalization (UNRISD 1995).

2. Nations and Nationalism Ernest Gellner (Basil Blackwell 1983).

3. Imagined Communities Benedict Anderson (Verso 1991).

4. The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the curse of the nation-state Basil Davidson (James Currey 1992).

5. Banal Nationalism Michael Billig (Sage 1995).

6. Motherlands: Black women's writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia edited by Susheila Nasta (Women's Press 1991).

7. When Corporations Rule the World David C Korten (Earthscan 1995).

8. The End of the Nation-state: The rise of regional economies Kenichi Ohmae (Harper Collins 1995).

9. Nations and Nationalism in a global era Anthony D Smith (Polity Press 1995).

10. Human Development reports 1993 and 1994 (United Nations Development Programme).

11. Nations and Nationalism since 1780 Eric Hobsbawm (Cambridge University Press 1992).

12. Ellen Willis 'The postnational prospect' in Village Voice, Nov 28 1995 p21.

(Courtesy of "New Internationalist" March 1996).

Dwarfing the Nation-State

Global institutions have taken over many of the powers of the nation-state.

■ Between 1980 and 1992 multinational corporations more than doubled their sales from \$400 to nearly \$1,000 per world inhabitant.

■ By 1994 there were 37,000 parent corporations with over 200,000 affiliates worldwide. TNCs now control over 33 per cent of the world's productive assets although they employ only 5 per cent of the workforce.

■ Economic unions are being created which will benefit the countries of the North rather than those in the South - Europe is moving increasingly towards some kind of federalisation with open internal borders, a common currency and a common interest in keeping out outsiders. NAFTA has opened borders to trade in North America and Mexico.

dent in downtown Los Angeles - Levi jeans, Coca-Cola, Western music.

Yet at the same time other groups - social, political and ethnic - are rebelling against this homogenisation. As Anthony Smith, author of a number of books on nationalism, explains, these groups are using the tools of mass communications to 'create and sustain their

On Human Rights and the UTHR(J)

S. Sivasegaram

"It should be borne in mind that human rights have only an instrumental function in the political culture, serving as a weapon against adversaries and a device to mobilize the domestic public behind the banner of our nobility, as we courageously denounce the real or alleged abuses of official enemies.

"In this regard, human rights concerns are very much like the facts of past and present history: instruments to serve the needs of power, not to enlighten the citizenry."

- Noam Chomsky in 'Deterring Democracy'

The human rights issue is, a political issue and what one sees as human rights and their violation vary with one's political stand point. In recent years, human rights have helped the imperialists to dictate policy to Third World governments which fail to toe the line. I need not go into the double standards and hypocrisy associated with campaigns for human rights nor into details of how the big powers that take a high moral ground on issues of human rights are swayed by other considerations. None of this means that one rejects altogether the notion of human rights, but one needs to view issues of human rights in their social and political context.

There are several human rights organisations operating in Sri Lanka, some more prolific than others in producing reports. Their names hardly tell us what they stand for or whom they represent, but their deeds sometimes do. The name University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) has a ring of authenticity which can be misleading and has thus tempted many into believing that it is in fact associated with the University in Yaalpaanam. For instance, a writer to the Tamil Times, S. Narapalasingham, chose to place that name alongside that of Amnesty International in his article (p.11, TT, Jan. '96). Its reports have received considerable publicity in the Sri Lankan media, about whose concern for the welfare of the Tamil people we have little doubt. These reports are sometimes quoted in part by publications from India, and the TT too has found space for their reports.

The legitimacy of the use of the name

UTHR(J) has been questioned for some time now, and some defenders of its use have argued that, if it was correct for a small group of people living in Colombo to call itself the All Ceylon Tamil Congress or for the ruling party in Thamilnaadu to call itself All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, it is equally legitimate for the authors of UTHR(J) reports to use that name. There is, however, a vast difference between the use of a name of a general nature in an inaccurate manner and the use of a name which is rather specific and implies that it belongs to or represents a particular institution or organisation, whereas it really does not. I think therefore that there is serious deception in the use of the name UTHR(J), especially in the context of objections raised by teachers from the University of Jaffna about its use and despite all manner of moral arguments presented by the faithful. Some do think that ends justify the means, but I somehow believe that means determine the ends.

There are some who argue that the UTHR(J) reports should not be published in one news paper or the other. Such arguments are anti-democratic and dangerous. As far as I can see, there are things that need to be discussed in the open and even incorrect views deserve to be aired. A wrong view cannot be corrected by suppression and there is a strong case for a critical rather than a censorial approach in dealing with views which are not acceptable to even the greatest majority.

One cannot in one's wildest of dreams accuse the UTHR(J) reports of being kind to the LTTE. On the positive side, these reports, despite their apparent bias, have played an important role in drawing attention to problems that exist. Even if only part of what they say is true, that is a matter for serious concern. And it will be good if those who claim to be LTTE supporters will verify the truth about serious charges and do what is within their power to make sure that such things can be avoided. But the difficulty with the UTHR(J) reports is that in recent times they have failed miserably to draw attention to far more serious violations of human rights by the Sri Lankan government. I have not, for instance, come across any report by the UTHR(J) on the plight of innocent Thamilis in Colombo, nor have I heard the UTHR(J) denounce the bombing of a school in the north a few months ago.

The way in which the recent lengthy UTHR(J) Special Report 6 on the exodus from Jaffna has handled its criticism of the LTTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces reminded me of another report released in 1989 by a 'human rights organisation' based in London, known as

International Alert and authored by Eduardo Marino, which I reviewed briefly in the TT, August '90. That report was written in a way that one would get the impression that the JVP was the real culprit.

Authors of reports on sensitive issues, if they are not acting in the interests of any establishment but that of the people, have a responsibility to ensure that their reports are not misused by governments which publish material from them selectively. I wonder whether the UTHR(J) has ever objected to such abuse by the Sri Lankan government and the mainstream media or taken steps to ensure that their reports are not distorted by partial publication. What has often made me wonder was that why the UTHR(J), with a name suggesting concern with the problems of the Thamil people, produces all its reports in English with rare and generally belated translations in Thamil. Are these reports aimed at the English-educated Thamil elite at home and abroad, on whom the UTHR(J) has always poured scorn, or at some others? The failure to write in Thamil on matters concerning the interests of a predominantly non-English-speaking Thamil population seems a bit of an anomaly to me. I may be wrong, and it may only be those who are literate in the language of masters past and present who matter.

Questions also arise in connection with the ability of the authors of these reports to see violations of human rights in the context of the historical reality of national oppression and the struggle against it. There are many who are highly critical of the LTTE on many issues relating to human rights while not losing sight of the fact that it is the failure of successive governments to address the real issues that lies at the root of the tragedy. If the government firmly believes that it is the LTTE that is standing in the way to peace, why does it lack the moral courage and confidence to put forward a proposal for a just solution which the LTTE cannot afford to spurn? The onus is on the government of Sri Lanka to put forward proposals for a just solution to the national question and to take concrete steps towards a negotiated solution, since it was a succession of Sri Lankan governments that have been responsible for the present crisis.

There are other issues which do not exactly relate to human rights raised in the UTHR(J)'s SR 6. Some concern political and military strategy for the LTTE and fall only slightly short of recommending that the LTTE should surrender to the government forces. Again, there are other critics of the LTTE who see many of the lapses of the LTTE to be consequences of the failure to develop

the liberation struggle into a mass movement, a failure that needs to be put right. Such criticism does not fail to recognise that the struggle is one for national liberation and that the LTTE is leading it, despite any reservation one may have about the course of the struggle.

There are nevertheless many who glorify everything about the liberation struggle and will see no mistakes, no failures, no set-backs, even temporary, and will have explanations for everything. Some of them would even go to the extent of comparing the exodus from Yaalppaanam with the Long March led by the Red Army in China or, if they have a distaste for the communists, with the exodus of the Jewish nation some millennia ago. The departure from Yaalppaanam was a shock to the vast majority including those who were supportive of the LTTE. There was room for anger and frustration, and even the most ardent supporter of the LTTE should know that LTTE does not quite comprise saints (although soldiers in the Sri Lankan army seem to be fast approaching sainthood, especially with members of the clergy joining their ranks). Any crisis brings along with it conflicts which need to be handled with care and understanding. Failure to do so will only weaken the struggle and problems will not go away by pretending that they do not exist. Thus it is just as wrong to pretend that all went according to plan as it is to argue that the LTTE always gets it wrong, as the authors of SR 6 seek to do.

The UTHR(J) report does criticise the government, some may argue. Even the naïve could see that the way that criticism is made differs from the way the LTTE is criticised. This is not unusual. I had drawn attention to such imbalance in the criticism of the LTTE on the one hand and its then rivals and the IPKF on the other in the 'Broken Palmyra', with which the authors of UTHR(J) reports were closely associated, in my review in the now defunct *Panimalar*, a Tamil periodical from London.

SR 6 also says that "those who remained found the government troops far better behaved than in previous phases of the war and LTTE propaganda had led them to expect". It accuses that "the LTTE then, as happened again in 1990, provoked the army from nearby places of civilian refuge and ran away". The failure of the army to prevent the people from vacating Valikaamam is attributed to "confusion in Government thinking", and of course, the government had "excusable delays" besides not-so-excusable ones for not allowing food supplies to go north and, to the authors of the report, it only "appeared" (*italics mine*) that

the government wanted to hide the developing disaster from the rest of the world". As far as LTTE intentions go, the report is far less cautious and speaks in more certain terms. All of this made me wonder why the government will not use these good soldiers trained in Yaalppaanam to police Colombo so that the Tamils in Colombo will feel safe, but I could not help thinking that Eduardo Marino (the man from IA, in 1989) was smarter story-teller than the writers of UTHR(J) reports.

Some defend the UTHR(J) reports on the basis of good intentions while others question the intentions. Whatever their intentions may be, the authors of these reports, in their enthusiasm to criticise the LTTE, seem to have done more to help the government to delay and deny the need for a just and lasting solutions than to strengthen the case for justice to the oppressed nation. The proverbial monkey who wielded a sword to smash the fly that disturbed the sleep of his master also had good intentions which nevertheless killed his master.

The report has, like those in the past, things to say about non- (but not anti-) LTTE intellectuals in Yaalppaanam: "Society had become apathetic about very young children being tricked or dragooned into serving the LTTE leadership. Those close to the children cried in their homes. But otherwise there was little noise. Bishops, professors and religious gurus had talked and behaves as though this was the normal order of things. It was all sanitised". Vasantha-Rajah, formerly of the Sinhala section of the BBC World Service and hand-picked by the current President of Sri Lanka to serve as Chairman of *Rupavahini*, the Sri Lankan state television network, and subsequently forced to abandon his po-

sition because of his view that war was not the way to deal with the national question, has a different view on the way the young join the LTTE. Despite my reservations about some of his arguments in his book 'Tamil Exodus and Beyond', I think that it has a lot of fairly objectively written material that counters some of the inaccuracies in SR 6 and other UTHR(J) reports.

The above 'holier than thou' stance of the authors of SR 6 did not stop at moral indignation at the lesser mortals. It went further towards censorship and control of news media. Attempts to curb the editorial freedom of *Sarinihar*, a Tamil fortnightly published by the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality was undertaken by individuals identified with the UTHR(J). This effort was thwarted, thanks to good sense prevailing in the MIRJE, but the crusade has not ended. An earlier attempt to undermine the Tamil service of the BBC for its apparently pro-LTTE slant failed, but the UTHR(J) has not given up and continues its campaign against Radio Veritas and the BBC Tamil broadcast.

What makes me wonder is that how a news magazine with a small circulation and two Tamil radio programs with short duration of broadcast can change the course of events guided by the entire Sri Lankan media and the overwhelming majority of international news agencies and governments. Does not one suspect a touch of authoritarianism somewhere, the kind of thing that defines the right to free expression as one for the expression of acceptable views alone? Have the writers of the reports strayed a little too far outside the scope of 'human rights' this time, or have they done exactly what they always intended to do?

