

TAMIL GUARDIAN

FREE!

Representing an oppressed people requires courage

PAGE 7

Tamil defiance



A Tamil in London demonstrator tears Sri Lankan flag at a demonstration opposite Colombo's High Commission on Feb 4. See p8 & 10.

Ashes of LTTE leader's mother desecrated

The ashes of the mother of Tamil Tiger leader V Pirapaharan were desecrated Wednesday, hours after her body was cremated in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Tamil MP Kanagalingam Sivajilingam said relatives who visited the cremation site to collect the ashes of Vallipuram Parvathi found them scattered and three dead dogs with bullet wounds thrown on them.

"This a barbaric act. I won't say who did it, but everybody knows who they are," Sivajilingam said, referring to the Sri Lankan military.

During the funeral on of 'Parvathi Amma' on Tuesday (pictured below and below left), Sri Lankan troops and police video recorded and intimidated mourners and people seeking to join the procession.

Mr. Pirapaharan's ailing parents were not actively involved in politics but were arrested by the Sri Lankan military days after the war ended.

His father died in military custody last year. Afterwards, his mother was released and spent her last year in hospitals under Sivajilingam MP's care.

See report, photos p5



ECONOMY

IMF: Sri Lanka's exports/GDP falling

"[SRI LANKA'S] export earnings, as a percentage of GDP, have been falling for years. So the first thing for Sri Lanka is to boost its exports to where it was 10 years ago," said IMF Asia Pacific Director Anoop Singh.

Interestingly, ten years ago Sri Lanka was gripped by high-intensity armed conflict.

And, as the IMF's chart shows, Sri Lanka's export/GDP ratio today is the same as in 1987 - when the JVP's second insurgency erupted, and the IPKF intervention began.

"We look towards agriculturists who will get the best prices in the world market by supplying vegetables and fruits, as well as tea, rubber and coconut ... We look forward to a productive economy that will add value to the produce of our own soil."

While Sri Lanka's Central Bank says export earnings would grow strongly in 2011, the National Chamber of Exporters recently said it would not be able to deliver half of the Central Bank's expectations.

The exporters blame growing energy costs (for their production) and the strengthening rupee (making their products expensive in the global market).

Meanwhile, what exactly does the IMF want Sri Lanka to do? Diversify export destinations (to Asia from US and EU), and export products (from garments and tea to more sophisticated ones).

(i) Diversify products

The IMF wants Sri Lanka to move away from primary exports (agriculture) and simple manufactures (garments) to more sophisticated ones.

But interestingly, this is what President Mahinda Rajapaksa said in his Independence Day address about his Sinhala-nationalist economic doctrine, 'Mahinda Chintana':

"Mahinda Chintana shows the way to a strong, self-sufficient economy. What we expect from such an economy is not only to produce a successful business community but also paddy farmers with a good earning capacity.

"We also look towards agriculturists who will get the best prices in the world market by supplying vegetables and fruits, as well as tea, rubber and coconut, and also to industrialists who supply goods that are suited to international standards.

"We look forward to a productive economy that will add value to the produce of our own soil."

(ii) Diversify markets

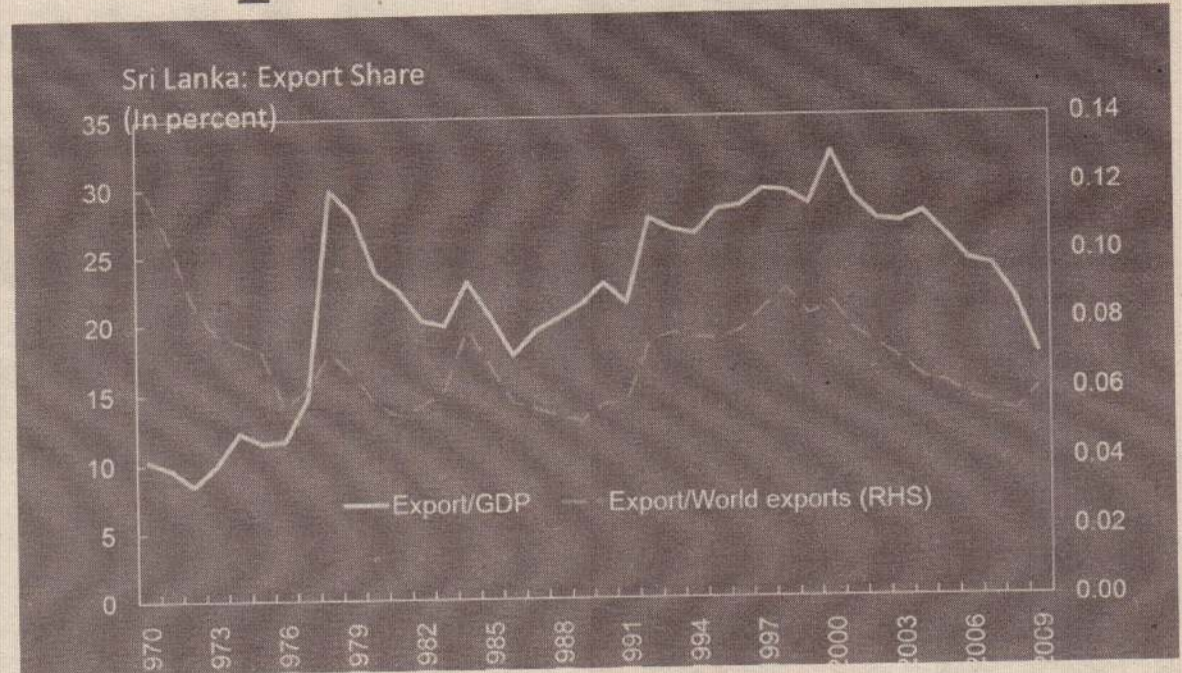
Despite some analysts making much of Colombo's 'turn to Asia', Sri Lanka's exports continue to go mainly (almost 60%) to the United States and European Union.

Exports to China, India and developing Asian countries are a small proportion.

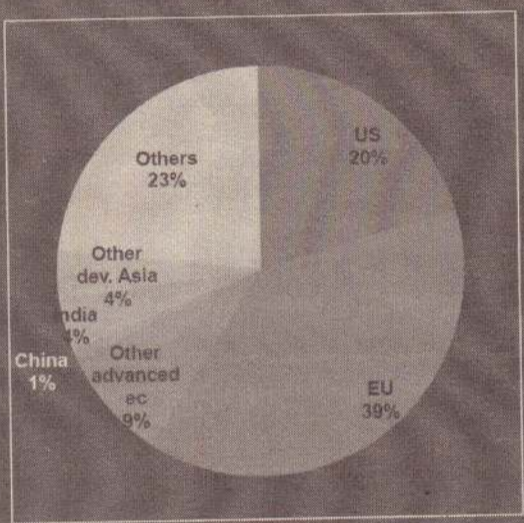
Although Sri Lanka has entered into several bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade agreements with the region, many of them are heavily under utilized. The Island quotes economists - for many years.

The IMF believes that: "Greater regional integration will help Sri Lanka capitalise on Asia's growth while [product] diversification and sophistication would give scope and lift market share."

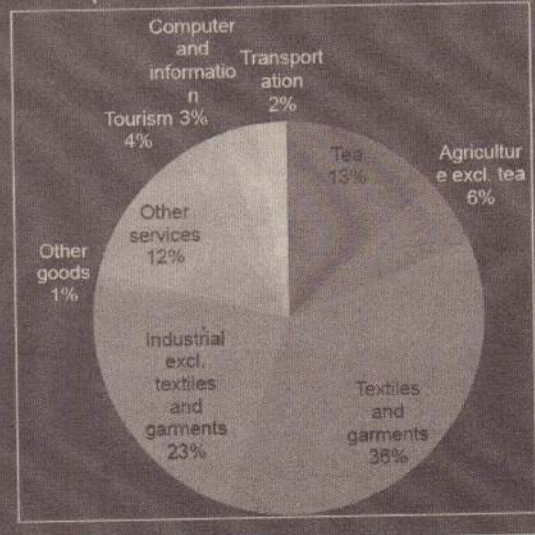
But that turns on Sri Lanka's government and exporters responding - and their products winning over consumers in Asia.



Sri Lanka: Exports by Destinations, 2009



Sri Lanka: Export Composition, 2009



While the IMF wants Sri Lanka to move away from primary products, President Rajapaksa's vision for the country is one of "paddy farmers with a good earning capacity". Similarly, while much has been made of Colombo's 'turn to Asia' Sri Lanka's exports continue to go mainly (almost 60%) to the United States and European Union, with exports to China, India and developing Asian countries being a small proportion of total exports. With a export/GDP ratio that is what it was in 1987, Sri Lanka will have to follow IMF advice to diversify products and destinations. The international vision and the local vision seem to be at odds and which one succeeds may decide the economic fate of the country.

Foreigners keep exiting Colombo stock market

FOREIGN funds are continuing to exit Sri Lanka's stock market, Reuters reported, sustaining a trend since the end of the armed conflict.

Despite the bourse's main index doubling last year, foreign investors have been net sellers of the "overbought and expensive" market.

Foreigners have sold a net US\$ 25 million (2.8 billion rupees) so far in 2011, after selling a record net \$236 million (Rs. 26.4 billion) through 2010.

Sri Lanka's bourse is described as 'Asia's best performer' with an 9 percent gain in 2011 after being the top performer last year, with a 96 percent.

It is trading at a forward price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio of 18, highest among emerging markets, compared with 13 in Asian markets and 11.9 in global emerging markets.

For more details, see our website at <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=2983>

Fallacies of Colombo's bourse

The Tamil Guardian has earlier covered the fallacies of those who cite the doubling of Sri Lanka's main stock market index in 2010 as some kind of success for the country.

As we explained, it is based on two mistaken assumptions: [1] that the index's rise is entirely due to fundamental improvement in the stocks, and [2] that the market is indicative of the wider economy's progress.

In practice, the index has been driven up by Sri Lankan government buying, while foreigners are exiting (see above).

Secondly, there is evidence that the Colombo bourse is unrepresentative of the wider economy.

