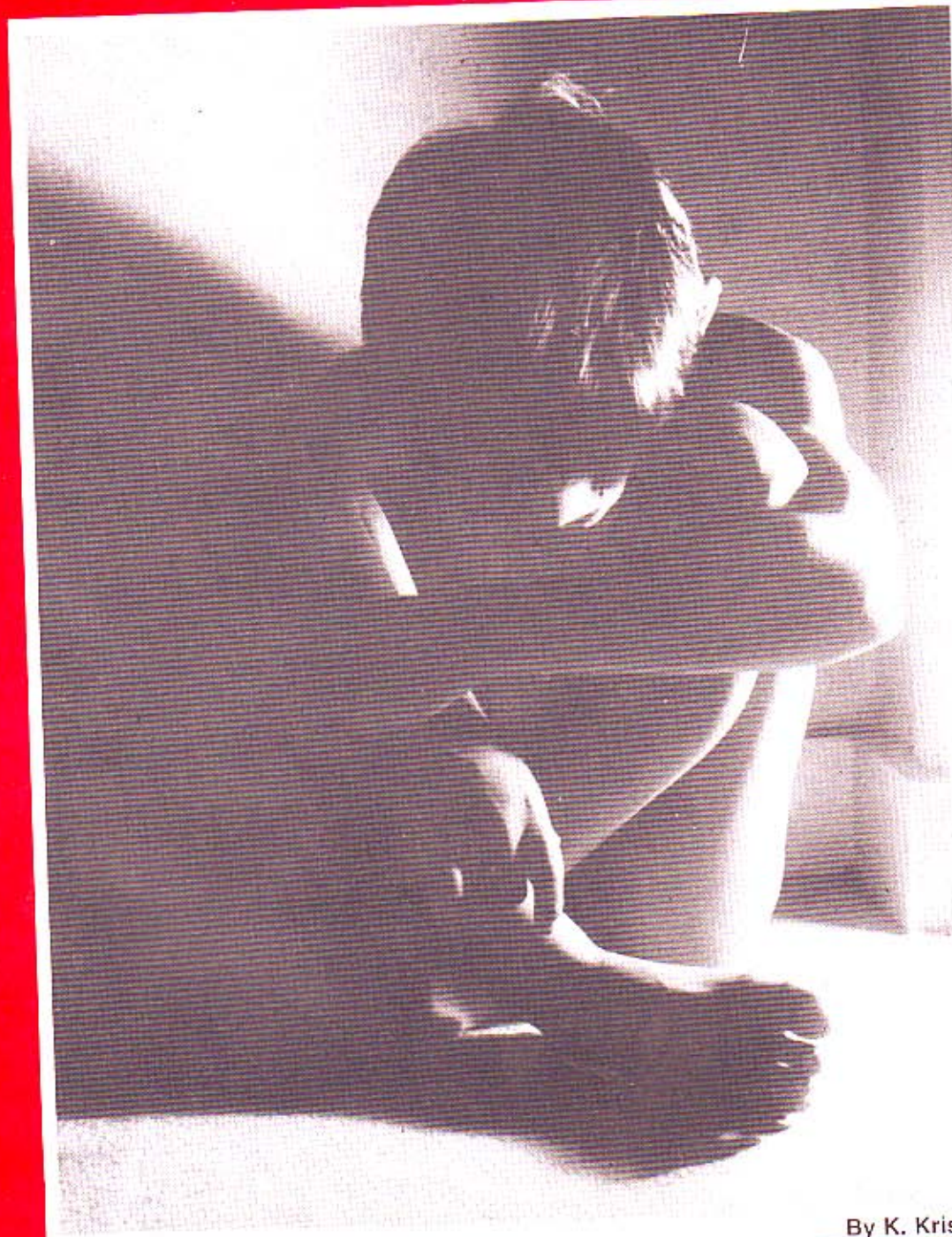


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By K. Krishnarajah



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-Voltaire

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CONTENTS

A Culture of Violence	03
News Review	04
A Controversial Election	08
The National Question	13
The Sri Lankan Identity	15
ICRC's Role	17
Politics of Cultural Identity	18
Rajiv Murder - Fresh Probe?	24
Of Monkeys and Squirrels	25
The Reluctant Crusader	27
Classified	30

A Culture of Endemic Violence

The assumption to power in 1994 of the Peoples Alliance (PA) government under President Chandrika Kumaratunga generated the hope that the politics of violence which characterised the previous 17-year rule by the United National Party (UNP) also would at last come to an end. But the widespread violence that accompanied the recent election campaign to the North Central Provincial Council (NCP) has dashed that hope among many, including those who are generally sympathetic to the PA government.

That large number of incidents of violence, including intimidation, assaults and even murder, were committed during the recently held election campaign is not in doubt. What is worse is the allegation of vote-rigging by way of impersonation and crude stuffing of ballot boxes with bogus votes. An interim report by an independent election monitoring group recorded a staggering 675 incidents of violence that took place in 45 days of campaigning in the Province reflecting the scale and intensity of the violence. One is compelled to ask whether history is repeating itself in that even under the present government the country is already returning to the days of political violence, abuse of power and electoral malpractices experienced under the previous UNP regime.

The opposition parties, mainly the UNP, have accused the supporters of the ruling party of indulging in violence while government supporters have claimed that the UNP too had resorted to violence.

In the aftermath of the election, the Opposition and UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe cried foul and indulged in a pathetic display of self-righteous indignation accusing the government party supporters of being mainly responsible for the violence. It was during the previous UNP regime, of which Ranil Wickremasinghe was a leading figure, that political violence directed at the opposition during elections and other times was routinely practised. Such violence was so intense and pervasive that not only the opposition political parties but also journalists, human rights activists and academics were cowed into virtual silence. Not only the party thugs, but also the forces of law and order including the police and the armed forces were drafted into the practice of institutionalised political violence. Despite its defeat in 1994 bringing into power a new government, recent events have shown that the UNP's legacy of the culture of political violence still persists and appears endemic. The fact that the UNP leadership deployed some notorious and discredited former personnel from the security forces to constitute so-called self-defence teams during the NCP election campaign demonstrates that it has yet to give up its familiar proclivity to political violence.

Recalling and citing the UNP's past record of violence or repeatedly asserting the democratic credentials of President Kumaratunga is no defence against the accusation that over-enthusiastic supporters of the ruling PA, including some of its leading members in the province, participated in many incidents of violence during the election campaign. The government has a constitutional and democratic duty to ensure that elections are free and fair and that the will of the electorate is reflected in the outcome. To permit the commission of acts of violence and electoral malpractices with impunity designed to subvert the will of the people is an abdication of its constitutional and democratic duty. Such a government and those who lead it will soon lose their democratic credentials in the eyes of the people.

One assumes that the appointment by the President of a Commission headed by a retired Judge to investigate into the allegations of election related violence and other malpractices that occurred during the recent election campaign reflects a recognition on her part of the serious threat to democracy in Sri Lanka. And it is hoped that the investigation would be thorough, impartial and not unduly prolonged and the guilty men, irrespective of their political or party affiliation, would be brought to book and appropriately dealt with.

NEWS REVIEW

Elections to the Wayamba (North-Western Provincial Council) were held on January 25. Three independent election monitoring groups - the Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE), the People's Alliance for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) and the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) - reported a series of events of intimidation and violence during the election campaign, leading up to large-scale violations of election law on election day. Accusations were primarily leveled by the UNP, the JVP and the New Left Front against the PA, by the PA against the UNP, and by the MULF against the SLMC. However, the extent of complaints against the PA, including accusations against MPs and even Cabinet Ministers, were the most serious.

Following the declaration of the PA as the winner of the Wayamba elections, both the UNP and the JVP filed action in Court challenging the decision.

There were many protests from groups in Wayamba who had been intimidated and deprived of their right to vote, as well as from the monitoring groups and other independent observers. Some sections of the clergy of Wayamba, both Buddhist and Christian came out with strong statements decrying the violence and intimidation. The response of the PA was to launch a highly personalised attack on the monitoring groups, accusing them of being agents of the Opposition (the UNP) and of being funded from abroad. In addition, the Foreign Ministry went so far as to write officially to the diplomatic community in Colombo, asking them to refrain from commenting on the Wayamba elections. This in turn created a real furor in media circles.

The President was in Switzerland, attending the sessions of the World Economic Forum, during the elections. On her return Sri Lanka, she expressed her dissatisfaction with the manner in which the elections had been conducted, and said that all

those implicated in acts of violence during the elections would be punished, including her own colleagues. These sentiments were reiterated in her Independence Day message of February 4.

The President also appointed two Committees, one to look into allegations of misconduct during the elections, and the other to propose changes to the election laws. However, belying the rhetoric was her appointment of several PA members who had been directly associated with some violent incidents as Ministers in the Wayamba Provincial Council.

The Wayamba election has resulted in creating a major political crisis in Sri Lanka. On the one hand, the PA's reaction to the independent monitoring groups has led to some level of confrontation developing with groups and individuals who had been supportive of the PA in the past. On the other, rifts have developed within the PA itself, as to how to face the consequences of the accusations of unfair practices. Several Cabinet Ministers have themselves gone on record expressing their dismay with the turn of events. SLMC leader Ashraff was among them. The LSSP, which is a constituent member of the PA, also issued a statement decrying the violence.

Human rights groups are raising broader consequences, such as the absence of minority representatives and opinions within the Wayamba PC. In addition, they point out that the failure of Provincial exercises in democratic practice, such as the Wayamba PC elections, lead to widespread disillusionment with any proposals for the devolution of power.

Among the most critical problems of the Sri Lankan electoral system that emerge from an analysis of the Wayamba PC elections are the inability of public officials - who serve as Returning Officers and Presiding Officers at the various polling stations - and Police officials - who provide security - to withstand pressure and in-

timidation from politically powerful individuals who prevent them from carrying out their lawful obligations as far as the polls process is concerned. Polls Monitors reported many instances where Police officers remained silent bystanders while the polls station was invaded by an armed gang who proceeded to grab ballot papers, mark them and stuff them into the ballot boxes, and other instances where Police had refused to entertain any complaints, especially those made by members of opposition parties and groups against the PA which is the party in power. In addition, the lack of space for the representation of minority opinions and points of view within the existing electoral structure has been proved once more by the results of the Wayamba election.

While the Wayamba elections results were creating a furor, on January 28 the Supreme Court delivered a judgment which was a stunning indictment of interference in the work of the Elections Commissioner by the executive arm of the government. In its decision, the Court ordered the Commissioner of Elections to set dates for elections to the five Provincial Councils where elections should have been held in August 1998. This has led to many expressions of concern from many different quarters, especially those who voice fears of escalated repetitions of the violence and intimidation that was seen in the Wayamba. A Bill containing an amendment to election law, which would empower the Commissioner of Elections to allow Secretaries of parties concerned to alter the list of names of candidates in the nominations lists submitted for the August 1998 elections which were postponed, is now before Parliament. Certain sections of this Bill, according to a Supreme Court decision, have to be passed with a two-thirds majority.

The monsoon has brought military operations in the North and East to a virtual standstill. There have been several reports of civilian fatalities caused by aerial attacks made by the SLAF in the parts of the northern province that are close to the Jaffna peninsula. The shooting of a M24 helicopter on one such shelling mission was a grim reminder of the LTTE's acquisition of surface-to-air missile power in recent times. During January, there were also several clashes

between the Navy and the LTTE's Sea Tigers on the seas in and around Mullaitivu. Meanwhile, report of shortages of essential items continued to flow in from the Vanni.

The shortage of man and woman power continued to pose a major question to any military strategy that could be devised in the future. Following a number of amnesties and recruitment drives, in January the Defence Ministry announced that it would continue to prosecute deserters. However, in the case of any voluntary surrenders, those persons would be considered Absent without Leave and penalised accordingly.

The creation of a Joint Operations Bureau under the leadership of former Army chief Daluwatta and the bringing of this JOB under the authority of the National Security Council headed by the President seemed also to indicate some changes in decision-making structures within the Defence establishment.

Throughout January there has been speculation that the Ministry for Constitutional Affairs was pressing for the proposals for Constitutional Reform to be brought before Parliament without further delay. If this was done without achieving some accommodation from the UNP, however, it would probably lead to a defeat of the proposals, thus setting in motion an action plan that could include a nationwide Referendum on the proposals. The almost clandestine return of EPRLF leader and former Chief Minister of the North-East Province, Varatharaja Perumal from India also fuelled speculation regarding the government's latest agenda with regard to the peace process.

There has also been some degree of speculation about the EPDP's objectives behind taking over the rebuilding of a statue to Sivakumaran (the first cyanide suicide) at Urumpirai in Jaffna, and PLOTE's objectives in distributing calendar with a graphic depicting a battle between a lion and a tiger.

The level of violence in present-day Sri Lanka has been cited as a cause for concern by the Police Department. According to statistics compiled by the Police Department, there were 1157 murders in Sri Lanka in 1998, of which only 247 were reported from the North and East. They also said there were alarming in-

creases in cases of rape and armed robbery.

Amnesty International continued to press the issue of illegal detention centres operating in Vavuniya, addressing its concerns to the government as well as to PLOTE. In several Urgent Alerts it has compiled a list of over 15 names of Tamil youth who have been reported as abducted and missing in the Vavuniya area. The escape of one detainee from a camp led to many revelations in this regard.

Norwegian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lunde, visited Sri Lanka during January and had meetings with government officials as well as with representatives of various political opinions. Also in January, Foreign Minister Kadirgamer visited Australia to carry on with his campaign to appeal to world leaders to prevent the LTTE from establishing fund-raising and propaganda sections in their countries. There were also several discussions with representatives of the Thai government, following reports that the LTTE was smuggling arms and ammunition purchased in Cambodia on to the East coast via Thailand.

WAYAMBA ELECTION

Following the announcement of elections to the Wyamba Provincial Council at the end of January, Mr. Siripala Jayaweera, a senior member of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, was appointed Governor of the Province on January 5, filling the vacancy created by the sudden resignation of the former Governor Hector Arawwawala.

The election campaign commenced in earnest in the first week of January. The Wayamba Province consists of 2 Districts, Kurunegala and Puttalam, with a total of 1,359,295 voters. There were 446 candidates standing for election, with 52 seats in the Provincial Council up for grabs - 35 in Kurunegala, 15 in Puttalam and 2 bonus seats.

There were allegations and counter-allegations of intimidation and violence levelled at all political parties. A detailed survey of the violence linked to these elections has been documented by the CMEV, while both election-monitoring groups, PAFFREL and MFFE, have made their own observations regarding the violence as well as the violation of election

laws. Among some of the key incidents reported were :

- January 02 : SLMC office in Viruthodai, Puttalam set on fire;
- January 05 : The house UNP candidate Gamini Dissanayake was shot at;
- January 10 : The UNP office in Mawattagama attacked by armed gang; the office was badly damaged;
- January 12 : 384 official polling cards were seized at gunpoint in Mundel, Puttalam District, on the very first day of distribution;
- January 13 : attack on Patrick Fernando and other members of the New Left Front;
- January 16 : UNP supporter T. Siva killed;
- January 19 : JVP meeting attacked at Pannala, about ten people injured;
- January 20 : PA office at Andigama Junction in Anamaduwa attacked; PA supporter Wijedasa assaulted at Megalewa;
- January 21 : Kurunegala District UNP MP D.M. Bandaranayaka complains of death threats;

The violence during the election campaign resulted in 3 deaths. One of them, of PA Gamini Weerasinghe, was reported to have occurred as a misfire. The most disturbing of the reports was the one from Mawattagama, where the body of a youth who was abducted by persons identified as belonging to the security forces was found dumped a few days after his abduction. Assault and sexual abuse of several women and children were also reported. The reports of the monitoring groups have detailed information on all these cases.

Throughout the election period, the monitoring groups, religious leaders and other independent observers appealed for a cessation of the violence and intimidation. On January 21, a few days before the elections, the Chief prelate of the Wayamba Sangha Sabhawa (the highest Buddhist authority for the Province) along with over 30 other Buddhist monks and priests of Catholic, Muslim and Hindu religions issued a joint appeal to the President, to the Leader of the Opposition and to the Chief Ministerial candidates of all the groups standing for election, calling on them to ensure peaceful elections. The statement expressed concern regarding the escalation of election related violence in

Wayamba, and in particular regarding the entry of various underworld thugs into the Wayamba area. The statement issued by the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka called on the voters of the Wayamba not to vote for any candidate who resorts to violence or encourages acts of hooliganism.

The Police Department too was involved in monitoring election-related violence in the Wayamba. On January 21, IGP Kodituwakku announced that on the basis of their information, the Police had made an assessment of which areas tended to display a propensity for violence and had decided to provide special security for certain polling stations. Accordingly, 357 of the 1,162 polling booths in the Wayamba Provincial Council election had been selected for the provision of special police security. He also said that all policemen covering polling booths were to be armed.

On January 19, a group of several key Colombo-based diplomats visited the Wayamba Province on a fact-finding mission. While there, they met with Senior PA and UNP politicians involved in the ongoing campaign. The diplomats visited several trouble spots such as Wariyapola, Kuliyaipitiya, Ridigama and Anamadua to see for themselves the situation prevailing there.

They also elicited information on the disturbances from local residents and had discussions with Christian and Buddhist dignitaries, representatives of organizations monitoring the elections as well as political parties.

