THE APPAPILLAI AMIRTHALINGAM
80TH BIRTH-ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL LECTURE

A Time for Tamil Introspection and Reassessment in the midst of Myth and Propaganda

S. Ratnajeevan Hoole
Scholar Rescue Fund Fellow, Institute of International Education, New York, NY
Drexel University, Philadelphia and University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

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Part I

Background to Paper/Personal

Chairman Sir, Madam Amirthalingam: It behoves me to begin this talk by first thanking the Organizing Committee and the family of the late Hon. Appapillai Amirthalingam, the onetime Leader of the Opposition in Sri Lanka, for honoring me by inviting me as the speaker today. I am as humbled as I am beholden.

While this is a memorial talk and not one on Mr. Amirthalingam himself, please permit me to digress a little as seems fitting, to say a few things personally about Mr. Amirthalingam and the Federal Party that he so ably led in dark and difficult times.

I make bold to speak here on this occasion because given the times in which I grew up, the Federal Party or FP is part of my make up and being. My family has for long been associated with the FP. The late M. Tiruchelvam, Neelan Tiruchelvam, Uduvil Dharmalingam, C. Vanniasingham, and Kopay Kaithavetpillai were all relations of sorts. SJV's niece Samathanam Muthiah married my uncle Peter Somasundaram who was an FP Member of the Jaffna Municipal Council. My uncle, the late K. Nesiah, was one of the principal civilians who prevailed upon the FP and the Tamil Congress to merge into the Tamil United Front, which later became the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

As a tribute to the great leaders of the FP and for old times' sake, I would like to go through the members of Parliament listed in this old 1960 calendar, under Mr. S.J.V. Chelvanayagam:

1. Mr. Rasmananickam, President
2. Mr Rajavarothayam M.P. Trincomalee
3. Mr Amirathalingam M.P. Vaddukottai
4. Dr.E.M.V. Naganathan M.P. Nallur
5. Mr.V.N. Navaratnam M.P. Chavakacheri
6. Mr. Mohammed Ali M.P. of Muthur perhaps
7. Mr K. P. Ratnam then of Kilinochchi . I used to chauf feur him in his A40 Somerset when he came to Jaffna at his nephew Engineer Logarajah's request
8. Mr Thurairatnam M.P. Point Pedro
9. Mr Kangaratnam M.P. Poththuvil whose son Ravilojan is a good friend.
10. Mr V Navaratnam M.P. Kayts
11. Mr. Dhramalingam M.P. Uduvil
12. Mr Kathiravetpillai M.P. Kopay
13. Mr Alahakone M.P. Mannar I remember his speaking to the Mannar GA with authority at a meeting while I was a school boy in the GA's bungalow listening on. MP's those days were men of confidence. Among today's MPs, I have seen Mr. R. Sambanthan commanding similar respect among Sinhalese.
14. Mr Rajaratnam M.P.of Udipiddy I think
15. Mr C Rajadurai M.P. Batticaloa

After the settled Dudley regime which saw the FP in cabinet, we enter the era when I as a youth came into contact with Mr. Amirthalingam. His leadership of the FP was then becoming more obvious as SJV Chelvanayagam aged.

The new ULF government came into office in May 1970. Shortly there-after the first university admissions were announced. These were to

Peradeniya's Faculty of Engineering. Previously out of the 150 vacancies, Tamils got 75 or so places. This time due to some sudden quirk, there were 103 Tamil medium students and only 30 Sinhalese medium students. The rest were the last English medium students. A campaign was begun in the South and our admissions were suspended.

What is relevant here is that the *Mahnavar Peravai* was born. All Jaffna schools joined in street demonstrations. Waragoda – a Sub-Inspector (SI) – was noted for his uncontrolled violence. It was believed he was on punishment transfer in Jaffna as if to say "If your psychotic disposition compels you to beat up people, go and beat up Tamils." Waragoda beat us up at the demonstration. Lucky, my classmate and a very happy fellow with a perpetual smile had been mauled. People like Sivakumaran were involved. Late in August 1970, a brother of mine, two friends and I were badly assaulted by Waragoda while cycling down Kachcheri-Nallur Road. Apparently some youth had passed comments on girls going for the Nallur *Thiruvila* and their parents had complained to the police. Waragoda jumped at the opportunity to thump a few more Tamil boys in the area as an example. My father was quite upset. We called up the Tamil Superintendent of Police (SP) to say we were coming to make a complaint. He, the author of a recent article in *Tamil Week* glorifying the peacefulness of his era in Jaffna, told us not to come to him because, if we came to him, he would need to take action! His very own words! He suggested that we go to the Officer-in-Charge, OIC Sivendran, who was till recently writing a Colombo column on rugger in the newspapers. Sivendran was very courteous and even sympathetic for he knew well his officer Waragoda. But it was obvious that our recorded complaint would go nowhere.

That was when the FP was consulted. My father and uncle Nesiah consulted Mr. Kaithiravetpillai and Mr. Amirthalingam. It was determined that, in the absence of action by the SP, a private plaint would be filed by me against Waragoda for assault and battery. Retired District Judge Thambithurai of the FP and of Thinnavely volunteered his

services on behalf of the FP. It is worth remarking that Mr. Thambithurai's son Kumar of the Tamil Eelam liberation Organisation (TELO) was the first Tamil to get political asylum in the US. His grand-daughter is married to the Liberation tigers of Tamil Eelam or the LTTE's Rudrakumar. In the event, after several court appearances we were thwarted as lawyer Rasa Viswanathan ably defended Waragoda against me, and calling me all kinds of names. Despite several court dates, the case was never heard as hearings were postponed using a note from the Tamil SP claiming that Waragoda could not be present because of emergency duty at Elephant Pass. It was a time when, in the FP frame of mind, particularly for the *Peravai*, the three relations GG, Alfred Duraiyappah and the SP were the agents of the state, traitors advancing personal well-being through cooperation with the state.