For more details of see our explanation of the Sri Lankan stock market at <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=2932>

A rough guide to Sri Lankan regimes' approaches to liberalisation since 1970:

- 1970-1977: Prime Minister Srimavo Bandaranaike's (SLFP) autarkic regime.
- 1977-1989: President J.R. Jaywardene's (UNP) 'pro-market' regime. Massive economic liberalisation from 1977 (the regime is a poster-child for the IMF's policies), but the results are shortlived.
- (1983: armed conflict begins. But export/GDP ratio has already been falling)
- 1989-1994: UNP governments of Presidents R. Premedasa and D. B. Wijetunga continue economic liberalization.
- 1994-2001: So does President Chandrika Kumaratunga's SLFP government
- 2001-2004: Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's UNP government. Liberalization expands with renewed force
- 2005-date: Liberalisation slowed, and reversed, by President Mahinda Rajapaksa's governments

FLOODS



No end to flood misery, appeal fails

AFTER two waves of floods devastated Sri Lanka's northern and eastern regions, coping capacity of the flood-affected people has been overstressed, a UN official said. Meanwhile, international aid for the flood affected civilians has fallen far short of the immediate humanitarian needs, United Nations figures showed.

There is major damage to the agriculture in the region with 100% of rice crop in Batticaloa and about 40% in Trincomalee damaged by the floods as the farmers were getting to ready for the harvest, Neil Buhne, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sri Lanka said on his last day as the coordinator for the island.

"A lot of farmers in these

areas are people who were living on the edge had borrowed money hoping for a good harvest crop and will now have no income," Buhne said.

A large number of wells have been contaminated and irrigation structure is seriously damaged in the flooded areas, he was quoted by ColomboPage as saying.

"There is very serious damage to the physical infrastructure. The irrigation system might not be able to work for quite some time in many areas," he said.

Meanwhile, as of early February, nearly a month after the United Nations appeal to assist the flood victims in Sri Lanka was launched, the UN has received only \$8.4 million out of

the \$51 million sought to meet urgent relief requirements in the island's north, centre and east.

"Donors have provided \$8.4 million of the \$51 million requested by humanitarian agencies last month to respond to the flood crisis," AFP quoted the UN as saying. Other reports put the figure 24 percent funded, with US\$ 12 million received.

Acting UN Resident Representative Adnan Khan told the Sunday Times that the poor response could be attributed to one or more factors such as the thinking of the donor countries at this time and the nature and size of their respective budgets.

The flash appeal for US\$51 million that was launched during the high-profile visit of the UN

Assistant Sec-retary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Catherine Bragg after the first round of floods in January.

A UN official said the flash appeal is to be reviewed at the end of this month to assess the damage, reported ColomboPage.

The UN in Colombo said it would revise upwards the US\$ 51 million aid request in the aftermath of the devastation caused by the second wave of floods, reported the Sunday Times.

Both rounds of rains left over 1.2 million people directly affected and sent food prices soaring.

Gareth Owen, Save the Children's emergencies director, said: "Many families in affected

areas are facing a nightmare scenario in which both their food source and their livelihoods have been washed away. They need help to survive until the next harvest."

"It is absolutely essential that the world does not wait until the children [here] are starving to act."

Aid numbers

UN appeal: \$51m.

Key pledges so far:

- EU: \$2.7m
- US: \$1.1m
- India: \$1m
- China: \$1.5m

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INDIA IN SRI LANKA

Northern railway projects to begin

INDIAN engineers are beginning work on three railway track projects in Sri Lanka's north funded by loans from India.

The three lines are Omanthai-Pallai, Madhu Church-Tallaimannar and Medawachchiya-Mannar (via Madhu).

IRCON International Limited, a company of the Ministry of Railways in India, has been given the contract. More than 200 engineers, technicians and supervisors from India would eventually be employed on the three projects. A similar number of local staff would be employed, and the labourers will all be Sri Lankan.

100 Indian staff are already in the country, having worked on tracks in Galle-Matara link in the south, also funded through Indian loans.

Meanwhile, the first batch of Indian-manufactured engines have arrived in Sri Lanka, PTI reports. The Export-Import bank of India (Exim) has signed an agreement with Sri Lanka to provide a line of credit worth \$416.39 million for the three projects.

Get more details from the Tamil Guardian website at <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=3006>



Sri Lanka takes India for a ride

SRI Lanka swapped a Chinese-made train for the Indian ones to be used on the service when the Galle-Matara high-speed line was inaugurated on Feb 16. The track, destroyed in the 2004 tsunami, has been rebuilt by Indian firm IRCON, and entirely funded by Indian cheap credit. The Indian-made locomotives for the route have arrived in Sri Lanka, but officials said they were "not ready". So Indian High Commissioner Ashok Kantha and the other dignitaries traveled in a Chinese-made train (above) on the maiden run. The train hit 100km/h - but started and arrived late. Photo R.K.Radhakrishnan/ The Hindu

Sampur: sophism and suffering

WHEN Sri Lanka resumed its war against the Tamil Tigers in mid 2006, the first offensives were directed at Sampur and nearby areas in Trincomalee district. Over 40,000 Tamil civilians were driven from their homes, which were razed to the ground. The vast majority remain displaced.

Sri Lanka then pledged the land in Sampur to India to build a power-station on it, and designated it a 'High Security Zone'.

Delhi was a strong backer of Sri Lanka's campaign, and the power station project has long been billed as a major milestone in bilateral ties.

However, the joint venture has never been taken forward, despite years of negotiation. The billion dollar project should have been completed this year.

And this month Colombo again come up with more objections to the deal. The Times of India says at the last minute Sri Lanka Attorney General's office has raised 70 new queries on basic issues.

One Indian official protests: "These are very fundamental to the understandings reached [with] the Lanka government over the last two years and should not be reopened."



Writing to TAMIL GUARDIAN

We welcome your comments. Letters for publication should contain the writer's signature, name and full address. If published, they are subject to editing. Please note, letters and unsolicited manuscripts are not acknowledged or returned. Letters should be addressed to the Editor. Email letters should be sent to: editor@tamilguardian.com

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TAMIL MOURNING

Eelam Tamils mourn Parvathi Amma

EELAM Tamils across the globe marked the death on February 20 of Parvathi Amma (Vallipuram Parvathi). The people of Jaffna flew black flags on Sunday, February 20, mourning the demise of the 80-year-old mother of LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan. Meanwhile, across the globe, Diaspora Tamils gathered to collectively mourn her passing.

As knowledge of her death became public, community organisations in Jaffna lowered their flags to half post amid harassment by the occupying Sri Lankan forces. Shops and businesses flew black flags as the people of the peninsula mourned her passing.

The remains of Parvathi Amma were kept in her home village of Valveddithurai, before being taken to the Theeruvil grounds and placed near the destroyed monuments of Lt. Col. Kumara-pa, Lt. Col. Pulenthiran and Col. Kiddu, for the public to pay their respects.

Jaffna harassed

In Jaffna, Parvathi Amma's funeral on Tuesday drew large crowds despite intimidation by the Sri Lankan military. Defying the order by Sri Lankan Army soldiers to remove the black flags, the people of Vadamaradchi closed their shops and flew black flags. The Sri Lankan soldiers were seen busy removing the black flags.

People from various parts of the peninsula took part in the funeral procession, together with former and current parliamentarians representing the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Tamil National Peoples' Front (TNPFF).

The casket with the remains of Parvathi Amma was taken in procession from Theeruvil grounds to her daughter's house in Valveddithurai for last rites and from there taken in procession Oorani central cremation grounds, where she was cremated. A relative, Mr. Changkaranaarayanan, conducted the final rites.

The Sri Lankan military had deployed soldiers every 10 meters along the route, intimidating the mourners by videotaping and photographing them, deploying armoured vehicles and civil clad intelligence operatives.

Almost everyone reaching Theeruvil grounds and the house where the last rites were held was checked by the SLA soldiers and journalists were harassed.

Meanwhile, Colombo blocked 400 students of Jaffna University, who were scheduled to leave the University in three buses on Tuesday to attend the funeral.

Sri Lankan military intelligence operatives in civil clothes entered the University premises and warned the students and the bus owners of 'dire consequences' if they left the premises to attend the funeral.

When the students refused, hundreds of policemen were deployed around the building. The policemen threatened to open fire on the students if they didn't

respect their orders.

Paying respects

Politicians and activists from Tamil Nadu and the diaspora addressed the mourners paying tribute through phone calls at Theeruvil grounds. Defying the order by SLA soldiers to remove the black flags, people of Vadamaradchi closed their shops and flew black flags.

Tamil Nationalist Movement leader Pazha Nedumaaran, Poet Kasi Anandan, MDMK General Secretary Vaiko, Naam Thami-zhar leader Seeman and Norwegian Council of Eezham Tamil representative Vijayshankar Aso-kan addressed the mourners through phone connected loudspeakers at Theeruvil grounds before the final rites.

Several politicians including TNA parliamentarian Yogeswaran and Ariyaneththiran from Batticaloa, Siva Sakthi Anandan and Vino Nokarathalingam from Vavuniyaa, Saravanapavan and Suresh Premachandran from Jaffna, Sriharan from Vanni, former TNA parliamentarians and TNPFF leaders Gajendrakumar Ponnampalam, Selvarajah Kajendren, Pathmini Sithamparanathan, S. Varatharajan, Manivannan took part in the funeral.

Mr. Kajendren, in his message of tribute, said Parvathi Amma was everybody's mother in the Tamil Nation.

Several personalities from abroad, especially from Tamil Nadu, attempted to get clearance from the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry to attend the funeral of Parvathi Amma.

Indian parliamentarian Thol Thirumavalavan, the leader of Viduthalai Chiruthaikal Kadchi, was denied entry to the island Monday when he arrived at Katunayake International Airport in Colombo.

After being deported back to Chennai from Colombo airport, Mr. Thirumavalavan told media in Tamil Nadu that the deportation was an insult to the entire India and urged the governments of Tamil Nadu and India to condemn his deportation from Colombo.

"The Sri Lankan mission in Tamil Nadu should be immediately removed," Thirumavalavan declared Tuesday.

Thirumavalavan was present last year at the funeral of 86-year-old Thiruvengadam Velupillai, the father of Mr. Pirapaharan.

Diaspora memorials

On Sunday, several organizations throughout the global Tamil diaspora and in Tamil Nadu held memorial events to pay tribute to the mother of the LTTE leader.

Eelam Tamil media operating from the diaspora canceled their normal programmes, giving space for viewers and listeners to pay their tributes through their broadcasts throughout the world.

Diaspora organizations, including student unions, youth organizations, village associations, sports clubs, welfare associations,



etc conducted memorial events throughout cities in countries such as Canada, UK, Switzerland, France, Germany, Holland, Norway, Australia and Denmark.

Her life and health

Born on 07 August, 1931, Parvathi Amma, resolved to stay with her people at her native village, after being denied entry to Tamil Nadu for medical treatment last year.