CIVILIAN LIFE IN THE NORTH AND EAST

North :

The situation in the Jaffna peninsula remained tense, with frequent clashes between the LTTE and the military creating a sense of insecurity in the community in general. Development work such as the rebuilding of roads has come to halt due to rain. The landmine eradication programme set up by the UNDP is still in its awareness-raising phase, with the actual clearing of landmines due to start in April. Statistics from the Jaffna hospital showed that there had been a reduction in the number of persons wounded by landmines, from 111 in 1997 to 40 in 1998. The Council of NGOs in Jaffna District, headed by

Mr. Ganeshalingam, continues to be active, making regular representations to the government regarding various problems faced by the civilian population of the peninsula. Among the issues they have focused on are : the difficulties faced by the fishing community by the continuing ban on fishing in some parts of the peninsula; the fact that 22,473 children under 5 in the peninsula have been detected to suffer from malnourishment; the fact that there is no Registrar of Births and Deaths functioning in Jaffna; that there is a shortage of over 500 personnel in the health sector in Jaffna.

In the context of the prevailing tensions, people hailed the New Year address made by Bishop of Jaffna Dr. Thomas Savudranayagam, in which he appealed for peace and in particular called on the LTTE to abandon its extremist positions.

There were several reports of civilian deaths reported from Jaffna peninsula in the month of January. C. Selvamalar (36) was killed in Vadamarachchi on January 4; Town Council member for Velvetithurai, Jacob Anthony (26) was killed in Nelliady, Jaffna on January 13; On January 23, P.P. Nishan was shot dead by the LTTE in Kopay; Two persons were shot dead by the army for violating curfew, one, Kavithasan was killed in Chavakachcheri on January 23 and the other, Divyanathan, was shot dead in Gurunagar on January 24; a PLOTE leader T. Chandramohan was shot dead on Hospital Street in Jaffna town in broad daylight on January 25. On January 30, a Christian priest and 2 others were killed in a shell attack from Pooneryn. In addition, there have been several complaints addressed to the Anti-Harassment Committee in Colombo, alleging disappearances of youth in Jaffna; among the names mentioned have been : Christie Johnson Basilraj of Gurunagar, Sinnathamby Thavaraja of Nallur and Pararajasingham Baskaran of Chunnakam.

The resumption of air transport between Jaffna and Colombo for private individuals was greeted with a sense of relief by persons who had been waiting for months for an opportunity to travel back and forth. The fact that the flights are operated by the SLAF could of course pose a problem for travelers. HELITOURS began

operating one flight a day from Colombo to Jaffna and back, with the same rules regarding Defence Ministry clearance for travelers applying as before.

Vanni :

Although there were no major military operations in January, there was a severe clash between the LTTE and Sri Lankan security forces in Mankulam in the first week of January. The biggest clashes, however, were at sea, in and around Mullaitivu.

Complaints of shortages of essential items - food, drugs and fuel including kerosene - continued to be a main focus of reports from the Vanni. A report from the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) in Kilinochchi stated that 52% of the children under 5 in welfare centers in the Kilinochchi District were malnourished. The resurgence of malaria in the Vanni was another area of concern.

East :

Electricity was restored to Batticaloa on January 13, Thaiday. Reports in January indicated that the LTTE had turned its attention to disrupting telecommunications; several small telephone communication boxes within Batticaloa town itself were blown up during the month.

There continued to be clashes between the LTTE and the military. In Eravurpattu, one person (N. Sabanayagam) was killed when a group of persons transporting a patient to hospital in a bullock cart during curfew hours was shot at by military personnel at an army checkpoint. On January 8, Kanapathippillai Alakaiya (64), father of 3, was shot dead by unknown persons at in Eravur; on January 18, Ehamparam Anantharajah (17) of Mylampaveli was shot dead by unknown people at Saththurukondan in Batticaloa.

At the end of January, there was a clash between the army and the LTTE in Mankerny in Valaichenai; following this incident, the army shelled the area and 2 civilians were reportedly to have been injured.

The ship LANKA MUDITHA has begun plying between Trincomalee and Jaffna carrying over 1200 passengers on each trip. It is hoped that this will relieve some of the pressures on people who have been stranded on both sides, waiting for the transport situation to improve.

TAMILS IN THE SOUTH

Following the blasting of several transformers in Colombo (2 in Pettah and 3 in Kotahena) plus the discovery of several more bombs strapped on to transformers, there has been heightened surveillance of the Tamil community in particular living in Colombo Central and in the Kotahena-Modera area.

The National Front against Terrorism held a meeting in Colombo at the Public Library Hall on January 12, and released its National Plan of Action against Terrorism. Among the most reprehensible of the proposals set out in this Plan are : the issuing of special Identity Cards to Tamils who have come from the north or east to the south; the holding of entire families responsible for whatever terrorist acts are committed by any one member of the family; setting up armed paramilitary task forces within public and private sector institutions and creating 100 paramilitary villages in the border areas. In a newspaper distributed at the same meeting, they published a list of names of those identified as 'traitors' to the Sinhala nation; the names of several persons working at INFORM were on the list. In addition, in that newspaper, there was a warning issued to all 'patriotic citizens' to watch out for Tamil infiltration into Sinhala neighborhoods, with a call to attack and drive out any intruders, especially singling out persons who come around to collect old bottles and newspapers (the ragpickers of society) who are most often Tamil.

On January 19, Tamil political detainees at Kalutara Prison once again launched a fasting campaign to call attention to their plight. The detainees situated themselves on the roof of the Kalutara Prison. There continue to be reports of the transfer of the Tamil prisoners to Boosa in Galle but

INVOLUNTARY REMOVAL AND DISAPPEARANCE OF PERSONS

On Monday January 3, the Secretary of this Presidential Commission, Mr. M.C.M. Iqbal, released a statement to the press in which it cited the Registrar of Deaths as having so far received 18,136 applications for death

certificates on behalf of missing persons. The Secretary has also stated that an interim report was submitted by the Commission to the press on 31.12.98.

The Commission, which is headed by Mrs. Manouri Muttettuwegama, Attorney-at-Law, had 10,135 cases brought before it when it started work. In January, the Commission had sittings in Matara, Hambantota and Buttala, and heard over 500 submissions.

According to the Attorney General, over 100 members of the Police have already been served with indictments before Magistrates Courts and High Courts on the basis of the testimonies heard by the Commissions. In all the AG's Department says that they have looked into 283 cases in which there had been evidence regarding involvement of members of the Police and the armed forces in disappearances which took place from 1988 to 1990. Of these, 75 indictments had been served in High Court. 45 non-summary proceedings had been ordered in Magistrate Courts. 60 were detailed for further investigation by the CID, and 103 were discharged due to lack of evidence.

LABOUR AGITATION


The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) threatened to strike on January 17 and later withdrew this action following discussions with Health Ministry officials. There is a great deal of unrest at all levels in the health sector regarding the recommendations of the Health Task Force which was appointed by the President in 1998. The GMOA and other workers' organisations in the

health sector are demanding that matters relating to transfers, promotions and personnel matters be handled by the Cabinet, and not be devolved to the regions. In particular the GMOA has stated its opposition to what it calls 'interference' by the Special President Advisor on Social Infrastructure, Dr. Tara de Mel, under whose aegis the Health Task Force functioned.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

During the elections, there were several complaints of harassment and abuse of women who were candidates, or supporters of political parties. The JVP complained of the intimidation of several women who had been appointed to work as Polling Agents for the JVP on election day. A woman campaigner for the UNP was assaulted and had her clothes torn in the process, while another woman who was a UNP supporter claimed that acid had been thrown on her while she was engaged in campaigning for the candidate of her choice.

On January 27, a report from Iyankerni, a Muslim village south of Batticaloa, said that 3 women had their heads forcibly shaved and were then tied to lamp-posts as 'a punishment for immoral behaviour'. Observers said the 'Jihad' group was responsible, and added that all 3 of the women concerned had been working in West Asia previously. While the details of the case are not clear, this incident sends out a warning signal about the rise of fundamentalist ideas among the Muslim community of the Eastern Province and also points to the increasing problems faced by women in such situations.

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A CONTROVERSIAL ELECTION

D B S Jeyaraj

The results of the recently concluded Provincial Council elections to Wayamba or the North-Western Province in Sri Lanka indicate that the ruling People's Alliance Government led by President Chandrika Kumaratunga has registered an impressive victory. It would however be difficult for the impartial observer to describe the result as a success for the PA in view of allegations of widely prevalent violence and vote rigging.

Grandiloquent pronouncements by PA leaders about their sweeping win tend to sound hollow when contrasted against charges levelled by the chief opposition, United National Party, other political parties like the JVP, N SSP etc along with election monitoring bodies and religious dignitaries. The conduct of the controversial poll has undermined to a great extent the credit claimed by the government and has raised serious questions of credibility.

The North-Western Province consists of the hinterland Kurunegala and littoral Puttalam districts. During the recent poll Kurunegala had 960,241 voters divided into fourteen electoral divisions while Puttalam had 398,055 in five polling divisions. Kurunegala had 800 polling booths and 82 vote counting centres as opposed to Puttalam with 360 booths and 36 counting centres. The Wayamba Provincial Council comprised 52 seats including 35 for Kurunegala and 15 for Puttalam. A further bonus of two additional seats would accrue to the party polling the most number of votes. The current election recorded 30 including two bonus seats for the PA, 19 seats for the UNP and 3 for the left wing Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front). The JVP has waged two abortive armed insurrections against the state in the early seventies and late eighties.

In Kurunegala the PA polled 405,431 votes or 56.16%, the UNP 273,892 or 37.94%, and the JVP 31,221

or 4.32%. According to the prevailing scheme of proportionate representation the PA got 20 seats, the UNP 13 and the JVP 2. In Puttalam, the PA gained 160,722 of the votes or 56.97%, the UNP 105,876 or 37.53% and the JVP 10,759 or 4.03%. On this basis the PA got 8, the UNP 6 and JVP 1 in Puttalam.

At face value the PA despite being in office for four and a half years has seemingly not suffered from the customary anti-incumbency factor and has recorded tremendous success with an enhanced voter base. In elections to the local authorities to the North-Western Province held in March 1997 the PA obtained 349,300 in Kurunegala and 160,615 in Puttalam. The UNP got 276,675 in Kurunegala and 104,802 in Puttalam. The 1994 Parliamentary elections saw the PA receiving 366,756 or 51.09% in Kurunegala while the UNP gained 332,577 or 47.1%. In Puttalam the PA with 150,609 got 53.6% and the UNP 127,671 or 45.5%.

The previous election to the NWP provincial council in 1993 had the UNP in the lead with 44% of the total vote (269,768) in Kurunegala and 50% in Puttalam (122,830). The PA got 36% (221,896) in Kurunegala and 37% (89,355) votes. There was, however, a third force namely the Democratic United National Front (DUNF) which had 117,893 or 19% in Kurunegala and 26,203 or 11% in Puttalam. It was the DUNF with PA backing that set up the first administration in 1993 in the NWP. In 1994 a segment from the DUNLF joined the UNP while the other faction aligned with the PA. After the split the UNP captured the Provincial Council again with backing from some DUNF members. This election saw a further split in the erstwhile DUNF with some more members going over to the UNP while its leader Srimani Athulathmudali remained with the PA. In spite of an earlier political estrangement she appeared

along with Kumaratunga on platforms during the campaign.

An interesting fact that provides a penetrating insight into the voting trends was the postal voting pattern. Contrary to the overall trend of a PA sweep the postal voting done by government servants from the province displayed a different shade of opinion. In Kurunegala district it was the UNP that got the highest 5,715. The PA came second with 5,482 and the JVP third with 505. In Puttalam the PA topped with 1,469 but the UNP came a close second with 1,287 and the JVP third with 132. Thus it was the UNP that led in terms of postal voting by a flimsy 51 in the whole province. It has been the norm in most elections for the pattern of postal voting to reflect the overall trend of voting without much difference. But in this case the end results showing a gross distortion of the postal voting pattern itself lent much credence to the allegation of vote rigging by the PA.

Although fraudulent voting patterns have been clearly visible it would not be correct to assume that the PA victory has been due to this factor entirely as charged by opposition parties. In the same context the UNP debacle too cannot be attributed to this feature alone. PA Minister in charge of the media, Mangala Samaraweera as well as Sirisena Cooray, former UNP Minister and right hand man of the late president Premadasa have posed the pertinent query as to how the UNP managed to poll nearly 38% of the vote if in fact mass rigging occurred on an unprecedented scale as charged by the UNP. The logic in these statements point to the fact that despite the violence and fraud it has been possible for sufficient quantities of genuine voting too. Nevertheless that alone is no criterion to white-wash the mass scale irregularities that marred the poll and say that it was a free election.

It cannot be denied that sections of the PA did indulge in illegal manoeuvres to increase their votes while correspondingly decrease the tally of their opponents. Yet it is also clearly established that the PA using all the resources at the Command of a party in Power aged an intensive propaganda campaign too. The chief plus point in the PA campaign was the intensive campaigning done by Kumaratunga who visited each and every

Polling division in the province staging 19 mass rallies. She remains the single most popular mass figure among Sinhala politicians and is the greatest vote gathering asset of the PA.

In addition to Kumaratunga several senior ministers of her government also engaged themselves vigorously in the poll campaign. The people of the province found themselves beneficiaries of several progressive measures and promises including jobs for unemployed graduates to speedy and efficient buses and trains. A vast number of election pledges including a separate University etc were also given. People attending rallies in which Plantations Minister found themselves being presented with coconut plants. Kurunegala, Puttalam and Polgahawela form the "Coconut Triangle" in Sri Lanka. Thus the present of coconuts was very well appreciated. But this was clearly a flagrant violation of election law.

Thus the PA being in power was in a position to persuade the moneybags of the area to part with massive donations which in turn were channelled to the lower echelons in the form of financial incentives. PA ministers in charge of the campaign were able to coax, cajole and coerce oodles of rupees. Ministers who hailed from Matara district in particular were more able in this respect. This factor was certainly helpful to these ministers in tapping the Wayamba Business Community because most of them have their roots in the deep South too.

The North Western Province has the highest rate of war casualties among the seven Sinhala Provinces. The poverty and unemployment in this ill-developed Province has made soldiering the main avenue of employment for the youths. Kumaratunga in her campaigning did strike a responsive chord when she alluded to this. She made it clear that her government had a concrete plan to end the war and that it was being delayed because of the UNP. The customary salutations to the fallen 'heroes' were also made.

Another point in this respect was the pledging of a huge amount of money for future development of the Province. It was also pinpointed that in spite of the UNP ruling the province for nearly ten years no meaningful development was made. The PA campaign spearheaded by Kumaratunga made ample use of the past negative

record of the UNP. Particularly the massive human rights violations unleashed in the Province. Former UNP Chief Minister and its current chief candidate Gamini Jayawickrema Perera does not have an enviable image in the sphere of human rights. This aspect was exploited to the hilt.

The UNP played into PA hands by displaying on their stage an unholy trinity associated closely with the human rights violations of the South. These were former policemen Udugampola and Gomes along with retired Army General, Lucky Algama. The reasons behind this UNP move is perplexing. It may have been intended to demonstrate to the violent elements of the PA that the UNP was tough too. If that was the motive then one can only say it backfired completely. The North-Western Province has suffered terribly in the past and seeing these evil icons" naturally alienated voters from the UNP.

In contrast to the PA campaign the UNP campaign lacked high visibility and relied on pocket meetings and house to house canvassing. Because of Kumaratunga's highpowered campaigning Wickremasinghe too was compelled to follow suit. The UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe lacked the charisma of his opponent, Kumaratunga, whereas Kumaratunga was forceful in articulating her policies and promises. Wickremasinghe suffered from a singular inability to project what he stood for. The UNP leader adroitly pinpointed all shortcomings in the government but failed to drive home to the voters what he proposed to do to remedy the situation. The resolution to the ethnic problem being a primary example. Thus Wickremasinghe's politicking lacked conviction, a key element necessary to inspire people into voting for your party. He could only say clearly what he was against but could not coherently state what he stood for.

The UNP also suffered on the choice of its Chief Ministerial aspirant too. Jayawickrema Perera had been Chief Minister earlier. As such his minus points had been spotlighted clearly during his tenure of office. The PA candidate was Sarath Nawinna, a scion of a business family. The mild mannered Nawinna was unassumingly popular in comparison with his counterpart. Moreover pro-UNP sections of the media launched

a vicious personal attack on Nawinna during the campaign. A development that only added sympathy votes for him. Jayawickrema Perera created more difficulties for himself by boasting that the election was a contest between himself and Chandrika Kumaratunga. Pitting himself against Kumaratunga albeit on home turf was a monumental blunder.

There was also the fact of divisions within the party. Wickremasinghe has been unable to wield a firm and cohesive leadership like his predecessors Premadasa, Dissanayake or Jayewardene. Factionalism is rampant. It was rumoured that there were differences between Wickremasinghe and Jayawickrema Perera too. This debilitated the UNP campaign.

Another factor was that it was the PA that was ruling as the Central Government. It was not clear to the Wayamba voter that even if the North Western Province voted for the UNP that act by itself would lead to a government change. On the contrary voting for the UNP under a PA government that may continue in office for a while would be detrimental to the interests of the Wayamba children of the soil. Voting for an all island regime change during Parliamentary elections as compared to voting at a Provincial poll is likely to have different impact on voting patterns in a relatively undeveloped region.