Alfred Duraiyappah, a politician with a significant following in Jaffna, had barely lost to C.X. Martyn in the 1970 general elections but was still Mayor of Jaffna. He was working with Mrs. B. to build up the SLFP in Jaffna. His trick was to get a monopoly on bicycle tyre sales though the Coop. Everyone who needed a tyre – that is almost every male in Jaffna – had to go to the Mayor for a permit which was duly given on giving Rs. 2 and signing the SLFP membership form. As party membership swelled, Mrs. B. thought he was really building up her party and sent more and more perks for distribution through him. I too went to him and queued up at the municipality in desperation and the Mayor, a master at personal relations, greeted me thus: "Hello young Hoole! What can I do for you?" He immediately gave me a permit without asking me to sign the party membership. He knew me as from a family not in his camp. In another instance, he gave a lift to a person who had written against him and instead of quarrelling with him, simply asked him with a smile to be kind to him the next time he wrote. I suppose that is how the gracious Mayor won over many people and always had a good third of the people of Jaffna behind him. With the rest of Jaffna divided between the FP and the TC, he always had a good shot at being MP for Jaffna as well as Mayor.

It is no secret that Alfred was seen as a traitor by many, while a good number believed that he represented the Tamils well by steering a non-confrontational course. It is difficult to dispute that when Alfred was Mayor he developed the city (and perhaps as his defenders would say, ate a little of the hay much like a threshing bull) – I say this because when the FP was in charge of the city, we made good thundering speeches about Tamil freedom and did little about bread and butter issues like pipe borne water for the city and the new market that Alfred was so good at.

With volcanic student anger now mounting against the SLFP, its offices were broken up several times by the *Manavar Peravai*. On one such occasion, after the SLFP Office was broken up, the police suspected that Sivakumaran and party were sheltering at the FP office. It was the first time I had seen Mr. Amirthalingam in action. A police SI pointing a submachine gun and men to back him up came storming to the FP office. Mr. Amirthalingam, on hearing the commotion, stood there unmoving, holding his right hand across the doorway in his hallmark *verty, the Tamil kurta* and his neatly folded *chahlvai*. The policeman with his armed party behind wanted entry to search the premises for suspects. "Where is your search warrant?" demanded Mr. Amirthalingam in his booming voice. "Move or I will shoot," replied the policeman very threateningly. "Over my dead body!," thundered back Mr. Amirthalingam with absolutely no concern for his safety. The policeman was visibly flustered. He left shouting several threats. It is a moment I can never forget. My whole face and torso literally tingled with pride then, given how we felt about the iniquitous treatment we were getting as a people and how we felt about the police.

It was strange times in a strange nationalist mindset those days. For example while asking for the right of the Tamil people to be free, as a party we always made speeches in parliament with little sympathy for the Palestinians in similar plight. Mr. V.N. Navaratnam a fine and great gentleman whom I accompanied to his lecture at University of Penn -

sylvania after the riots, would hold forth in Parliament on behalf of the FP in favour of Israel. Ariam, a founding leader of the *Peravai* with Sathialeelan – both of them are disillusioned and abroad today – was in close contact with the Israelis and went about with piles of magazines from them on how Jaffna could be made to boom agriculturally. At that time we were all enraged by the government and admired Israel. Though we were fighting for liberation based on liberal principles, here we were oblivious to the rights of the Palestinians! – I suppose because the Israelis were a small group in the vast Middle East showing how powerful a minority could be and we took vicarious pleasure in Israel's might.

Where I actually got to know Mr. Amirthalingam personally was at the Tamil Conference in Nanuet, NY after the 1983 riots. His description of the happenings in Jaffna and Colombo was clinical and without exaggeration. Numbers relating to Tamil victims he mentioned were well below the numbers mentioned by expatriate Tamils. Mr. Amirthalingam mentioned 2000 dead, while the expatriates had previously mentioned "thousands upon thousands" before a Senator. Anyone listening to his account, despite the total lack of exaggeration, still came away with a clear idea of the huge enormity that had been visited upon us Tamils. The Tamil organizers of the event though were hostile to him and Mr. Sivasithambaram. The organizers worked through youth from Germany to attack the TULF at the conference, calling for a full push for Eelam. Nowhere was the chasm between US Tamils and the Sri Lankan Tamil leadership more evident than at this conference. The organizers from the Ilangaith Thamil Changam who had donated more than $10,000 each for the conference wore purple ribbons on their lapels proclaiming their wealth. Invitees from India and Sri Lanka including our leaders and students who could not pay the registration fee were given yellow ribbons announcing their pauper-like status. When the organizers, in showing off their new loyalties and identity, called for a toast for Eelam at the conference, Mr. Amirthalingam and Mr. Sivasithambaram, did not rise but sat through stoically looking at the floor, seated with

their arms folded across their chests, as the others stood and raised their glasses of liquor. Mr. Amirthalingam's objection I found out was not to Eelam but the use of liquor in a Tamil function, showing the widening chasm between the local and overseas leaderships.

Part II

Lessons for a New Direction

Population Statistics – The Bell Tolls for Tamils of Sri Lanka

I now move on to the main subject of this talk – A Time for Tamil Introspection and Reassessment in the midst of Myth and Propaganda. I will take as a given the cruelty we Tamils have suffered at the hands of the Sri Lankan state. I do not for a moment diminish its evil. Indeed there is little to debate on that matter as even the government in its occasional good moments has ceded that fact and also apologized for it. The wider international community too takes that for granted.