Readers Forum

OF WIT AND WISDOM

The behaviour, the reasoning, the greatness and the wisdom of a person, irrespective of his educational background, is another yardstick to assess his leadership, his virtues and his propriety in the field of politics or even in social life. One can never win allegiance of others by trying to dominate them, enslave them, to instil fear in them, to torture them and murder them - but can only succeed by listening to them, by caring for them, their welfare and to enhance their social structure.

The letter from Mr Sachi Sri Kantha written from Japan and appearing in the 'Tamil Times' of 15 February 1996 with reference to the report from UTHR(J) on the forced 'Exodus from Jaffna' is in-

dicative of yet another demonstration of arrogance and pettiness, in that he is interested only in the identity of the writer or writers of the report rather than in the contents to contradict or deny the analytical documentation of the forced Exodus. The Tamils residing outside Sri Lanka did not witness the Episodes that took place during September/December 1995 when the Sri Lankan Army went on the offensive to capture Jaffna. I would, however, wish to point out to Mr Sachi Sri Kantha that the desperate Tamils who are displaced and forced to live in the Vanni under inhuman environment and who wrote letters to their kith and kin in the UK and elsewhere had pictured their sufferings and painful endurance and the arrogant behaviour of the gun trotting boys of the LTTE and their leadership. They narrate in different ways how they were threatened

by this move by the LTTE are quite obvious. the Tamils have become mere pawns in the hands of the LTTE. (Perhaps Mr Sachi Sri Kantha would ask for the identities of the people who wrote such letters from the Vanni). Any Tamil person airing his views contrary to the wishes and the actions of the LTTE is portrayed as a traitor and condemned to death. People who fear to identify themselves have to use some methods to voice their grievances. There is no democratic source or platform to air their views.

The welfare of the Tamil people have been totally ignored by the LTTE and its leadership. The people are being used as tools. If, warring with a Nation is the only ultimate aim of this group, irrespective of the results of war, any political wits or wisdom, that organisation is set to be doomed. The people for whom they pretend to fight would perish. The inhuman and barbaric methods used to suppress the voice of the Tamils by the LTTE for the last 15 years cannot and should not continue for ever. The Tamil people are fed up with the LTTE as they have suffered long enough which would take many more years to heal. If, all the resources given by the Tamils from the West to procure arms for the LTTE, could be directed to build the community in the North, it could be paradise.

There are hundreds of thousands of Tamils leading their livelihood among the Sinhalese people which is their chosen freedom like the father of Mr Sachi Sri Kantha living in Colombo and the father and mother of Prabakaran living in India. But it is very unfortunate for these Tamils living in Colombo, as every turn they make they are suspected by the security as LTTE supporters. But truly enough there are few who are working for the LTTE using their knowledge and positions to bring death and destruction in Colombo. The security forces cannot be blamed for arresting the suspects in order to safeguard the civilians and property.

The LTTE, if it cannot end the conflict and wishes to continue the extremist idea of warfare with the Government, they have already missed another opportunity with the present government to achieve peace. There are already extremist Nationalist elements from the majority community emerging and the dimensions of a Holocaust of the Tamil race would be unimaginable. Extremism has not brought emancipation in the history of Mankind. Prabakaran would take his bow as vanquished and not as a victor.

"To act without clear understanding, to form habits without examining them, to pursue the way all his life without

knowing where it leads - such is the way of ignorant men.".... By Menclus

S Sivapalan

Tooting,
London, SW17

NO SOLUTION WITHOUT LTTE

As a young reader of your great magazine, I like to say a few mature words to your readers.

In our Eelam Nation's struggle, it is very clear that no solution can be achieved without LTTE's participation; such solutions will never bring Peace to the Island. So at this critical point, rather than rejecting LTTE's leadership, we have no choice but to accept LTTE as a major representative of our Eelam Nation.

That does not simply mean we have to accept what LTTE is doing. As good 'Eelamese', we all have a duty in reforming the LTTE's thinking.

LTTE does need the help of the Superbrains of Eelam in achieving a solution which is acceptable to both Sinhala and Tamil Nations.

Miss Vanu Rajalingam

41 Campfield Road,
St Albans,
Herts, UK.



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THE EXODUS FROM JAFFNA - Part III

October/November 1995

The following is the text of the Special Report No.6 dated 6 December 1995 by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) :

(Continued from last issue)

The Government in Peace and War

Looking at the events over the last year, it would appear that during the peace process the Government was not clear about the nature of the LTTE. Moreover, during war it lacked clarity and consistency in its approach to the Tamil people, whom, it aid, it sought to win over politically. One of its marked achievements is however the peace package announced at the end of July, laying down the outlines of a political settlement. During the peace process the Government paid little attention to the complications arising from the nature of the LTTE. Having consulted the Tamil elite in Colombo and those abroad, the Foreign Minister, who had no grass-roots contact, maintained confidently that the Tamil people supported the Government's efforts for peace with the LTTE. These were ultimately noises modulated by the LTTE and kept changing with the LTTE's strategic considerations. Once the war was precipitated the Government and the foreign office became hostile to NGO and other voices which tried to represent the people who were victims of military measures.

In both these phases there has been a notable lack of conception regarding the place and interests of the ordinary Tamil people. The manner in which the current war is being conducted has shown little respect for the civilians as people whom the Government is trying to win over. With the exception of Jaffna town and suburbs, bombing and shelling in other areas appears to have been untargetted and done in the way of reprisals. It was pointed out earlier that most of the hundred civilian deaths during October occurred as the result of bombing and shelling well outside the combat zone. Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi had been regularly shelled during the month of November and these are areas to which displaced people have moved in large numbers. Shelling of these areas had notably taken place during times when fighting was heavy and the army sustained casualties-i.e., shelling had been frequent from about 10th to 14th November.

Two civilians were killed in the Mattuvil area in Thenmaratchi on the 10th. On 11th November a refugee child was killed when shells fell in Maruvan Pulavu, Thenmaratchi, on the Kerativu road. Two were killed in Kaithadi, Thenmaratchi, on the 12th. On the same day one civilian was killed near Thikkam in Valvetthurai. Many more were injured in all these incidents. During the 13th night a total of about 40 shells were

accounted by civilians to have fallen in several parts of Vadamaratchi, most of them on the coast or into the sea. Only one shell is known to have fallen on or near an LTTE women's camp in the Mattuvil-Nunavil area killing a female and injuring two others. The LTTE later claimed that they had apprehended a woman spy with a walkie talkie! On 21st November the air force dropped bombs in the Mullaitivu area. In Nedunkerni 4 persons from three families were killed and 15 were injured. At Kachilamadu 5 members of a single family were killed. Some of the injured are receiving treatment in Vavuniya. In the Navat-kuli-Kaithady area bombs were dropped near a refugee camp - no reports of casualties. Such indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas helps to negate in the minds of ordinary people the apparent pains taken to ensure good behaviour of advancing troops.

The same lack of clear conception of civilian welfare also applies to the banning of travel through Jaffna lagoon. If it is done for a short term purpose, the civilians should be told so. As it is, this threatens to become another fiasco like what happened under the UNP government. For the lack of an alternative passage Tamil civilians travelled through Jaffna lagoon for three years under fire from the navy and the air force. Well over a hundred civilian lives were lost. In one incident in early January 1993, 30 to 60 civilians were massacred with knives and guns by the Sri Lankan Navy who boarded some of the boats. Those who lost their lives included government servants who were required to go to Colombo to transact government business.

Also unfortunate is the choice of some of the officers leading the offensive. One of them, Brig. Karunatilake, was in charge of the brigade at Valaichenai that was responsible for the notorious Eastern University disappearances during September 1990. There are also cases being taken up against him pertaining to his earlier activity during the JVP insurgency. This again shows a certain lack of concern about civilian welfare and civilian sensibilities.

The relative care shown in not shelling or bombing Jaffna town suggests that the operation had been discussed with the more influential sections of the diplomatic community in Colombo and that some agreement was reached (One shell had fallen within the ICRC zone, in front of the surgeon's house. The bombing in Ariyalai East has been referred to already.

Several shells fired from Mandaitivu fell about the Gurunagar coast). The Government itself fails to have appreciated its strong position in this respect. Having scored a success in influencing the UN Secretary General to make a statement, the LTTE propaganda failed thereafter. There were two main reasons for this.

Foreign journalists covering the war were told by foreign diplomats and some of the international Nogs that the government forces had been careful to avoid civilian casualties, with the exception of about two lapses. The latter seemed to refer to the bombing of Ariyalai East on the 26th October and the two shells in Gurunagar on the 29th, suggesting again that they were looking almost exclusively at the town area. The bombing and shelling elsewhere does not seem to have featured significantly in their thinking. To this extent the army and air force had been careful. On the other hand they seem to have had the license to vent their anger anywhere, but sparing Jaffna town where the refugees were once supposed to gather. This may satisfy foreigners, but it is far from being a satisfactory approach towards the Tamil people who are citizens of this country.

The second reason for the failure of the LTTE's propaganda blitz was that its claims were found wanting in two respects. Although the LTTE underestimated its own power to force an exodus from Jaffna, the resistance of those who remained had to be overcome by force and terror. (An LTTE functionary later confided privately that they had underestimated the panic that would result from the announcement of the exodus order.) Despite the use of terror it took the LTTE 16 days to throw out those who remained and the truth came out very soon. The figure of 500,000 refugees claimed for the exodus too raised scepticism. It turned out that the Government Agent was quoting Nogs and the Nogs were quoting the government administration that was under the GA. A figure of 300,000 may have been more realistic since a steady exodus had been taking place for 5 years. Moreover, the LTTE's conduct over the years had made the foreign media far less sympathetic. Its spokesmen too cut little ice with the foreign media.

Very damaging to the LTTE and the Tamil people had been the massacre of a hundred Sinhalese civilians in the East. Had the LTTE not done this, the 100 or so Tamil civilians killed during October would have aroused greater concern. As it was, it appeared as collateral damage that was light by the standards of other wars. A veteran correspondent experienced in Vietnam and Cambodia remarked, "I hate to be the father of one of those killed. But look, what is a hundred civilians dead given the heavy fighting involved?" The indications are that the death among combatants was about 1500 over the same period. Our questions are

however not based on numerical considerations, but rather on the politics behind the civilian deaths. The death of even this relatively small number of civilians cannot be attributed to collateral damage. It was mainly callousness. Whether the number killed by the random shelling in Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi is 2, 20 or 200 is not the question. The question is about whether the Government should bomb or shell civilians at all in the manner it had done? What is the politics behind such actions? Can it bring peace? Can it reconcile the Tamils to accept living in a united Sri Lanka? These are long term questions that go beyond numbers.

It is in the same vein that we have questioned the LTTE's politics. What it represents is not determined so much by the number of Tamil dissidents tortured and killed, or the numbers of Muslim and Sinhalese civilians massacred, but rather that these killings and massacres are integral to its workings as an institution and have frightening implications. We need to use a different yardstick from foreign observers because these are all our own problems and an indication of the callous attitude towards people in general that is part of the Tamil nationalist legacy.

Looking at events over the weeks, it was remarkable how much the government and the LTTE were playing identical games with the people and actually reinforcing each other's actions. Both parties seemed most at ease in extreme polarised positions, found in a state of confrontation and war. The government through restrictions starved the people of cash. The LTTE did the same by withdrawing its cash deposits from the banks and collecting for the National Defence fund. It then reaped thumping profits by exchanging cash for gold with desperate civilians on highly advantageous terms. When the LTTE wanted to expel the civilians from Jaffna, it looked to the government for some help in the form of shelling civilians. But early November witnessed a lull in SL army shelling. The LTTE had to go through the embarrassment of firing its own shells and getting caught.