Given these reasons there are some analysts who feel that even if the campaign had been clean and devoid of violence the PA may still have won but with a smaller margin. An example cited is the electoral district of Bingiriya where thanks to the decent yet strong PA party apparatus a comparatively clear election took place. There the PA got a majority of more than two thousand but nowhere near the ten thousand plus gained in other places. Bingiriya was a point in favour of both viewpoints. It demonstrated that even without rigging the PA could have won. At the same time it proved the UNP argument that the PA had rigged polls in its favour because a thumping majority was not possible here.

It has been reported that Kumaratunga herself had been critical of her henchmen for sully through violence a poll that would have yielded victory for the PA. Thanks to the violence and fraudulence the lustre of

the PA success has been irredeemably dimmed. There is no denying that the enhanced majority it gained was to some extent at least due to the violently illegal atmosphere prevailing before and during election day although quantifying it in definite terms is not possible. If this prognosis is correct then it is indeed unfortunate that this state of affairs has been allowed to tarnish the PA victory and erode its credibility greatly.

The run up to polling day was a pointer of things to come. The efficient and impartial Police Chief of the area Abeyagoonewarde was transferred out and another Jayewardena installed. More than 40 senior policemen were also transferred out. The Provinces Governor too resigned gracefully and was replaced by another. Even as the campaign proceeded hundreds of armed men all claiming to be henchmen attached to prominent figures of the PA turned up in the Province. In addition the indigenous violent elements also began flexing muscles. The most notorious personality was a PA member of Parliament, Dassanayake, nicknamed "Thalagoya" (Iguana) against whom there are many court cases including murder charges in progress. His wife was a candidate this time.

Independent observers noted that prior to the poll the province was a sea of "blue" (the PA colour). There was no sight of "Green" (The UNP colour) very few posters or flags of the UNP were visible. In spite of 15,000 policemen being deployed in the Province during the campaign they were more or less bystanders while violence and intimidation occurred on a widespread scale. UNP supporters were prevented in most places from canvassing for votes. Two deplorable incidents were where the children of a UNP candidate were forced to swallow cowdung and crawl on the road. The other was where a group of UNP supporters including women were stripped naked and compelled to run on the road. All these were done at gunpoint.

An interim report was issued by the non-governmental organisation, the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, some days before polling day. That portrayed the qualitative nature of pre-elections violence. Some salient points are as follow:-

1. This election is proportionately

more violent (in terms of numbers of incidents) than the local government elections of 1997. A total of 675 incidents were recorded in the 45 days of the present campaign, whereas in the 44 days of the campaign in 1997 a total of 335 incidents were reported from the same geographic area.

2. The incidents reported are qualitatively more serious than those reported at the local government elections for the same Province. For instance, allegedly, two murders, nine attempted murders, 40 incidents of injury, 175 assaults, 28 robberies and 18 reports of arson have taken place in the Provincial Council campaign as compared with one murder, no attempted murders, ten incidents of injury, 84 assaults, 14 robberies, and four acts of arson in the run-off to local government elections.

3. This campaign has recorded a significant increase in violations by persons whose party affiliations have not been identified. In comparison with the 1997 elections, the allegations against the PA and UNP have shown a slight decline and increase respectively. The JVP's share of alleged violations has declined both in numerical and percentage terms.

4. A significant difference in this campaign is the relative absence of alleged violations against other groups or parties. The total violence thus reflects the polarised aggression of the PA and UNP towards each other. Whereas in 1997 5.07% of the complaints were against groups other than the PA and UNP, in the present campaign the two parties together account for all but 0.7% of the allegation against perpetrators whose party affiliations have been identified.

5. The number of complaints against persons of unknown party affiliation has increased from the 1997 figure of 25.67% to 29.48% in 1999. This reflects a sharp increase from 86 to 199 incidents.

6. Within the Districts of Kurunegala and Puttalam, the police areas of Kuliypitiya, Mawathagama, Anaduwa and Puttalam recorded the highest number of incidents totalling 52, 53, 40 and 34 respectively.

7. 49 incidents or 7.26% of the total recorded involved the use of firearms, which is higher than the average for the local government elections.

8. In the police areas of Ana-

aduwa, Wariapola, Kobeigane, Giribawa, Kuliypitiya, Puttalam, Rambodagalla, the PA has allegedly been responsible for more than two-and-a-half times the number of violations than the UNP, and the number of incidents recorded in each is over 15. In Gokaralla the UNP has allegedly committed twice the number of violations than the PA has. Gokaralla and Maho are the only police areas, in which the total number of incidents exceeds 15, with a significant increase in violence allegedly by the UNP.

9. 22 individuals have been named in complaints made to the police. Of these, D Dm Dassanayake, Pa Member of Parliament for the Puttalam District, has been cited as the alleged perpetrator in 13 incidents, one of which is a case of injury, 2 assaults, 4 allegations of threat and intimidation, one robbery, two acts of mischief and 3 threats, of the others Anthony Maximus (PA) is the accused in 5 incidents, Sarah Nishantha (PA) in four and M Thaha Anoss alias Anju (UNP) in five incidents, including one attempted murder and two cases of injury. Notable is the fact that two UNP MP's from outside the Province (Susantha PUNCHINILAME & AMS Adhikari) have been accused of alleged violence.

The extent of the violence was visible before, during and after the Polls. The police recorded 1,364 complaints regarding incidents of violence and election malpractice since the campaign was launched on 7 December. Of these 846 were from 7 December to 24 January while 578 were on 25 January or election day. Independent monitoring bodies such as CMEV and PAFFEREL too registered complaints in four digits. According to the figures recorded by the election monitors there were 394 complaints against the PA, 66 against UNP, and one against the JVP on the day of the poll. Two complaints were made against the police. In 199 cases the victims had been unable to identify the perpetrators. There were 31 post-poll incidents. Eight were against the PA, 12 against the UP and one against the JVP. Victims could not identify the violent elements in ten cases.

The election monitors also received 1,693 complaints in the pre-poll period. 851 were against the PA, 304 against the UNP, one against the JVP, two against the police and 528 against

15 FEBRUARY 1999

unidentifiable unknown persons. Of these 1,000 complaints were from 7 December to the commencement of the last week before elections. The last week saw 693 complaints.

The UNP alleged rigging in more than 600 polling booths. It complained justifiably that its polling and counting agents were chased away by PA gangs. Several journalists too witnessed intimidation and vote rigging. Two monitoring bodies the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence and the Peoples Action Front for Free and Fair Elections also issued reports confirming the vote rigging and condemning the polls exercise. There were many instances where stuffing of ballot boxes was done openly with scant regard for the observing monitors. The PAFEREL declared that the elections were irretrievably flawed" and wanted the election cancelled. The response of some PA ministers was bizarre. They accused the independent bodies of being UNP stooges and in a facetious counter charge said that it was the defeated UNP that had rigged the polls.

The most severe indictment came from the Catholic Church. There is a strong concentration of Catholics along the seaboard in Puttalam district. The Catholic Archbishop, Nicholas Marcus Fernando, himself a son of the Wayamba soil was unprecedentedly harsh on the government. Addressing a prize-giving at the Catholic College of St Peters in Colombo, the Archbishop made a hard-hitting speech that portrayed his sense of grief and frustration at the recent development. Excerpts of his speech are as follows:-

"I wish to touch upon a subject which is of great topical and national interest. A few days ago we had an election if indeed it can be called an election in the northwestern Province. Surviving that event was like winning a war. We heard people speaking of violence and fraud in the past. Certainly nobody justifies wrong doings of the past. But there is so much that is ugly, hypocritical and immoral in the present, that there is no need to hark back to the past. Violence and fraud can never be justified. We want deeds, not words.

"On Monday 25 January this year the people of Wayamba (Northwest) woke up from their sleep and suddenly realised that they had become sec-

ond class citizens of Sri Lanka. For all political purposes, their democratic right to vote had been taken away from them. It was an ironic memorial to fifty years of independence in Sri Lanka. The people of Wayamba demand, as their right, a fresh election.

"One should honestly ask: Can any governing body that grabbed power by blatantly unethical means win the respect of the governed? Is such a body morally legitimate? The fabric of our national life is coming apart. We cannot go on like this. I dread to think of what would happen to our country if we were to face a few more exercises of this type. People will lose all confidence in the democratic process. We are experiencing a prolonged war in the north and east. An unfortunate side effect of this war is the culture of violence that is gradually gripping our country. As long as the war lasts - with its rhetoric and political jostling, its deserters and fire-arms, its news bulletins and killings we cannot think of overcoming this culture of violence. Thus ending the war is another imperative. Marred elections, leading to further frustration, are not likely to help that process," the Archbishop said.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference as well as the Archbishop himself reiterated their criticism of the conduct of the Wayamba polls in their Independence Day messages.

In spite of the Clamour for annulling polls the elections Commissioner Dayanda Dissanayake did not do so. He himself stated that he was not empowered under the law to do so. Legal opinion was divided as to whether the Commissioner does or does not have the power under elections procedure. One thing however was clear. Dissanayake is no Seshan (Ex-Indian elections Chief). The Commissioner, instructed by President Kumaratunga, did exercise his authority in two respects. Incidentally the Supreme Court has criticised the Elections Chief severely for complying meekly with Presidential directives in postponing elections indefinitely to five other Provincial Councils under emergency provisions.

In the case of the Wayamba poll officials of 212 (141-Kurunegala, 71-Puttalam) polling stations had informed the Commissioner of some vote rigging concerning some ballot boxes. Nine ballot boxes were also

missing from the Kurunegala district. The number of votes involved amounted to 39,116 from Kurunegala and 8,174 from Puttalam. Elections Chief Dissanayake has declared null and void all 47,290 votes. Acting strictly in terms of election law Dissanayake went ahead and announced the PA as the winner. The PA chief candidate, Sarath Nawinna has taken office as Chief Minister.

The UNP however has announced that it will boycott Council sittings. It also got one of its district organisers to file a breach of fundamental rights application. This was a measure to obtain speedier justice as elections petition cases tend to drag on indefinitely. The Supreme Court, refusing to grant the interim relief, sought that the Elections Commissioner be directed not to make or gazette the declaration of the results of the poll. The Courts, however, granted leave to proceed with the petition alleging that elections were not free and fair. Argument would be heard on 15 March. The Elections Commissioner was given one month to file objections.

President Kumaratunga in her address to the nation on Independence Day has referred to the Provincial poll violence and stated that action would be taken against the culprits even if from her own party. It remains to be seen whether she would be able to implement this pledge. One reason for disbelief about her intention is the recent promotion to two police officers under a cloud over their acts of omission in Wayamba. Also Neranjan Wickremasinghe, son of Cabinet Minister, D P Wickremasinghe has been made Provincial Minister. Wickremasinghe was one person against whom there were many allegations of violence. Likewise Indra Dassanayake, wife of the notorious Dassanayake has been made Deputy-Chairperson of the Council. These are not acts that inspire confidence in Kumaratunga's professed intentions. If preliminary reports are to be believed many senior politicians from her party have been complicit in the violence.

The violence unleashed has been used for a two-fold purpose. On the one hand supporters of the UNP have alleged that they were intimidated into refraining from or prevented from voting. On the other there is evidence that massive rigging and impersona-

tion has taken place. It is clear that the climate of violence created before polls and maintained on polling day was definitely detrimental to the opposition parties. A negative feature was the terrorising of the minorities in the Province particularly the Tamils of recent Indian origin living in pockets in Dodangaslande and Mawattegama in the Kurunegala district. Also one of the three persons killed in election violence was a Tamil, Sivakumaran, the treasurer of the Kuliypitiya UNP Branch. The Christians in the Catholic belt of Puttalam along with various enclaves of Muslims were also intimidated to a great extent.

A transparent post-poll feature is the perceived discomfort of the government despite having obtained an electoral victory. There was a conspicuous absence of the "cock-a-hoop" attitude usually displayed by the victors on such occasions. Later some posters showing a smiling Chandrika with the slogan "Wayamba yukthiya Ratata Sakthiya" (The Wayamba strategy is strength to the Country) appeared. It remains a puzzle as to

who was responsible for these posters.

When media reports appeared that the US embassy was concerned about the violence and fraudulent practices during elections, the Foreign Ministry reacted by sending a confidential missive to all the diplomatic institutions. It warned them in polite jargon that expressing such concern would be treated as interference in domestic affairs. Also PA ministers have gone on record accusing elections officials who highlighted electoral malpractice as UNP agents. Likewise office bearers and spokespersons of election monitoring bodies spotlighting electoral misdemeanours have been told that the PA will sue them in courts for slander and defamation.

Generally elections to the North-Western Provincial Council would not have attracted this amount of attention or activity. In this case it assumed aggravated importance because it was seen as a "testing point" for greater exercises such as the Presidential or Parliamentary elections. The poll was considered as a gauge for

assessing the popularity level of the incumbent government. It was expected that once the Wayamba weather-cock indicated the direction of the political winds forthcoming electoral winds too would blow in a similar direction. Ironically the violence and fraudulence has defeated that objective. A clear analysis is not feasible under present circumstances.

One reason for the indignation about this election is that it has proved to be a regressive measure. The UNP in its time has also been guilty of massive election violence and fraud. But people expected a difference under the dispensation of the PA under Chandrika Kumaratunga. In fact even the UNP ensured a comparatively free and fair poll in 1994 that saw the PA win. The NWP election has been a grave disappointment in the sense that the PA too has demonstrated that it is no better in government than the UNP. The PA contention that the UNP did it too does the PA no good.

Yet the silver lining has been the courage of election monitoring bodies, sections of the clergy (Catholic and Buddhist) and the media in focu-



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sing attention on the violence. If the Elections Commissioner was of sterner calibre a sea change could be effected. It was the same case with the police. It must be noted that in a few booths where election and police officials stood firm no rigging could be done. Although the PA has committed a great travesty now the crescendo of criticism against the PA is something that cannot be ignored by this or any government in the future.

A related reason for the importance of this election was the absence of possible elections to other Provincial Councils. At the time elections to the North-Western Provincial Council was announced there was seemingly no prospect of polls to the Provincial Councils of the Uva, Sabragamuwa, Central, Western and North-Central Councils being held. All five had been postponed indefinitely by Presidential Council.

During the election campaign the Presidential secretariat announced that elections would be held to those Councils shortly. A few days later the Supreme Court ruled in a landmark judgement that the original act of the President in postponing polls was not within the ambit of powers under emergency regulations that could be exercised by the President. This was consequent to a petition filed by two journalists of the Free Media Movement. This defining of the limits of Presidential authority has ensured that polls to the other five Councils will be held shortly. Also there is a possibility of elections to the defunct North-East Council being held too.

This indeed augurs well for the strengthening of democracy in the country. In the aftermath of the North-Western Provincial Council elections the crucial question that arises is whether these elections too would be on the same lines as that of Wayamba. Unless swift measures are enacted to prevent a repetition of the North-Western Provincial poll the prospects for meaningful democracy in the island nation are quite bleak.

Nevertheless the PA can salvage its lost prestige if it conducts the next five PC elections on the same day in a free and fair manner. If it does creditably then the Wayamba black mark may be erased a little. But if it loses badly then it will be morally bound to dissolve the Wayamba Council voluntarily. ●

Revisiting the National Question

S. Jayahanthan

The paper by Dayan Jayatilleka (Tamil Times, December 1998) being from a Marxist stance was interesting reading.

Besides the a minority complex mindset, the Sinhalese also believe that Buddhism in its pristine form is found only in Sri Lanka and any privileges granted to any other culture would seriously impair the position of Buddhism. The Sinhala psyche is also entrenched with the idea that the Tamils came as invaders and that they exist at the sufferance of the Sinhalese people. The indigenous Tamils have never looked at themselves as being subsequent settlers. Their demands have always been from a position based on that premise. The difference in the attitudes has had a profound effect on attempts for a negotiated settlement of this question over the years rendering it impossible.

No doubt, there were successive sporadic waves of migration from India both as invasions and for settlement. These got absorbed both in the South and in the Northern and Eastern parts imbibing the respective cultures.

I subscribe to the theory that ethnically the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils are the same; the difference being that the Sinhalese speak a language with Aryan roots and the Tamils speak a Dravidian language. For the Tamils, cultural links with South India was made possible by the language they spoke and the religion they embraced. In fact, before this question came to a crisis point, the majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils were able to relate better to the Sinhalese rather than to their Indian counterparts. It was interesting that the Indian Tamil soldiers showed a natural hostility towards the indigenous Tamils during the days of the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

Jayatilleka quite rightly states that the national question is bound up with questions of the form, structure and reach of the State. The Soulbury

Constitution, manipulated in its making, relegated the Tamils to a position of inferiority. Instead of eliminating representation on a racial basis, it made it inevitable. It gave the country, with a multi-racial society, a unitary structure of government based on the Westminster system. The safeguards it had for minority interests, however were ineffective.

In November 1945 when the State Council debated the Soulbury Constitution presented as a white paper, D.S. Senanayake, the leader of the State Council and the then leader of the Ceylon National Congress later to become the first Prime Minister as leader of the United National Party, in order to allay the fears of the minority members declared, "On behalf of the Congress and on my own behalf, I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need you fear at our hands in a free Lanka". The subsequent events, however, say it all.