Today we are at a time when we Tamils face a grave crisis – a crisis that questions our very existence as a people. When I was a boy, I was taught that we so called Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils numbered 11% each, the Muslims some 7 percent and allowing for Burghers, Malays and others, the Sinhalese were 69%. Today the Srimavo-Shastri Pact, so correctly and vehemently opposed by the FP, has reduced the Indian Tamil population to some 5.7%.

And what of the Ceylon Tamil population? No census has been conducted in Tamil areas since 1981 because of the war. The government Department of Census and Statistics has published estimates that do not reflect the massive reduction of Tamils in Sri Lanka and thereby saved the government from charges of genocide. I believe that the North-East was deliberately skipped for this reason. For I have seen several NGO and Education surveys being successfully conducted. In one instance my wife and her team went into remote corners of LTTE territory.

It is a lie in which we Tamils too have colluded. For it ensures that the number of Tamil seats in Parliament, based in part on population figures, are kept up and quotas of Tamil university places based on these numbers preserved.

It had been my estimate that Ceylon Tamils are at 5.5% making a Tamil total of 11.2%. Ceylon Tamil numbers, as all of us know, have been vitiated by human rights violations from all sides – in the words of the International Crisis Group based in Brussels, and I quote

> While the LTTE has continued its deliberately provocative attacks on the military and Sinhalese civilians as well as its violent repression of Tamil dissenters and forced recruitment of adults and children, the government is using extra-judicial killings and disappearances as part of a brutal and counter-productive counter-insurgency campaign. 'Human rights abuses are for the most part the result of deliberate policy decisions by the government and the LTTE', says David Lewis, Crisis Group Regional Deputy Director.[1]

Close quotation.

As the country bleeds its Tamil population, the world needs to take serious note of Minority Rights Group International's 2007 Report "Minorities under Threat" which saw the Tamils of Sri Lanka moving from forty-ninth endangered place in the year 2006 to fourteenth in the year 2007. Urgency is added by a recent article in the Washington Post[2] where Minister Rambukwella, the Sri Lanka government spokesman, let the cat out of the bag when he said "Thirty nine percent of Tamils now live in the Western Province." His intention of course was to say that Tamils prefer, when they can, to live in the Sinhalese South rather than under the LTTE. And this is indeed often true for reasons including fear of military action and not just of the harsh rule of the LTTE as he was saying. But in so saying Minister Rambukwella gave us, officially for the first time, the true population statistics.

Now with Minister Rambukwella's revelation, we see the true numbers. The 2001 Census from the non-Tamil areas where the Census was conducted gives Tamil numbers in the Western Province Districts of Kalutara, Gampaha and Colombo as 387,043[3]. If this is 39% of the Tamil population, then we Tamils number 992,417 in the island, a figure of 10% at most – a very realistic figure that is a little worse than I feared and is in consonance with figures of Tamils before the conflict, Tamils in foreign countries and those I have seen from government officials in charge of rations distribution in Tamil areas. The Tamil population has been reduced to less than a half in our 60 years of so called independence.

The Need for Reassessment and Action without Delay

A crisis is upon the Tamil community. Time is of the essence. A new direction is required if we are to survive as a people. Reality must be faced. Mythmaking – and there is a lot of it – has to stop. Divisions within the community need to be bridged – and that means pluralism has to return. Indeed, the two are very connected and I would like to take this opportunity to point out a few places to start.

As a person who believed strongly in federalist principles, I must confess to being guilty myself of many of the community's faults. As an academic teaching ethical principles for engineers, I am most mindful from the Ford Pinto, Space Shuttle and Bay Area Rapid Transport engineering debacles that are now classic textbook examples that we engineering educators use to draw lessons from – their repeated lesson that problems need to be addressed early and that delay means that the problem gets bigger.

We easily see this principle in politics. The US and Israel refused to deal with Yasir Arafat and even tried hard to sideline his Fatah. Arafat lost prestige among his people for his failure to show results. The extremists gained. And today we see the sad spectacle of Israel and the

US trying to shore up Fatah in the hope of off-setting the power of the far more radical and uncompromising Hamas. But most analysts believe it is too late. We have seen the same phenomenon with the TULF. After sidelining and breaking it up, the Sri Lankan government tried vainly to deal with the TULF rather than the LTTE

Just like with the engineering problems with the Ford Pinto, an early solution would have been easy. But having delayed it, a solution seems as elusive as when the fuel tanks of the Pinto had exploded in several accidents and several law suits were upon the company. In contrast, when Quebecers wanted to quit Canada and the Canadian government generously allowed a referendum, the fissiparous tendencies seemed to evaporate. Trudeau, a French Canadian campaigned against separatism. But no one called him a traitor and shot him. When the Scottish people showed even the slightest sign of restiveness, they were given their own institutions aborting any violent fissiparous reaction.

Five Miscalculations

What then are the issues confronting the Tamil community? What are the issues? What are the presumptions and mis-assumptions we make, that have brought us, a once proud community, to our knees as it were, to the point of near extinction as a people?

It is of utmost importance for our survival that we reassess ourselves and how we think honestly at this crucial juncture in our history without any further delay, and undistracted by our own propaganda. I will now list five matters of immediate concern this evening.

1. **Believing our own propaganda without verification and acting on it:**
   First and foremost, we have come to believe our own propaganda. We are victims of our own propaganda. As a result we

get our analysis all wrong. We play cards that we do not have because of our own propaganda.