Now in Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi, the game is more complex. The LTTE wants the people to move to the Vanni, but appears to be hampered both by international opinion and the tougher nature of the people in Vadamaratchi in engineering a second exodus without help from the SL army. The government appears to have no clear policy. The army, it seemed, had acquired a taste for taking over an area without the inconvenience of having civilians around. It would be more convenient for the government if the LTTE could be blamed for chasing the civilians out. Following its capture of Jaffna, the army continued to shell Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi, but not heavily. In mid-December, however, the army announced a heavy artillery barrage against LTTE targets in Vadamaratchi,

claiming that it was to prevent LTTE infiltration into Valikamam. Based on past experience, one could have no illusions on what this means to the civilians. This made the censorship then prevailing even more inexcusable.

How does the ordinary Tamil civilian see the government through all this? He experienced bombing and shelling around Jaffna. But once the LTTE drove him out, and made him a vagrant, his anger turned against the LTTE. In Vadamaratchi or Thenmaratchi, he again experienced shelling. He underwent privations because the government was made to appear responsible for starving him of cash and other necessities. He came to Vavuniya to proceed to Colombo. He had to undergo the humiliation of being herded and confined to a camp for three days by the government. He came to Colombo to experience police harassment and fear. All around him people were saying that it felt rather like July 1983. By this time, many in his position would have concluded that the LTTE is something in the nature of a necessary evil, that is the only check on the communalism of successive governments.

The celebration by the state for the fall of Jaffna and the general treatment of Tamil civilians in the South which followed the exodus again raised the important question of what the Tamils can expect from the government in the face of rising buoyancy among extreme Sinhalese. If there is no change of heart but a mere continuation of the same state machinery and polarised attitudes, the Tamils will be only pushed further into the arms of the Tigers leaving only the prospect of continuing divisive conflict, destruction and war in the coming years.

The government needs to be far less cynical and do much better if it wants to involve the Tamils in a political process of reconciliation that in the long term will help the whole country to get out of this vicious cycle of destruction.

It must be borne in mind that even this government has been guilty of war crimes. We quote from a recent publication titled "Post-Traumatic Responses to Aerial Bombing" by a medical don to appear in "Social Science and Medicine"(UK): "In addition to detention, torture and displacement, bombing [and shelling] is one of the major stressors of the war. It would appear that in many instances, bombings are used primarily as psychological weapons against civilians, for their ability to accurately hit military targets within densely populated areas is exceptional, as seen in the war in Sri Lanka where the sophistication of instruments is low. At the same time, the guerillas have consistently sought civilian cover, thereby drawing fire on to the general public. The usually sudden, unexpected and unpredictable nature, the blast and noise of the explosion giving rise to what was called 'shell-shock' in World War I; and the massive destruction, injuries and death that follow are dimensions of stress

...Thus the variety of symptoms and even the cluster of more severe symptoms amounting to a psychiatric disorder in some individuals had been accepted as an inevitable part of the war situation. It could also be true that many of the responses to a traumatic experience are manifestations of an organism's attempt to cope or adapt in an abnormal situation. Obviously what is abnormal is the bombing itself and not the reactions to it. Lifton had stressed that it is important not to delegitimise the suffering of the victims by assigning a psychiatric label. Bombing of civilians should be considered a grave offence - a war crime."

The Elite, the People & Illusions

The elite are nearly always atomised individuals whose confidence and reassurance come from their association with institutions, whether the state, commercial institutions, religious and educational institutions or Nogs. In the present world all these have ramifications in the global power structure. It is power that they respect and power relations they understand best. In the event of a phenomenon like the LTTE which jars their complacency, it is natural for them to approach the problem in terms of co-opting it into power structures. But such attempts to deal with a phenomenon such as the LTTE, the total thrust of whose actions is entirely contrary to the well-being of people, further corners the people and inflicts enormous suffering on them.

Thus from an elitist point-of-view, the human rights violations of the Tigers, their eliminations and their virtual conscription of children were largely non-issues. The blood and spirit was taken out of these violations and they were sanitised and explained away in such allegorical terms as painful and curative reactions, necessary side effects to combating state terrorism. There was a persistent refusal to see its ultimate destructiveness towards its own community in the long term.

Among the illusions held by the elite is that of rationality. Morality was of little significance in their world-view as appears the norm in international relations. There was an expectation of being able to deal with the LTTE rationally. This was largely the approach of the various peace missions, both foreign and Southern. A confidence was expressed from within the Government negotiating team that the LTTE leaders now reaching middle age and not far from old age would like to settle down. The 40 year-old LTTE leader's son's being sent to an elite mission school was deemed a healthy sign. In other words they understood each other, or so it seemed.

There was such confidence also among the Tamil elite whose position had become morally compromised. They had a contempt for those who raised questions of human rights and morality and suffered for it. They believed that they were doing the rational thing that was the need of the hour. Whatever compromise they made,

they argued, it was to keep institutions going and to preserve the foundations for the future. What was happening to the people for whom these institutions existed was lost sight of. Even sections of some of the churches plummeted to their lowest depths.

Both the elite and the LTTE sustained these illusions and built vested interests around them. The edifices - underground facilities, hospitals, impressive buildings for administrative divisions and public relations, parks, tombs and mausolea - the LTTE built in the Neervely, Urumpirai and Kondavil areas which fell to the government forces within a month are a testimony to the magnitude of the illusion. The breaking of the bubble so irked the LTTE that it decided that if it could not have Jaffna, no one could have it, not even the people to whom it belonged.

The elite who thought they had the LTTE in a relation of partnership discovered overnight that they did not matter a hoot to the LTTE. They were thrown out of Jaffna along with the ordinary people and the institutions which they sought to preserve ceased to exist. The nation was on the roads, rain and all. But they were so cornered that even at this juncture they could not move to represent the concerns of the people. Although privately expressing bitterness against the LTTE, publicly they signed petitions to the international community blaming it all on the Government. Although the relatively low death toll and the recent massacres of Sinhalese diluted their case, expressions were used giving the sense that the Government of Sri Lanka which had killed thousands of Tamil civilians [in the past], was now [through forcing them out of Jaffna under conditions of inclement weather and utter want], finally destroying them through mental trauma and physical hardship. The constant theme in these statements was the claim that the Government was subjecting the Tamil people to genocide.

Yet the voices of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people that were not heard and are not meant to be heard, carried no sophistry and no illusions. Forced in the night and under heavy rain, on 30th October, to trudge through the flooded moorlands of Chemmani and Kaithady, one clear refrain was readily heard and assented to:

"This is happening to us today because we did it to the Muslims exactly five years ago." Some recalled that they were given 4 hours to vacate, while the Muslims were given two. The common people's sense of justice had remained clear and unambiguous. A recent evacuee from Jaffna asked: "I know even school boys who had got together and told the LTTE recruiters coming to their schools that they would not join, because 'those who live by the sword will die by the sword'. If school boys could do that much, why cannot our religious and community leaders do more?"

The Cost of the Exodus

The one defence of the enforced exo-

odus that is also advocated by the LTTE statement quoted earlier is that it saved human lives, in view of the looming military confrontation. However, temporary displacement from directly endangered areas could have been best left to the judgement of the people who are themselves well experienced in such matters. Even if the claim to saving lives is valid, it is so only in the context of the perverse nature of the LTTE's insistence of turning Jaffna into a battle zone and the paralysis it has brought on the civil society. Having decided on reverting to guerilla warfare, if it had concern for the people, it had no reason to bring death and destruction on the people and their institutions by confronting an army in the city for the second time in eight years. (Many national armies avoid confronting an invading army in cities for the sake of the people and to protect their cultural treasure and institutions.) If there

was moreover a functioning civil society with teachers, professionals and religious leaders who could voice the concerns of the people independently, their demands would have had a global audience. Then pressure would have been brought to bear and their security far better ensured with the ICRC playing a more active and positive role. The Government would not have got away with the kind of bombing and shelling it has indulged in. Instead of credible voices on behalf of the people, we have statements from bishops, vicars-general and academics that are so one-sided that no one takes them seriously except expatriate Tamil nationalists.

The roots of the exodus must be sought in the character of the LTTE's politics, its unchanging agenda of totalitarian power, its absence of concern for the people, and its duplicity resulting from a historical inability to negotiate as part of a political process.

It must also be pointed out that the physical death toll from the exodus is high, beginning with a dozen or two who died in the same night as the direct result of conditions in the march. We do not exactly know how many patients shifted from the hospital died as a result, or how many sickly persons succumbed (some conservative estimates have been given at the beginning of this report, based on available information). Moreover, tens of thousands of animals succumbed to an agonising death through starvation.

Death from disease arising as a direct consequence of the exodus is certainly high. Approximately ten persons from Thenmaratchi and 5 persons from Vadamaratchi were dying daily as the result of malnutrition debility, weakness and diarrhoea that were endemic among the displaced children. This alone would make the LTTE claim of life-saving very dubious. There was also the accidental explosion of an ammunition truck in Chavakacheri during November which was then crowded with refugees. According to medical authorities, thirty six, in-

cluding 14 civilians, were killed and many others injured. Such hazards were greatly increased by the exodus.

What is perhaps the key point here is that physical death that is readily recognisable is just one way of ceasing to be. Other forms of death that are at least as serious are far less easily recognised. In this second manner, the community has suffered grievously and, perhaps, permanently. Each man or woman is organically linked by deeply felt bonds to his or her home, the soil, the environment, the domestic animals, educational institutions, and to institutions of culture and religion. It is for this reason that the Muslims forced out of Jaffna five years ago have resisted resettlement elsewhere and still want to come back; it is not merely for a small plot of dry land and the walls of a looted home. These institutions are the lifeblood of the community, built through generations of labour, and represent an extension of the life of those long gone.

This second form of death is evident in various degrees among those forced out of Jaffna. The conditions and rigours of the march made people feel humiliated and robbed them of their self-esteem. They also lost their sense of identity as their homes, schools and the university ceased to be and they became vagrants and beggars on the streets.

Many who were part of the exodus described in dramatic detail the stages by which they were destroyed as persons and members of a community. In the milling crowd each person high or low was a nobody. No one cared about women, children or the sick. It was a struggle to take just one step in several minutes. Each move hurt or toppled someone else. Everyone was a curse to his or her neighbour. Everyone was scarred by the terrible experience. Life in the conditions of Thenmaratchi only reinforced it. At the end of it many felt empty as though they had lost an important part of their self.

It is a cruel irony for LTTE sympathisers abroad to put out statements about the wonderful life in the brave new world of the Vanni, where people are supposed to be rediscovering their authentic Tamil heritage by tilling the soil and living as equals. In the face of such claims, even aid agencies are becoming anxious about finding funds to deal with the impending disaster.

To begin with, the Tamil middle class and most of those who went abroad aspire to give their children the best education and see their entering prestigious professions. Almost all writings on the Tamil militant struggle start with standardization and discrimination in educational opportunities. The struggle was significantly about equal access to educational opportunities. It was never a struggle to dismantle our educational infrastructure and go into the jungles. Even LTTE supporters had talked enthusiastically about the Singapore model. This propaganda about the Vanni is just a

shoddy attempt to sell and cover up the destruction resulting from the LTTE's precipitate decision and its politics.

Most Tamils continue to condemn the burning of the Jaffna Public Library by the Government in 1981 as cultural genocide. Has not this exodus resulted in unquantified, but large losses of our public and private cultural and educational treasures, including most libraries? Many leading Tamils were aghast at UNP minister Ranjan Wijeratne's proposal, which they described as crazy and inhuman, to shift the Tamil population into Vavuniya and then conduct an operation to take over the peninsula. But now this very same 'crazy and inhuman' idea has been accomplished by the so-called protectors of the rights of the people. Has not our case been gravely weakened by recent events?