Lord Soulbury having served a term of office as Governor General of Independent Sri Lanka was later to admit: "I now think it is a pity that the Commission did not also recommend the entrenchment in the constitution of guarantees of fundamental rights."

Jayatilleka's option No.3 is Federalism. Federalism is a centripetal concept. It has been successful in federations of states having come together both for the common good of the nation and for the individual good of the states concerned. Successful federations, to mention a few are: U.S.A Canada, Germany, Italy, Australia, Switzerland, Malaysia etc.

In India the federal system has not proved a success primarily because unwilling and reluctant partners with centrifugal aspirations were brought together to constitute a federation of Indian states. Fissiparous tendencies of states have been a constant threat to the unity of the nation.

S.J.V.Chelvanayakam, the leader of the then Federal Party and the then

acknowledged leader of the Tamil people campaigned for a Federal system of government. He was shouted down as it were and branded a racist wanting to divide the Sri Lankan nation. Much to the contrary Chelvanayakam's approach to the question of federalism was centripetal. He did not envisage the division of the country or the Sri Lankan nation. He believed in all communities comprising one nation but with constituent states with a government at the centre thus preserving the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, and also its integrity. The Tamil people have had to pay a big price in the form of race riots for merely asking for a federal system of government.

Chelvanayakam was even prepared to settle for a watered down version of a federal system in subscribing to the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact (B-C Pact), in an agreement entered into in 1957 with S.W.R.D Bandaranaike the then Prime Minister. Perhaps, Jayatileka in his option No.2 avers to similar lines of this agreement in reference to "one state but more political space at the periphery, different relations with the centre." The B-C Pact had to be abrogated. Since then the Tamils were not offered anything close to it. Perhaps J.R Jayawardena, in hindsight would have regretted his protest march to Kandy demanding the abrogation of the Pact.

A paradigm of Jayatileka's reference to Confederalism in option No.3 would be the emerging European Union in its current form. This is again centripetal in its conception.

Origins of the Crisis

1970 was a fateful year for the Tamils. Having been elected with a resounding majority as the Prime Minister, in coalition with the major Marxist parties, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party (CP), the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike did not require the support of the Tamil parties to maintain herself in power. Tamil Parliamentary representation entered an era of sterile politics never to be reversed.

Emboldened by her success in quelling the petit-bourgeoisie insurgency led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) during the second year of her rule by the massacre of thousands of Sinhalese youth in the South with

ruthless brutality, she was in no mood to negotiate with the Tamil leaders to settle this question.

In the new Constitution of 1972, with claims to creating a socialist state as a precursor to achieving a socialist society, was entrenched for the first time "Sinhala Only" which had remained hitherto only as an Act of Parliament. Nay, Buddhism too became the religion of the State. Even the few safeguards provided for the protection of the minorities in the Soulbury Constitution were removed.

The remaining hopes of the Tamils, who thought that with the influence of the so called Marxists in the government who at one time stood for equal status for the Tamils, Mrs Bandaranaike would recognize their due rights in the making of the constitution, were shattered.

Mrs. Bandaranaike now sought to rule the Tamils of the North and East with a new breed of persons called "SLFP Organisers," drawn from sycophants, political turncoats, and megalomaniacs. The head of this crowd was the District Political Authority. They were of course Tamils. Despised by the people as they were, they were the intermediaries between the Tamil people and the government. The parliamentarians elected by the Tamils to represent their cause went into the political wilderness. These organisers vied with each other to catch the Madam's eye for the plums of office, while some were happy to settle for the crumbs.

Not being able to command any respect from the Tamil people to perform their tasks, they had to turn to the police and the army, who having killed the Sinhala youth in the South during the insurgency with impunity were now poised to turn their guns towards the Tamils.

Aided and abetted by the organisers, the bases important for the social and economic security for the Tamils were systematically destroyed. The co-operative sector which was of immense economic importance to the Tamils and built up over the years by voluntary effort was reduced to a subservient tool of the government. The introduction of "standardisation" for entry to Universities, the closing of two leading public schools to be converted to University campuses were some of the factors that undermined the educational base.

The army and the police struck terror into the fabric of the Tamil society. Small farmers, petty traders, fishermen, could not go about their business without being harassed either by the army or the police. Innocent people were subjected to intensive searches at check points. Youth were arrested, tortured and thrown into jails. The people felt threatened, intimidated and humiliated.

It is in this atmosphere that the militant youth who had secretly vowed to creating a separate state for the Tamils began to act.

A crude form of justice from an "Unseen Hand" began to emerge with the assassinations of some SLFP Organisers and police officers who were seen as betrayers of Tamils. In their desperation the Tamil people began to tacitly endorse these killings. Pre-conditions for the entrance of the militants on to the political scene were now ideal.

Taking the cue from the militants the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) an amalgam of Tamil parties in desperation decided to request the Tamil people for a mandate to campaign for a separate state. At the general elections of 1977 the Tamils in the North and East, overwhelmingly voted for the request for a separate state for themselves. Some SLFP Organisers who were bold enough to contest at the elections realised that the stones and brickbats they got were far in excess of the votes they received! The Tamils by this time had ceased to entertain any hopes of constitutional changes.

The militants were not there to just to mouth slogans. They had a definite focus, aspirations and their clear priorities.

The successive governments created further conditions for the progressive growth of the militant movement

The New Century

There is no doubt that any negotiated settlement involving only the main players, is a far cry.

When we pass into the next century it will dawn on the players that the issues in contention have become irrelevant and obsolete especially in the global context. During this century we carried on a fight from where Dutugemunu and Elara left. Perhaps,

(continued on next page)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI LANKAN IDENTITY

Dr. V. Ambalavanar

Note on classification

At a certain stage starting from the turn of the 19th Century, distinctions were introduced within communities in Sri Lanka (e.g. Kandyan Sinhalese, Low-Country Sinhalese; Sri Lankan Tamils, Indian Tamils; Sri Lankan Moors, Indian Moors) in the published data on Census of Population. The Census of Population 1981 has done away with the distinctions within the Sinhalese and Moors Communities. It is the view of the author that the distinction between Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils should also be done away with. Consequently, in the discussion below, the classification Tamils mean both Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils as one single community. Also, the term Tamil speaking people is used to cover the Tamils and Moors as one single group.

Sri Lankan Identity

Recently some persons asked a Saint who visited the country about the solution to the ethnic problem in the country and the violence that is going on. His simple reply was "All of you remember that you are Sri Lankans and learn to live together. That is the way to get out of the present mess and march forward as a Nation."

Yes. We have been too preoccupied destroying what is left of our

identity as Sri Lankans that we need to be reminded about this very simple thing in life. More than a hundred years back, when we had the first Census of Population in 1871, there were 2,400,380 persons in the country. A Census in 1946 (i.e. 2 years before independence) showed that there were 6,657,339 persons in Ceylon at that time. The last Census of Population taken 17 years back in 1981 revealed that there were 14,846,750 persons in the country on the day the count was taken.

conflicts relating to language and religion the Sri Lankan society had sidestepped the more important issues relating to capital and labour.

The dichotomy of capital and labour is itself becoming increasingly irrelevant as the global economy passes from an industrial age to an information age where investment should be in knowledge, skills, research and development, instead of arms and ammunition. If we miss this, Sri Lankan society will be two centuries behind time.

Foreign assistance on a serious and concerted basis has to be solicited for a permanent and positive settlement.

Our children need a better future and a better quality of life, but first, they have to live. For them to live, the war must end with a political settlement to the conflict. ●

According to the Census of Population taken in 1871, 69.57% of those counted were Sinhalese, 22.26% were Tamils, 6.81% were Moors and 1.36% were other groups. In 1946 the corresponding percentages were 69.40, 22.75, 6.15 and 1.70 respectively while in 1981 they were 73.95, 18.22, 7.05 and 0.77 respectively. By and large the Moors have been and are Tamil speaking or often bilingual.

It is clear from the above that from the outset when modern statistical methods were used to count and categorize people (i.e. from more than three quarters of a century prior to independence), Sri Lanka which was earlier known as Ceylon has been the home of three major communities - Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors. In other words Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors have been living in the Indian Ocean Island of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) as Sri Lankans (Ceylonese) for well over 4 generations. It is also clear that more than a quarter of the inhabitants have been and are Tamil speaking.

It is the right and duty of every one of us to understand that all of us are Sri Lankans first irrespective of the community to which we belong and Sri Lanka is not the country of any particular community only. We need not go back and probe history to understand this logic behind the Sri Lankan identity and weaken our Nation.

For the Tamil speaking people the Sri Lankan identity is extremely important because this identity only helps them to talk about their rights and denial of them by successive governments. This is particularly important at the present juncture when many Tamil speaking people and organizations are keen to get a third party mediator to resolve the ethnic problem and bring about peace.

For the Sinhalese, this Sri Lankan identity is equally important. If this is not accepted and the rights of all communities to live peacefully with dignity and honour is not ensured, it will be the Sinhalese, and not the Tamil speaking people, who will accelerate the destruction of the Sri Lankan identity and precipitate the separation of the country.

(Continued from page 14)

Dutugemunu and Elara took up the fight from where Rama and Ravana left.

A protracted discussion on who is more indigenous to the country is an exercise in futility. It is as ridiculous as a debate on whether the first monkey that appeared in Sri Lanka was a Sinhalese monkey or a Tamil monkey. Does it matter whether the monkey embraced Hinduism or Buddhism. (but, of course, in India there are still a whole lot of Hindu monkeys hovering around the numerous temples!)

In due course Sinhala and Tamil as media of communication could well become irrelevant. They will be important only in so far as the media of the respective cultures. As important are the fauna, the flora and other issues of the environment.

In their pre-occupation with the

Homes of the major communities in Sri Lanka

In 1871, 83.38 per cent of the people lived outside the North and East while 16.62 per cent lived in the North and East. This changed to 88.6 per cent outside North and East and 11.4 per cent in the North and East by 1946. By 1981, the people living outside North and East came down to 85.96 per cent and those living in the North and East rose to 14.04 per cent. This is not surprising because the North and East of the country consisted of some of the driest parts where the nature is most adverse to agriculture.

In 1871, only 0.51 per cent of the Sinhalese lived in the North and East while 63.29 per cent of the Tamils and 29.71 per cent of the Moors lived in the North and East. These changed to 0.80 per cent, 38.7 per cent and 31.09 per cent respectively in 1946 and to 2.54 per cent, 52.9 per cent and 34.98 per cent in 1981. It is thus clear that the Sinhalese preferred to have their homes outside the North and East while a little over half the Tamils and about one-third of the Moors preferred to have their homes in the North and East.

Outside North and East, the Provinces with substantial Tamil population are the Central and Uva Provinces. In 1881, 27.69 per cent of the Tamils lived in the Central Province while 6.34 per cent lived in the Uva Province. The corresponding percentages in 1946 were 28.78 and 9.42 respectively. In 1981, these percentages were 19.61 and 6.70 respectively.

In terms of distribution of population by major communities, the following tables are worth noting:

Table 1 - Population of Sri Lanka by major communities Percentages

Community	1871	1946	1981
Sinhalese	69.57	69.40	73.95
Tamils	22.26	22.75	18.22
Moors	06.81	06.15	07.05

Table 2 - Population of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka by major communities Percentages

Community	1871	1946	1981
Sinhalese	00.38	02.00	03.17
Tamils	95.49	93.82	92.03
Moors	03.46	03.79	04.58

Table 3 - Population of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka by major communities Percentages

Community	1871	1946	1981
Sinhalese	06.33	09.87	24.99
Tamils	59.03	48.75	42.06
Moors	33.12	39.06	32.34

Table 4 - Population of the Central Province of Sri Lanka by major communities Percentages

Community	1881	1946	1981
Sinhalese	51.38	54.49	65.62
Tamils	40.18	38.39	26.41
Moors	06.18	05.93	07.31

Table 5 - Population of the Uva Province of Sri Lanka by major communities Percentages

Community	1881	1946	1981
Sinhalese	68.70	57.35	76.17
Tamils	26.30	38.34	19.82
Moors	03.66	03.19	03.49

Tables 2 and 3 clearly reveal that the vast majority of the people in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka up to the time of independence belonged to the Tamil community in particular and the Moors. The movement of the Sinhalese into the Eastern Province has taken place in large numbers only after independence.

Table 4 reveals that prior to independence a little over half the population in the Central Province was Sinhalese while well over one third was Tamil. This picture changed to about two thirds Sinhalese and a little over one quarter Tamil by 1981.

From table 5, it is seen that, prior to independence, the Sinhalese formed between half and two third of the population in the Uva Province while the Tamils formed between one quarter and one third of the population. By 1981 the Sinhalese population rose to a little over three quarter while the Tamil population declined to about one fifth. These changes and the ones noted in the previous paragraph reflected the results of the repatriation of a large number of Tamils from the plantations to India under the agreement between the two countries.

This discussion on evidence from Census of Population taken in Sri Lanka since 1871 clearly show that

1. Sri Lanka is multi ethnic,
2. The Sri Lankan identity applies to the Sinhalese, Tamils and the Moors who have been living in the country for generations,
3. The Northern and Eastern Provinces have been mainly the Home Provinces of the Tamil speaking people,
4. The Home Provinces of the Sinhalese have been the seven Provinces other than the Northern and Eastern Provinces,
5. Between one quarter and one third of those living in the Central Province have been Tamils, and
6. Between one fifth and one fourth of those living in the Uva Province have also been Tamils.

*The author of this paper was an Additional Secretary to a former President of Sri Lanka.

ICRC's Role in the Provision of Essential Medical Service

Twenty years ago, when the General Hospital in Jaffna became a Teaching Hospital (JTH), it had more than its ample quota of highly qualified consultants and specialists (35) along with the requisite supporting staff, who undoubtedly contributed to its smooth and efficient functioning.

With the rapidly changing situation in the peninsula and the onset of the fighting, events took a dramatic turn. The year 1990 for instance, saw the reversal of the conditions that prevailed 10 years earlier for the people of Jaffna, as far as facilities were concerned, and in particular the health services.

Transport suffered badly, affecting greatly the flow of supplies to the peninsula. The rapidly deteriorating civilian security situation and adverse conditions resulted in many an executive, or government servant, seeking less turbulent pastures in the outh. The health and medical services were the most affected having the highest numbers leaving the peninsula.

1990 also saw the advent of the ICRC to Jaffna. The humanitarian needs of the people was their focus, with health warranting immediate action. The conflict situation had resulted in an increase of maladies and diseases and the number of specialists serving in JTH had dwindled to a meagre 6. The drug supply was parlous or minimal. Urgently needed medical equipment barely left the medical stores in Colombo. Few doctors were available to even man the clinics at JTH.

The ICRC, with agreement of the government, and also having obtained security guarantees from the LTTE, introduced a ship service whereby it was possible for the seriously sick patients, in need of further treatment, surgery and therapy to be transferred to Colombo. Patients were transferred to Trincomalee via ICRC vessel and thereon to Colombo overland. The patients were selected by the Director of JTH, on the recommendations of the specialist, and arrangements were made with the health authorities, and Ministry of Defence to effect the necessary clearance for

travel. Ever since the inauguration of this service, a minimum of 4 voyages were conducted monthly for the needy patients of Jaffna. On an average, 30 patients (and 'bystanders') were sent to Colombo for treatment and brought back after treatment, on each voyage.

Year	No of Patients
1994	718
1995	(Displaced) 311
1996	314
1997	688
1998	566

In addition, the ICRC vessel also transported the much needed drugs for the JTH along with equipment for the health dept., and at times, even stationery.

"Patients are generally selected on the basis of the urgency of the treatment, such as cancer patients for radio and chemo therapy, cardiology patients for urgently needed surgery, neurology patients for CT scan/MRI scan, patients for laser treatment, angiogram, lithotripsy, review of treatment, et al....

If we could get specialists to visit JTH at least once a month, the necessity for 20-30 patients to travel to Colombo once a month can be averted when such patients are old and feeble, they would need a bystander/accompanion there by denying a place to 5-10 on the waiting list" pointed out Dr. Ms Kanagaratnam, present Director of JTH. As for suggestions for improvement she said that especially the older people had difficulty in using the toilets on the ship". The presence of an ICRC delegate at the time of admittance to the various hospitals would be very useful, whereby the situation could be reviewed and some sort of relief brought about," she added.

Let us see some of the patients on board the vessel 'Java Gulf' (voyage 37/98 of 28.11.1998):

P.T. 62 yrs. (male) retd. public servant complains of gall bladder 3 yrs ago. No surgery performed. Admitted to JTH 3 months ago and now recommended for laser treatment. Waiting

list for 2 months.

P.N. 30 yrs. (female), works as a colonisation officer in DS office Sandilipay... had complained of nose bleed 6 months ago. Was operated in July, but difficulty in breathing. Colombo biopsy report tested for Carcinoma in the nose. 4 months on the waiting list. Accompanied by her mother.

Mrs. T. S. 60 yrs. stones in the kidney operated twice. Recommended for laser treatment in Colombo found difficult to make up mind to go to Colombo owing to family responsibilities. Accompanied by husband.

KN. 17 yrs. (male) Consequent to panic and fear during the frequent fighting, had a problem of fear of loud noises.

The 726 ton 'JAVA GULF', has a capacity for 800 tons of cargo, and has 11 crew members, including the Captain. Each voyage takes approx. 45 passengers (30 patients, 15 VIP (including important govt. officials).