We rightly condemned standardization requiring different admission standards from different groups. We rightly confronted it then. But did we ask the equally relevant question whether it is right for one community under 10%, the Jaffna Tamil Vellahla community, to dominate at least 103 of 150 engineering places in 1970? If we had asked that question and engaged the state in a dialogue, perhaps the wisdom would have dawned on everyone that Tamils and Sinhalese are indeed different peoples (which, after all, is why we are asked how many are Sinhalese and how many are Tamil in a state pretending to be made up of one people). It would perhaps have dawned on us that Sinhalese and Tamil aspirations are both well served and our conflicts best avoided by having a Tamil state whose universities Tamils try to enter and a Sinhalese state that Sinhalese compete in. Our filing a case against standardization under Section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution, then still very much in force, rather than taking to street demonstrations, I think would have helped the dialogue start in a less strident way, thereby provoking thought and promoting solutions. I think a lot of our activism, both political and military, has been directed at controlling the minds, passions and loyalties of Tamils rather than at finding a solution.

We rightly condemn the burning of the Jaffna Public Library by the state and the destruction of culture. But how many of you know that powerful men went about Jaffna's village libraries and party offices pulling out and destroying every copy of any material on Mr. Amirthalingam? Is that something we do not want to hear? Or is it something that does not matter? Is it not cultural genocide as we make out with the Jaffna Library?

By the way, the word Juggernaut is a phrase derived from the old practice of Jegannathah's *Ther* under which devotees threw

themselves in self-sacrifice as it rolled on, for merit in the after-life. It is an event that has been noted by Friar Oderic in the 14th century and confirmed from British records of the nineteenth century banning the practice. As for the Tamil Juggernaut, we must all climb aboard or be crushed. It is no accident that followers of this Juggeranut – Jegannathah or Krishna – have compared him to Krishna of the Bagavad Gita, arguing that the killing fields are part of the dharmic order. In *Time* dated September 16, 2002 Jaffna psychiatrist Daya Somasundaram says the faithful make pilgrimages to MR. Prabhakaran's former home in nearby Valveddithurai to fill little boxes of soil "like a holy ritual, as though they are collecting water from the Ganges." He adds, I quote: "Many of my patients regard Prabhakaran as higher than their own god."

Again we make much of the TRO and its functions being disrupted by the Sri Lankan state and western governments as it is investigated. We speak among ourselves on what great work the TRO is doing and how the west is illegally obstructing its work. Highly agitated, we work towards getting the ban reversed? But how many of us know that when my students went through the Pettah after the tsunami pleading for donations and drove their convoy of lorries with supplies to the affected Tamil areas, they were stopped at the border and not allowed to proceed? After a week of waiting, the TRO took over the supplies that had not spoilt by then and my students had to return, dejected.

Again, do you know about the bicycles that a foreign NGO had given each family when they were shown a village near Point Pedro devastated by the tsunami? After the NGO had departed, those who had brought the NGO confiscated all the bicycles. An FP MP who went there later got the shelling of his life from the villagers for obediently standing by when all these things happen to them.

Most significantly I know from first hand sources that in 2005 a representative came to New York to raise money for the so called final push for Eelam. When concerned potential donors asked if there would be no problems from their giving to a proscribed organization, they were assured that the money could be given through the TRO or the Thamil Changam. Western intelligence agencies have their foul-ups but they are not stupid. We must assume that when they go after the TRO they have something solid to go on. When they know the true facts and we argue for the TRO, western governments have little respect for our community and stop listening to us.

2) Anyone who disagrees with us is a traitor

Our second mistake – grave and self-defeating error that has robbed us of several of our ablest leaders – is our assumption that those who disagree with us are traitors to our cause. What we have created is the Tamil Bandwagon that everyone must climb on to and as it assumes the proportions of a Juggernaut.

And those of us who refuse to climb aboard the Tamil Juggernaut immolate ourselves. A long line of Tamil leaders such as Mr. Amirthalingam, Mr. and Mrs. Yogeswaran, and Neelan Tiruchelvam came forward to see if some *via media* could be worked out for the Tamil people to live in Sri Lanka with a modicum of self-respect and safety. They tried to make the harsh world we faced under Sinhalese aggression as comfortable as possible for us in the circumstances. Mrs. Yogeswaran, my class teacher's sister, tried to run the municipality and tried to do something for our people through it. They were all deemed traitors and killed.

I trust we can see how wrong we have been. We have made many a *volte face*. M. Sivasithambaram whom many of us federalists did not like at one time because of his Congress roots,

became a genuine hero to us. Sivaram Taraki who had much to explain from a period when he was PLOTE Deputy Leader and many PLOTE cadre were internally killed, went through a remake. The FP that supported Israel in Parliament later would arrange for India to send our boys for training under Arafat's PLO. Rasa Viswanathan became a TULF hero defending human rights. The effete AG, Siva Pasupathy, who as chief legal advisor to the government did not inform the government that adding 28 marks to every Sinhalese candidate in the 1969 ALs violated Section 29 of the then Constitution, became the LTTE's legal advisor and a new hero. The very SP whom the students of Jaffna intensely disliked then and who allowed Waragoda to get away from punishment, is a much touted writer. Kumar Ponnambalam in 1990 with his presidential running mate Raviraj was very critical of the LTTE in his articles in the Sunday Times. Many of us Federalists, I recall, had cheered in the late-1960s as cruel jokes about Kumar that cannot be committed to writing were uttered from election platforms, tying him to his close relative Alfred. We thought of his father GG Ponnambalam also as a traitor. Today GG is a heroic founding father of the TULF[4]. Kumar and Raviraj both are our heroes, praised by the very same people who once were against them. There was a time when Mr. Sambanthan, Mr. Suresh Premachandran and others were "traitors" hiding in the Non-aligned Flats guarded by the state. Today they are our leaders. Is it possible that Alfred too, if he had not been so brutally murdered, would perhaps be a hero today? Or perhaps even a Maamanithan? Who is a traitor and who is a hero for us Tamils? It all seems stage managed according to convenience.