The Exodus and the Tamil Media

An aspect of how Tamil society has become paralysed and locked into this totalitarian politics is the failure the Tamil printed and broadcasting media to come to terms with this historic exodus. Obfuscation has been the general rule. There has been a great reluctance to come near the truth, and give in-depth coverage and analysis.

The BBC Tamil Service (BBC(T)) and Radio Veritas, a Philippines based broadcasting station belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, are regularly listened to by Tamils in the North-East. A regular listener in the Eastern Province spoke for many others: "When an incident takes place, the people caught up in it are most often angry with the Government. But they also become disillusioned with the LTTE and its politics. But when others, even those a short distance from the incident, passively listen to these stations, they blame only the Government. They continue to believe that the LTTE is doing something positive and would achieve something. In this sense the media are a disturbing influence on the people".

The BBC(T) has been very efficient in providing versions of events favourable to the LTTE - mainly through the choices it makes in interviews and in what is said. Thus when about 100 Sinhalese were massacred by the LTTE in October, a Tamil Politician based in Colombo who was interviewed suggested that the massacres could have been done by other Tamil groups to discredit the LTTE. In the case of the recent exodus, there were correspondents' reports translated and broadcast over BBC(T) which spoke of the exodus having been engineered by the LTTE. But in a series of subsequent interviews it was the LTTE version that was prominent - i.e., the Government's military operation was almost exclusively blamed. The producers cannot be accused of being naive. Any Jaffna Tamil living in this country after all has to be stone-deaf not to know the truth.

The producers of BBC(T) in London cannot be accused of inefficiency either. They even scooped the Vanni based Tiger

leader Prabakaran's speech from the Tiger Radio based in Vanni. The BBC(T) spent a good 10 minutes of a 30 minute broadcast on 26th November giving the voice of the Leader addressing the Tamil nation in connection with National Heroes' Day. The producer clarified what was lost in a bad recording. The Leader affirmed the supposed voluntary nature of the exodus. The speech had its local broadcast in Vanni the following day as coming live from the leader addressing the nation.

Such an approach to broadcasting, which is highly emotional at times, cannot be construed as informing the listeners. Given the delicate manner in which the people are poised between life and death, such broadcasters may qualify to become undertakers to the Tamil nation.

A Divided Nation:

Questioning Ourselves

A few weeks ago an LTTE publication widely circulated among Tamils in mainland Europe, England and elsewhere in the West carried the cartoon of a man in Jaffna covering his head in an attitude of shame. His shame, he explained, was because none of his sons had joined the LTTE. The readers in Europe, North America and Australasia are very sure that none of their own sons would join the LTTE and certainly do not want them to, but compensate instead with financial contributions and by attending vocal LTTE rallies.

One such rally in London was reported in the same journal. Many of the speakers were well-to-do Tamil professionals. Some of them had sponsored the coming over to London of young relatives who had been in the LTTE. Indeed, most of them, however, would share an indignation against unfortunate ordinary folk at home who do not want their sons to join the LTTE.

During the SL Army's Operation Liberation in 1987, refugees from Vadamaratchi coming into Valikamam found weddings being celebrated in the usual manner and people going to amusement parks run by the LTTE. There was little sense of an impending calamity. The illusion is often sustained until the last minute that the LTTE would not allow the SL Army to come in. After the recent exodus, angry Valikamam folk going to Vadamaratchi were taken aback to find many of the Vadamaratchi folk defending the LTTE. Again the sympathy many Tamils in Colombo feel for the LTTE is governed by a consciousness of alienation in the South that is oblivious to the experience of the people in the North-East.

The recent exodus brings out again the atomisation and leaderlessness brought about by the bankruptcy of Tamil nationalism. For most people the focal points of community life and leadership had either lapsed or been destroyed. When the LTTE ordered the people to go, most had to decide for themselves and their family.

The abandonment of Jaffna hospital is

a historic event where the fate of a community and the fate of a city seemed to rest on the exhausted shoulders of a handful of medical staff tired in body and mind. Having endured much, they failed, and had they resisted then, they would very likely have failed the next time or the time after. The episode, while bringing out human weaknesses, also brought out strengths. It ended very much like many battles of a handful of individuals against a determined totalitarian force. Yet it is an event that we ought to be proud of. It demonstrated human potential and the spirit to organise around a common cause and resist. It showed that the Tamils had not caved in to totalitarian domination, but could act independently.

It is not these doctors and consultants who are on the dock, but the Tamil community itself, the expatriates, the elite and the more than 4,000 doctors the community has produced since 1960. How did we come to allow a political drift where it fell to a handful of doctors to take some momentous decisions on behalf of the entire community? The catastrophe had after all been in the making for decades. Moreover, of the thousands of doctors the community produced, only a handful were willing to work in Jaffna. They had also spurned the option of leaving Jaffna with dignity some months ago. What have these hundreds of expatriate

Numerous petitions are being signed today by professors and religious leaders. These neither address the people nor reflect their experience. They rather address the LTTE versions and the LTTE's concerns to the international community. They have therefore nothing to offer the people in the way of leadership. Their actions are rather a betrayal of the people.

There is again no leadership being offered to the Tamils whether in journalism, broadcasting or in parliamentary politics. They, the practitioners of these, do not address specific concerns in a convincing manner where the Government would have an interest in listening to them. Their general refrain to stop the war and resume talks with the LTTE makes no practical sense since the LTTE is yet to demonstrate that it seeks political accommodation and permanent peace. This is only a way of playing safe with the LTTE on the one hand, and on the other, in the event of the LTTE being destroyed, to play the same nationalist card saying that it was not they who betrayed the LTTE!

All this is troubling particularly because of the absence of a clear policy on the part of the Government on being accountable to the Tamil civilians. Reports of bombing and shelling well outside combat areas are being angrily denied and censored. If this direction is not changed, worse may come and alienate the Government further from the Tamil people.

Meanwhile the LTTE Leader has in his National Heroes' Day address in late No

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POLITICIANS RUNNING FOR COVER

T N Gopalan

"In ancient India, kings and emperors thought it a privilege to sit at the feet of a man of learning. In today's India, MP's and Ministers think it a privilege if they get a chance to sit at the feet of underworld dons and base businessmen to get secret donations from and to get their blessings..."

"Politics seems to have become the most profitable business of the day wherein the individual enjoys the fruits of political power and he becomes holder of several new accounts in Indian and foreign banks and these accounts fatten day in and day out..."

Thus spoke Additional Sessions Judge Shiv Nargin Dhingra of New Delhi while rejecting former Union Minister Kalpanath Rai, detained for allegedly sheltering some associates of the Bombay-blasts-accused Dawood Ibrahim, to attend Lok Sabha, the last session for this Parliament.

Dhingra did not fail to see the irony of it all either - "see, while the Parliament passed the TADS Act to strike at the terrorist and anti-social and criminal elements, a Member of Parliament and a central minister has been found to be harbouring the terrorist and anti-social and criminal elements. This much for the concern of Mr Kalpanath Rai for his constituency, society and the nation about which he has spoken at length in his application".

True the Parliamentarians reacted furiously at the "gratuitous insults" hurled at them and the Delhi High Court came forward to strike off some of Dhingra's remarks as uncalled for and chided him for exceeding his brief. But, Dhingra's outburst found a sympathetic response in many a heart.

As noted satirist Cho S Ramaswamy commented, "the judge did exceed his brief. He should not have set the stage for a confrontation between the judiciary and the Parliament. Still he was speaking for millions of his fellow Indians when he made those soothing comments. Are we not all so much disillusioned with out politicians?"

While the juggernaut of the hawala case keeps moving steadily, relentlessly, more than two dozen netas (leaders) have so far come to grief, new scandals also keep breaking out - Kalpanath Rai, the highly voluble post-graduate in English Literature who thrives in foul-mouthing his rivals inside and outside the party, and Brij Saran Singh, a BJP MP, (both

hailing from the UP) have been detained by the CHI for alleged association with the underworld don and prime suspect in the Bombay blasts of 1993, Dawood Ibrahim.

In Bihar officials of the lowly placed animal husbandry department - of course in cahoots with various political parties - are believed to have siphoned off up to Rs.500 crores, in the name of buying cattle-feed, over the last four or five years.

And, down south in Tamil Nadu, the Jaya Government is being rocked by ever new scandals, from laying roofs for cremation sheds to distribution of saris and dhotis to the poor. Nothing ever gets done here without someone or other lining his or her pockets. And senior IAS officials perceived close to the Poes Garden clique are charged with amassing wealth to the tune of several crores of rupees and so on.

Politicians across the spectrum find themselves being swirled and tossed towards some dreadful destiny in the wake of hawala and the courts everywhere seem to be deriving some sadistic satisfaction by turning the knife in the wound and aggressively pursuing the various corruption cases before them. The question is whether Prime Minister Rao himself is savouring it all.

All these exciting developments, coming as they do on the eve of the general elections, have indeed made the parties reassess their strategies in order to regain their credibility in the eyes of the public. Barring the CPI and the CPM every other party has been linked to the hawala racket, it may be noted here.

But, easily the worst hit is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the pretenders to the throne. Not just the tall-talking Lal Kishen Advani, its president, but a battery of second-level leaders including New Delhi Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana have also been indicted (the latter had to step down reluctantly).

And as mentioned earlier one of its own MP's has been accused of colluding with Islamic terrorists. Independent investigations by the press have revealed that the MP, Saran Singh, is a history-sheeter, meaning he is a notorious criminal and a familiar figure in the police stations of his native gonda district. Even now the party is unable to bring itself to expel him, he has only been suspended. Apparently his vote-mobilising skills are more important in an election

year than the moral norms it used to spout in and out of turn.

In a bid to embarrass Narasimha Rao the BJP lined up an MP who had come over to it from the Jharkhand Mukthi Moroha JAM (a regional party from Bihar) to say that the Prime Minister had bribed him to the tune of Rs.40 lakhs in July 1993 - in order to make him vote against the opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion.

But, how could such a person be accepted as its member? "Well, he was only an innocent tribal", the BJP leaders claimed and said that he had been unfairly lured by the wily Congress.

However, as it turned out, he was not all that innocent. A couple of days later the JAM MP promptly retracted and said the money he had received had nothing to do with him supporting Rao in 1993. He had done so for political reasons, and the BJP leaders are busy searching for the right place to busy their faces!

The CPI and CPM too have their own quote of embarrassment even though they themselves are not tainted by the scam. Their "natural ally", the Janata Dal is also experiencing hawala-related convulsions since quite a few of its leaders including its Lok Sabha leader Sharad Yadav and President ... Bommai figure in the Jain roll call of honour. Though only Yadav has been charge-sheeted so far.

Not that the Congress is in any better shape with as many as Seven Union Ministers having resigned from the cabinet following their implication in hawala and a lot more being linked, all of them facing the ignominy of being charge-sheeted and tried in public, they are all seething with rage. They are angry with Rao for ditching them despite their "unswerving loyalty" in order to buttress his own position and the media constantly holds out the prospect of a revolt but none dares. After all how could one rebel on a corruption platform?

Rao's supporters are claiming that their leader has taken the wind out of the sails of the opposition which has been charging the government with all kinds of corruption by bursting the hawala bombshell. "The morale of the Congress workers is upbeat. Efforts to cleanse the policy is appreciated not only by partymen but by common people," boasted Ved Prakash, joint secretary, AICC.

Rao himself told his Parliamentary Party Executive "Go before the people, holding your heads high. We have let the law take its own course, without interfering in the probe in any way. We have a clean conscience."