Due to multiple displacements during the military offensives of the Sri Lanka Army, and later incarceration at the notorious Panagoda Camp, Parvathi Amma's health had deteriorated. One of her hands had been badly affected and she was also afflicted with blood pressure and diabetes.

The house of Mrs. Parvathi Amma, where Mr. Pirapaharan



The Sri Lankan military and police harassed those who attended the funeral of Parvathi Amma, including taking their pictures

was born and raised, was destroyed by the occupying Sri Lanka Army in April last year following reports that the house had attracted the attention of several Sinhalese visiting Jaffna.

The LTTE leader's parents had been living in Tamil Nadu in India but opted to return to Vanni before the war broke out as they preferred to be with the people during the war.

Kohona may face war crimes charges over LTTE deaths

An Australian citizen and senior Sri Lankan diplomat has been accused of complicity in the murders of three surrendering Tamil Tigers in an application to the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands, Sydney Morning Herald reported, referring to Dr Palitha Kohona, who is currently attached to the United Nations Sri Lanka Mission in New York.

"...two international Tamil organisations have made a series of war crimes allegations to the International Criminal Court involving Dr Kohona and his role in the negotiated surrender of three Tamil Tigers who are believed to have been killed," the paper said.

"The man, Palitha Kohona, was the international face of the Sri Lankan government's war with separatist militants, the Tamil Tigers, and played an important role in the surrender of Tamil Tiger soldiers following their defeat in May 2009," the paper said.

"But reports of mass killings and the extrajudicial killing of surrendering Tigers have since surfaced. Dr Kohona and the Sri Lankan government strongly deny the claims, and so far the international community has been reluctant to investigate them," the paper added.

The public copy of the document filed with the ICC prosecutor "does not include the detailed

deposition given under oath by a senior Sri Lanka's Army Commander who is in hiding in the U.S." TamilNet quoted the spokesperson for the US-based activist group, Tamils Against Genocide (TAG), as saying.

The omitted parts of the deposition include a statement which "authenticates the fact that command from higher officials were given to front line commanders to shoot dead surrendees," the spokesperson said.

The deposition, however, is part of the original filing, the spokesperson added.

The request, filed by the Swiss Council of Eelam Tamils and the US group Tamils Against Genocide, alleges Dr Kohona had been involved in the trio's [Mahindran Balasingham, Seeveratnam Pulidevan and a man known only as Ramesh] surrender in the days before their death, the paper noted.

A spokeswoman for the Home Affairs Minister, Brendan O'Connor, would not comment on the case except to say: "Australia is a party to the Rome Statute and, as such, supports action by the court to prosecute crimes falling within its jurisdiction," the paper further said.

Dr Kohona told the ABC the claims had no substance and were politically motivated, the paper noted.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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Parvathi Amma

How a remarkable woman became a dignified symbol of the struggle

Whilst Sri Lanka and its international allies labour to present an image of emerging 'post-conflict' normalcy - and even of 'reconciliation' in the offing - events in Jaffna this week made clear the country's future is exactly the reverse. The military's desecration of the ashes of LTTE leader Vellupillai Pirapaharan's mother, and its anxious, violent efforts in preceding days to prevent public mourning of her death underline not only the popular sentiment amongst Tamils, but the state's unshakable insecurity. In short, the seventy-year long antagonism between the Sinhala ethnocracy and the Tamil people will endure and grow. This is not a matter of ancient hatreds, but of state policy and the politics to come.

By desecrating Parvathi Amma's remains, the Sri Lankan military has again demonstrated the extent to which the Sinhala sense of self rests on the ability to inflict pain and humiliation on the Tamils. The slaughter in the Vanni is celebrated as a heroic victory, the repression of the Tamil areas presented as necessary to pacify an implacably hostile population, and the state-sponsored colonisation of Tamil areas as an epic re-conquest of historic lands. While international community remains perplexed by Sri Lanka's conduct - or puts it down to a yet-to-be-fixed backwardness - the Tamils recognise the logic.

While the Tamils must bear the brute material reality of this oppression, it is such acts of barbarism that will come to define Sri Lanka on the international stage. Parvathi Amma's death was, understandably, of little interest to international media. But the desecration has been swiftly covered by several international newspapers. For all the money Colombo will plough into public relations in the years to come, its image will ultimately be framed by its own macabre violence and repression. The attendant themes of ethnic discrimination and unpunished war crimes will not end. The Diaspora will see to that.

Unlike her famous son, Parvathi Amma and her husband were never involved in politics. Yet, no sooner had the war ended, Sri Lanka arrested them both. There was no charge, of course. But this was, after all, another opportunity ripe with symbolism for the Sinhala polity to yet again demonstrate its domination over the Tamils. Only when her husband died in detention would Sri Lanka release Parvathi Amma. Yet Colombo fretted

about this quiet and remarkable woman.

Despite its repeated self-congratulation over its military defeat of the LTTE, the Sinhala polity remains anxious and restive. Which is why when Parvathi Amma also passed away, the state began lashing out. When people in Jaffna put up black flags of mourning, the military tore them down. Troops leveled machine guns to bar Jaffna University's students from attending her funeral, and intimidated and videotaped those present. Politicians from Tamil Nadu who sought to attend were refused visas and deported. Ultimately, frustration over the palpable affection and respect the global Tamil community showed for Parvathi Amma (and it is indisputable why this is so) prompted the vile desecration of her remains.

This is Sri Lanka's future, as it has been the past. For the Sinhalese polity, international, as well as domestic, priorities will be driven solely by a need to keep the Tamils in a state of terror and dependence. See, for example, the refusal to allow international access, let alone rehabilitation, reconstruction or economic revival in the Tamil areas. Maintaining a state of repression in the Tamil areas will become an all consuming pre-occupation. Victory over the LTTE has not lessened an imprecise fear that continues to gnaw.

Paradoxically, it is Sri Lanka's repression that will help consolidate the Tamils' struggle amongst a new generation, both in the island and in the Diaspora. It was Sinhala majoritarianism, after all, that helped fashion a robust Tamil identity infused with a determination to withstand domination. In mourning Parvathi Amma, the Tamil nation again came together. The defiant Tamils who hung black flags in Jaffna, the university students who protested, the expatriate Tamils who attended public memorials and the Diaspora media which covered the funeral and programmes of commemoration acted as one.

Conversely, it is precisely because Sri Lanka has failed to cow the Tamils that bullying and displays of force at Parvathi Amma's funeral and the subsequent desecration of her remains became necessary. A much loved and respected woman was this week transformed into a figure of historical importance for the Tamil nation and a dignified symbol of our struggle. In her death, as in her life, Parvathi Amma has brought new strength and resolve to her people.

The Tamil Diaspora and the future of the Tamil struggle

Nirmanusan Balasundaram

Groundviews

TODAY, the 18th of February, finds us three months away from the second anniversary of the "Mullivaikal Massacre". At this juncture it is important to ask the question: What constructive action can be taken by the Tamil Diaspora to build a better future for the Tamil nation?

In Tamil culture, at a funeral, all the people of the village are expected to attend. It's tradition. But if the whole village was a funeral house, who will go and to whose house? Also, who will heal the existing souls?

This is not just a philosophical question, but an unavoidable reflection on the May 2009 humanitarian catastrophe, where 40,000 Tamils were massacred and nearly 60,000 were wounded. Nearly one in four Tamil people became direct victims of the Sri Lankan government's offensive military operation. And today the survivors still suffer lingering effects of structural and cultural violence.

May 2009

The disastrous events of May 2009, which were sold to the International Community as a "humanitarian rescue operation" by the Rajapakse regime, led to nearly 300,000 Tamil people being detained against their will in military run internment camps for almost a year.

Tamil people in Sri Lanka lost kith and kin, lost their livelihoods, and lost their hope for the future. What is left is an identity shaped by trauma and a situation of needless fatality.

This begs the question, what is the role of the Tamil Diaspora - who remain a voice of voiceless as they are connected to the kith and kin back home?

Until May of 2009, the Tamil Diaspora remained actively engaged, but after the "May Ashes," their efforts have been limited and do not appear to be able to function in a sustainable manner in order to achieve long-term goals.

It is obvious after the tragedy, each community needs considerable time to recover and rebuild. At the same time, the Tamil Diaspora became the next priority target of Rajapakse regime after its military victory over the LTTE.

Soon after the end of the war in May 2009, the GoSL adopted a full-scale operation to destroy or weaken the function and the network of the Tamil Diaspora.

Presently, the GoSL is using its maximum resources to weaken

the Tamil Diaspora and is spending millions of dollars for this purpose. They hired top-level public-relations firms. For instance, in the UK, Bill Pottinger is working to build up Sri Lanka's image. This is the same organization that is working for the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who has been charged by International Criminal Court with alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Tamil Diaspora is not as well equipped to face the challenges, as there are sharp divisions within the community.

In order to properly move forward the Diaspora need to engage in collective mourning, conduct brainstorming and reflection sessions and ensure they have a clear understanding of the current reality

The transformation from a unipolar front to multipolar approach is worthwhile, if misunderstandings are sorted out through peaceful dialogue. Otherwise, it may end up in a disaster.

Swift action without a realization of the implications of these actions creates more misunderstandings among any community. The Tamil Diaspora is a recent example of it.

Way forward

Compared to other Diaspora communities, the Tamil Diaspora has re-awakened relatively soon and has productively engaged in certain activities.

However there are still setbacks which need to be overcome before applying any strong initiative in the future.

In order to properly move forward the Diaspora need to deal with following issues.

Collective mourning

The May 2009 tragedy is still a shock to the Tamil Diaspora. It was something so unbelievable, that still today the Diaspora does not know how to deal with it.

For months everybody was checking news on the internet, TV and radio every minute, was following the events on the

OPINION



screens, the phones, saw and heard the bombings and killings, and had to realize that the rest of the world did not care.

The Diaspora experienced the war as a virtual reality. Is it therefore, that they haven't gathered for collective mourning in the same way that they gathered for other remembrance days.

Denial of emotion is a disaster and an impediment to a better future.

On the ground, the Tamil people cannot commemorate the loss of their kith and kin as they faced intimidation by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. Also, their atmosphere and attitude is desperate as they are living under severe oppression for a long time. However, the Diaspora has the environment to commemorate it.

Mourning is part of humanity and a long tradition and deep rooted aspect of Tamil culture. Tamils shared their sorrow and showed their sympathy when it was needed, but in this particular situation they have not done it so far.

At the same time, they are considered the voice of voiceless of the oppressed Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Suppressing emotions may lead to frustration and has the potential to end up in a lack of productivity.