For travel both ways, clearance from the Ministry of Defence must be obtained. Passengers booked for the voyage from KKS to Trincomalee meet at the ICRC Delegation in Jaffna in the afternoon, and then leave by convoy to KKS. Travel time from KKS to Trincomalee is approx. 12 hrs (depending on the seas!!). From Trincomalee to Colombo by land convey it takes a further 6 hours, with a short stop in Habarana. The patients returning to Jaffna, leave the ICRC Delegation in Colombo at 6.30 am. A JTH doctor accompanies the patients both ways, and is authorised to use the emergency medical kit on board, when necessary. An ICRC Convoying Officer is present on every voyage. Passengers are served with all 3 meals and tea on board. 'JAVA GULF' costs the ICRC \$3500 USD per day, and is presently on a 6 month charter.

Yet another service by this vessel, has been the conveyance of mail between Jaffna and Colombo, free of charge. In the words of the Chief Post Master, Jaffna, thanks to the goodwill of the ICRC, enormous quantities of mail are being exchanged with minimum delay... this valuable service is most welcome at a time when other avenues of transport are extinct, and greatly appreciated by people from all walks of life."

"As medical personnel, on behalf of the people of Jaffna, we are grate-

(continued on next page)

BOOK REVIEW

THE MODERN SOVEREIGN STATE AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN SRI LANKA

Review by Prof. Alfred Jeyaratnam Wilson

Culture and Politics of Identity in Sri Lanka edited by Mithran Tiruchelvam and C S Dattathreya (International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, 1998) is an important contribution by ICES to the lively and ongoing debate on the highly politicised ethnic problem in Sri Lanka.

Not a little of the success of this exercise must be attributed to the ceaseless endeavours of Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam. P Thambirajah, the chief librarian of ICES has functioned as the human dynamo in preparing the collection for publication, and praise is due to him for his industry and dedication to the intellectual enterprises of ICES.

ICES, Colombo was the brainchild of Robert Goldman of the Ford Foundation and a few others such as the indefatigable Dr Neelan. The Centre has become a hive of intellectual activity for Sri Lanka's peaceniks and those in the island who are genuinely interested in advancing the cause of peace. Apart from the conferences, seminars and lectures by reputed international scholars, ICES (Colombo) has also published several volumes of work by researchers, all of which have provided an intellectual feast to the knowledge seeking elites of Sri Lanka.

There are eight chapters in this volume, the work of deeply committed and serious minded scholars, all of them free of vitriol and avoiding stirring up the hornet's nest.

The purpose of this volume is as Mithran Tiruchelvam states in the Introduction to favour as much as to nourish the reader's palate, providing

(Continued from page 17)

ful for the magnanimous service rendered by the ICRC to the Health Services,.... and special mention must be made of the kind and considerate crew of 'JAVA GULF', said the Director of JTH, in conclusion. ●

a sampling of the eclectic diversity of topics, methodologies and critical perspectives engaging the social scientists today.... the essays in this volume do find general unity in the questioning of cultural and political identity in Sri Lanka."

The key to the whole volume is Jayadeva Uyangoda's chapter on Biographies of the Decaying Nation State. In fact it would have been more appropriate to have placed this as the first chapter because it gives us a penetrating overview of the erosion of what used to be the modern nation state. It is not that this state has let itself be internally self destructed or became disintegrated internally by external forces. The modern state has had its day and what is in vogue today are structures which modify their sovereignty and bring them under an umbrella union with their common currency, freedom of movement, reduction of customs barriers and so on. The European Union, and NAFTA are examples of this outmoding of the nation state. What is of greater significance, Uyangoda emphasises, is the majoritarian nation state which from his viewpoint is a totemistic concept. In Sri Lanka it was the calamitous year, 1958, a veritable watershed when totemism took over. Uyangoda comments (p.179):

"...I have begun to believe that some of our energies should be devoted to imaging fresh forms of political association which would enable for example, in the present period of globalisation - free movement of capital and all forms of labour. I, for one, would love to see a South Asia which will no longer be a prison house of nations."

Uyangoda clarifies his position further by concluding (ibid):

"In my thinking, de-centring of state sovereignty and democratisation of state borders would lay

the basis for a multiplicity of South Asian republics which should ideally replace the existing system of majoritarian nation-states."

In an earlier section Uyangoda observed:

"I begin to wonder why there is such a faithful commitment to this belief in Sri Lankan exceptionalism."

Totemism, majoritarianism and exceptionalism with its sense of manifest destiny along with being the custodian of a unique religion and an ancient civilisation are the bywords of the political Sinhalese today. In contrast with this prevailing passion for the over-centralised British colonial state, J K Galbraith described India as a functioning anarchy of 700,000 villages. Thus today as Uyangoda quite rightly comments, the nation state is a thoroughly outmoded concept, just going out of currency and the object of adoration and worship by the apt phrase of Uyangoda, Sri Lankan exceptionalism. Only in this state do we still have relics of the nineteenth century quoting from mid-Victorian books on parliamentary procedure and antiquated Queensberry rules. Those who therefore exorcise all forms of devolution including federalism are clearly barking up the wrong tree.

Patrick Anderson's "Talk About the Passion" (Chapter 1) gives us a rich and succinct analytical survey of the controversial writings of three learned Catholic priests, Fathers Aloy Pieris, Michael Rodrigo and Tissa Balasuriya.

Anderson's commencing paragraphs take a historical sweep of the Buddhist-Catholic controversy in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the turbulent fifties and sixties. Catholic dialogians and defenders of the Catholic position emerged during these phases as protagonists of the Catholic doctrine. Interestingly the Second Vatican Council's sessions of 1962-65 by its less dogmatic approach have cited a more liberal view of other religions. Nirvana (Buddhism) and Karma (Hinduism) are apparently accommodated for the very first time. Vatican II postulated that other religions enshrined different ways of approaching change. So it seems that all of us, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims are now exempted from original sin and the gat-

15 FEBRUARY 1999

eway is open to the pearly gates and our souls are saved.

Anderson has done a careful and incisive analysis of the writings and thoughts of three erudite Catholic priests, Fathers Aloy Pieris, Michael Rodrigo and Tissa Balasuriya. Father Pieris shines as a dialogian and as editor of *Dialogue*, he used the journal as a vehicle for putting across his controversial thinking. Pieris is the proponent of a liberation social theology and he sees the pressing question today is that of the place of the poor in the social ideologies of the dialogue between rich and poor. Essentially Pieris is an advocate for the poor against the state where God is the Liberative Agent and has made a covenant or defence pact with the poor against the agents of Mammon.

Michael Rodrigo was like Pieris, a committed dialogian. For Rodrigo life in the community is the distinctive form of human experience. So he used a Buddhist village where he learned about and experienced the lives of the poor. Rodrigo's thinking approximates to that of Pieris, Rodrigo being essentially an abstract thinker.

Father Tissa Balasuriya's contribution to the evolution of Christian ideology is original and unique. In his work, he concentrates on Mary, the mother of Christ, and he develops a revisionist assessment of Mary. Balasuriya also concerns himself with the role of the poor in society and to this extent he is a revisionist Marxologist.

The social and political thinking of Pieris, Rodrigo and Balasuriya unfortunately do not cross the borders of the conventional state. So that it is within this outmoded nineteenth century sovereign state that their thinking operates. Besides the three priests lived in the most troublesome times and we do not come across any references to the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils and the horrors of terrorism that has plagued the island. The burning question is not only that of the poor, though they have their ramifications through every nook and cranny in Sri Lankan society. More crucial is what does the state do to curb and discipline its army men when they blatantly violate human rights and perpetrate crimes against humanity.

In sum, Pieris, Rodrigo and Balasuriya constitute a vanguard of liberation theologians where they see the

conflict in the struggle between rich and poor and where they expect the state to perform welfare functions in order to strengthen the poor. For the balance, the state must also perform a positive role. It is necessary for the state to provide for the poor. Their argument concludes with the significant observation:

"All religions are in various ways and to various degrees, both oppressive and liberative. [Third World theology needs to develop] a form of inter-religious dialogue which is concerned not so much with the doctrinal insights or the spiritual experiences that different religions can offer one another as with the contribution to human liberation that each can make."

We are still within the paradigmatic confines of the sovereign nation state. Jani de Silva's chapter on "Shifting Frames of Masculinity" takes the reader on an illuminated guided tour of what was most probably a pro-Sinhalese nation state. Jani de Silva, as usual, is a profound thinker and writes serious stuff. She provides a guide especially an informed and comprehensively analytical overview of Sinhalese social structure with its manifold complex consanguinal relationships. The role of the village or gama is here spelled out so very lucidly that we get fresh insights into how the political system functioned in those times under the king or the state. The modern centralised unitary state was the operation of Britain reinforced by the habits of a business civilisation. It is essentially a contemporary phenomenon and most certainly cannot be traced back to the days of King Duttu Gemunu. To do this would be tantamount to tacking on a tattered piece of fabric to a recently woven textile straight from the factory. This would be an incongruous construction. Jani de Silva might be nearer to the paradigm of a sovereignty holding a galactic sway over peripheral regions, a weak central government but nevertheless exhibiting the appurtenances of kingly or state authority. The editors succeed in placing de Silva in context when they observe in their Introduction:

"She investigates a kind of cognitive dissonance of group formation embodied in the distance between ideal personhood and social reality"

and they add:

"De Silva discovers how the symbolic orientation of language to reality exposes the ascriptive, hierarchial and fraternal words of young Sinhalese males."

The remaining five chapters written by Michael Schafter! Marisa Angell, Sasanka Perera, Sunil Bastian and Shari Knoerzer form part of the unity of this entire work if they are looked upon as off shoots from the main tree of knowledge provided by Jani de Silva, Patrick Anderson and Jayadeva Uyangoda. Marisa Angell's critical discussion in her chapter, "Understanding the Aryan Theory" is both revealing and instructive.

The crux of the Sinhalese dilemma lies in their vain belief in their origins in the cradle of the human race" publicised by the German Aryanist, Max Muller. They, the Sinhalese, had no share in this vicious publicisation of Aryan social origins. Unfortunately misguided but eminent religious propagandists such as Anagarika Dharmapala seized on it as a way of advancing the notion of the superiority of the Sinhala race as against the Dravidian Tamils. The British Colonial rulers stood aside and winked at the whole process, not unsympathetically. Angell provides an excellent narration of the development of the Aryan theory of language and race. Strange as it may seem, it was a Britisher, Sir William Jones, a civil service judge in Calcutta who first propounded his theory at a 1788 meeting of the Royal Artistic Society of Bengal. Jones' findings were regarded so influential that he came to be known as the father of the Aryan theory of languages. Jones was followed by other Englishmen such as Reverends Robert Spence Hardy and J G MacVicar but neither of them approached the stature of Sir William Jones.

The German Aryanists, Max Muller and later Friedrich Schlegel were quite active in their writings so much so that R A L H Gunawardena named Muller as the Aryan racial theory's "most effective propagandist."

These racial theories coincided with the majoritarian needs of a racially dominated nation state even when plurality and multi-ethnicity were cross cutting factors not merely within borders but across borders as well. They only helped justify majority ethnic hegemonism. In recent times,

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modern historians in Sri Lanka such as C R de Silva have rejected this theory

Sasanka Perera's chapter on The "Victims" throws much needed light on the sufferings of women, especially their menfolk at the hands of the yet all consuming state. The majesty of the state and as an instrument of brutal repression is brought to our attention. In this piece, we begin to realise the slow, imperceptible erosion, in the nineteen nineties of the sovereign state. The agent of this eroding process is none but the emergence of human rights as an important issue and states are obliged to respect human rights if they are not to be viewed as outcasts in the comity of nations. Additionally the factor of aid especially from international credit agencies and aid consortiums and the possibility of it being curtailed are deterrents to the wanton violation of human rights and the committing of crimes against humanity. Sasanka does not mention any of these adverse consequences resulting from the deviant behaviour of defaulting states but the consequences of the state's violation of human rights have been amply spelled out elsewhere and is a matter of grave concern to the democracies of the world.

Sasanka states that the worst violence was between 1987 and 1991 when the state and the JVP (People's Liberation Front) went on a killing spree. He links up these enormous and brutal killings with the sad human tragedy that befell women who had to bear the brunt. He writes (p.94):

"Many of them saw the brutal murder of their husbands and other male kin and had to endure the repression of the normal modes of mourning as per the demands of either the JVP or the agents of the state."

Two developments which were not quite anticipated in the earlier decades became increasingly clear in the nineteen nineties modifying consequently the sovereignty of the fast dating sovereign state. Globalisation and the revolutionising of information technology have compelled repressive states to conform to international standards of decency.

NGO's are another break on the supremacy of the sovereign nation state. They have become prominent and powerful bodies in their efforts

to monitor a state's record of human rights.

Sunil Bastian, a sound thinker, has already a well-established and well-founded reputation for his dedicated work on various facets of the Sinhala Buddhist state in Sri Lanka. Here in his chapter on Development, NGO's and Ethnic Conflicts, Bastian endeavours to analyse the politics of development NGO's in the context of their support for the Tamil minority's demand for the devolution of powers to their traditional areas. The NGO's are still yet another break on the arrogant nation state. Bastian writes:

"...when we talk of NGO's today, we are concerned with a major force that is bound to become even stronger in the near future. The increased linking of NGO's with foreign funding in general and official development assistance in particular makes them an important element in the role of foreign aid in developing countries..."

Bastian quite rightly states that in these NGO's there is a strategy to reform the state in order to make it more transparent and accountable, secondly they are seen as a means of strengthening civil society and lastly from the level of donor policies, there is a search for good governance by aid-giving states. All three factors, it might be noted, modify the arrogance of the sovereign state.

Bastian engages with the ethnic and international challenges to the sovereign state. It is clear from his thinking that the sovereign power has been diminished by the intervention of new modes of thinking and the engulfment of the planet by globalisation and revolutionised information technologies.

Bastian's section on "Debates among International NGO's" identifies him at his most insightful. Internal conflicts, he asserts, give rise to misinterpretation of the sociology of war in countries as distant as Sri Lanka and Rwanda. There is a confusion in understanding here, a totalising and generalising of a particular situation with the generality of inter-ethnic conflicts. Bastian insists, "The single term 'conflict' cannot characterise what is going on in Bosnia and smacks of the discredited practice... ignores the specificities extremely important to an understanding of internal

conflicts." (p.119)

But it is his section on "Limitations of the Concept of Development" (pp.122-30) which bring out certain outstanding killer theorems. He avers:

1. development includes much more than mere growth and the trickle down process does not occur automatically unless the poor are targeted.
2. a fundamental objective of development strategy that hopes to shape capitalism and to give the disadvantaged a state is to change these relationships so as to enhance the capacity of the less powerful to determine their own living conditions and control resources. The overall effect of this approach states Bastian, is an uncritical attitude towards the structures of capitalism within which many of these target group-oriented projects operate. Obviously we are here close to the thesis that the state should be the instrument of the poor and become their welfare dispensing agency.

We are close to the British Labour Party view of the Attlee era that the modern welfare state is the answer to the poor. Bastian's verdict is that such are the attitudes of the neo-liberals. He is not opposed to the idea but the substance of his thesis is that we should give welfarism a chance before transiting to the Marxist state. The reform of the state structure is therefore one of the goals of this school of thought. This would mean experimenting with other structures of modernisation and by implication we cannot eliminate federalism as an end solution to the inter-ethnic conflict. Certainly the tried and failed antiquated unitary state is by no means a panacea to the ills that plague our contemporary society. Such a simplistic unitarian response will not eliminate conflict. But this Marxist proposition that the ills of society are attributable to the class struggle between rich and poor and that the state is the repressive instrument of the haute bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie is too simple and uncomplicated an explanation of a highly complex phenomenon as the modern state. The Marxists therefore argue that a better equitable redistribution of scarce resources along with rapid economic development which will reduce unemployment and make

available to everyone poor in society a fair deal will necessarily involve a reform of the state and the introduction of new institutions and reformed structures to achieve the goals of a redistributive society.

Shari Knoerzer makes a skilful dissection of the political behaviour of the scattered and itinerant Muslims of Sri Lanka. She seeks an answer to the puzzling question: what can a thinly spread minority such as the Muslims do in an ocean of Sinhalese in the majoritarian hegemonistic state. One response is for them to play the pliant and subservient role as an appendage to the majority political parties which they had been doing until the other day. Another is for their leadership to be in constant low profile in the political firmament lest excessive posturing brings them opprobrium. Their cringing stance to date can be attributed to the fact that they are looked upon with a loaded prejudice by the Sinhalese Buddhists and the Ceylon Tamils. There have been three critical anti-Muslim riots by the Sinhalese in recent times, the one in Hambantota almost at the turn of the century, the acme in the 1915 riots and

the Puttalam shootings in 1976 by security personnel.