In the event, I would like to defend and pay my humble respects to two of my leaders. Mr. Amirthalingam experienced first hand the inveterate racism and unyielding expansionism of the Sinhalese state. He saw in India a friend, a great friend of the Tamil people. It may be argued that India had selfish interests.

Surprised? Every state has permanent interests which it pursues, sometimes without principle. What is relevant is that Indian interests were confluent with the interests of the Tamils given two factors – the intrinsic anti-Indian ethos of many Sinhalese and the common cultural links between India and the Tamils. Mr. Amirthalingam simply saw an avenue for advancing Tamil interests and moved strategically into that opportunity. Those of us who were in Sri Lanka as the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) moved in are deeply aware of our very high expectations – realistic expectations. Criminals settled in the East had run away. An IIT-like institution for the North-East was in the making, as was a modern highway along the east coast from Batticaloa to Jaffna.

It all came to naught because of our puritanical all or nothing attitude towards the 7 seats of the Provincial Council.

Can anyone today really argue that Mr. Amirthalingam was wrong? We have been practically eliminated, slipping in numbers behind the Indian Tamils and the Muslims. Our educational indices are badly down. According to a Ministry of Education study, Jaffna is behind Kilinochchi. Surely the Indian intervention – even if we choose to call it Indian hegemony – would have been far better than what we have today. In hindsight Mr. Amirthalingam was so right!

Similarly a second person whose good name I would defend is the late Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam whose death anniversary just passed us by. He was an internationally recognized constitutional lawyer. He tried his level best to arrive at a negotiated constitutional settlement. He and we Tamils were cheated as the Sinhalese parties went through their now predictable contortions and machinations to defeat even the modicum of a meaningful devolution that the constitutional reforms envisaged. As Ranil Wickramasinghe sent his wavering MPs on paid vacations to

Singapore to prevent their voting, even the vote of TULF MPs became uncertain. The legislation was withdrawn.

Today in hindsight, who would deny that if that constitutional amendment with all its weaknesses had been passed, we Tamils would have a certain safety in Tamil areas which we no longer possess?

What is sad is that the former colleagues of these two men in the TULF with some notable exceptions behave as if these brave men did not take a stand for and on behalf of the party. We fail to acknowledge that these men were martyrs for the Federal Party and its successor, the TULF. We pretend as if they did not exist and often will not utter their names. They were our enlightened leaders. And leaders must be given the space to take decisions. I understand that one of the new leaders of the party cried at a private meeting and apologized saying his somersault was because of his safety. Today our once able, respected and self-sacrificing leaders are our representatives with the kind permission of the Tamil Juggernaut. Even though I am sure some of our MPs will be returned if the public is allowed to choose and anyone wishing is allowed to contest, many others will not be because they have no standing among the Tamil people. The election of these men of the Federal Party is questionable given the fact that others are not free to challenge them at the polls. One MP of this great party is there because of his experience at rigging votes as a university student and was pushed out by the Senate of the University as a graduate although he had marks below the passing 40. He is today a specialist at shouting the worst possible Tamil filth in Parliament. This is another way in which we Tamils have died as a great people.

I cannot help wonder if by simply saying they will not participate in Tamil politics any more, our MPs would not be leading the

Tamil people in a big way once again. I do not presume to judge them. But certainly as their admirer and follower, I wish that Mr. R. Sambanthan, Mr. Mavai Senathirajah and Mr. Sivajilingam would truly lead us again as they once did rather than simply follow orders. While they do what they can, given their circumstances, their example of subservience as leaders and their silence on one half of the atrocities that our people are put through, is very disheartening to us of their old fold.

The real crisis facing the Tamil leadership then is that anyone who comes forward to deal with the Sri Lankan government goes back empty handed. In the process they are, what I might call, Arfatized – drained of the goodwill that the people have for them, despite the great sacrifices they made and continue to make in striving for a solution with minimal loss of life. It is the challenge confronting Mr. V. Anandasangari, another great unarmed Tamil leader taking great personal risks for what he believes in. He is raising serious questions about the wisdom underlying many of our political methods and we would do well to enter and encourage that dialogue. If the Sri Lankan government is serious about freedom for and the well being of the people over whom it presides, it must deal honestly with those who are still willing to talk. The experience of the ongoing All Party Conference and the Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances, it seems to me, points to the government's resolve to use these conferences and inquiries not to progress but to delay what is owed to the Tamil people. As the government digs in its heels on these two important institutions, those Tamils participating will unfortunately get devalued before the Tamil public.

Irony indeed it is that we who do not allow Tamil intellectuals to think freely cannot see what we do to ourselves in the process. To demonstrate, I would like to take situation with Dr. Mohammed Imtiyaz, a good friend of mine from Temple University. He is

a Muslim scholar and takes an independent line of thinking rather than the so called line "that a Muslim ought to take." In his writings in *Tamil Week* and other places, he has pointed out where the Muslims need to change and stated that in the circumstances devolution of powers is a sound way out of our common predicament.

Tamils who spew virulent nationalism have congratulated him for his liberal positions. "Very well analyzed," "It's about time the non tamil [sic.] elites speak out and defend humanity and democracy in Sri Lanka," and "Quite right Dr Imtiyaz," were some of the encomiums he received from the cowards who always use pseudonyms. One "Ilaya Seran Senguttuvan," a self-styled king/the monk Ilango indicating the old imperial grandeur of a bygone era in which he had cloaked himself, declared Dr Imtiyaz as "one of those who analyses [sic.] the Lankan situation in perspective and dispassionately."