Not many will buy that line. None believes that the CBI has not been selectively targeting Rao's rivals inside and

SUB-CONTINENTAL CRICKET

SHARING THE BOUNTY BUT MISSING THE MAGIC

G.Ramesh

Now that the World Cup is getting over, time has come to reflect on what the game has come to mean in the subcontinent. Is cricket here just a paracolonial hangover, as some Marxist critics would have it? Or is it just a gentle reply to colonialism, as exemplified by the wristy strokes of an inventor like Ranjit Singhji, an artist like G R Viswanath, or today, the elegant Harshan Tillekaratne, which baffle bowlers anywhere and the spinning arms of the likes of Bishen Singh Bedi, Abdul Khader or Muthiah Muralitharan which foxed batsmen wherever they bowled?

Alternatively, can this reply be considered gentle at all, given that the highest number of test wickets have been taken by the fiery Kapil Dev, that 10,000-odd test runs were scored by Sunil Gavaskar, the maximum number of 30-odd World Cup matches were played in well over two decades by Javed Miandad, all belonging to recent subcontinental history. And also because of the huge bounty being mopped up by Sachin Tendulkar and others via advertisements, ranging from Pepsi Cola to VisaCard to Mahindra Armada or Cielo cars in this World Cup.

Is cricket just a game for breaking records set by the White Man, as was thought when Sir Garfield Sobers then and Brian Lara now crossed the highest score in a given test innings? Or is it, going by the expositions of the great

C L R James, a unique response of a colonised culture to a colonial culture, as was the case with the genius of a Learie Constantine? Is cricket at the highest level being played for fun and sharing its magical twists and turns? Or is it just big business, where market forces have come to rule with the subcontinent's stars like Tendulkar getting on equal financial footing with their English, Australian or South African counterparts?

Is cricket a gentlemanly game, as brought out by quotes from the likes of yesterday's greats like Mike Brearly, Tony Lewis and Ajit Wadekar which interspersed live telecasts of games asking us to share the magic? Going by this World Cup, cricket sounds very hot. It is now a game with "nothing official about it", a cliched ad-slogan mouthed for Pepsi Cola (as against Coke which bagged the official drink title) by Indian players like Asharuddin and Kambli (apart from Tendulkar), English pacer Dominic Cork and non-other-than the eternally efficient English Umpire Dickie Bird. In the ad, no one is gentlemanly; they don't want the official drink!

The Windies too seem to have been bitten by the ad-bug. Pepsi-wanting quickie Courtney Walsh displays his power by driving a bulldozer over a car in a Caribbean shantytown, a far cry from genial assassins like his team managers Wes Hall and Anderson Roberts who, in

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outside the party. But, now that every party and leader is seen as corrupt and unscrupulous, the labours of the opposition to single out Rao as heading the most corrupt regime since independence will turn out to be in vain.

All the same there is also a perception that Rao has lost control of the process and it is the courts which are dictating the pace of it all. And, so the monster unleashed by him could ultimately devour him. After all he is in such unenviable company like that of conman Chandraswamy. So goes the reasoning.

If that indeed happens the Indian political system will have indeed been thoroughly cleansed. But it will be some time before such a turn of events does come about.

As of now, however, Rao is quietly enjoying the drama he has scripted at least in part and is also flaunting his Government's achievements on the eco-

nomic front.

As his Finance Minister told the Lox Sabha, presenting his interim budget. "Our economy today is growing than six percent a year. Industry is growing rapidly, Agriculture production is strong, Food stocks are high, Employment growth is buoyant, Poverty is declining, Inflation is at its lowest ebb in many years, Exports are booming. Foreign investment is also buoyant, Foreign Exchange reserves are comfortable. And the level of savings and investment is high".

No doubt there are many sceptics around. The bottom layers do not seem to be enjoying the fruits of liberalisation, the fiscal deficit is growing and the Foreign Exchange reserves are declining. A Mexico-type collapse could be around the corner, they warn.

In a month from now it will be known how the Indian electorate perceive the situation and whether the Indian Machiavelli does come up trumps.

their heydays, managed to extract some life even out of the subcontinent's slow wickets! Besides, a whole lot of Windies players drink the beer that sponsors them worldwide, Kingfisher, which is unavailable in India. The beer foam splashes over the screens of Star TO and the Windier may well be overdoing their image-bit, playing up as the happy-go-lucky characters who don't seem to mind losing. Do such add have something to do with the poor performances of a Labra or a Richardson in this World Cup?

Sure, answers are difficult to get at, but these questions kept coming to the fore last month with cricket bombarding the collective consciousness of the subcontinent, from India to Pakistan to Lanka, not to leave out the expatriate/refugee populations in the Gulf, Europe and North America. The dismantling of apartheid in South Africa brought on view the mystery Black spinner, Paul Adams whose chinamans and straight ones kept deceiving every batsman who played him. He and the Kenyans who humbled the mighty Windier, are the true finds of this World Cup. At least now, South Africa would have realised that it had missed several Paul Adams' all along.

"Share the magic" says the World Cup motto. In the beginning, the event seemed to share out controversies. Firstly, there was a row over telecast rights in India and elsewhere between Doordarshan and WorldTel. This is indicative of the possible advertisement revenues out of the Cup Telecast: a shopping Rs 500 crores (There is even an official chewing gum). Even as top Indian courts besieged with corruption cases found time to settle this dispute, the tragic Colombo blast left the Aussies and Windier numb and they predictably refused to play Lanka there.

With the blast, the LTTE's objective was achieved, though tragic events in earlier years did not prevent matches being held in Bombay, Delhi or Karachi. Now only the Zimbabweans and Kenyans would visit the island to play matches. An Indo-Pak eleven casually lost a goodwill match to the Lankans at Colombo, signalling the nature of things to come. In the last two decades, Lankans have fast emerged as a fully-fledged cricketing force. (Far away are the decades when Tamil Nadu spinners like leggie V V Kumar and offie S Venkatraghavan used to taunt even aggressive visiting Lankan batsmen during the M J Gopalan Trophy matches!). Later in the Cup, the Lankans simply stormed Delhi, beating the formidable Indian team despite exhilarating performances by Tendulkar, Azhar and leg spinner Anil Kumble. Lankans have cer-

tainly displaced the fantastic fielding traditions. They have the flashy Romesh Kaluwitarana and Sanath Jayasurya opening the innings with contempt for any bowling, Gurusinha who plays the anchor and Arjuna Ranatunga, who, with his cool-headedness, makes captaincy look so easy a task. They have a thinking fast bowler in Chaminda Vaas, a product of the Madras-based MRF and a capable off-spinner in Muralitharan, who was wrongly called a chucker in Australia. He has now been fully cleared. Muralitharan, along with his Indian counterpart As his Kapoor and Pakistani sibling Saqlain Mushtaq, typically carries forward the subcontinental finger-spin tradition of Venkatraghavan and Erapalli Prasanna. And it is only right that leg spinners like Kumble, Shane Warne and Mushtaq Ahmed have ruled the slow tracks of this World Cup.

In the subcontinent, cricket is played not just in school grounds or college maidans, but in waysides, street corners and gallis (alleys), on housetops, near courtyards and cattle sheds, on riverbanks, lagoons, beaches, paddy fields, chillie-beds and even refugee camps! Coke, the official World Cup drink, has a nice brownish-red colour - there is colour in this magic". For once, this much-hated capitalist multi-national symbol is right, making this point tellingly! In the background is a mystic Sufi song, mast kalandar, signifying the subcontinent's plural, popular culture. In the advertisement, stumps are not used; instead sticks, chappals, empty cylinders and cool drink crates are. Some even play makeshift hand-cricket. And it is at once ignored and watched by everyone around. The presence of cricket thus is eternal as televisions switched on everywhere in the subcontinent at 0900 hours until late into the night demonstrate. The magic of spin strokes, the magic of overs and scores, keeps everyone, players and spectators alike, guessing, even if they are not aware of it. A kind of astrology? No, says psychologist Ashis Nandy. Like its great counterpart, the Indian cinema, cricket is the subcontinent's popular culture of myths which has stretched itself just to answer the British. Cricket, for us, is as much a game as it is our passionate identity. Huge clapping audiences and pitch invasions by madding crowds, which are the nightmare of any team visiting the subcontinent, prove this point.

Even with all this, the Lankans, as well as the entire subcontinent, have been missing something. And that is Jaffna. Jaffna's cricket culture is very much a part of us all, but alas, Jaffna is destined not to be part of this World Cup hosted by the subcontinent.

Let me recall that when I went to the

peninsula during a peace interregnum in 1987, gun-wielding young LTTE militants asked me whether India would be able to win the Cup then hosted by the subcontinent. The militants who put this question might well have been wilding the willows! Clearly, they wanted the subcontinent's best team to retain the Cup, despite the tension building up between the LTTE and the Indian armed forces then stationed in the peninsula.

A similar instance was when I came across an Indian mother who celebrated Inzamam-ul-Haq as a Bhima-like son. The hefty Pakistani youngster had just made his debut by bludgeoning the bowling attacks of colonial powers like England in the last World Cup held in Australia and New Zealand. And when Pakistan lifted the Cup, Captain Imran Khan and commentator Gavaskar simply forgot the borders between the two countries. It was the subcontinent's win, not any one country's. And cricket

is what binds the subcontinent, like spices and popular films.

It is the strength of Jaffna's cricket culture that it could survive even war. The presence of the game in the peninsula until October last year has been documented by Ms Emma Levine, a Hong Kong-based photographer. One of her pictures in her recent book *Cricket: A Kind of Pilgrimage* (Local Colour Ltd, Hong Kong, 17.50 pounds sterling) shows a coaching session outside the bombed-out library. However, the recent capture of the peninsula by the Lankan forces has killed the game not only in Jaffna, but also, in a way, at Colombo, and elsewhere in the subcontinent too. Much is expected out of the Lankans, wherewithal to defeat England and other teams and even enter the finals. Yet, tragically all of us have lost Jaffna's cricket and what it could have contributed to the subcontinent's most engrossing and watched game.

No Light at the End of the Tunnel

G.Ramesh

On 16 February last, the University of Madras sent out a letter to colleges and institutions affiliated to it directing them to continue not admitting Sri Lankan refugee students or Sri Lankan passport holders. It cited an earlier state government order dated 8 August last year, which stated that Sri Lankan students could be permitted to study only in schools and not in colleges.

This denial of higher education very much resembles the Standardisation Policy of the island government implemented in the early seventies. The consequences are too well known to be quoted here. Lankan Tamils are acutely aware of the opportunities of institutionalised higher education. Precisely because of this, higher education has been denied to them for the last four years. Hence, students among the 125,000-strong Lankan refugee population in Tamil Nadu have no option but to leave the country. But where will they go? Abroad? Or would they take up crime as their profession?

This "higher education" policy is symptomatic of the state government's attitude to the Sri Lankan issue. Refugees just manage to eke out a hopeless life in Tamil Nadu, some elsewhere in India, in the aftermath of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. The current

tragedy is that none of the political parties which participated in the 30 November statewide bandh to condemn the Lankan military offensive seems to be worried about their plight. Some time ago, the state government attempted to send back refugees forcibly. The move was given up because war resumed in the peninsula last year.

Political parties in Tamil Nadu are also not really bothered that the relief amounts and drugs and blood collected by them meant for the suffering population of the Jaffna peninsula have not been handed over to the Indian Red Cross Office at Egmore here managed by noted social worker and Congresswoman Mrs Sarojini Varadappan, daughter of the late Chief Minister M Bhaktavatsalam.

Chief Minister J Jayalalitha shoots off letters on every conceivable occasion to Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao who has no time for the hapless fishermen of coastal Nagapattinam and Ramanathapuram districts who bear the brunt of the Lankan naval firings, harassment and abductions. At least one boat is being shot at every week and sometimes the firing proves fatal. The state bureaucracy regularly contacts the Colombo High Commission which has only a minimal programme of action to save the kidnapped fishermen.