The problem with the Muslim community is that its members have been dictated to by a self-serving, self-fish and exploitative leadership concentrated mainly in Colombo city and the suburbs. This leadership is conspicuous, wealthy and vulgarly ostentatious and very much unaware of the social envy they provoke among the wealthy Sinhalese elite. The Colombo-centred leaders have been able to exact the support of their fellow Muslims because by and large, Muslims living amidst Sinhalese and Tamils in the villages are such an insignificant number and mostly poor and existing on the edge of subsistence that they vainly believe that their leaders will deliver the goods to them. The Tamils too look upon the Muslims with disdainful superiority. Muslims often complain that their teachers in the secondary schools, the majority of whom are Ceylon Tamils, discourage their school children from aspiring to higher education instilling into them that they only fit to tradesmen or herdsmen. During the Federal Party phase (1956-1977) in

Tamil politics, the Federalist leaders especially S J V Chelvanayakam and other seniors spoke eloquently of the Muslims being part of the Tamil-speaking peoples of Ceylon. In fact, there were electoral agreements between the Federal Party and Muslim candidates in constituencies where either Muslim or Tamil candidates could win with the votes of the other community. There were several such electorate victories but the Muslim victors failed to honour their pledges to the Federal Party after entering Parliament.

Knoerzer unfortunately fails to analyse the Muslim-Tamil relationship during this 1956-77 phase. There was a serious effort by the Federal Party to establish a permanent link that they even successfully elected a middle-level Muslim politician, Mashoor Moulana to Parliament who true to form crossed over to the government soon after entering the Senate. During the Eelam wars in the North and the East, the Muslims incurred the suspicions of the Tamil Tiger leadership. They were suspected of passing on vital information to the Sinhalese army and accused of being indifferent and



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unsympathetic to Tiger cadres operating in their midst. Consequently Muslims were shot and killed while in their mosques saying their Friday prayers. These shootings at random occurred mostly in the Eastern parts and they of course provoked brutal retaliations. The most deplorable was when the Tigers expelled the entire Muslim population in the Jaffna peninsula, some 75,000. In a matter of days they were asked to move from their homes which cost them tremendous losses in property. These Muslims were accused of providing intelligence to the Sinhalese army.

The solution to these serious problems came when the Muslim intelligentsia in the Eastern province inaugurated their own political party in 1981. Knoerzer rightly observes "the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) marks the transformation and Islamisation of Muslim politics in Sri Lanka" (p. 136). This party has become pivotal in the island's politics because the Muslims constitute the third largest vote bank in the country. The party was founded by its current leader, M H M Ashraff who is now a minister of cabinet rank in the People's Alliance government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga. It has the support of the young Muslims and its leaders are also drawn from this age sector. The SLMC aspired to be a national party but is still region-based, in the Eastern province. The conventional method in Sri Lanka's political culture is to appoint the leader of the party to the cabinet in the expectation that this could contain discontent. Ashraff's entry into the cabinet has not, however, solved the Muslim problem. The Muslims though they had not been targeted have benefited considerably from legislation enacted since independence. The Paddy Lands Act alleviated their landlessness. The nationalisation of the schools and admission by racial quota to the universities provided Muslims a larger number of the reserved places for backward areas and for the disadvantaged. Since the Muslims came mostly from such areas and were considered educationally and economically handicapped. These quotas have not always been filled because of a dearth of Muslim candidates.

Problems have arisen, however, over the question of devolving powers

to the regions especially those areas where the Muslims are in a majority. One section of Muslim thinking prefers to remain a united community. This section prefers to continue as a united community within the confines of a unitary state, the argument being that it would be better to be a single minority in one state than a minority in two different and probably mutually hostile states. There are those who argue for a separate Muslim unit as a way of protecting Muslim interests. It is probable that the protagonists of a Muslim unit will in the end have their way.

The fundamental question here is how can a minority in a hegemonistic state function without inviting disaster to itself. One way is to remain subservient and in low profile and avoid challenging the state. The Sri Lankan Muslims have conformed to this policy and consequently avoided being mistreated.

Another is to try to gain advantages at the expense of a rebellious and bellicose minority such as the Sri Lankan Tamils. Major sections of Muslim opinion have tended to veer in this latter direction arousing in the process the wrath of the Tamils. Sinhalese politicians have also stirred up the Muslims against the Tamils thereby allegedly seeking to pursue a policy of divide and rule. The Sri Lankan Tamil response has been to try to appease the Muslim political leadership and bring all Muslims with the Tamils under the broad rubric of the Tamil-speaking peoples of Ceylon. This kind of courting of a strategically placed minority has been persisting for most of the post independence period but without much success. A guess is that the Muslims will continue to remain a bifurcated minority but with a more solid leadership which will always seek to drive hard political bargains. In the sharp competition that has been generated between them and the Tamils, it cannot be ruled out that the conflict will become a permanent sore thumb and a further dimension to the riven island, yet another example of the disintegrating broken-backed sovereign state.

What does a national park within the confines of a city comprising some one hundred acres have to do with the sovereign state? Michael Schaffer attempts an answer in his interesting essay "From Victoria to Vihara Maha-

devi". The vicissitudes of time pushed the eccentric old queen (Victoria) to the background and the forces of nationalism brought Vihara Mahadevi to the forefront. Mrs Bandaranaike dignified the park by leading a demonstration followed with a protest meeting in the premises of the park on the day the Dudley Senanayake government had Parliament enact regulations for the use of the Tamil language in January 1966. Schaffer gives us a detailed narrative of the historical evolution of the park since its inauguration in 1866. There is a successful attempt to link the park with the evolution of the state. Schaffer writes:

"... in fits and starts, and never completely, the park was transformed from a formal urban garden for the city's elite, to a more romantic green space, and then into a somewhat decaying democratic space with rides and amenities aimed squarely at the urban middle class. How this happened, when and why, traces the history of a city and a country which over the years since the park first opened has seen economic growth, evolving colonial rule, independence and political strife."

The park only served a rich clientele and was meant to be a pleasure ground for the wealthy residents of what were then suburbs of the city of Colombo but are now part and parcel of Colombo - Slave Island, Kolpetty and Maradana. But in the course of time, it had become a vice park and, as was remarked by the then Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa, "the happy hunting ground of all vagrants, petty thieves and other undesirable elements in society."

Schaffer concludes with a significant observation:

"... the park's changes have reflected some of society's own changes, from reaching to urbanisation to carry out the marks of divisive nationalism to exhibiting an imperfect democracy and a frayed welfare state..."

The last sentence in Dr Schaffer's essay contains a telling note of caution:

"As such the future of the park, in its small way, will continue to say something about that state of Sri Lanka's public culture at large." (continued on next page)

CBI Seeks Fresh Probe into Rajiv Assassination

T N Gopalan

There just seems to be no end in sight to the probe into the assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Six years and seven months since he was felled by a human bomb in Sriperumbudur, one year since a special court set up to deal with terrorist offences sentenced all the 26 accused before it to death and six months since the Justice Milap Chand Jain Commission submitted its final report on the "conspiracy behind the assassination" none seems the wiser.

Even if the evidence relating to the actual carrying out of the assassination revealed the hand of a vengeful Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), as to the involvement of others in the conspiracy to the diabolical crime, nothing has been conclusively proved one way or another and many things remain in the realm of conjecture.

It is in such circumstances the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the federal investigating agency of India, has sought permission to re-open the investigations into the as-

(Continued from page 23)

This volume is an important contribution to an understanding of the contemporary Sri Lankan state. The editors need to be congratulated for putting all the various chapters together in book form. Each of the essays and their contributors from Patrick Anderson to Jayadeva Uyangoda belong to a rare band of objective thinkers and researchers who have brought their singularly unprejudiced minds to bear on a highly complex subject. There is a golden thread that runs through this volume that of the disintegrating sovereign state however imperceptible this thread may seem: when one completes reading the essays of high quality and puts down the book, even a reviewer such as myself begins to have a hope that our country still has a future. ●

assassination, saying that it has come upon "fresh material" following the findings of the Jain Commission.

Though as things stood in the first week of February, the judge before whom the petition was filed had returned it twice seeking "more details." The chances are that the clearance would finally come sooner than later. But the question remains - what next?

Why is the CBI eager to re-open the investigations? Why is it finding it difficult to convince the presiding judge of the court set up under the Prevention of Terrorist and Anti-Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) of the legitimacy of its claims?

In January the state government in effect revived the TADA court before which the trial of the 26 accused had taken place, but which had become defunct after the delivery of the judgement. A new judge Vadivel Ratnam was named for the purpose. Navaneedham who had ordered wholesale hanging had been moved out after he delivered the judgement. Evidently the move under the Centre's instructions was aimed at enabling the re-opening of the investigations. For the case could be re-opened and further proceedings conducted only before the court before which the original trial had taken place.

Anyway what exactly is the CBI up to at this stage when the Supreme Court is to deliver its verdict on the petitions challenging the death sentence handed down to the 26 accused in the case charge-sheeted way back in 1992?

Political motives are widely assumed to be behind the move, like embarrassing Chief Minister Karunanidhi by interrogating him, of course only to humour the ever truculent ally of the BJP, Jayalalitha Jayaram. The CBI top-brass could also be pursuing their own agenda in the matter. The present initiative could be a face-saver for the premier investigating

agency if the apex court acquits many of those sentenced to death.

The CBI told the TADA court that following the submission of its report by the Jain commission and the setting up of a Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) by the centre to follow up the commission's recommendations fresh investigations were warranted.

The judge first sought more details like who authorised the CBI to seek permission to re-open the investigations, what was the nature of the fresh evidence it had come upon, etc. He was also upset that a lowly Superintendent of Police of the CBI had come before him with a scrap of paper and wanted him to grant permission to re-open the case. Normally the Public Prosecutor is entrusted with such a job.

A few days later the CBI counsel did present himself before the Judge but did not provide anything more than the directive from the Centre to the MDMA to resume the investigations. He also contended that under Sec.173(8) of the Criminal Procedure Code which was being invoked to re-open the case only a formal consent of the judge was required and that the judge had little discretion in the matter.

Vadivel Rathnam, a rather maverick judge, flew into a rage and retorted that it was inconceivable that when there was a provision to seek permission from a court, the latter should have little to do in the case except sign on dotted lines. "I'm not a government official, mind you," he told the counsel sternly. Left with little option the CBI counsel promised to come before the judge yet again with all necessary details.

The counsel, Jacob Daniel, later told this correspondent, "While I refuse to join issue with the judge, I can only say that we are on a strong wicket. There is nothing in the law that could stand in the way of re-opening a case if the investigating agency so desires. Sec.173(8) of the Cr.P.C. is very clear on the matter. It is only a courtesy on our part to seek the formal consent of the court before which the trial of the original case took place. The supreme court has of course said that it is desirable to seek the consent of the court in such circumstances, but it leaves little room for discretion for the judge."

He also maintained that it was not necessary to produce before the court the "fresh evidence" which the CBI might have come upon and which in turn necessitated a further inquiry. In fact doing so would only alert those whose roles the multi-disciplinary agency (MDMA) would like to investigate. "Well of course we would be willing to produce the case diary before the court at an appropriate time, but not at this stage." He also seemed to feel that even if the judge chose to reject the petition to be put up before him with the details he is calling for, the CBI could go before the Supreme Court and get the ruling overturned.

But then for all the bluster on the re-opening of the investigations, the CBI, still seems to groping in the dark on what it intends to do after getting the clearance.

One after another, the officials this correspondent spoke to conceded, "It is a fact that we don't have an iota of fresh evidence which would make the re-opening sensible. The Jain commission report is such a farrago of nonsense as a leading editor had caustically remarked that it would be thrown out of court straight-away by a second class judicial magistrate. We're citing it to only to bolster our case for re-opening and seem non-partisan. Actually we're only doing the bidding of our political masters, leave it at that..."

They seemed to imply that the Centre wants to keep Jayalalitha in good humour by hauling up the Chief Minister Karunanidhi and also to placate Sonia Gandhi herself, sending her signals that they mean business in the assassination case and would not leave any stone unturned to get at the culprits.

It is becoming crystal clear that the BJP would do anything, just anything, to remain in power. The MDMA saga itself is unedifying. Even in its Action Taken Report (ATR) the Centre sought to surreptitiously include Karunanidhi's name in the list of suspects whereas the Jain Commission says in its final report that his interrogation would have been relevant in many circumstances.

Only when Murasoli Maran protested vigorously, the Centre agreed that the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's name figures in the chapter Stand of the SIT on theories beyond the LTTE and made the necessary correction.

Still Karunanidhi along with Subramaniam Swamy and Chandraswamy figure in the list of those to be interrogated as per the ATR and the prospect should seem quite exciting for Jayalalitha. She could exploit to the hilt Jain's observations in the Interim Report wherein he had made scathing comments against Karunanidhi in the context of the alleged encouragement given by him to the LTTE during his reign in 1989-91.

But then the political factors apart, it is further said, that the CBI could be playing its own game, apprehending as it does that the Supreme Court could acquit some or most of those sentenced to death. It is in fact poin-

ted out that at one stage the three-member bench presiding over the hearing of the petitions challenging the sentence observed in the open court, "it seems to be a case of judicial massacre."

The CBI legal team in fact concede at the very least the sentence would be commuted in quite a few cases. The CBI top-brass appear to apprehend getting eggs on their faces and hence as a face-saver they are expediting the reinvestigation - so that they can still say, "the case is not yet over..." And so Rajiv's ghost is destined to haunt the Indian polity for some more time to come.

Sethu Samudram: Of Monkeys and Squirrels

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

Sethu means a feat of the bridge. And it is also the land's end, as discovered by Lord Rama in his journey to Lanka. Crossing the marshlands, he arrives at the coast, only to find the Ocean King ignoring him for a few days. The poet Kamban, whose homeland lies somewhere along Rama's journey in south-eastern Tamil Nadu, depicts Rama's fury which brings out the Ocean King from the depths. The king agrees to the Sethu to be built. And after Rama prays to Siva at Rameswaram, the Vanara Sena gets into action, and lo, the bridge is completed. It was a marvellous feat, led by the Vanara architect Neelan. Everyone including a little squirrel has a role in it. And the lord praises the squirrel, showering his affection on it.

The modern Sethu Samudram project is history's fight against geography, politics and ecology. Planned way back in the mid-19th century by the British, it is yet to see the light of the day. The new "bridge" planned by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime is not going to link land-masses as in the Ramayana epic, but join two sea-fronts, the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Bay. India's defence minister George Fernandes, who led a successful campaign in the early nineties to lay a rail line along India's western

coast, called Konkan Railway between Mumbai and Mangalore, announced, in January last, that a new Rs 735 crore project would be implemented in four years' time. The project will cut the Rameswaram island into two at a point close to the Kodhandaramar temple near what remains of the town Dhanushkodi which had been swallowed by the sea on a fateful stormy night in 1964. At this spot, a deep gorge will be dug and a 31-foot-deep canal made out of it to enable even big ships pass through.

The reason trotted out by various Tamil Nadu politicians for the failure of the project to take off all these years is the sustained obstacles put forth by successive Sri Lankan governments. Sure, once the project gets over, Indian cargo and military ships need no longer sail around the Sri Lankan island as they are doing now; also, the bridge can take the international maritime traffic, slowly eliminating the prime position enjoyed by the Colombo port. India has two all-weather ports at Tuticorin and Cochin where large ships can berth. And hence, according to this viewpoint, Colombo will lose its sheen to these two ports. This is why the Colombo governments have been protesting against the project, they say.

Those familiar with south Indian

geography know that the Adam's Bridge, which spans the sea between Rameswaram and Talaimannar, is made up of sand bars (called as theedais by Lankan Tamils and Tamil Nadu fishermen).

These bars ensure that the sea is only 11 feet deep at some places, canceling the possibility of ships going through and allowing only boats of militant groups and refugees to pass through. In fact, the British, under whose colonial rule India and Lanka were together, had periodically worked out various schemes. In all, nine schemes were prepared for the Sethu Samudram project, of which the one prepared by Dr Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar in 1922 assumed significance. Dr Mudaliar had disagreed with the earlier schemes which had wanted the canal to be dug along the Adam's Bridge itself. He also ruled out the project being built east of the famous Pamban bridge as suggested in earlier schemes.

Ultimately, he decided that the canal should be dug in the Indian mainland itself. The same idea had been mooted by the author of the first

project way back in 1860. However, all this and the reports of several commissions and Tamil Nadu assembly decisions failed to evoke any response from the Indian government which decided to scrap the schemes in 1989, saying that it was not economically viable.

Tamil Nadu politicians once again saw red in this move. It was obvious that the then prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, was getting desperate to mollify Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa after the latter demanded the withdrawal of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) from Lanka.

Was not the Kachativu handed over on a platter to the then Lankan prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranayake, they asked.

That the defence minister is involved in the current project speaks a lot over India's security concerns in the region. The Indian government wants to put its stamp of authority over a region which had hitherto remained under the control of armed Lankan militant groups, smugglers dealing in petroleum products and assorted anti-social elements. Also,

the majority of Indian coal-laden ships take this route, from Eastern India's coalfields to the southern states.

The location of the 31-foot canal well inside the Indian landmass indicates that India does not want to take the risk of digging the canal along the Adam's bridge. This implies that India does not envisage the ethnical conflict in Lanka to peter out in the next three-four years. Also, fishermen from Ramanathapuram district can go south without taking the risk of getting shot at by Sri Lankan naval personnel.

The decision to launch the Sethu Samudram project has been welcomed by all political parties in Tamil Nadu. However, the parties are unaware of the fact that frequent shipping could cause enormous damage to the environment, especially at the Gulf of Mannar which has been declared as a National Biosphere Reserve. In any case, it will be clear from the next few months as to what extent this project would be implemented in right earnest, like the way the monkeys and the squirrel did in yet another yuga. ●

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Karunanidhi - The Reluctant Dravidian Crusader

T N Gopalan

The septuagenarian DMK chief Karunanidhi would like to somehow believe that he has not lost his Dravidian moorings in the course of his pursuit of power. Every once in a while he makes some noise or other on the Dravidian principles, raising hackles among the predominantly Brahmin media.