Sinhalese readers for their part got very upset and called up Dr. Imtiyaz's Department Head at Temple University and demanded that he, a supporter of terrorism as they described him, be put out. The international attention to his scholarship impressed the Head so much that he asked Dr. Imtiyaz to teach an extra course on South Asia.

Muslims for their part directly contacted him threatening him physically.

The same phenomenon can be seen in the hate letters and columns directed by Sinhalese at two of my good friends, Dr. Jehan Perera and Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda, two Sinhalese who speak up for a liberal Sri Lanka accommodating of Tamils and for that reason regarded highly by Tamils.

Just imagine a Tamil writing independently. These reactions would have been reversed. A good example is the Martin Ennals 2007 award winning UTHR-J and Tamil reactions to it.

We who thank God for people like Drs. Imtiyaz, Perera and Uyangoda must do so not because they agree with us on some things, but because of the liberal ethos they fearlessly defend and uphold. As The Rt. Rev. Rayappu Joseph poignantly reminded us recently from Mannar, "Where there is no truth, there can be no justice and peace."

3) Overseas Tamils as Representatives

The third myth is that the Tamils abroad represent the interests of the Tamils at home. I do not say that Tamils abroad have no sympathy for our brethren at home or that they have no role to play on their behalf. Rather, what I say is that the Tamils abroad have different needs and often their work is detrimental to the interests of their home-bound brethren. We have already seen the purple ribbon syndrome.

Unlike the Tamils who live in Sri Lanka, generally the Tamils abroad have a different world view. Here I speak of those who are presuming to act politically on our behalf and against those of us who will not fall under the wheels of the Tamil Juggernaut that runs our lives. The myth is that these activists are interested in the well being of the Tamils at home. Consider the self-styled Diaspora Tamils at Schliran Salmen Hall in Zurich, on July 24, 2006 marking the occasion of the 1983 riots. They sloganeered thus: "Death Won't Deter Us" Do you think any of them faced death there, far across the seas in Germany? I am sure that nearly all of them will die of old age as their lives are artificially prolonged by western medical technology. Surely they mean that the deaths of Tamils in Sri Lanka will not deter them!

This July 23, many of my Tamil friends in the US had a demonstration in Washington DC from noon to 3:00 PM, supposedly organized by "Tamil Americans and Friends for Peace". I was also asked to attend or at least send my children. They were short of a crowd. Some Senators would be there, I was told as an inducement. In the event only an aide to a Congressman turned up. Within an hour of the event TamilNet.com had photographs and the resolution showing the hidden hand behind the event. Declared the resolution "We, the Tamil Americans, ... resolve that our struggle to establish the right of Tamil people to Self-Determination, and to establish self-rule ... will continue until our goal is achieved." I point to the key phrase "our struggle." What is their struggle except to have meetings in 5-star hotels and organize picnics in Washington DC for their children who have nothing to do in the summers? Meeting a Senator and possibly taking a photo with him was certainly one of the attractions. TamilNet proclaimed that a thousand had come. The real numbers were well short of 500.

A special website created for the newly formed organization behind the demonstration, http://tamilpeace.freewebhosting360.com/ went through other websites making tracing difficult and had no names. The webpage appears to have been taken off as soon as it came on. It was a lot like the anonymous website of the Thamil Changam where the Editor, President, Secretary et al. remain anonymous. The so called struggle has gone anonymous except for fronting white Americans.

The statement in TamilNet was not signed by anyone and merely quoted the LTTE's Rudrakumaran and an 80 year-old Mrs. Kandasamy who had no fear of prosecution (one as a lawyer and the other because of age). As such neither the demonstration nor its resolution had little credibility, the little credibility it had undermined by the exaggeration on numbers.

I put it to you that we must regard those activities that do not take into consideration the well-being of the Tamils of Sri Lanka, as those of a deracinated crowd looking for ways to enhance their status and have activities of an entertaining nature for their past time in their rich but boring corners of the world. At best, it is their way of telling off the Sri Lankan government with which they are justly angry. But when they demonstrate and make speeches that list only the Sri Lankan government's atrocities against the Tamil people and

- Do not recognize the plight of children who are forced to bear arms
- Do not recognize the plight of those Tamils who are shot dead for holding different political opinions
- Do not recognize the right of the Tamil people to buy, publish and sell newspapers of their choice
- Do not recognize the right of the Tamil people to vote for the representatives of their choice
- Do not recognize the right of the Tamils to seek the mandate of the Tamil people for their ideas their work must and will be dismissed as Goebbelsian propaganda perpetuating the Tamil people in slavery. And those who hear only half the story from us, have scant respect for us.

4) Tamil histories are right and Sinhalese histories are propaganda

The fourth myth among us Tamils, overlapping with the first, is that our Tamil histories are right and Sinhalese histories are all propaganda. That Sri Lankan histories are full of distortions upholding the Sinhalese image of themselves is without doubt true. I have laboured this point at length in my talk at my Amnesty International—University of Toronto Lecture this past April. I do not need to tell a mainly Tamil audience that and waste valuable talk time. We have suffered under these Sinhalese myths – most of all the myth that we are invaders in Sri Lanka not entitled to

the same rights as they. I will focus on Tamil myths because many of you may not be aware of these. We believe there was no Tamil violence in the several riots but I can personally testify that school boys picked up biscuits off Hospital Road when City Bakery was smashed up. Those who look at the Sansoni Commission evidence taken down in Kilinochchi will see records of Sinhalese migrant workers having been raped. Although Tamil violence was of a much smaller order and even reactive, we must be mindful of the full perspective. We believe that Alfred was a traitor deserving of death but if he is a traitor then that third of Jaffna that backed him also must be deemed deserving of death. In Toronto I pointed out histories attempting to make false claims belittling Christian Tamil contributions with respect to C.W. Thamotherampillai and Navalar's role in Bible translation.