This is also a reason why the Tamil people always give paramount importance to funerals, especially when the older generation cries together for the first few days - particularly on the burial day.

This tradition still continues at the individual level and needs to be followed for those 40,000 people collectively as well.

To honor and remember the lost ones is a healing sort of mourning, which the Tamil Diaspora should do in great degree. Tamil tradition and culture shows how and why it's important for recovery and re-emergence.

Thinking & reflecting

There is a time to fight, a time to rest, and a time to rethink and reflect. Like collective mourning, this has also not taken place.

It is a crucial step that will decide the future of the Tamil people. In this stage, to have a constructive self-critique of the past successes, deadlocks and

failures would be helpful to identify, how successes were brought about, why deadlocks could not be overcome, how and why the Tamil people in Sri Lanka faced failure.

We should also think about the present, while connecting it with the past and future. We must also, be pragmatic, when dealing with the past and build smart strategies for the future.

There is a need to build concrete and different scenarios, while learning lessons from the past-and at the same time-to be pragmatic, radically honest and comprehensive.

A Tamil reflection needs com-

Prof. Abraham Maslow once said, "If I were dropped out of a plane into the ocean and told the nearest land was a thousand miles away, I'd still swim. And I'd despise the one who gave up." The Tamil Diaspora has to fight this struggle constructively until it reaches fruition.

prehensive discussions and a constructive dialogue concerning its goals. It should consider possible solutions and what Tamils really want. It can be an analysis of common political perspectives and personal needs.

It should be a realistic assessment based on the ground realities, even though there may be a contradiction between short-term personal emotions and long-term perspectives on sustainable political goals. **It might lead to some disputes, but these disputes should not be avoided, but constructively dealt with.**

A self-critical reflection process demands for looking at our weaknesses, which can be frightening in the face of a much more powerful opponent. But if Tamils are to avoid the same mistakes in the future, it is needed.

And what might be perceived

Continued on page 10

TG View

Representing an oppressed nation

Against the many crises the Tamil people in Sri Lanka face today, perhaps the most grievous is lack of effective representation. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) continues to claim, implicitly and explicitly, the role of chief advocate, but in practice has instead left it to other Tamil and international actors, including those in the Diaspora, to articulate the Tamils' urgent needs and difficulties.

The TNA's reluctance to vigorously articulate Tamil grievances on a range of self-evident contemporary issues inevitably raises serious questions regarding their ability, indeed their willingness, to accurately and effectively represent the Tamil nation's interests and aspirations in any wider discussion on a political settlement.

Since the end of the armed conflict, the Tamil people in Sri Lanka continue to suffer humanitarian deprivation and political and economic marginalisation in their homeland. The Tamils expected nothing else from the Sinhala-dominated state, but any electoral mandate granted the TNA was linked solely to expectations the party would speak for them on the global stage.

The TNA was formed in 2001 as the result of a growing consensus amongst the larger Tamil parties that there was a need for a united voice to articulate Tamil interests and aspirations. It is worth recalling that in the late nineties some of its key constituent parties were partners with President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government - even as she unleashed another catastrophic military campaign on the Tamils in Jaffna, first, and then Vanni.

The Tamil people nonetheless embraced the TNA on the basis of its new principled position on the Tamil nation's struggle - set out clearly in their manifestos of 2001 and 2004, for example. Moreover, it was their preparedness to faithfully project the views of the Tamil people on the international stage that lent them their legitimacy - proved not only in general elections but in local ones too. Popular support did not come from securing crumbs from the Sinhala state, but from forcefully advocating Tamil grievances and aspirations on the international stage.

Yet since the end of the war, the TNA - except for some of its (more junior) MPs - has either been muted or feeble in its protests over the deprivations continuing to be visited by the Sinhala state on the Tamil people. Instead,

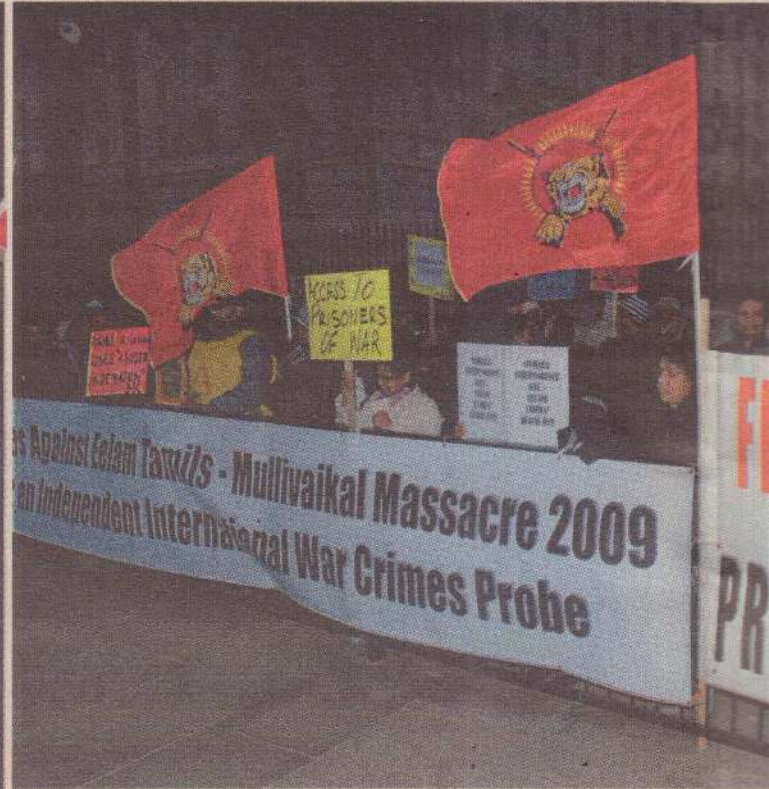
the TNA is leaving it international human rights groups, Diaspora organisations and other local actors, such as religious figures and even some Sinhala voices, to keep the Tamils' difficulties alive in the global conscience.

The on-going detention of Tamils held without charge, the state's arbitrary restrictions on economic and social activity and the military's continued refusal to allow resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Tamils in their properties are amongst issues on which the TNA was once forcefully vocal, but is now largely silent on. These are nonetheless being taken up by others, but the TNA seems content to limit itself to vague 'discussions' with the Sri Lankan state - something they know full well will ultimately prove futile.

Even amid the recent wave of paramilitary terror unleashed in the Jaffna peninsula, the TNA became active only after the main Sinhala opposition party, the UNP, had taken up the issue. Crucially, after the mass slaughter of Tamil civilians in 2009, what ought to be a key issue for Tamil representatives - accountability for war crimes - is explicitly being avoided.

There is no denying that Sri Lanka is dangerous place for those calling for accountability on war crimes, and TNA leaders have explained their silence on these terms, as the Wikileaks US cable of January 2010 shows. But if this issue, which is receiving growing global attention, is a no go area, it is difficult to comprehend how the TNA would effectively take up the political aspirations of the Tamil nation - the subject of over 60 years of strife in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, the TNA is largely silent on the myriad day-to-day deprivations which the US cable quotes it as saying the Tamils in the Northeast are more concerned about.

Fear is understandable, but it cannot be an excuse for silence. Those who put themselves forward to speak for an oppressed people do so wilfully - aware not only of the risks, but the magnitude of responsibility such a role carries. The political history of the Tamil nation, and those of struggles across the world, is marked by those who have risen to that challenge. Amid repression, courage is sine qua non for legitimacy. The dangers of having no representation, meanwhile, are greatly surpassed by the consequences of having a passively submissive one.

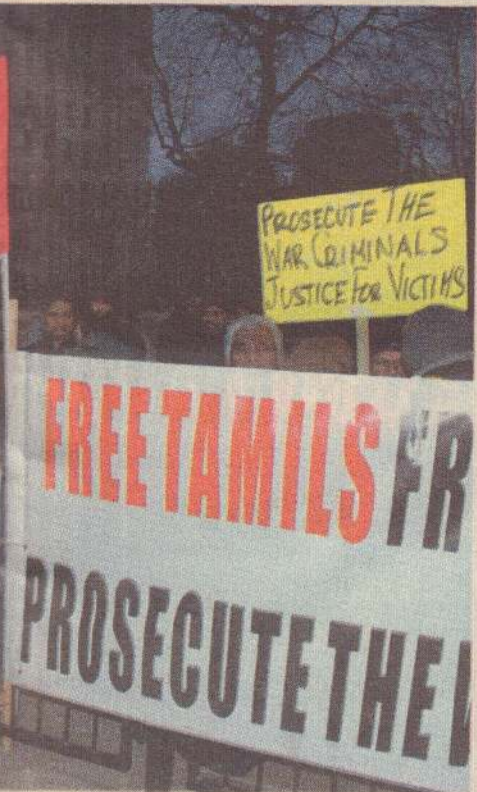


There were protests by Tamil expatriates in several Diaspora centres including Toronto (left) and opposite the Prime Minister's official



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EVENTS



Protesters gathered at the Sri Lankan independence day celebrations at the official residence in London (above).



Sri Lankan ire at London protest

Top row, l-r) Tamil protest begins Friday Feb 4, Sri Lankan independence day at 1.30 am/ Diplomatic Police Group responds to embassy's emergency call/ PG departs after alarm proved false/ Embassy official gestures at protestors (middle row, l-r) Embassy officials appear on balcony to photograph protestors/ Embassy officials spill onto street, remonstrating with police/ Police move officials back to embassy porch (bottom row, l-r) More photographs of protestors are taken/ Demonstrators tear Lion flag/ Protest continues, concludes at 3pm. See p10 for full story, p1 photo.



Remembering Murugathas Anna

WITH a single, supreme act of sacrifice for his people in February 2009, Murugathasan Varnakulasingham became a revered household name for the Tamils.

Outraged by international apathy as tens of thousands of Tamils were being massacred by Sri Lanka's military, the quietly spoken 26-year-old computing graduate walked up to the United Nations building in Geneva and immolated himself.

On the second anniversary of the death of Murugathasan Anna, as he is fondly referred to by Tamil activists, memorial events were held in Diaspora locations.

In London, several hundred people gathered on February 12th to remember him and several other Tamil activists who selflessly gave their lives for the freedom struggle.

As in all such Tamil commemorations, music and dance performances celebrated the actions and lives of those mourned. The event was attended by Murugathasan's mother, who although proud of her son's bravery, was also distraught at the loss of not her child.

Murugathasan's life story is similar to those of many if the Tamil Diaspora.