Denial of LTTE Threat to Embassies

The LTTE has denied that it has issued any threat against foreign embassies in Colombo or in any other part of the world following news reports to that effect appeared in Colombo newspapers. The Japanese and Malaysian missions in Colombo have received death threats from a group believed to be a front for the Tamil Tigers separatist the *Sunday Times* newspaper reported on 24 February.

The Japanese embassy was warned not to issue a visa to a Tamil Member of Parliament while the Malaysian mission received threats after reports in the last few days that the Malaysian government had outlawed the LTTE, the paper reported. "... it was clear that the group was now aiming at foreign missions here as international pressure against the LTTE mounts overseas," the paper added in its lead story. The paper alleged that the threats were made by the "Ellalan Force" which it claimed was front organisation of the Tamil Tigers.

The paper's allegation came in the wake of the Malaysian government's decision to ban any activities in support of the LTTE in Malaysia. The Home Ministry in Kuala Lumpur had in a statement warned that the government would re-

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It seems that Indian officials, and this includes the Red Cross and Refugee Relief Commissioners, have "given up" on Lanka. They must be working on the assumption that the Lankan Tamil issue is no longer going to affect, let alone dominate, the public sphere of Tamil Nadu and are willing to let things "take their own course".

There seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel for Lankan Tamil refugees living in the state. The DMK led by Muthuvel Karunanidhi was the only party to entertain a resolution in its recent Tiruchirapalli conference highlighting the plight of Tamils in Lanka because of the war. The Marumalarchi DMK's militant postures in favour of the LTTE and the Lankan Tamils' plight is constantly being muffled by its ally, the CPI(M). MDMK general secretary V Gopalswamy has been asked by the CPI(M) leaders not to raise this issue because of the ongoing talks with breakaway Congress leader Vazhapadi K Ramamurthy, an ardent camp follower of Ms Sonia Gandhi. The AIADMK's recent jamboree at Tiruchirapalli had not such time for any issue other than praising Ms Jayalalitha. It is clear that the Tamils' issue will not come up before the elections.

voke the permanent status of foreigners involved in demonstrations supporting the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. Police were investigating reports that some foreigners and Malaysians had taken part in pro-LTTE demonstrations in front of several embassies in Kuala Lumpur, Deputy Home Minister Megat Junaid Megat Ayob told the press. The demonstrations were also directed at the Indian government for not supporting the Tamil Tigers.

"The government will not condone any demonstration which supports terrorist activities," said Megat Junaid. He warned that those taking part in any of the demonstrations would be arrested for causing unrest.

In denying the allegation, an LTTE statement issued from its London office said, "In this connection, the LTTE wishes to state that it has never issued any threat of any form to any Foreign embassies based in Colombo or in any part of the world and will never do so in the future too.

"The LTTE wishes to take this opportunity to state that it is very much interested in building friendly relations with all the countries in the world and in that context values, respects and looks forward to the Foreign Embassies in Colombo and in other parts of the world to develop friendly relations. The LTTE also wishes to state that it has nothing to do with the so-called Ellalan Force and also it has no knowledge that the Ellalan Force actually issued such an intimidating statement to the above mentioned em-

(Continued from page 23)

member asserted that the people left Jaffna of their own free will, and that he would not talk to the Government as long as the SL Army is in Jaffna. For the first time he has personally made a claim in stark contrast to the people's experience. He has both cornered himself and put a further distance between himself and the people. It also faces those who would like to return to Jaffna with unpleasant choices, while the LTTE blows more bubbles of illusion in the Vanni and prolongs the suffering. It would save the Tamils a great deal of tragedy and loss if the LTTE could be brought into a critical process of questioning by all concerned Tamils, and made accountable as well responsive to the wishes of the people. However because of the LTTE's absolute command structure, the supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran may remain isolated from these avenues of influence and pressure.

This places a great burden on the

bassies in Colombo.

"The Sinhala owned Colombo news papers collaborating with the Sri Lankan Government on the chauvinist cause of the Government against Tamils have been coming out with false reports in time to time with the aim of tarnishing the image of the LTTE. These Colombo Newspapers are also guilty of carrying on a sinister disinformation campaign consistently against Tamils and the LTTE in order to undermine their political aspirations. The current article in the Sri Lankan Sunday Times is no different.

"Some Colombo based Sinhala reporters of the much respected International News agencies, are also implicated in this by virtue of the fact that they deliberately file reports taken from the Colombo papers, that are essentially anti Tamil and anti LTTE. These Sinhala propaganda materials are put into the international news media for the consumption of unsuspecting readers. These Colombo based Sinhala reporters of the International News agencies have also deliberately filed reports emanating from Sri Lankan military authorities, that are of a war propaganda nature, without trying to get any independent verification. We wish to state that these all happen while the Government effectively preventing genuine local as well as international news correspondents going to the war-torn North-Eastern Province."

Meanwhile Malaysia's envoy in Sri Lanka has denied the newspaper report that his mission had received a death threat from a group believed to be a front for Tamil LTTE. "It's not true. We have not got any threat from anyone," Malaysian High Commissioner Kadir Deen told the press in Colombo.

Tamils living here and abroad, to recognise that the community, particularly at home, is leaderless and in grave danger, and to act with a sense of responsibility. Even at this late stage we have to question our politics of death - the death of people, with so called martyrs and traitors, and of children used in bearing arms or used as instruments of terror. In the Exodus we have an experience where the truth according to the rulers is in sharp contrast to the testimony of hundreds of thousands of people. The LTTE's claim to protect what those in Jaffna valued most - their education and their infrastructure so painfully built up - has been laid bare after this exodus. We need to ask, what is the politics behind this and what does it mean for us? Is it possible to sustain a society and a civilisation through sheer manipulation without an underpinning moral commitment?

Tamil doctors who support the LTTE done to make the lot of their colleagues who remain easier and more dignified?

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A Service of Thanks Giving to Commemorate the Centenary of Chundikuli Girls' College, Jaffna.

The Chundikuli St. John's Past Pupils Association UK wish to invite past pupils their families, friends and well wishers of the school to a service of thanks giving to commemorate the Centenary of Chundikuli Girls College, Jaffna on Saturday 27th April 1996 at 6pm at the St. Nicholas Church, Church Lane, Tooting, London SW17.

Tea and refreshments will be served after the service



Kokuvil Hindu College
Old Students Association (U.K.)



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Doors Open at 6:30pm

Refreshments on sale

“Govt Proposals Will Pave Way for Separate Eelam”

Some 2,000 saffron-robed Buddhist monks from all over Sri Lanka gathered in Colombo on 5 March to denounce the government's devolution proposals and demand its immediate abandonment.

“The problem in the north is a problem of terrorism,” Maduluwawe Sobitha, an archetypal exponent of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism, told the gathering of monks from around the island. “There can be no political solution to terrorism. We demand that the government eliminate terrorism.” Sobitha is an outspoken critic of government peace proposals which are designed to give substantial devolved powers to the regions through the establishment of Regional Councils. The fiery monk warned that the plan could lead to the break up of the country. “These proposals are divisive, they will

destroy communal amity,” he declared.

The much publicised gathering of leading Buddhist prelates adopted a resolution which, in brief stated:

* The proposed constitutional amendments will pave the way for the creation of an independent state of Eelam which is the sole objective of Tamil separatists, and therefore they should not be implemented.

* Because the government has stated that the constitutional amendments are aimed at solving the Tamil problem and to correct the historical injustices caused to the Tamils, the Maha Sangha demands that the government specifies in what ways the Tamils have suffered any injustices and the problems for which it is seeking a solution.

* Sri Lanka is the sole Sinhala Buddhist country in the world, and hence the Maha Sangha demands that in solving the problems of the country, the Sinhala Buddhist identity should be safeguarded.

* The objective of the violence and propaganda by “Tamil terrorist groups” is to put an end to the two thousand five hundred years existence of the island as one country. It is clear to us that the new constitution proposed by the government under the euphemism of proposals for devolution of power is designed solely to achieve that very objective.

* As at the present time there is only one territory comprising a unitary state. What is sought to be done is to divide the land into several countries or territories and then to bring them together loosely in a federal union.

* One of the strident arguments for combining Tamil majority areas within a single political region is that if the Tamils did not so coalesce the Tamil “nation” will not survive. The government proposes accordingly to bring Tamils together in a region carved out of the combined Northern and Eastern Provinces. It proposes at the same time to divide the Sinhala dominant areas into several sovereign regions. Applying the Tamil argument heeded by the Government the intention can only be to ensure that the Sinhalese do not survive. If the land be constituted in terms of the Government's proposals, the country, the nation and its principal religion will certainly be destroyed.

Soldiers Found Guilty

A military court appointed by the Sri Lankan authorities have found 14 soldiers guilty of massacring 24 Tamil civilians and has recommended that they be severely punished. The soldiers - privates and lance corporals - were found guilty by the military court of inquiry of killing the civilians on February 11 in the village of Kumarapuram in eastern Trincomalee district.

Tamil politicians and some of the wounded had accused government troops of going on a rampage after Tamil Tiger guerrillas killed two soldiers earlier that

day. Among the dead were women and children. Some 25 people were wounded. Following strong demands for an independent investigation into the massacre, the government ordered a special military court to probe the allegations.

The army commander will now decide on punishment on the basis of recommendations made by the court of inquiry, military sources said. They said the court had criticised officers in charge of the soldiers for not controlling them, but had not called for disciplinary action against them.

Centre in respect of the legislative, judicial, administrative, developmental, enforcement of law and order and defence matters over which it has exclusive or overriding powers.

Mere cessation of hostilities (through whatever means) will not signal the end of the war; only when the process of reconciliation begins in earnest the people will see the dawn of peace. The sooner the elected and self-appointed leaders on both sides realise that for better or worse the destinies of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims are inseparably linked, the shorter will be the healing time. If the proposed constitutional arrangement devolving powers to the regions fails, it will be for the very same reason that the previous constitutions failed to sustain the sense of belonging to one united nation.

(Continued from page 12)

must be made to feel that they have a stake in keeping the union together and the paramount duty to ensure this rests definitely on the majority community. The indissolubility of the union must stem from the conviction of all the people and not forced upon by one group on the others. The antagonistic and distrustful attitude clear from the current debate, where some want a guaranteed “mechanism by which the Tamil Region could be disciplined, if it violates the substance of any legislative enactment, or if it makes unilateral declaration of independence on one pretext or the other” is unhelpful to achieve this noble goal. The principle of inclusion currently adopted by the magnanimous and far-sighted leader of multi-racial South Africa, Mr. Nelson Mandela must be followed by the

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MATRIMONIAL

Parents, Jaffna Tamil seek steady caring husband for their British born daughter, twenty-four, with steady employment in leading bank. Religion immaterial. Parents will assist towards start in life. Send brief details, photograph (returnable). M 834 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu sister seeks good looking reasonably educated bride under 30 for accountant brother, 35, US citizen. Send details, horoscope, photo. M 836 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek fairly educated partner for son, 31, UK permanent resident, Mars afflicted. Send details, horoscope, photo. M 837 c/o Tamil Times.

Sri Lankan Tamil parents (UK) seek for son, 25, fair, computer science graduate holding professional position, an attractive confident professional girl, 20-24. Send recent photo, horoscope, details. M 838 c/o Tamil Times.

Indian Tamil Christian male, 27, 5'9", employed in UK seeks slim, reasonably educated, good looking partner, 18-27, religion immaterial. M 839 c/o Tamil Times.

Friend seeks kind hearted sincere male partner under 45 without encumbrances for well established, UK resident, talented divorcee. M 840 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu brother (USA) seeks partner for pretty, fair sister, 32, working in Colombo. Send horoscope, photo, details. M 841 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional partner for fair, attractive, biochemistry graduate, daughter, 24, in good UK employment, Mars afflicted. Send horoscope, details. M 842 c/o Tamil Times.