The unwary, naive or helpless Tamil nationalist sections get excited of course over the renewed war cry and start praising him. But before you say Tamil, the controversy dies down, for a busy Chief Minister has moved on to other "pressing" issues of the day and the votaries of the Tamil Tigers are left twiddling their thumbs.

In the last couple of months, at least on three different occasions the Dravidian ideology came to the fore only to be shoved on to the backburner for the nth time.

Tamil as medium of instruction in the primary schools, Tamil archanas in temples and finally the "kunkumam" controversy hogged the headlines briefly in the local Press before being forgotten altogether in a matter of weeks if not days. An examination of the issues involved and the way Karunanidhi handled it all would give some insight into the way the Dravidian movement has been evolving in the state.

First on having Tamil as the medium of instruction in primary schools.

Nothing could be more disgraceful to a movement founded avowedly to promote the interests of the Tamil society, read the non-Brahmin castes, than to have to hum and haw for over three decades - the time the Dravidian parties have been in power - to take a tentative step forward in making Tamil a medium of instruction in primary schools, that is those with classes up to the fifth.

But there were roars of approval when the Government issued a directive to the effect that nursery schools must compulsorily teach at least three subjects like the Social Studies and the Mathematics in Tamil, otherwise they would be de-recognised.

(Most of the primary schools do not anyway receive any governmental grants and so de-recognition would not amount to much for them. That still the nursery schools' associations strongly protested the "authoritarian" measure is a different story.) The order also said that in schools run by the linguistic minorities (like those whose mother-tongue is Telugu) should teach Tamil as a third language upto the Eighth Standard. Some news agencies misinterpreted the order to mean that Tamil was being made compulsory right upto eighth standard in all schools which would then mean students who opt for a language other than Tamil as the second language, like Hindi or French, would be affected.

The upper class wards belong to the latter category, and so there was a furore.

And even the foreign media, especially the BBC, got excited apparently because they were under the impression that the Christian schools would be affected.

As usual some uninformed Tamil crusaders started lauding Karunanidhi for his commitment, "This is an assertion of our cultural identity, better late than never," and so on.

The truth was out in a day. The elite would not be touched. Only three subjects in classes up to fifth in Tamil and nothing more, though some sops to such schools which teach all subjects through the Tamil medium.

When this correspondent talked to a top Government official, he conceded that even making Tamil compulsory upto the eighth standard in schools run by the linguistic minorities was a project not completely thought out. Doing so would mean the students of those schools would be learning three languages, that flies in the face of the cherished two-language policy of the Dravidian parties, Tamil and English.

"We are wondering whether we could suggest teaching Tamil after class hours and we can appoint Tamil teachers for the purpose," he said. Such is the commitment of the DMK

government. The matter is rarely discussed in public fora these days.

No DMK or AIADMK government ever took any effort to popularise Tamil medium courses, rather they did not care to ensure that those who graduate out of such courses faced no difficulty in getting jobs.

"If only some way had been found to ensure that the Tamil medium graduates were properly equipped and also that they got some preference in the job market, Tamil medium would not have been at a discount as it is now," it has been pointed out.

There was a tentative effort by the DMK regime as soon as it came to power in 1967 to introduce Tamil as compulsory medium of instruction in certain courses in the colleges, but that only sparked off furious student protests - inevitable in the absence of job guarantees - and the government backed down. After that no one heard of that ever again.

When the sons and daughters of all the DMK and AIADMK VIPs make it to English medium schools, some of them even studying Hindi, what kind of credibility they would have among the people at large?

The much-vaunted two-language formula giving, as it does, the pride of place to English, has itself enormously damaged the prospects of Tamil's emergence as the pre-eminent language of the state. But no introspection has been done on this score thus far.

And then the Archanas. The self-proclaimed Tamil enthusiast and Minister for Tamil development, appropriately named Thamizhkudimagan, one day announced that provision would be made for performing archanas in Tamil in temples for those who desire to do so.

Ha, how dare you. This is the thin end of the wedge. How could you interfere with the cherished customs and traditions of Hinduism, why should the Government poke its nose into religious affairs, would it try and tell the Muslims to conduct prayers in Tamil, screamed the conservative sections, the maverick Cho Ramasamy leading the charge.

The other side rallied behind the government. Pazha Nedumaran, the anointed champion of the Tiger cause, conducted an opinion poll among those turning up at the Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple and de-

clared that an overwhelming majority of the worshippers preferred Tamil archanas and not the Sanskrit ones. Again the issue was hotly debated for a few days and some harsh words were exchanged.

But no one would take note of the fact that hardly a few of the devotees ever demanded Tamil archanas. Why should they care anyway? For those seeking solace from religion what matters is that God should be coaxed into granting the boons they are looking for and not the language in which the prayers are offered.

And such has been the impact of the Dravidian movement on the vast non-Brahmin masses that they still hold Sanskrit in some awe, as some divine language. Even the Brahmin-priest-free-self-respect marriages are few and far between.

And pray when did the Dravidian movement undertake any systematic campaign to motivate the believers to ask for Tamil archanas apart from their platform rhetoric and Brahmin-bashing? No surprise then this controversy too petered out quickly.

The last one was the kunkumam controversy. While presiding over

the marriage of a brother of one of his cabinet ministers, K. Ponnudi who is also a close associate of his son Stalin, the Chief Minister made some scathing comments on the practice of sporting kunkumam on one's forehead and exhorted his cadres to hark back to the cherished rationalist principles of the Dravidian movement.

While predictably the BJP took a strong exception to his comments and termed them anti-Hindu, one of his erstwhile proteges, MDMK leader Vai.Ko, accused him of doublestandards and hypocrisy on the matter and a section of the Tamil press lampooned him for his inconsistencies.

In fact Dinamani, a Tamil newspaper, generally sympathetic to him, splashed a large photograph wherein his wife Dayalu Ammal, herself wearing kunkumam, is seen putting on a tilak on the forehead of the bridegroom, while standing by the side of her rationalist husband - that scene straight from the very marriage wherein Karunanidhi had made his clarion call.

He later wondered what the fuss was all about. All that he had done was to draw the attention of his youth

wing to the rationalist principles.

"I am not legislating against the practice. I'm only calling upon my followers to shed irrational habits. What's wrong with that, why should anyone get worked up about it?" he wanted to know.

When asked about his own wife's sporting a large red dot on her forehead, he went on the backfoot and said, "Let the womenfolk persist with whatever they are doing. It's difficult to see why the men also should seek to emulate them on that score. I've always felt saddened that the Dravidian ideology is becoming progressively diluted and hence I expressed my concern there," he said.

When it was pointed out to him that one of the senior party leaders, the Speaker of the state Assembly himself, P.T.R. Palanivel Rajan, was always seen with sacred ash and kunkumam on his forehead, he could only say weakly, "Well many who believe in god are in our party, I can't deny. Rajan is one of them, I can't say anything more on that." The Speaker is a deeply religious man and he makes no bones about it. He dares even call on the Kanchi Kamakoti Shankar-

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acharya in public. His father P.T.Rajan, a veteran leader of the Justice Party during the colonial days and a leading of the light of the anti-Brahmin movement, was a trustee of the Madurai Meenakshi temple, and the Speaker still basks in the shine of that reflected glory -- none in the DMK, not even Karunanidhi, cares to tread on his toes on the issue of his religious beliefs.

Palanivel Rajan was rewarded with the Speakership because he stood by Karunanidhi when another senior leader from Madurai threw his weight behind Vai Ko when he revolted against the increasing prominence given to Karunanidhi's son Stalin. These days the leadership indeed finds it difficult to reconcile itself to his ways, though it would not go public on the matter.

Ironically the Chief Minister chose to keep quiet on the dig taken by Vai.ko over his yellow shawl. "If you're really against any kind of superstitious practice, how is that you don't say anything when your own family members take to religion and frequent temples and you yourselves would not shed your yellow shawl?" he wanted to know.

There is indeed some mystery about the yellow shawl found constantly around his neck. Though the Dravidian leaders do sport some shawl or other, earlier Karunanidhi used to wear shawls of different colours, but inexplicably he has been sticking to yellow for sometime now. Some have even claimed that the yellow shawl was gifted by a dubious godman called Kalki - yellow is the favourite colour of his cult. Since he stormed back to power in 1996 and he was also apparently cured of some neck-ailment after he started wearing the yellow shawl, Karunanidhi would not give it a go-by, it has been speculated. To this day he has not satisfactorily explained why he is sticking to yellow.

As it happens he turned the spotlight on the rationalist issue at a time when a

section of the press went to town on the ostentation attending on the minister's brother's marriage.

"We have always been very simple folk. The enthusiasm of the cadres who take the marriage as their family function should not be misconstrued to mean ostentation; we don't spend crores of rupees on marria-ges..." he said in a dig at Jayalalitha and then went on to dwell on the kunkumam issue. Perhaps it was a calculated diversionary tactic. He regretted he had spotted someone of his workers wearing kunkumam. "When I sent word through one of us asking him why he was bleeding, the man wiped it away, but then the DMKmen should not do something only to please me They should deeply school themselves in the founding principles of the Dravidian movement," he had exhorted.

It may be recalled here that way back in 1990 too when he was the Chief Minister he called upon his followers to get back to the roots while addressing a DMK state convention. But subsequently the Dravidar Kazhagam, the mother of all Dravidian parties, went berserk, assaulting Brhamins in some areas in Thanjavur district, cutting their sacred threads, hacking at their tufts and so on. There was a furore and Jayalalitha then riding on the crest of her popularity strongly criticised him. An embarrassed Karunanidhi cried halt to the campaign post-haste.

He could be genuinely committed to rationalist principles barring the mysterious yellow shawl business, certainly much more so than Jayalalitha who nonchalantly flaunts her beliefs, but he has been very inconsistent in championing them, taking them up when it suits him and conveniently forgetting them when it does not.

The apologists always bemoan that Karunanidhi should be daunted at the slightest sign of protest from scheming Brahmins, scared as he is of their media clout. And there are those who contend it

was the orthodoxy combined with the powers at the national level, still in the hands of the upper castes, which had browbeaten a genuine movement of the people like the Dravidian into submission.

What kind he or she is who retreats with alacrity whenever confronted by opposition, they would not explain. And what kind of a movement could give birth to an outfit like the AIADMK or a leader like Jayalalitha who is a standing rebuke to every canon of the Dravidian principles, but who had the audacity to call herself the latest stage in the evolution of the Dravidian movement?

What happens to the movement when the General Secretary of the very party founded by Periyar turns into a courtier in Jaya's durbar?

But then the larger issue is what indeed Periyar EVR himself, the holy cow for the Dravidian ideologues, was doing when he saw right before his eyes his own cadres turning their back on the rationalist principles. He had seen Karunanidhi's deprecations in his first stint, still he would not utter a word over the way his protegee was feathering his own nest.

At one level those who remained with the DK started wavering on the rationalist principles - as some used to jibe that roadside Ganesh temples started mushrooming after he started breaking Ganesh idols. At another the intermediate castes which rose to power thought nothing of trampling upon the Dalits.

During all that time, all that Periyar would do was rave and rant and not take up any campaign either to cleanse his own organisation or crusade for integrity in public life. Apparently for him the end of the Brahmin hegemony was the consummation devoutly wished and nothing much remained after the consummation. No wonder the Tamil society presumably led by the Dravidian parties continues to flounder with no light at the end of the tunnel.

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MATRIMONIAL

Sri Lankan parents established in UK seek professional partner for their UK qualified graduate daughter, British citizen, employed, 35, religion no bar, confidentiality assured. Please write with details. M 1079 c/o Tamil Times.

Tamil Hindu Aunty in UK seeks educated bride for caring responsible nephew, 31, 5'2", British citizen, accountant (ACCA) in permanent employment, Mars seventh house. Reply with horoscope and details. M 1080 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Catholic parents with good family background seek groom for daughter, 34, accountant, British citizen. Please send details. M 1081 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Catholic parents seek partner with good family background for daughter, 27, CIMA finalist. Send details. M 1082 c/o Tamil Times.

Friend seeks groom for attractive, Catholic administrative officer in London, 39. Send details. M 1083 c/o Tamil Times.

Sister seeks professional bride for handsome, Ph.D., engineer, 33, 5'11", non-smoker in excellent employment in London. Please send details. M 1084 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Tamil brother in UK seeks partner for sister, 24, working in bank in Sri Lanka, Mars seventh house. Send horoscope, details. M 1085 c/o Tamil Times.

Uncle (London) seeks professional Christian groom for niece, 29, father Colombo doctor. M 1086 c/o Tamil Times.

Sri Lankan Christian Tamil parents seek groom for youngest daughter, 27, GCE (A Level), working in Emirates Airline office, UAE. Send details. M 1087, c/o Tamil

Times.

Sri Lankan Tamil parents seek bride for son, 29, 5'9" pharmaceutical executive working in Canada. Send details, horoscope. M 1088 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents in UK seek professionally qualified bride below 25 for son, 28, Ph.D., (Chemistry) in employment. Send horoscope, details. M 1089 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek partner for son, 39, educated and settled in US, MBA, CPA, in excellent employment. Send details. M 1090 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Dr. Partheepan son of Mr. & Mrs. Narendran of 110 Deans Lane, Edgware, Middx., HA8 9NR and Dr. Nirodhini daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Muruganathan of Moorlands, North Drive, Sandfield Park, Liverpool L12 1LD on 31st January 1999 at Brent Town Hall, Wembley, Middx.

Kiritharakopalan son of Mr. & Mrs. Periyathamby of 1 Jefferson, 83/85 Sudbury Avenue, Wembley, Middx., HA0 3AW and Subathira daughter of the late Mr. S.D. Balarajah and Mrs. P. Balarajah of 21 Haydon Park Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8JQ on 7th February 1999 at South Borough School Hall, Surbiton, Surrey.

Vasanthan son of Mr. & Mrs. Mahesavelu of 17 Fredrica Road, Colombo 6 and Pathma daughter of Mr. E. Thillainayagam and the late Mrs. Thillainayagam of 16 3/9 Amarasekera Mawatha, Colombo 5 on 12th February 1999 at Hotel Sapphire, Colombo 6.

OBITUARIES



Mrs Kamalamalar Ariyaratnam, retired teacher, Jaffna Central College; beloved wife of Mr. J.S. Ariyaratnam, retired teacher, Jaffna Central College and later Principal, Kanagaratnam MMV, Jaffna; loving mother of Dr. Jeyakumar Ariyaratnam (Canterbury), Dr. Rajkumar Ariyaratnam (Bolton) and Mr. Shanthikumar Ariyaratnam (Hong Kong); beloved sister of late Dr. Arulrajah Arulampalam (Cannock), Mrs. Rasamalar Vivekananthan (Italy), Dr. Thangarajah Arulampalam (Mansfield) and Mrs. Thirumalar Selvasingham (Malaysia) passed away on 19th December 1998 in Canterbury, Kent. Funeral service took place on Thursday, 24th December at St. George's Baptist Church, Canterbury followed by burial at Canterbury cemetery. - Contact Address: Dr. J. Ariyaratnam, 9 Ealham Close, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7BW. Tel: 01227 454206.



Justice Satchi Ponnambalam, Retired Judge of the Supreme Court of Belize, beloved husband of Vasanthi;

father of Sumathi, Jamuna and Menaka; father-in-law of David Courtney and Jules Vasquez; loving grand father of Patrick, Alexander, Priya and Sahar; brother of the late P. Anandakumar and Mrs. S. Sivasubramaniam of Chundikuli; brother-in-law of late Nirmala, Leela, S. Balaratnam, Colombo and Dan Muthuveloe UK; son-in-law of the late Gemma Sittampalam passed away peacefully following a prolonged illness on 31st January 1999. Funeral took place according to Hindu rites in Belize. - 24 New Town Barracks, Belize City, Belize, Central America.



Mrs. Regina Rajanayagam, beloved wife of P. Rajanayagam (Senior Solicitor of Bexley Council and Editor, Tamil Times), daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Savari (Mannar); sister of Cecilia Lawrence (Mannar), Rathnam (Tamilnadu), Jesuthasan (Sri Lanka), Anton James (Paris) and Prince (Tamilnadu); sister-in-law of Dr. Arasaratnam (Hemel Hempstead), Mrs. Parames Selvaratnam, Nadarajah (both of Colombo), the late Shanmuganathan and Mrs. Mahes Sivayoganathan (Colombo) and aunty of Sharmini and Anthony (London) passed away peacefully after a brief illness. Regina was laid to rest on 18.2.99 at Hither Green Cemetery, London SE6 after a Requiem Mass at St. John Fisher Church, Bexley, Kent.

Mr. Rajanayagam and members of his family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes, made donations

Continued on page 31

15 FEBRUARY 1999

Continued from page 30

to the Haematology Research Fund of the Queen Mary's Hospital Trust and assisted them in various ways during the period of great sorrow. - 13 Arbuthnot Lane, Bexley, Kent DA5 1EH. Tel: 01322 550191.