Having been made a refugee in his own homeland, living a life of mistreatment, racial exclusion and the possibility of arbitrary and sudden death at the hands of the state, he chose, along with his family, to seek sanctuary abroad.

Safely beyond the Sri Lankan state's reach, he and his family rebuilt their lives. He graduated from university in computer science.

Murugathasan had not been an activist before his selfless act of protest. However, amid the callous lack of international action to aid his people in their horrific suffering, he was compelled to act.

He set out his carefully considered reasoning in a letter, written in Tamil and English, that is now among the annals of Tamil history.

Although not all supported his act, saddened by the loss of one of their brothers, his message was shared and understood, and he was embraced by the global Tamil community.

His funeral, attended by ten thousand people, and watched on satellite television by hundreds of thousands, was yet another moment of Tamil unity.

Although the mass protests of that brutal phase have passed, the

flame the Murugathasan lit ignited new waves of political activism amongst the Diaspora youth.

Within weeks of his self-immolation, tens of thousands of Tamils took to the streets in Diaspora centres everywhere, in sustained protests that built an enduring popular solidarity that now underpins the struggle.

For the many activists around the world who attended the public commemorations this month, or held their own gatherings, it was a moment to pledge themselves anew to their cause.

The logic of their campaigns is to be found in Murugathasan's outrage at international inaction; that Tamils' liberation from Sinhala oppression can ultimately only be assured by one end - an independent Tamil Eelam.

DIASPORA

Tamils denounce Sri Lanka on independence day

TamilNet

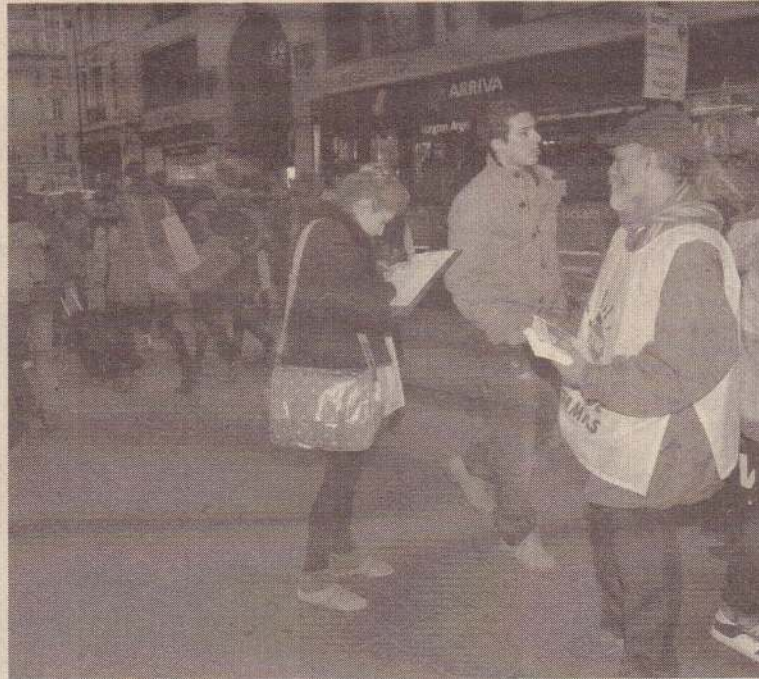
"I WISH all Sri Lankans around the world a happy celebration and continued peace and prosperity in the coming year," said a statement harping on "post-war reconciliation" released from the office of the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, on the eve of Sri Lanka's independence day, February 4.

But the imposed celebration was largely ignored inside the island and outside, the day drew protests across the world by Eelam Tamils.

"Sri Lankan High Commission has invited the Sri Lankan community for a reception to celebrate their independence. We will assemble outside the embassy to condemn the Sri Lankans celebrating while denying the Tamils their right to independence," the call for protest in London said.

Demonstrations were held in London, Toronto and in Oslo. Addressing protesters in Oslo, Conservative Party (Høyre) leader Erna Solberg called for war-crimes investigations.

Hundreds of Eelam Tamils demonstrated outside the parliament in Oslo. Demonstrators in front of the Consulate General of



Sri Lanka in Toronto carried placards urging the occupying Sri Lanka to leave Eelam.

Parallel to a demonstration outside the High Commission in London, there was another demonstration in front of the British PM's official residence at No 10 Downing Street and the Eelam Tamil community was also enga-

ged in a signature campaign in different locations in London, against detentions and disappearances in the island.

The British Tamils Forum (BTF) also re-lunched its campaign "Are they Alive?" to coincide with Sri Lankan Independence Day. **Photos p1, p8-9**

Sri Lankan ire in London

WHEN a group of Tamil expatriates began protesting outside the Sri Lankan High Commission in London on Friday Feb 4 (Sri Lanka's Independence Day), officials inside made a false call to the police claiming the building was under attack. British police sources said Monday. A police squad rushed to the site, but found peaceful demonstrators chanting slogans and carrying placards and Tamil Eelam flags. Embassy officials later remonstrated on the street with police as well as shouting abuse at the protestors and taking photographs of them, protest leaders said.

Shortly after the demonstration began outside the High Commission, a squad from the Diplomatic Protection Group hurriedly arrived with motorcycles escorting their two characteristic red-liveried vehicles.

The squad commander entered the building to speak to embassy officials and thereafter spoke to the demonstrators, a protest organiser said.

Police sources told Tamil contacts Monday the DPG was responding to an emergency call by the High Commission that the building was being attacked.

After a radio conversation with his superiors, the commander left with the squad, having advised the demonstrators to stay within an enclosure set up 30 yards opposite and across from the embassy entrance.

A small group of regular

police officers remained behind as the protest continued.

Shortly thereafter two embassy officials came out and stood directly opposite the demonstrators, taking photographs of them. Later other officials came out on the building's balcony also taking pictures and gesturing.

'The embassy officials were furious and were screaming at the police that we were terrorists. There were as many of them on the street as protestors.'

"They kept coming out from time to time to take pictures us, implying dire consequences," the protest organiser said. "Seeing as that's how the deal with protests in Sri Lanka, we were not surprised. We took pictures of them taking pictures of us."

The demonstrators responded to the intimidation by chanting louder, including the slogans "Sri Lanka government - terrorists, terrorists!" and "Rajapaksa - war criminal!"

Later, several enraged embassy officials spilled out of the building, remonstrating with the police who positioned themselves between the two groups.

"They were furious and were screaming at the police that we were terrorists," a protestor said.

"There were as many embassy people on the street as protestors."

With the two groups just a few feet apart, some embassy officials provocatively advanced to take pictures of the demonstrators, who in turn took pictures of them.

"Just see what happens when you come to Sri Lanka," one official said, jabbing at the protestors.

The police brought the situation under control and ushered the embassy officials back towards the building's porch.

As the two groups faced each other from afar, one demonstrator tore the Sri Lanka's flag. Others stamped on and set fire to the pieces. The embassy officials later withdrew into the building, and the protest proceeded uneventfully.

At 2.30pm another senior police officer inspected the site and spoke to demonstrators.

"He asked if we were part of the Tamil protests were going on in other parts of London," a protest organiser said. A protest scheduled by the JVP did not take place.

The demonstration opposite the High Commission concluded at 3pm. When the protestors left, so did the small group of police who had remained behind after the embassy officials went back inside.

Pictures p1, p8

Diaspora and the Tamil struggle...

Continued from page 7

as weakness in the short-term, it is a long-term precondition for strength and magnitude.

Recognizing mistakes requires more courage, commitment, hard work and dedication than merely blaming others. Such a process can provide Tamils the necessary building blocks for future achievement and growth.

Understanding reality

The successive governments of Sri Lanka targeted the LTTE while talking about peace. Now the Rajapaksa Regime is targeting the Tamil Diaspora, in order to destroy them, at the same time talking about reconciliation.

At present the Tamil Diaspora is the only challenging factor to the government. Otherwise, the Rajapaksa regiments would not need to spend \$4.7 million to build up its post-war image and hide mass atrocities.

Apart from this, their diplomatic missions are carrying out special assignments at a high cost to weaken the Tamil Diaspora's peaceful resistance activities.

Most of these activities function with the aim of weakening the Tamil Diaspora. The Tamil Diaspora has become a focal point as the LTTE's armed structure is no more.

Therefore, the Tamil Diaspora must understand their external and internal challenges, limitations and strengths.

In particular, internal contradictions are not dealt with in a constructive way. **A critical self-reflection process might lead the Tamil Diaspora to a new understanding and concept of unity, not a monolithic concept of unity, but a unity, which is achieved by co-ordinated diversity, and in which different roles and functions are carried out in autonomous and non-hierarchical structures.**

Current regime

It is obvious that the present dynastic government is more powerful than any of the previous governments in Sri Lanka.

But this does not mean they will yield this kind of power forever. There was a time for Augusto Pinochet, Pol Pot, Idi Amin, Slobodan Milosevic and so on. Their rule eventually ended.

Hopefully a similar end would befall the current regime in Sri Lanka as well. Tunisia and Egypt

are very recent examples that undemocratic rulers and bad governance cannot be sustained indefinitely.

This will not happen by accident, but will depend on the hard work of the people - those who really want to restore democracy and stability in Sri Lanka, and who want to contribute towards global peace.

Those who want to regain their rights and sovereignty need to do the appropriate homework and adequate preparation.

Work with world

In this process, the Tamil Diaspora can play a crucial role. In a way it's an opportunity for them to play a constructive role, if they consider the above mentioned points. The present circumstances are a challenge at the current time, but if they work hard with a clear goal, but it is not an obstacle that cannot be overcome. The events in Egypt proved this possible.

Engagement with the International Community should not be limited to war crimes and crimes against humanity issues only.

While it is vital to seek justice, the Diaspora needs to realize that this is a mid-term goal. Long and short term goals need to be pursued as well.

The long-term goal has to remain to find and achieve a political sustainable solution for the Tamil people, especially for the people in Sri Lanka. The short-term goal is the humanitarian and developmental support of the Tamils in Sri Lanka through genuine channels.

All three goals needs different strategies and can be pursued by different Diaspora organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Tamil Diaspora should respect each other's opinions and appreciate what everybody can contribute to fulfil the needs of the Tamil people, so their rights, sovereignty and dignity can be regained.

Prof. Abraham Maslow once said, "If I were dropped out of a plane into the ocean and told the nearest land was a thousand miles away, I'd still swim. And I'd despise the one who gave up."

Like this, the Tamil Diaspora also has to fight for this struggle constructively until it reaches fruition.

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Letters should be addressed to the Editor.