Wanted Nanny

Kingston Area, care of one year old doctors' child in their home, full time, week-days. Attractive salary.
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 after 20th March.

OBITUARIES



Mr. M. Nadarajah of Kalviyankadu, Jaffna, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Ponnammah, loving father of Dr. Thangarajah (UK), Thuraisingham, Vijayamalar; father-in-law of Pathma, Ranji, Balasubramaniam; grand father of Asok (UK), Ajith, Ajanth, Arun, Ajive, Danisha and Prasanna expired on 21.2.96 at Meesalai and was cremated on 22.2.96. - 57B Days Lane, Biddenham, Beds., MK40 4AE. Tel: 01234 346090.



Vallipuram Sellathamby of Vadarachi, Thunnalai (Attorney-at-Law, J.P., U.M., Point Pedro); beloved husband of Saraswathy; son of late Mr. & Mrs. Vallipuram; loving father of Dr. Manoranjan (USA), Shiyamala (UK) and Kathirchelvan (UK); father-in-law of Thirugnanasampantha Pillai (UK) and Rukmani (USA); grand father of Vishnu (USA), Gajan, Ruban, Haran (all of UK); brother of Mrs. Sivanayagam Vanniasingham (Sri Lanka),

Mrs. Sivasothyayagam Sithamparanathan (Canada) and Mrs. Panchamasothyayagam Sabaratnam (Australia) passed away on 21st February 1996 and was cremated on 29th February at Croydon Crematorium, Croydon, Surrey.

His wife and members of the family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes, messages of sympathy and assisted them in various ways. - 50 Wiltshire Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey. Tel: 0181 689 1450.

IN MEMORIAM

Mr. Chandrasegaran Balachandran



In loving memory of a dear brother who passed away on March 5th, 1994.

We remember you in silence
 And make no outward show
 And what it meant to lose you
 No one will ever know.

Sadly missed by his brothers
 and sisters.

In Loving Memory of Our Beloved

Daddy	Mummy
Ponnampalam	Vemalaranee
Kanagaratnam	Kanagaratnam
Born: 11.10.1908	10.7.1923



Life is not measured by the years
 But the love and affection
 you gave
 These are precious memories
 for us to hold
 No words can comfort us
 When those we love depart

Days of sadness still loom
 over us
 But memories of you both
 will live for ever.

Remembered with love and affection by sons Sara, Brem and Dubsy; daughters-in-law Laliitha and Shyamala; and grandchildren Janarthan, Mehala, Uthistran, Arani and Anuja. - 19 Huxley Place, Palmers Green, London N13 5SU. Tel: 0181 886 5966.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

March 31 10.00am Tamil Speech Competition conducted by London Tamil Centre at Wembley High School, East Lane, Wembley, Middx., Tel: 0181 904 3937.

Mar. 31 5.00pm Cultural Evening presented by Saiva Munetta Sangam (UK) at Town Hall, Eastham, London E6. Tel: 01708 851189/0181 470 2371.

April 1 Pirathosam.

Apr. 2 Pankuni Uthiram.

Apr. 3 Full Moon.

Apr. 4 Maundy Thursday.

Apr. 5 Good Friday.

Apr. 7 Chathurthi; Easter Sunday.

Apr. 8 Easter Monday.

Apr. 13 Thathu Hindu New Year.

Apr. 14 12.30pm S.C.O.T. New Year Lunch & Raffle at Wandsworth Town Hall, Wandsworth High Street, London SW18. For tickets Tel: 0181 952 7249.

Apr. 15 Pirathosam.

Apr. 17 Amavasai.

Apr. 20 Karthikai; 6.00pm Tamil Association of Brent celebrates Seventeenth Anniversary and Tamil New Year with Music, Dance and a Children's Drama 'Malaikalai Akattiya Mooda Kilavani' produced by Tamil Performing Arts Society at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 908 6993.

Apr. 20 7.00pm Kokuvil Hindu College Old Students' Association (UK) presents Variety Entertainment at Claremont High School Hall, Claremont Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. Tel: 0181 578 3159.

Apr. 21 Chathurthi.

Apr. 25 Feast of St. Mark.

Apr. 27 6.00pm Service of Thanks Giving to Commemorate the Centenary of Chundikuli Girls' College, Jaffna at St. Nicholas Church, Church Lane, Tooting, London SW17.

Apr. 27 6.30pm Cultural Evening presented by London Tamil

Centre at Logan Hall, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. Tel: 0181 904 3937/907 6638.

Apr. 27 6.30pm M.I.O.T. South Thames Region presents 'A Feast of Music, Drama and

Dance' at Kelsey Park School Hall, Manor Way, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3SJ. Tel: 0181 690 7285.

Apr. 29 Feast of St. Catherine. At Bhawan Centre, 4A Castle-

town Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171-381 3086/4608.

Apr. 13 6.00pm Bharata Natyam Recital by Sandhya & Kiran Subramanyam from India.

Apr. 14 6.00pm Tamil Devotional Music by Janaki Subramaniam.

Apr. 21 6.00pm Bharata Natyam Recital by Vena Gheerawo.

CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Weather: Severe winter continues with blowing snow. Torontonians who normally experience sunshine during winter are disappointed this year with the cloudy and foggy conditions that prevail most of the time.

Suresh's Defence: The court hearing of Suresh Manickavasagar, President of the Tamil Movement of Canada, detained under the Immigration Act is expected to come up on 18th March 96. His defence is being co-ordinated by Visvanathan Rudrakumar, a Sri Lankan US lawyer. The renowned international lawyer, Karen Parker, from Los Angeles is expected to be in the defence team.

High Commissioner's Denial: The Canadian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka recently visited Toronto and conferred with a number of Sri Lankan Organisations in Canada. When he met the Board of Directors of the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils on 14.2.96, he denied the story attributed to him in 'Macleans' magazine that large sums of money were channelled to the LTTE from Canada.

Vettivelu Nadarajah

— Born 7.11.1909;



Died 18.12.1995

In the passing away of Mr. V. Nadarajah, the Sri Lankans have lost a truly great man, who lived and worked among them with distinction. His life was an example of dedicated service for the good of the community and for his own fulfilment. He came from a well known family, his forbears being persons of distinction and culture, but family tradition as such sat lightly on 'NADA' — as he was known throughout the country.

Fifth Anniversary of Tamil Information: The most outstanding social event in February was the fifth anniversary celebrations of the monthly journal 'Tamil Information'. The ceremony is held year after year in the Council Chamber of the City Hall with the Mayor of Toronto as the Guest of Honour. A committee headed by Mr. N. Sivalingam with Mr. S. Thiruchelvam, the Editor as the secretary selects persons of outstanding ability for their contribution in different fields of activity for annual awards. This year the celebrations were held on 11.2.96 with a capacity attendance of 300. The function was restricted to invitees only and the recipients of the awards were as follows.

Social Service: Mr. M.J.A. Jeyanathan, **Tamil Drama:** Mr. S.S. Achuthampillai, **Oriental Dancing:** Mrs. Geetha Yogendran, **Educational Service:** Mr. P. Kanagasabapathy, **Refugee Service:** Mr. Ali Kolpur who is a non Sri Lankan.

Mr. G.K. Mahendran of Toronto, social worker and Tamil activist passed away suddenly. He was 45 and a former Sri Lankan Attorney-at-Law, in the process of qualifying as a Canadian barrister at the time of his death.

A graduate of the University of London, he joined the Co-operative Department in 1934 as an Inspector of Co-operative Societies, and was promoted as an Assistant Commissioner (ACCD) in 1948. He retired from Government service in 1960 to become General Manager of the Co-operative Federal Bank and in 1961 was awarded an ILO Fellowship to undertake a tour of some West European countries to study Co-operative Banking. On his return to Sri Lanka in July, 1961, he served as Recoveries Officer at the People's Bank for a year, and later as Personnel Manager of the Bank from 1963 to 1970.

After his retirement from the People's Bank, he served as Principal of the Jaffna Co-operative Training School for two years.

Nada was an outstanding Co-operator, as well as a kind and understanding administrator, whose wise counsel and direction were eagerly availed of by others in dealing with the many inherent problems of the Co-operative Movement. He was a tower of strength to all those who worked with him. To his office he gave lustre and grace, and his colleagues looked upon him with much hope and affection. For those who were privileged to work with him, the loss is indeed irreparable.

His life was clean and pure. He never wronged any person, nor did he indulge in pettiness, dishonesty or chicanery that plagued the Co-operative Movement from

the beginning. He was too honest to pretend; too sincere to be a sham.

Nada was so friendly, so human and so unsophisticated, and he went about his work so unostentatiously. His was a life of simplicity, humility, honesty and integrity. He was a man of great intellect, of wise and objective judgment, and of enduring charm in his relations with others. He had a happy married life for 59 years and to his great disappointment, his wife predeceased him on 6.10.95. As he himself noted, 'Words cannot convey the agony of the loss of a partner for 59 years of devoted marriage'.

To take a cue from Shakespeare,

'His life was meek and gentle,
And the elements so mixed in him,
That all should stand up and say:
This was a man.'

Mr. V. Palasundram. Ret'd ACCD,
Dr. K. Paramothayan.

Chundikuli Girls' College Jaffna Centenary 1896-1996

How do we celebrate the Centenary Year of our school? Chundikuli Girls' College today lies empty of its pupils and teachers in a ghost town — the aftermath of a civil war.

The spirit that is Chundikuli lies not in its buildings which have been a proud reminder of the vision and determination of the founders and keepers of its tradition for a hundred years. From humble beginnings, she has grown from under the shadow of a sister organisation, into a territory of her own, nurtured and loved by generations of teachers and pupils who have taught and studied there.

Founded by Mrs. Mary Carter, sustained by the Church Missionary Society, triumphantly marked by the Principalship of Dr. E.M. Thiliampalam, Chundikuli reached its Diamond Jubilee year in 1956 — revitalised and extended — its curriculum revised in a national language.

Under Mrs. G.E.S. Chelliah, as it successfully negotiated its passage into the private sector on a non-fee paying basis, Chundikuli prospered, to stand besides St. John's in a 'partnership' that brought distinction and recognition in the island.

1983 was marked by the intensity of Ethnic violence and the subsequent years of instability and turmoil presented a challenge to our present Principal, Mrs. Padma Jeyaveerasingham. With prudence, vigilance and pastoral care, the changing needs of pupils, teachers and the community were met, while maintaining the academic and creative standards the school had set itself. A task admirably carried out — with courage.

The spirit of Chundikuli is not essentially in the achievement of its pupils in the world of music, dance, drama and sport nor in the academic attainments that have produced professionals in many fields, both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the world. The spirit that is Chundikuli lies deep within each pupil and past pupil. It has enabled us to continue to grow long after we have left her gates – to carry with us the lessons we have learnt of integrity, loyalty, sisterhood, laughter, love and friendship – and the beliefs we have acquired – wisdom, justice, goodness and providence.

In a world gone so wrong – these are the enduring gifts our school has given us. Using these we will go FORWARD to renew and rebuild, to help and sustain the generations to come. Trusting in God's faithfulness and His mercy, we come together to celebrate this Centenary Year with Praise and Thanksgiving.

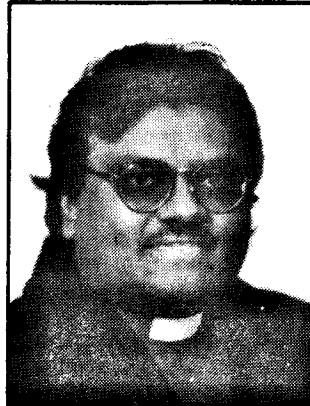
Padmini (Poppy) Canaga-Retnam
– Sebaratnam.