Mrs. Panumathy Nallainathan, beloved wife of the late Supiramaniam Nallainathan, retired Udayar of Urumpirai, Jaffna; beloved mother of Kumareswary, Chandradevi, late Mallihadevi, late Sathyamoorthy, Vallinayagi, Meenambigai (all of Sri Lanka), Kurumoorthy, Sothymathy, Sarveswaramoorthy (all of UK), Kumarachandran, Sakunthaladevi (both of Canada) and Kanagambigai (Australia); mother-in-law of Vaithialingam, Rajadurai, Pandithavarathan, Sivasithamparam, Somanathan (all of Sri Lanka), Susila, Ruban, Ambiga (all of UK), Ariaratnam, Parankirinathan (both of Canada) passed away peacefully and was cremated at Kanatte on 30.01.99 from 18/1 Edmon-ton Road, Colombo 6. She also leaves behind 30 grand children and 25 great-grand children.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and assisted in various ways during the period of bereavement. - 96 Inglehurst Gardens, Red-bridge, Ilford, Essex. Tel: 0181 551 2620.

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Tel: 0181 578 6201 in Greenford.



Mr. Chelliah Nadarajah (Broker), formerly of 42nd Lane, Colombo 6, beloved husband of Pathmavathy; loving father of Malathi (Madras), Sivakumar and Vasuki (both of UK); grandfather of Dharani & Gopikrishna (Madras); Thanusha, Nimalan & Renuka; Saravana & Krishna (all of UK); great grandfather of Shurthi (Madras); father-in-law of late Yogarajah, Rajeswari and Dr. Rajan Namasivayam; brother of the late Saraswathy, Thilakawathy, Ariyaratnam, Manonmani, Thiyagarajah, Kanagaratnam, Sabaratnam, Pathmanathan, Kumara-singam, Paramanathan and Vadivambikai (UK) passed away peacefully on 18th February 1999 on his 91st birthday and was cremated on 20th February.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of bereavement. - 104A Carshalton Park Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey SM5 3SG.



Mr. C. Vinayagamoorthy, Retired Senior Civil Engineer, Ealing Council; Chairman, Sri Rajarajeswari Amman Temple Trust; Permanent Trustee, Britannia Hindu (Siva) Temple Trust; beloved husband of

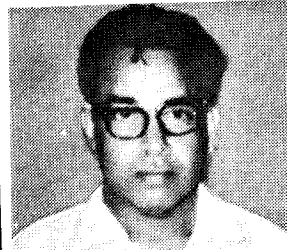
Sugunawathy; loving father of Iynkaran, Dental Surgeon Birmingham; Dr. Vidya, Newham Hospital, London E6 and Dr. Myuran, Mayday Hos-pital, Croydon; son of the late Candiah and late Nallapillai of Earlalai South; son-in-law of the late Ponniah and Rasamma of Alaveddy; brother of Sivasothy, late Siva-pathasundaram, Shanmu-ganathan (all of UK), Balasub-ramaniam, Vairavanathan, Sockalingam, Thirunavukkara-su (all of Canada), Sivananda-sothy, Sivananthan, Gnana-sothy and Gnaneswaran (all of UK); brother-in-law of Chinni-hah (UK), Kamalambikai (Sri

Lanka), late Navamany, Pakia-sothy, Soundararani, Sridevi, Kaladevi (all of Canada), Ragunathan, Swarna, Chandrapala, Malini (all of UK), Sar-avanapavan, Punithawathy (both of Sri Lanka) and Thila-gawathy (South Africa) passed away peacefully on 11th Feb-ruary 1999 and was cremated on 18th February.

The members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow. - 65 Revell Road, Kingston, Surrey KT1 3SL. Tel: 0181 942 2013.

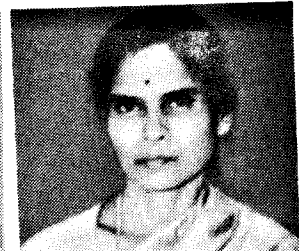
OBITUARY cum IN MEMORIAM

**Our Aiyah
Mr. K.P. Thambusamy
Born: 26.01.1915**



Rest: 18.11.1998

**Our Amma
Mrs. Sellamah Thambusamy
Born: 19.09.1917**



Rest: 24.05.1996

Kathirasar Ponniah Thambusamy (K.P.T.), Proprietor, The Cheapside - Jaffna, Point Pedro, Kilinochchi, and Colombo of 'Sel-lagri', 105 Manipay Road, Vannarponnai, Jaffna; beloved husband of late Sellamah; loving father of Balasubramaniam (Madras), Siva-subramaniam, Sivanathan, Ganeshalingam, Ravintharan (all of Colombo), Sarojinidevi (Doha), Kamaladevi (Canada), Vimaladevi and Sakunthaladevi (both of UK); father-in-law of Vamadevan (Engineer, Doha), Kathirkamathamby (Engineer, Canada), Dr. Sritharan (Maidstone Hospital, UK), Dr. Mahesan (UK), Gowri (Madras), Pathmini, Rohini, Ranees and Nalayini (all of Colombo); loving grandfather of Thayabaran (Accountant, UK), Vithyabaran (Engineer, Sri Lanka), Sarveswaran (Madras), Srikumar (Colombo University), Balambikai (Madras), Prabakaran (South Bank Univer-sity UK), Siva Periya, Siva Ramya, Mayuran (all of Colombo), Dr. Inthumathy Surendran (USA), Krishnakumar (Computer Analyst, USA), Jeyatharshan, Arulrajah, Kartheepan, Janaky (all of Colom-bo), Krishanthi (Medical College, Canada), Senthuran (Canada), Logi (Kingston University, UK), Kaji (St. Marys Medical College, London), Ganai (Eton College, UK), Jenarathanan (Colombo) and Sangeethan (UK) passed away peacefully on 28.11.98 and the funeral took place from his daughter's residence 14 Castle Lane, Colombo 4, Sri Lanka on 29th November.

We thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and supported us during the period of great sorrow.

In loving memory of **Mrs. Sellamah Thambusamy** on the Third Anniversary of her passing away on 24th May 1996.

**Love and Remembrance
Last for ever**

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by all.

- Dr. Sritharan and Mrs. Vimala Sritharan (daughter), 'Shree Rangam', 203 Willington Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8EE.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mr. Chelliah Sivasampu** on the seventh anniversary of his passing away on 9th March 1992.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his two sons.

Sixth Death Anniversary



In loving memory of **Mr. S. Sithamparappillai (Ponniath Master)** of Alaveddy, Sri Lanka, retired Principal, Arunodhaya College on the sixth anniversary of his passing away on 5th February 1993.

Aiyah.

We thank the almighty for you, whose love, devotion and sacrifice were endless, unselfish and enduring. Unseen, unheard but always remembered by your children Thilakavathy, Mangayathkarasy, Mangaleswary, Selvaranee and Umaphathysivarn; sons-in-law Kandiah and Sabaratnam, daughter-in-law Suchitra; grand children Usha, Varathan, Nalini, Nanthini, Seyone, Kugan, Umaipalan, Uma, Kalaimagal, Thirumagal, Mythily, Tharan, Mohan, Yohan, Poorany, Ragulan Ponnaiah; great grand children Bhairavi, Rudran, Abhirami, Luxmmi Sellam, Ahimsa, Sebastien and Cynthuja.

Appreciation on page 33.



In loving memory of **Mr. Chittampalam Subramaniam (Orator)** on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 18th February 1994.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his wife, children, son-in-law, daughters-in-law, sister, nephews and grand children.



Vallipuram Sellathamby (Attorney-at-Law, J.P., U.M., Point Pedro)

Years may pass but your memory shall remain fresh in our hearts.

Remembered with love and affection on the third anniversary of your passing away on 21st February 1996, by your wife, children, son-in-law, daughter-in-law and grand children. - 50 Wiltshire Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 7QN.



In loving memory of **Thayapary Rasaendiran** on

Second Death Anniversary



18.1.35 - 4.2.97

In Remembrance of **Mohandas Kanthyah Samuel** We are thankful for the happiness you brought To our lives and miss you very much.

You will always have a place in our hearts With much love from us all.

Utaiwan, Monti, Manee, **Mike** and **Allan**. Mother **Rasamanie**, Brothers **Indran** and **Peter**, Sister **Chandra** and their Families.

the first anniversary of her passing away on 3rd February 1998.

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her husband **Rasaendiran** and daughter **Rajini**. - 34 Grangeway Gardens, Redbridge, Ilford, Essex IG4 5HN.



Mrs Sivagamasoundaram

First Death Anniversary

In loving memory of **Mrs. Sivagamasoundaram Pararajasingham** who passed away on 5th February 1998.

A devoted wife and a dearest mother.

Deeply missed and affectionately remembered by your ever loving husband, children and families, nephews and nieces. - 27 Mayford, Howard Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8SB.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

March 1 to 14 London's Leading Restaurant **Red Fort** at 77 Dean Street, London W1V 5HA presents Coastal Cuisine along with a Cultural Festival of Mohiniattam by **Radhr Marar**, Vocal & Veena Music by **G. Elangovan** and Mridangam by **Chanda Shekar**. Tel: 071 437 2115.

Mar. 1 Full Moon; Masi Maham.

Mar. 4 Festival of St. Casimir.

Mar. 6 South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Mar. 8 Feast of St. John of God.

Mar. 9 Feast of St. Francis.

Mar. 13 Eekathasi; SLTWG Women's Group meet. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Mar. 17 Amavasai; Feast of St. Patrick.

Mar. 18 Feast of St. Cyril.

Mar. 19 Feast of St. Joseph.

Mar. 20 Sathurthi; SLTWG Drop In. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Mar. 21 Karthigai.

Mar. 22 Shashti.

Mar. 23 Feast of St. Turibus.

Mar. 25 Sri Rama Navami; Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mar. 27 Eekathasi; 11am Colombuthurai Sri Yoga Swamigal Abhishekam & Guru Poojah at Shree Ganapathy Temple, 123 Effra Road,

Continued on page 33

Continued from page 32

London SW19. All welcome.

Mar. 28 4.30pm Kokuvil Hindu College O.S.A. (UK) presents Variety Entertainment of Vocal Music, Dance & Light Music in support of Handy Perinbanayagam Memorial Fund at Acton Town Hall, Main Street, Acton, London W3. Tel: 0181 680 8578/204 2567/01293 881181.

Mar. 29 Pirathosam.

Mar. 30 Pankuni Uththiram.

Mar. 31 Full Moon.

At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HG. Tel: 0181 381 3086/4068.

Mar. 13 7.00pm Shankara Asian Arts presents Bharatanatyam by Dr. Srinidhi Chidambaram. Tel: 0171 610 1575/402 2033.

Mar. 21 2.00pm Talk by Prof. B.M. Hedge. All welcome.

Mar. 27 6.30pm Bhavan's Benefit Performance. Kathak by Gauri Tripathi.

Mar. 28 6.00pm Bhavan's Benefit Performance. Bharatanatyam by Sangeeta Banerjee.

AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

The Tamil Senior Citizens Association of Sydney won an award for good practice among Senior Citizens' Clubs and Centres, for forming community networks, establishing a diverse programme of activities and providing a supportive welfare role for the wider Tamil community. The award was presented at an Awards Ceremony at the Sydney Town Hall by the Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities Council and was accepted by Col Ramanathan, President of the Senior Citizens' Association.

The association celebrated the Thai Pongal festival on January 16th at Homebush Primary School Hall. The programme included Bharatha Natyam dances by students of Mrs. Karthiga Ganeshan, a veena recital by Mrs. Varalakshmy Sritharan, a percussion recital by students of Mr. Lagudas, a vocal recital by Mrs. Chandrakala Ilango and the singing of old favourite songs by the P.A. Jegendran Group. The evening ended with the serving of refreshments.

Australia Day, the national day of Australia is celebrated every year on January 26th. There were grand celebrations in Sydney, with open air concerts in the city and glorious fireworks that lit up the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House.

Many Sri Lankan Tamils participated in the Australia Day celebrations, organised by the Strathfield Rotary Club, at the Strathfield Park, where Mr. Laurel O'Toole, the Mayor of Strathfield, welcomed the large crowd. Proceedings began with the singing of the National Anthem - Advance Australia Fair, followed by community singing and the Australia Day Address by Mrs. Margaret Whitlam, wife of the former Prime Minister. Her address was followed

by the presentation of Australia Day Awards and the Citizenship Ceremony for many migrants who had become citizens of Australia. The formal proceedings ended with a prayer for the nation.

Mr. S. Sithamparapillai - Indelible Footprints of a Great Teacher

Alaveddy Mixed English School from humble beginnings gradually gathered momentum and during subsequent years manifested itself as 'Arunodhaya College'. The speedy and spectacular development of an ordinary school to a full fledged college was entirely due to the untiring efforts and dedicated service of Mr. Sithamparapillai, more dearly called 'Ponniah Master', who was a teacher for several years and later crowned his career as the Principal. One can never dare to think of Arunodhaya College without him. He was the architect of this institution and all name and fame and the reputation that Arunodhaya College enjoys have to be attributed to Ponniah Master's endeavour. Those who have had the privilege of being his students, will definitely feel the impact of his influence on their lives.

He was a strict disciplinarian and a stern task master. There is no area of knowledge that his intellect could not penetrate. Be it Chemistry, Physics, Algebra, Geometry, Geography, History, Tamil, English, Christianity or Hinduism, whatever the subject, he was knowledgeable. Unlike the present unenviable state of relationship between teacher and student, in his case it was one of reverence and respect, discipline and dedication. It was our prayer that our teacher bade us to carry out an errand, however trifling, like going to the post office to buy stamps or wheeling his bicycle up to the entrance. These accomplished, it was a dream come true.

He was hard and harsh on us, very reserved and showed no smiles but stern frown - only in the class room - but interwoven was an intangible and invisible thread of love and affection, an altruistic dedication towards the development and well-being of his students - only visible to those who could discern them.

'English Literature' a subject unheard of in Sri Lanka at present was one in which Ponniah Master derived most delight. Beau Geste, Oliver Twist, A Tale of Two Cities, Thirty Nine Steps, Daffodils, The Deserted Village, Morte D'Arthur and many more were the literary waters in which Ponniah Master immersed us - with our willing consent. The very atmosphere of the story or the poem was evident in the classroom. We were left spell-bound. It was an exhilarating experience. Such was his method of teaching.

'He was a veteran and a victor in life's race. He has left behind indelible footprints on the sands of time.'

K. Selvadurai,
A. Sandrasegaram.

Miss Daisy Salvaranee Rasiah - A Tribute

Miss Rasiah as I have respectfully addressed her, was one of my beloved teachers in my teens. She endeared herself at Vembadi by her simplicity and her very quiet but pleasant ways - an almost permanent impish smile on her face is what I recall! She achieved her goals very effectively by a purposeful sincerity that was very forceful. The work done - never raised her voice or chided the students.

Her response to our erring ways was just a correction, often with a customary smile. The most, the worst of us could elicit from her by our teenage mischief was a struggle within to control herself. What frustration she had to bear, we were too immature to realise then. Anything amused her as much and she would burst out with uncontrollable laughter and then struggle to collect herself. To us, she was guiltless and loveable and we revered her, our mathematics teacher.

As a friend she was genuine and caring. Her friendship was understanding and without censure. She cared for people as people. It was not in her nature to judge anyone. Even though she was rather limited in moving around, more towards the end, one was amazed at the amount of data she possessed about each and everyone who was within her circle of friends. This probably was also her way of gathering experience of life and Miss Rasiah interestingly enough was often able to give out solid advice, that too in her usual unassuming quiet way. One could easily sense that she belonged to a very close knit family and a remarkable atmosphere at that to have been nurtured in to have resulted in such a nature in her.

Ill health, misfortune were all taken in her stride and tackled calmly with composure as far as I could see - an example to the younger generation of her family who have been close to her all their life. Even the situation in our country was only something she was interested in, for analysis and action in a responsible way, when action was called for. Gratitude, for what God had allowed for her, was her response to the whole situation. She felt strongly for people who had less, and she did whatever was in her power to do, to help or assist where possible.

She loved her family very much. She was interested in the welfare of each niece and nephew much so that listening to her, one felt close to them oneself even though one has not met them. She was very proud of them all. Great will be their loss now at this earthly parting. But her memory and what she was in life will surely be a continuous source of inspiration to them and all her friends too.

Therefore it is only right and our bounden duty to thank God at every remembrance of her, and be very grateful for this lovely gift that God has bestowed on us. Birth, life and death are but events in God's creation. Love is what makes life a gift, in turn to be used for the extension of love.

Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done!

Dr. (Mrs.) Thiagawathy Agnew.

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கிரமமான, நம்பிக்கையான சேவை.

★ கொழும்புக்கு அர்ப்பணம் மிகுந்த உன்னத சேவை. (16 தினங்கள்) ★ தேயிலைப்
பெட்டிகளிலிருந்து, முழு அளவிலான தனிப்பட்ட பொருள்கள் வரை. ★ கார், மற்றும்
20 அடி, 40 அடி முழு வர்த்தக சரக்குகளுக்கு விசேட கட்டணம். ★ மின்சார உற்பத்தி
யந்திரம், யந்திர வகைகள், உபகரணங்கள். ★ சலவை யந்திரம், குளிர் சாதனப் பெட்டி
போன்ற வீட்டுப்பாவனை மின்சார உபகரணங்களுக்கு வரிவிலக்கு.

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● உலகளாவிய விமான பொதி சேவைக்கு எங்களை நாடுங்கள். ●

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