Email letters should be sent to: editor@tamilguardian.com

GALLE LITERARY FESTIVAL

Self indulgent hypocrisy

Sivakami Rajamanoharan
Tamil Guardian

WHEN Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS) called upon literary figures to boycott this year's Galle Literary Festival (GLF), they were undoubtedly prepared to face the ire of the Sri Lankan state. What they would not have anticipated was the angry response provoked from event organisers and a small but prominent group of liberal advocates in Sri Lanka. What was particularly striking about the backlash was the hypocrisy inherent to the arguments about free speech and inter-ethnic harmony marshalled in defence of the GLF.

Sri Lanka's unabashedly repressive government is desperately trying to feign a situation of normalcy whilst ruthlessly suppressing criticism and dissent (quite apart from its continued visitation of deprivations on the island's Tamils). The torching of the Lanka-e-News office is but the latest in several years of attacks on critical media.

Serving the regime

As such, any internationally promoted event on the island – entertainment, sports or, in this case, literary celebration – undoubtedly directly serve the regime's interests. Quite apart from furnishing it with international legitimacy, they help the cash-strapped state attract foreign tourists.

The claim that "the government has nothing to do with [such events]" could have been made in the case of every repressive state (remember the international boycott of sports events in Apartheid South Africa?) and turns on denying the wider contribution of such events towards the state's international image. As RSF chief editor Gilles Lordet pointed out, "Galle is one of the main tourist towns and [from here] you could imagine there that everything is fine in the country, but that's not the reality."

Ironically, whilst actually having said almost nothing about Sri Lanka's repression either during or after the war, the GLF's organisers and its supporters didn't respond to the logic of the RSF-JDS petition. Instead they attacked the boycott call as itself an attempt to stifle free speech. It was, of course, nothing of the sort: the petition was simply a principled appeal – it was up to the festival's participants to either respond or ignore.

Writers boycott

As it happens, some leading literary figures did not turn up. Nobel laureate Turkish-born Orhan Pamuk and Kiran Desai pulled out first, and later so did South African novelist Damon Galgut, who explicitly linked his no-show to both the RSF-JDS appeal and Sri Lanka's conduct.

These developments, however, neither provoked a rethink by the organisers, nor any support for these actions.

Instead, the GLF's defenders focussed on ridiculing and down-playing the RSF-JDS petition. In doing so, their efforts became a

Until the Sri Lankan state ends its repression, any international event in the island contributes to the veil of legitimacy for it to continue - it is the deeply symbolic value of such events that serves the regime's interests and allows the persecution of the Tamil people.

de-facto defence of the Sri Lankan state and its conduct, and have thus served to add force to Colombo's repression and limit its victims' ability to resist.

Moreover, while defending the GLF, festival co-curator Shyam Selvadurai allowed himself to be exploited as a poster boy for a fictional inter-racial harmony in Sri Lanka. His assertion that the GLF is the "voice of plurality, tolerance and multiculturalism" read like a government pamphlet. His protest that the event is "not a carnival for the rich" (some tickets cost \$50) did nothing to address the wider implications of staging an international event in a country where state-led majoritarianism is fast deepening.

Disingenuous claim

The claim the GLF is a rare bastion of free speech in Sri Lanka is itself simply disingenuous. Since its inception in 2007, the GLF has focused on the celebration of literary works and writers. The festival, which began amidst the resumption of Sri Lanka's military campaign and an unfolding humanitarian crisis in the Northeast, has never been a forum for rebellion against Sri Lanka's suppression of free speech. Instead such issues are sidelined into fringe meetings on human rights and the occasional speech, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's this year.

Adichie's view is that "the way to deal with bad speech is to talk about it." But the GLF's is only marginally concerned with defending free speech.

Indeed, nothing exemplifies this more than the case of Prageeth Ekanaligoda, a cartoonist critical of the government. The anniversary of his 'disappear-

ance' in 2010 coincides with the GLF. It was even suggested his wife could use the event to publicise his case. She was reduced to wandering about the venue with her sixteen year old son, handing out leaflets. As she later told the BBC: "I'm not 100% satisfied with our trip to Galle as I expected to speak to the whole crowd, at least for five minutes."

Petition does more than festival

The assertion that the RSF-JDS boycott call would prevent international media coverage of such supposed resistance to Sri Lanka's repression could not be more false. International media reports about the boycott call – and the exit of key speakers – raised far more attention about Sri Lanka's conduct than those covering the festival itself – indeed, the latter usually only touched briefly on it.

Meanwhile, another suggestion, that the GLF is about literature, rather than the controversial pursuit of media, again missed the point of the boycott call: it was against the event's legitimising the Sri Lankan regime's wider repression, not literature per se.

The distinction between media and literature is not one shared by the Sri Lankan state anyway – as exemplified by the police's torching of the Tamil literary works and historic manu-

scripts in the Jaffna library in 1981. Consider also Sri Lanka's Sinhala-Buddhist ideological policing of history textbooks and other works. As British writer Juliet Coombes told the AFP, "Sri Lankans like to talk about their loss of freedom in private, but not through literary works or in newspaper columns."

Contempt for plight

Until the Sri Lankan state ends its repression, any international event in the island to cele-

brate literature or anything else contributes to the veil of legitimacy for it to continue. As such, it is the deeply symbolic value of such events that serves the regime's interests.

One attack on the RSF-JDS petition admonished them saying: 'Events like GLF are sadly rare. Let us enjoy them in peace'. This argument encapsulates the contempt for the past and ongoing suffering and persecution of the Tamils in the island that celebrations like the GLF embody.

While the organisers of the festival defended it on the grounds of free speech, the audience was unconcerned the ongoing denial of press freedoms on the island



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INDO-LANKA RELATIONS

Tamil Nadu wants stronger Indian naval presence

AS India again warned Sri Lanka that the killing of Indian fishermen by the latter's navy was damaging bilateral relations, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi called for a stronger Indian naval presence,

"The coastal waters of south need to be paid some attention through resources and personnel [just] as land borders in north, west and east are being attended to," Karunanidhi said. "It is requested that our demand for more vessels, police stations and manpower, and better air surveillance capabilities may be considered favourably," he said.

Delhi rejected Sri Lanka's claim a 'third force' was to be blamed for the attacks on Tamil Nadu fishermen and noted that such incidents don't happen even on the Pakistani border.

Tamil Nadu killings

Karunanidhi was speaking at the fourth Chief Ministers Conference on internal security held in New Delhi. The conference was addressed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and union Home Minister P. Chidambaram.

The Tamil Nadu chief minister referred to the repeated killings of the Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy, saying: "Fishermen who cross international borders unwittingly and apprehended by other neighbouring countries in the west and the east are not subjected to physical harm."

"[However] Indian fishermen who cross the international maritime border off Sri Lanka are repeatedly subjected to physical harm, harassment and at times get killed."

Karunanidhi also said that the Sri Lankan government should abide by the October 2008 India-Sri Lanka joint statement on fishing arrangements that stated that there should be no firing on Indian fishermen.

India - Sri Lanka ties

India told Colombo that use of force against Tamil Nadu fishermen should not be repeated and asked it to take a decision that will not upset bilateral ties, NDTV reported.

Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao raised the matter in "open and candid manner" with Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa, The Hindu reported.

Sri Lanka has flatly denied its navy has attacked Tamil Nadu fishermen has instead blamed a

'third force'.

Responding, Ms. Rao told reporters: "I don't have anything to say about it... We are proceeding on the information we have; what our fishermen have given to us. What we have with us, we have nothing to corroborate what the Sri Lankans have claimed [on the existence of a third force in the region]."

Noting that the situation today was different from 2008, when the first bilateral agreement on protecting fishermen was made, she said there was now no scope for ambiguity.

"This is a post-conflict situation... We are of the view that [the October 2008 agreement] arrangements should be abided by and observed in both letter and spirit," she said.

Noting India's cordial and friendly relations with Sri Lanka, Krishna said:

"So it is in this context that the Sri Lankan Government will have to revisit the question and take some decision which will not upset the bilateral relations between our two countries."

"It has been pointed out to Sri Lankan authorities that it does not happen with Pakistan or any other country and why should it happen with Sri Lanka alone?"

Meanwhile, Indian External Affairs Minister S M Krishna has also directed Foreign Secretary Rao to convene a meeting of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on the issue including better air surveillance, in the waters between the two states, IANS reports.



Indian fishermen trawling seas near Katchatheevu have allegedly been targetted by the Lanka Navy

Killings after Katchatheevu

AN investigation by the Times of India found 378 recorded attacks on Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan navy (SLN) between 1983 and 2005.

Interestingly, however, most cases were closed in a few months with the comment "action dropped" or "unidentified", the paper found.

There have been many more attacks since 2005, with the issue repeatedly appearing in bilateral relations between the two states and prompting a bilateral agreement, which proved non-consequential, in October 2008.

However, the paper quotes researchers as saying SLN attacks began well before 1983.

"Firing and high-handedness by the Sri Lankan navy started in

1975, a year after Katchatheevu was ceded to them," said researcher L Selva Prakash.

Katchatheevu, a tiny islet close to Rameswaram, was ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974.

In March 2010, Chinese and Sri Lankan naval personnel were reported to be training on the islet. In Jan 2008, the SLN planted sea mines near it.

Most of the 1983-2005 reports filed by Tamil Nadu fishermen mention the place of the attacks' occurrence as "Near Katchatheevu in Indian Waters" and the SLN as the accused.

Recently, the main opposition AIADMK in Tamil Nadu again said retrieving the islet was the only way to stop SLN attacks on local fishermen - the party's posi-

tion for the past few years.

During Sri Lanka's armed conflict, which began in 1983, the SLN's attacks on Tamil Nadu fishermen were lost amid its more numerous attacks on Tamil fishermen in the Northeast, and its clashes with the Tamil Tigers' naval wing. That the attacks continue underlines the force of other drivers in Sri Lanka's policies towards Tamil fishermen from both sides of the Palk Straits.

"Hundreds continue to be maimed or killed," said organiser of the NGO People's Watch CJ Rajan. "The continuing attack on our fishermen shows the impotence of the Central and state governments."

For more, visit our website at www.tamilguardian.com

Tamil Nadu police reject claims of LTTE threat

Senior police officers in Tamil Nadu dismissed claims that LTTE cadres would attack top political leaders during the forthcoming state Assembly elections

On Sunday February 13, The Hindu newspaper quoted Indian intelligence sources as saying the Ministry of Home Affairs had sent alerts about possible attacks.