How we work is best illustrated by the story of a Far Eastern Monk who used to go about Jaffna in the late 1980s beating a drum for peace. One day he was shot by one of our groups. An FP activist came home and told me, "They say he was shot by our boys on mere suspicion. But there is also a story that when questioned by our boys he took out a radio and a pistol and launched a karate attack that necessitated his killing. When you go back tell your contacts the latter story because it is in our favour." The problem is when we believe our own lies.

The Tamil nationalist Juggernaut makes very good propaganda. Take for example my good friend Urumpirai Sivakumaran. The website TamilNation.Org says that he studied at Urumpirai Hindu College up to the G.C.E. Advanced Level (AL), majoring in Chemistry ...[and that] he had worked for the success [of the 1974 Tamil Research Conference]. It adds that "On June 5, 1974, Sivakumaran was trapped by the police.... He was 17 years of age and knowing about police torture if he were caught, he used to carry a cyanide pill. On that day he swallowed it without so -

much as an afterthought and died almost instantly.[5]" TamilNation has knocked 7 years off his age to make him a schoolboy. And he did not die instantly but much later at the hospital, after his stomach was washed out. I was in Jaffna that day. A girls' school principal told me on the day he died based on what she had been told: "Sivakumaran rejected his seat at the university to fight for Tamil rights". But the fact is that he did not pass his A.Levels. He was 2 years my senior and had dropped out earlier. And indeed there is no majoring in chemistry at the A.Levels. Again let us see what the website of the LTTE Peace Secretariat says: "[I]n 1974, Sivakumaran inspired his fellow students by taking his life to avoid capture by the Sri Lankan military. .... In that year of 1974 during the World Tamil Research Conference in Jaffna, nine Tamils were shot and killed by the police without provocation. The police hunted Sivakumaran on suspicion that he is planning to take action against the police for this atrocity. But what are the facts? Fact 1: By 1974 Sivakumaran was a 24 year old dropout and was not a student for us to speak of his fellow students. You see the concerted attempt by different propaganda agencies to make him a young schoolboy. Fact 2: The police did fire but into the air. There was no deliberate attempt to kill. I was in Jaffna and later listened to the O.L. de Kretser Commission proceedings on the matter at Palm Court in their entirely. The police beat up people with all manner of things all over the town. They did not shoot at the people and no one died of gunshot that terrible day. Their warning shots, perhaps threatening shots, into the air brought down a power line that fell on the pipe railings that were there to direct the crowd and electrocuted those in contact. Nearly 8 died of electrocution. Fact 3: Sivakumaran was hunted following attempts on the Mayor's life and a failed Bank Robbery and not because they feared his reaction to the atrocities at the Tamil conference.

I deliberately chose this preceding example because it brings out why propaganda is so difficult to counter. When I give these

details, it appears that I lack grace for the memory of a young man whom many of us liked and is no more with us. It seems to put me on the side of the police in saying they did not shoot. We therefore choose not to contradict these claims. This reminds me of my experience with *Tamil Voice*, the magazine of the New York Ilanagaith Thamil Changam. When my sister was arrested in Colombo in 1995 and thrown into jail. I described the incident very carefully in *The Island. Tamil Voice* repeated it, doubling my sister's period of incarceration and claiming that she was naked in the presence of policemen. I protested to one of the four editors then saying that exaggeration would allow the state to undermine the indictment against it and make it easy for them to claim it was all cooked up – unfaithful in small things, unfaithful in big things goes the old adage. The furious editor told me that if I wanted he would issue a correction stating that the family denies the story and claims she was treated well by the police! I do not mean to say the police were nice to those attending the conference. They were indeed horrid. But the claim that those who died (including my dear mathematics teacher Mr. Sigmaringam who died of a heart attack after running home from the conference) died by police shooting is easily contradicted and belittles their deaths.

5. Tamils as a Monolithic Community

The fourth myth on propaganda naturally dovetails into the fifth myth – that we Ceylon Tamils are a monolithic entity. We never were and I doubt that we will ever be. For that is the nature of the state of human affairs.

Consider the Sinhalese. They rule Sri Lanka and determine outcomes in almost every matter of importance. As we are all aware, the Sinhalese think that all is well with our relationships. "Tamils have everything. What are they fighting for?" they ask in utter amazement. In turn it never ceases to amaze me how many

Sinhalese intellectuals can claim for example, that Tamils never had a problem until the LTTE came into being. They are so full of their magnanimity to Tamils and their dispensation as good rulers, that it never occurs to them that we have problems, very serious problems. Likewise, South African Whites believed that Blacks were well looked after by them. The British believed that those over whom they ruled were privileged to be under them, learning to be civilized.

Is it then possible – perhaps even remotely possible – that the Tamil ruling classes are equally unaware that their yoke is heavy on those whose lives they run?