Kingston Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

The Kingston Institute of Tamil Culture will celebrate its Tenth Anniversary and the Tamil New Year on Saturday, 13th April '96 from 6.30 to 9.30pm and Sunday, 14th April '96 from 5 to 8pm at Holy Cross Convent School Hall, Sandal Road, New Malden, Surrey. A programme of music and dance will be presented by the students of the Institute.

The Institute was formed in April 1986 with 15 students to teach Tamil language to children resident in the UK. It has grown in student rolls and activities during the past ten years and has established itself as one of the leading organisations in the Borough. The current student strength of the Institute is around 120. Classes are conducted on Saturdays from 9am till 1.30pm in Tamil Language Vocal Carnatic Music, Veena, Violin, Mirudangam and Bharatha Natyam at Holy Cross Convent School, Sandal Road, New Malden.

Ordination



Rev. Barnabas J. Alexander has been ordained a Minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus on 11.2.96. The Archbishop Dr. Ezekiel Guti (Assembly of God Africa –

Forward in Faith Ministries International) officiated at the ordination on the last day of Annual Christian Leadership Conference held in Harare, Zimbabwe attended by over 8000 delegates around the world.

Rev. Alexander is the founding-Pastor of the Multi-racial, cross-cultural fellowship Burning Bush – the people's Church – in Croydon, England. He also co-leads Intercessor Action Group for Sri Lanka, along with his wife Elizabeth Thulasi. Rev & Mrs. Alexander are producers of a weekly broadcast in Tamil/English on Croydon Christian Radio.

London Tamil Theatre Group Visits Australia

The Tamil Performing Arts Society (TPAS) – Tamil Avaikkaatu Kalai Kalagam – a well-known Tamil Theatre group in London is presenting a Tamil Drama Festival in Australia. The Festival consisting of several of their plays will be held in three major cities – Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne on three consecutive days of 26, 27 and 28th April 1996. For an amateur theatre group this is a mammoth task but the TPAS has the experience, dedication and talent to fulfil it. The members of the group travelling to Australia include Kanagasabai Krishnarajah, Anandarani Balendra, Mano Manuepillai and K. Balendra, the Director of the Group.

TPAS has performed over 165 times in Sri Lanka and the UK and has presented similar festivals in Canada, France, Switzerland and Norway and special performances in Holland and Germany. Their plays have been hailed as professional by Tamil Theatre lovers. It has not been easy to break from the light comedy influence of

Thai Poosam in Seychelles

Thai Poosam, a Hindu festival dedicated to Lord Murugan whose abode is usually the hills and mountains has been celebrated for the fourth year in succession on 4th February at the Murugan Temple in Quincy Street, Seychelles. The Kavadi procession associated with this festival, which was held for the last three years in the inner courtyard of the temple, this year wound its way along the roads that form the outer perimeter of the temple.



The event provided a cultural contrast for the curious Seychellois eyes and the large number of western tourists. Devotees fulfil their vows carrying a Kavadi which is a metal frame decorated with peacock feathers. Any devotee carrying a Kavadi has a small brass vessel of milk tied to it. The milk brought with such pomp and pageantry is used to anoint the deity of Lord Murugan, thus fulfilling the promised vow. The whole procession is a matter of absolute faith done with sincerity of purpose, strong will and confidence.



the South Indian cinema, but they have worked hard to create a serious Tamil theatre audience by staging plays of quality regularly.

TPAS has produced thirty six plays out of which seventeen are adaptations or translations. Tennessee Williams, Bertolt Brecht, Garcia Lorca, Vaclav Havel, Anton Chekov and Harold Pinter are some of the authors whose plays have been adapted

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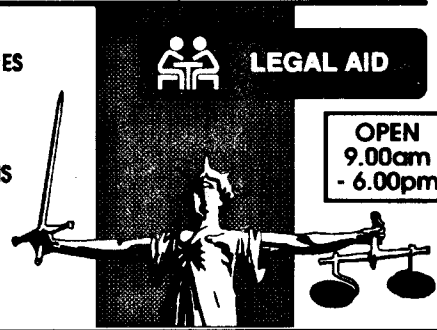
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and performed several times. Playwrights Badal Sircar in Bengali, Girish Karnad in Kannada and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi are some of the authors whose plays have been translated and produced. Tamil plays by Sri Lankan and Indian writers depicting the social intricacies of everyday life in the community have been staged.

TPAS has introduced a new form of Tamil theatre in which modern Sri Lankan Tamil poetry is set to music and used to portray the recent social political history of the Tamils under the title 'Our Nation on Fire'. In this production mime, narration, songs and simple dance gestures are used with paintings projected on a screen at the back of the stage. The group has also produced children's plays, using traditional folk theatre form of 'Kuuthu'.

Tamil Theatre lovers in Australia should not miss this golden opportunity. For details please contact Sydney (02) 807 3382, Brisbane (07) 3279 4853, Melbourne (07) 9794 0639.

NAVALY

So how could it be
that the people in the North
were forced to hide in their churches,
that orders on the radio
and leaflets from the sky
said they must all congregate
in their places of worship
to shelter from the carnage
that soon would fall from above?

And how could it be
that the same people
who had sent out the orders,
the government itself,
then bombed and strafed them
where they took sanctuary,
whole families together,
killing them in each others' arms
tearing them limb from limb?

And how could it be
that even for those who survived
there were no proper medicines
for wounds or amputations,
and all because the government

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conducted an embargo
on drugs and other basic goods,
starving out the very same people
it claimed it was there to help?

And how could it be
that there was also an embargo
on the presence of reporters,
for the same government decreed
that any press would undermine
the confidence of its soldiers,
and so the only tales we heard
were full of the same distortions
as the papers on the Island?

And how could it be,
just because the West had plans,
and all because of profit and power,
that we in the rest of the world

were kept in ignorance,
were told nothing,
while those who fought for freedom
were left without friends or supporters,
were isolated and described
as monsters and fanatics?

So how then could it be?
How could any of this
make any sense at all?
And you who keep repeating every day,
This is the world and how it is,
Always has been, always will,
I ask of you, so how then can this be
That we must justify such things
simply because there seems
no other way?

Mark Abraham



யாழ்ப்பாணப் பாடசாலைகள் விளையாட்டு சங்கம் (ஐ.ஐ.)
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POLITICIANS RUNNING FOR COVER

T N Gopalan

"In ancient India, kings and emperors thought it a privilege to sit at the feet of a man of learning. In today's India, MP's and Ministers think it a privilege if they get a chance to sit at the feet of underworld dons and base businessmen to get secret donations from and to get their blessings..."

"Politics seems to have become the most profitable business of the day wherein the individual enjoys the fruits of political power and he becomes holder of several new accounts in Indian and foreign banks and these accounts fatten day in and day out..."

Thus spoke Additional Sessions Judge Shiv Nargin Dhingra of New Delhi while rejecting former Union Minister Kalpanath Rai, detained for allegedly sheltering some associates of the Bombay-blasts-accused Dawood Ibrahim, to attend Lok Sabha, the last session for this Parliament.

Dhingra did not fail to see the irony of it all either - "see, while the Parliament passed the TADS Act to strike at the terrorist and anti-social and criminal elements, a Member of Parliament and a central minister has been found to be harbouring the terrorist and anti-social and criminal elements. This much for the concern of Mr Kalpanath Rai for his constituency, society and the nation about which he has spoken at length in his application".

True the Parliamentarians reacted furiously at the "gratuitous insults" hurled at them and the Delhi High Court came forward to strike off some of Dhingra's remarks as uncalled for and chided him for exceeding his brief. But, Dhingra's outburst found a sympathetic response in many a heart.

As noted satirist Cho S Ramaswamy commented, "the judge did exceed his brief. He should not have set the stage for a confrontation between the judiciary and the Parliament. Still he was speaking for millions of his fellow Indians when he made those soothing comments. Are we not all so much disillusioned with our politicians?"

While the juggernaut of the hawala case keeps moving steadily, relentlessly, more than two dozen netas (leaders) have so far come to grief, new scandals also keep breaking out - Kalpanath Rai, the highly voluble post-graduate in English Literature who thrives in foul-mouthing his rivals inside and outside the party, and Brij Saran Singh, a BJP MP, (both

hailing from the UP) have been detained by the CHI for alleged association with the underworld don and prime suspect in the Bombay blasts of 1993, Dawood Ibrahim.

In Bihar officials of the lowly placed animal husbandry department - of course in cahoots with various political parties - are believed to have siphoned off up to Rs.500 crores, in the name of buying cattle-feed, over the last four or five years.

And, down south in Tamil Nadu, the Jaya Government is being rocked by ever new scandals, from laying roofs for cremation sheds to distribution of saris and dhotis to the poor. Nothing ever gets done here without someone or other lining his or her pockets. And senior IAS officials perceived close to the Poes Garden clique are charged with amassing wealth to the tune of several crores of rupees and so on.

Politicians across the spectrum find themselves being swirled and tossed towards some dreadful destiny in the wake of hawala and the courts everywhere seem to be deriving some sadistic satisfaction by turning the knife in the wound and aggressively pursuing the various corruption cases before them. The question is whether Prime Minister Rao himself is savouring it all.

All these exciting developments, coming as they do on the eve of the general elections, have indeed made the parties reassess their strategies in order to regain their credibility in the eyes of the public. Barring the CPI and the CPM every other party has been linked to the hawala racket, it may be noted here.

But, easily the worst hit is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the pretenders to the throne. Not just the tall-talking Lal Kishen Advani, its president, but a battery of second-level leaders including New Delhi Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana have also been indicted (the latter had to step down reluctantly).

And as mentioned earlier one of its own MP's has been accused of colluding with Islamic terrorists. Independent investigations by the press have revealed that the MP, Saran Singh, is a history-sheeter, meaning he is a notorious criminal and a familiar figure in the police stations of his native gonda district. Even now the party is unable to bring itself to expel him, he has only been suspended. Apparently his vote-mobilising skills are more important in an election

year than the moral norms it used to spout in and out of turn.

In a bid to embarrass Narasimha Rao the BJP lined up an MP who had come over to it from the Jharkhand Mukthi Moroha JAM (a regional party from Bihar) to say that the Prime Minister had bribed him to the tune of Rs.40 lakhs in July 1993 - in order to make him vote against the opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion.

But, how could such a person be accepted as its member? "Well, he was only an innocent tribal", the BJP leaders claimed and said that he had been unfairly lured by the wily Congress.

However, as it turned out, he was not all that innocent. A couple of days later the JAM MP promptly retracted and said the money he had received had nothing to do with him supporting Rao in 1993. He had done so for political reasons, and the BJP leaders are busy searching for the right place to busy their faces!

The CPI and CPM too have their own quote of embarrassment even though they themselves are not tainted by the scam. Their "natural ally", the Janata Dal is also experiencing hawala-related convulsions since quite a few of its leaders including its Lok Sabha leader Sharad Yadav and President ... Bommaji figure in the Jain roll call of honour. Though only Yadav has been charge-sheeted so far.

Not that the Congress is in any better shape with as many as Seven Union Ministers having resigned from the cabinet following their implication in hawala and a lot more being linked, all of them facing the ignominy of being charge-sheeted and tried in public, they are all seething with rage. They are angry with Rao for ditching them despite their "unswerving loyalty" in order to buttress his own position and the media constantly holds out the prospect of a revolt but none dares. After all how could one rebel on a corruption platform?

Rao's supporters are claiming that their leader has taken the wind out of the sails of the opposition which has been charging the government with all kinds of corruption by bursting the hawala bombshell. "The morale of the Congress workers is upbeat. Efforts to cleanse the policy is appreciated not only by partymen but by common people," boasted Ved Pra-kash, joint secretary, AICC.

Rao himself told his Parliamentary Party Executive "Go before the people, holding your heads high. We have let the law take its own course, without interfering in the probe in any way. We have a clean conscience."

Not many will buy that line. None believes that the CBI has not been selectively targeting Rao's rivals inside and

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