However, in response to the reports, Director General of Police Letika Saran told reporters that the police have confirmed that there were no LTTE elements in Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, another senior police officer told The Hindu: "Sri Lankan Tamils staying at [refugee camps] should not be mistaken as LTTE cadre.

"The Government of Sri Lanka wants them to return to their homeland... but the refugees don't want to go back."

The official added that Sri Lankan Tamils wanting to go to Canada or Australia were not being given exit visas.

See more details from the links on our website at <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=3008>

BJP takes up Tamils' plight

The President of India's BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), Nitin Gadkari, said that his party would take up the miseries of Sri Lanka's Tamils at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR). The BJP would also raise the issue in India's Parliament, where it has 165 seats, he told a party event in Tamil Nadu on Saturday January 30.

Arguing that the Sri Lankan Tamils' plight is not an issue for Tamil Nadu alone, Mr. Gadkari said: "We always support the demand of Sri Lankan Tamils for getting fundamental rights. They are part of our family."

Saying that India's former BJP-led government had adopted the "correct approach" towards the Sri Lankan Tamil question, Mr. Gadkari criticized the present Congress-led government, in which Tamil Nadu's DMK is a partner, for "furthering their selfish interests" in this regard.

The BJP-led NDA coalition governed India from 1998 till 2004, when it lost power to the Congress-led UPA alliance.

Sri Lanka's peace process began with a Norwegian-brokered ceasefire agreement in 2002. Colombo resumed its war against the LTTE in 2006, with the support of India and the United States.

GREAT POWERS

US, India and China in the 21st century



US urges India-China ties

THE United States says it is willing to help India and China improve their relations and welcomes a greater involvement by New Delhi in East Asia, AFP reports.

"We support an improvement in dialogue between India and China, and we would seek to take steps to facilitate that as we move forward," Kurt Campbell, the US assistant secretary of state for East Asia said.

"Ultimately, we think that India's role in the Asian-Pacific region stands to be one of the most important new developments over the course of the next decade."

The Obama administration focused attention from the start of its term on managing the complex relationship between the US and China but says it is also committed to a global partnership with India.

More at www.tamilguardian.com

WITH the new century set to be dominated by India and China, the US believes it is imperative for it to strike the right balance in its relations with the two Asian giants, while India is wary of being caught between the US and China.

The comments were made by senior US diplomats in a discussion on 'Unlocking the full potential of US-India relationship' at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington-based think-tank.

Balancing act

"How to manage this triangular relationship in a cooperative and not a competitive way is going to be very important," said Robert D Hormats, Under Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs.

He said the US wants the two countries to play a growing role in helping to make the global economy work better, by making progress on global trade negotiations and devising ways in which the rules of the system can be adhered to by big emerging economies, the Economic Times reported.

"That, I think at least on the economic side, is a very high priority for us," he said.

Hormats also stressed on the

importance of working with both India and China, the increasingly important players in the global economy, on global security issues and on a wide range of other issues that are important to the United States.

"Therefore, we do not want to make it a situation where there's a zero-sum game where we try to play one country off against another, first of all, because it's not in our interest to do it, and second, because they don't want to be played off against one another themselves," he said.

Trade ties

The key element for both countries, he said, is economic development and creating large numbers of jobs.

"Both of them are focused very dramatically on creating jobs. They are developing countries. Large numbers of people in both countries are living close to, in some cases under, the poverty line.

"So the last thing they really want is friction between themselves or instability in the global economy. So they need to work together," he asserted.

Hormats said the trade is really booming rather dramatically between these two countries.

"So they both want good rela-

tions, certainly good political relations and stable security relations with the United States. They also like the notion that over a period of time, the United States plays a proactive role in their economies as investors and as trading partners," he said.

Delhi's concerns

Meanwhile, another senior US diplomat at the event argued that New Delhi doesn't want to be caught in this Sino-US game at the global level.

"China has been watching very carefully the rise of the US-India relationship, including on

the defense side," Karl F Inderfurth, the former Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs said.

"We (the US) do more manoeuvres now with the Indian army than they do with any other country. We're looking to sell India 126 jet fighters".

"India does not want to be caught up in a US-China -- playing the card, the India card in that relationship.

"India wants good relations with China because they know that they are neighbours, and they know that they're both nuclear-weapons states, and they want to

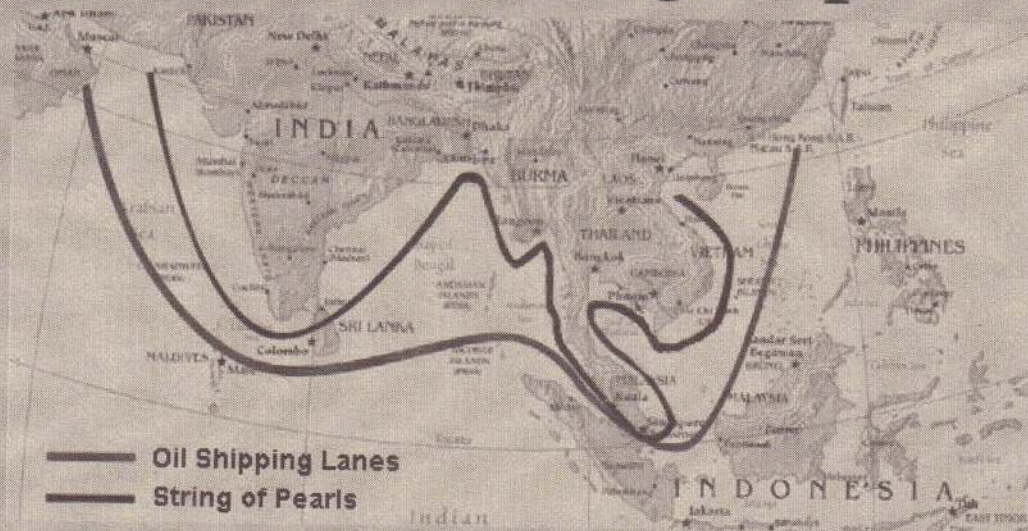
trade," he was reported as saying.

"They don't want to get caught up in a machination of US-China. So they're very concerned about being caught up in that. And so they're going to maintain their distance," he said.

Working together

"But they key to this is not to get into the mindset where it is two against the other, ganging up on the rest. Somehow our governments have to find a way to deal with each of the relationships on their own merits, and not try to out-strategize or manoeuvre the other," Inderfurth observed.

Whither China's 'string of pearls'?



JAMES Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, associate professors of strategy at the US Naval War College, write on the much-quoted 'string of pearls' theory:

"A subset of the larger debate over Chinese sea power is Beijing's supposed quest for a 'string of pearls', or network of Indian Ocean naval bases. The term originated in a classified Booz Allen study and was popularized by the Washington Times in 2005.

"Few Indian Ocean specialists still view the 'string of pearls' as a nascent base network ... They are more apt to scoff at the term. So fierce was the backlash that Booz Allen undertook a new study of the concept in 2009, in an apparent effort to distance the firm from its own past work. Scales, it seems, fell from analysts' eyes.

"Today, the conventional wisdom seems to be that China will

settle for access to 'places, not bases' in the Indian Ocean. If so, Beijing is negotiating agreements that grant Chinese vessels the right to call at ports like Gwadar, Hambantota, and Chittagong to rest, refuel, and perhaps refit.

"China entertains little desire for a wholly-owned base network comparable to the [US] outposts in Japan, Guam, Hawaii and elsewhere. In all likelihood, Chinese leaders are simply creating options for themselves-as prudent leaders do.

"If the Indian Ocean strategic environment remains non-threatening ... Beijing can spare itself the expense and hassle of maintaining such [major] facilities."

See links to the full text of their article and their 2008 critique at <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=3019>

China: no fear over grain supplies

CHINESE Premier Wen Jiabao sought to calm global concerns about the impact of severe droughts on China's grain output and inflation, the Wall Street Journal reported in early February.

The country's supply of grain is basically in balance with demand and reiterating the government's confidence that it can keep prices under control, he said, adding:

"We are confident that we have the ability to promote the stable development of agricultural products, to ensure the effective supply of agricultural products, especially grain, and to maintain the overall basic stability of goods prices"

Go to our website at <http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=3000> for links to the Wall Street Journal's report.

CULTURE

A Tamil music maestro and his gems



Thaamarai
Tamil Guardian

ILAIYARAJA is a household name for Tamils all over the world. A highly acclaimed composer, lyricist and writer, he has been in the South Indian film industry for over 30 years producing around 4500 songs to date.

Any Tamil person, asked to name their favourite song by Ilaiyaraaja, will probably not be able to limit their choice to just one composition, such is the range and quality of his output. He has covered such a vast range of genres and moods which appeal to a wide audience.

Ilaiyaraaja mastered many musical forms from carnatic to folk and western

music.

Normally referred to as 'Isaignani', a man who is a music expert, or Maestro, he has won 4 National Film Awards and the coveted Padma Bhusan Award from the Government of India.

His music can only be described as a continuous sequence of instruments punctuated with genius interludes with many layers and interwoven with the singers' voices which make up the perfect musical tapestry.

On our website, we have a regular update of some of the most memorable of Raja's songs, with links to videos of the songs. But for our print readers, following are this author's thoughts on some of the songs we have featured so far.

Go to www.tamilguardian.com for more songs and links

Aagaya Vennilave



One of Ilaiyaraaja's unforgettable gems is 'Aagaya Vennilave' from Fazil's 1990 blockbuster hit 'Arangetra Velai'.

Set to the notes of Darbari Kanada, a grave raga usually played at night and known for its potential of profound emotional impact, it is a duet describing (using plenty of metaphors relating to the moon, a woman's beauty and musical instruments)

intimate moments shared by the hero and heroine of the film.

Uma Ramanan and Yesudas showcase their excellent musical abilities and render the lyrics with amazing emotion which elevate the song to another level.

The song is peppered with understated raga improvisations and plenty of haunting sitar and violin pieces.

Shenbagame Shenbagame

'Shenbagame Shenbagame' from the 1988 film 'Enga Ooru Paattu Kaaran' was another hit for Isaignani Ilaiyaraaja.

Composed in the raaga Sindhu Bhairavi, the song is a solo which has three different versions for the film; the male version sung by Mano, a female version sung by Sunantha and a sad female version sung by Asha Bhosle, one of the best known and highest regarded Indian playback singers who reportedly cried after listening to the tune.

Ilaiyaraaja was very prolific in his use of the raga Sindhu Bhairavi in this song, distinctly showing the versatility of this raga. It is exploited to the point of its fullest use in a way that no other composer has yet been able to match.

Although this particular raga is extremely versatile, Ilaiyaraaja has used it in way in which it evokes feelings of empathy and melancholy; however he has set it to lyrics in a song that is not limited to these feelings only. Typical of Isaignani, many different colours and emotions are intricately woven with the flute and violin parts

in this piece.

An almost meditative quality overwhelms the listener who is lost in the eloquent poetry of the lyrics written by Ilaiyaraaja's brother, Gangai Amaran.

**"Un paadham pogum paadhai
naanum poga vandhene
Un mele aasaipattu kaathu
kaathu ninnene
Un mugam parthu nimmad-
hiyaachu
En manaam thaano vaadi-
dalaachu"**

(My footsteps follow yours, I waited and waited filled with desire, seeing your face brings me inner peace although my soul weakens.)

In the fast pace of new movies and songs, many old songs are forgotten or lost and there is a reason why songs from that era composed by Isaignani are called ever-green gems - they are invaluable, irreplaceable and inimitable.

Thakida Thadhimi

One of S. P. Balasubramaniam's most famous hits is 'Thakida Thadhimi' from the 1983 movie 'Salangai Oli', which was dubbed from the original Telugu 'Saagara Sangamam'.

Known as a cult classic due to Ilaiyaraaja's music, Kamal Hassan's high level classical dance (and of course acting) performance, it received many national awards. Ilaiyaraaja received the National Film Award for Best Music Director and S. P. Balasubramaniam received the National Award for Best Male Playback Singer for the song 'Thakida Thadhimi'.

The song is based on the raga Shanmughapriya, one that Ilaiyaraaja has used many times in his career ('Thamthanam' from the movie 'Pudhiya Vaarpugal', 'Kaathal Kasakkuthayya' from the film 'Aan Paavam' and 'Sollayya Vaai Thiranthu' from 'Mogamull' are some examples that come immediately to mind).

Shanmughapriya consists of seven notes and is therefore called a Sampoorana raga in carnatic music. Ragas like Abhogi for example ('Indreikki En Intha Ananthame' from the film 'Vaithekie Kaathirunthal' is tuned to this raga), which only have five notes, are called Audava Raagas, and ragas such as Malahari have five notes in ascending order (Audava) and six notes in descending order, which are then called audava-shadava ragas.

Ilaiyaraaja has solely used the notes from Shanmughapriya for this particular song - no foreign notes from another raga are used, which make this tune a pure Shanmughapriya delight.

**"Pazhaiya ragam maranthu,
nee paranthathenna
pirinthu?
Iravum thorum azhuthu, en
irandu kannum pazhuthu.
Idhu oru ragasiya
nadaghame, aleigalil
kulingidum odam naane"**

("You took off and left me, forgetting our past, my eyes are tired from crying all night. A drama is unfolding and I am a canoe drifting on the waves)



Kamal Hassan's acting and dancing complemented the maestro's music, setting a fast song in a sad raga

The lyrics are intertwined with classical music and dance images.

Kamal Hassan's dramatic drunken dance performance on the edge of a well has the audience on the edge of their seats until the woman he desires (played by Jaypriya) manages to catch him before he topples over and falls.

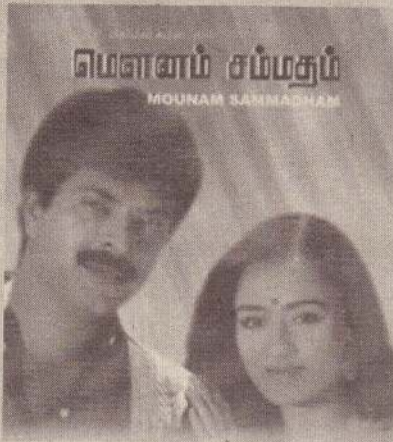
Ilaiyaraaja used many instruments which are used in classical Indian dance (bharathanatyam) such as mridangam, flute and veena, keeping the song consistent with the entire theme of the film.

'Thakida Thadhimi' has so many musical layers to it that it is almost hard to comprehend how such a complex composition came about.

Having used a raga which is said to be sad, Ilaiyaraaja has yet again achieved what he became so famous for: letting the audience feel the song to the point that every time you hear it, you pick up another musical genality which he has woven in.

CULTURE

Kalyana Then Nila



'Kalyana Then Nila' from the film Mounam Sammatham, featuring Mammoothi and Amala showcases all of Ilaiyaraaja's musical abilities in just 4 minutes and 41 seconds.

Set in the romantic and evocative raga Darbari Kannada, 'Kalyana Then Nila' starts with a soothing rhythm, a beautiful guitar piece which then leads into a short string and flute jughalbandhi. A second's pause and Yesudas' stunning vocals fill the room. Yesudas is one of those few artists who can make the listener feel and experience the lyrics of the songs. The ease and playfulness with which he entices the listener is almost ridiculous!

The female vocals are effectively introduced halfway through the first charanam. Chitra, also known as 'Isaikuyil

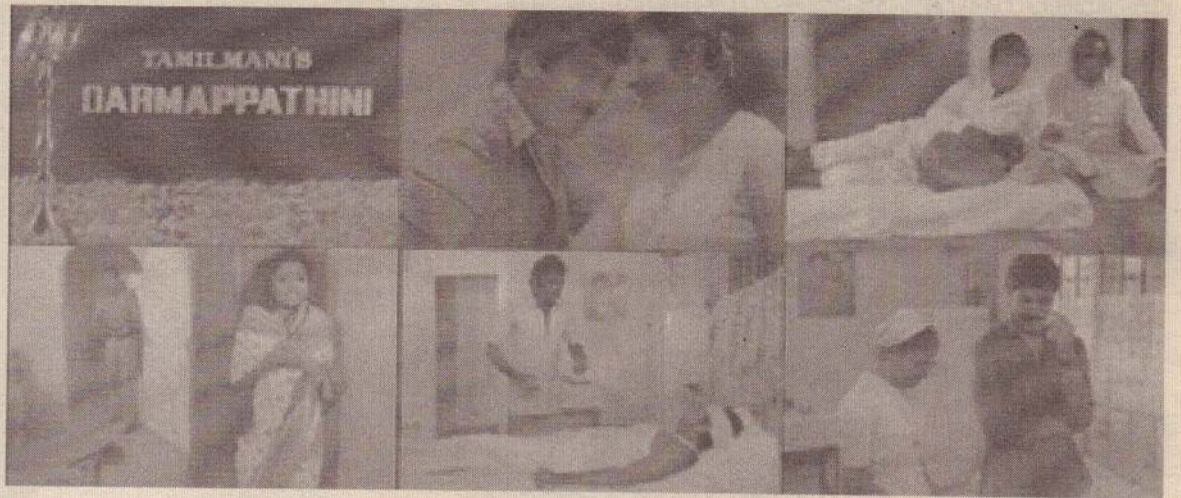
Chitra' (Nightingale Chitra), whose voice was even sweeter and absolutely crystal clear in her early days, certainly does her title justice in this composition.

Words almost fail to describe both singers' abilities to render their parts so effortlessly and with such emotion which is echoed in every word.

Subtle undertones of coyness and romance highlight the honeymoon setting (Kalayana Then Nila literally means Wedding Honey Moon) and both actors play a wonderful part in translating the song onto the screen.

An important point must be noted about the lyrics of this song by Pulamaipithan: each line ends with the syllable 'la', a deliberate twist which puts a unique stamp on this truly mesmerizing composition.

Naan thedum sevvanthi poo



'Naan thedum sevvanthi poo' is a wonderful composition by Ilaiyaraaja from the film Dharma Pathini, starring Karthik and Jeevitha.

It is set in the carnatic raaga of Hindolam, although it has a very non-carnatic rhythm and bass pattern, and can therefore be referred to as a semi-classical composition.

It is a good example of an Ilaiyaraaja tune, where he has perfectly fused classical western and carnatic influences to create a true masterpiece.

The very beginning of the song is an excellent embellishment of the Hindolam raaga; sung by the maestro himself, the vibrant and colourful ad-lib (a

spontaneous improvisation of a tune) will stay with the rasika for a very long time.

An unforgettable moment is where Ilaiyaraaja performed this piece at his live show 'Andrum Indrum Endrum' and the crowd went absolutely wild after a few notes of the ad-lib. See the live performance below:

Whilst announcing the song, actor Partheeban even expressed that this aalapanai is so soulful, that one can die blissfully and contentedly after listening to it. This statement just about sums up the entire song.

S. Janaki also produced an absolutely flawless rendition, perfecting her subtly underplayed role as the coy, young girl who is

being courted by a love interest.

One can always rely on S. Janaki, from the 60's to the present day, to sing with such emotion, touching on avenues where other singers have never gone before.

S. P. Balasubramaniam notably constantly praises 'Janaki Amma' - how he affectionately refers to the multi award winning singer - and her ability to present such a vast and varied display of emotions in the studio as well as on stage.

Other Hindolam tunes by Ilaiyaraaja include the stunningly beautiful 'Pothi Vacha Malligai Mottu' (Mann Vaasanai) and 'Ohm Namasivaya' (Salangai Oli).

TAMIL GUARDIAN

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Imperial Tamil Soc sparkles at 'Mega Maalai XI'

IMPERIAL College London's Tamil Society staged their annual 'Mega Maalai' entertainment show on January 23 with a blaze of colour, dance and song at the Piccadilly Theatre in the capital's West End. **Rajini Naz** writes for Tamil Guardian.

The audience at the eleventh in the successful 'Mega Maalai' series had high expectations. ICL's Tamil Soc did not disappoint.

Tamil students and international colleagues laid on a rollercoaster of entertainment, with acts ranging from traditional bharathanatyam, Western street dance and ballet performances to dramas, stand up comedy, and martial arts.

Music performances mixed traditional carnatic sounds with popular Western chart music, all performed by students.

There was, as the organizers had promised, something for everyone.

At the peak of the show, a one-minute silence was observed to remember all those lost to Sri Lanka's genocidal repression and the Tamil struggle to protect their identity.

The theme was explicitly taken up in a dance drama depicting the journey from happiness to suffering and the hope for a just peace for Tamils in the homeland.

With the majority of students having been brought up and educated outside their homeland, 'Mega Maa-lai' is an iconic celebration of how the Diaspora's second generation is preserving and advancing Tamil culture forms, whilst embracing Western and other international ones.

All profits from the show are to be donated to Medical Institute of Tamils (MIOT) and North East Central Tripartite Association for Reconstruction (NECTAR), as well as Save the Children, underlining the strength of the bonds between the global Tamil community and their fellow Tamils in the homeland.

Photo: Ben Ganeshwaran for Thamarai.