I strongly suggest – indeed I put it to you – that Tamil society is controlled by a Mafia-like Vellahla elite. The LTTE may not be Vellahla but its intellectual base very much is. At one time the Vellahla Ilangaith Thamil Changam proudly declared in one its articles that Roman Catholics and coastal people are low caste. Now one can see this same intellectual base trying to give the people of Valvetithurai a high royal caste status through new writings. The caste ethos demands that Valvetithurai be elevated before its leadership has acceptability – much like Thamotherampillai needs to be made a born-Hindu to make his contributions legitimate and the Bible's translation attributed to Navalar before its quality can be extolled. The late Anton Balasingam's Maamanithan status also needs some conformity with the ideal that good things come only from the high caste. These flip-flops in Eelam rhetoric come from Vellahlas who articulate theory from safety while the others do the dying in the battle-field. Almost everyone in leadership in Kilinochchi I presume is the non-Vellahla other. It is true that many non-Vellahlas have risen to power within the LTTE. But so long as their power status needs to be justified through a higher caste status, the caste ethos will continue. In a couple of generations they will

become Vellahla or even Kshatriya. We see this in TamilNet, presumably from Vellahlas abroad, making the claim this Aug. 6 that the Paraiyar, are "prestigious ancestors of the Tamil social formation." Yet, I doubt that TamilNet's editors would be happy to be called Paraiyer, given the hypocrisy of the ruling Vellahla classes. Instead of attacking caste as the fiction it is, we try to make token elevations of those who cannot be kept down, so that the system is preserved and, with it, the status of the Vellahla. "If you cannot keep them down, invite them selectively to our ranks!"

The caste domination of the Vellahla and the boredom of the newly wealthy in the West have combined to spawn a new industry. If one pays a tidy sum to some of these new professional genealogists, they would oblige by giving you your family tree tracing you back to the ancient kings without any evidence. I am aware of those who show little culture in their personal lives going about with these family trees claiming high Tamil culture. Even as the Vellahla Ilangaith Thamil Changam has put down the Roman Catholics as low caste, another overseas Tamil family with Roman Catholic background has re-established the Ariya Chakravarty line, proclaiming "His Royal Highness Prince Remigius Kanagarajah" as the "Head of The Royal House of Jaffna"

How foolish the Tamil community is made to look when its affairs are handled by these out-of-touch – even virulent – sections of overseas Tamils! It undermines the credibility of us Tamils as a whole and our cause.

At the same time look at the advisors and "struggling" activists of the LTTE in Europe and North America. Almost everyone is Vellahla. Those who are not will hide that fact. And look at those legal advisors who went for the talks to tell the non-Vellahla oth

ers what to do – one-time collaborators and not just from Vellahla families, but from families that make it well known that they are Vellahlas. They claim to be the oldest true Vellahla stratum before the rest of us jumped on board and claimed to be Vellahla. Such is the human condition.

Again, on another aspect of our homogeneity, look at the leadership of the Tamils. Is it perhaps possible that Jaffna folk really dominate over the rest while Jaffna folk like the Sinhalese just cannot understand why our benign leadership is rejected by the others? I have seen serious difficulties at Eastern University among intellectuals that convince me that there is a huge problem. Col. Karuna could not have lasted this long without substantial support from the Tamil people of the East. We must take note and cannot continue ostrich-like till we vanish as a people from Sri Lanka

I am convinced that what we see going on in Sri Lanka is a lot more than the struggle of the Tamil people to be free. It cannot be just that when Tamil Vellahla intellectuals are for the most part abroad worrying about buying their second house and a fancier car, while "struggling for Eelam" with toasts with the highest grades of liquor.

What is going on is the separate struggles of different groups of the Tamil people in many forms – of all the Tamil peoples to be free of Sinhalese oppression and expansionism, of the people of the East to be free of Jaffna domination, of the people of the lower castes to be free of Vellahla tyranny, of the Tamil speaking Muslims to maneuver between the Tamils and Sinhalese among whom they live to carve out a dignified niche for themselves in Sri Lanka; and of the Tamil Protestant Christian community which has reacted to the new order by running away to Australia, the UK and Canada. And of course it is also the struggle of the Tamil

nouveau riche in the West to assert their status in light of their deprivations in Sri Lanka.

Our propagandist attitude is very clear when we look at the Muslims. They were part of "the Tamil speaking peoples" when we wanted to claim a 27% Tamil population and Sir Pon. Ramanathan argued strongly that they were Tamils against the Sir Razeek Fareed and Muslim leadership's desire not to be called Tamils. The FP bridged the gap successfully for a while by getting a substantial Muslim vote. But all that was brought to naught when they were deemed not good enough to live with us in the North-East. This is another instance where we want to talk about only one half of the problem of "the Tamil speaking peoples," and as a result no outsider takes us seriously.

Also remember the 1970s when we encouraged upcountry Tamils to settle in the Vanni and be a buffer between Jaffna and the Sinhalese? But when upcountry beggars displaced from the plantations came into Jaffna town, our true brotherly feelings became very evident.

In this rough firmament the larger struggle of the Tamil speaking peoples – yes, peoples – against Sinhalese-Buddhist hegemony is eviscerated. For us Tamils, survival as a people in Sri Lanka, necessitates recognizing first the aspirations of minorities in our midst.

A New Course: A Commitment to Human Rights

If the Tamil people are to survive we need to stop "canceling people." We need to recognize that the last 30 years of war have not solved our problems but really made them worse. Is there still anyone who will not concede this?

We need to set ourselves a new course. And what should that new course be? We have tried two courses. The course of cooperation was tried first through our dishonored pacts leading to failure. If we continue to go trustingly to the state, we will be robbed of even the little we have left. The Muslims have tried the same and the state has taken them for granted. I understand that Sinhalese settlements are coming up in Moothur and the Muslim leadership is too scared to protest. Apparently Muslims who fought for the government as home guards have now been beaten up by the government since there is no need for them now that the LTTE has seemingly been taken care of there. It shows that those who cooperate will be used and tossed aside when their use is over. Tamils who cooperate are in real danger. Karuna needs to take note. Thondaman has tried cooperation and has been called a Pariah. He stands humiliated and taken for granted, unable to assert himself in any way.

The second course, the course of war, has also been tried. The power of the gun brought out the worst in us. We killed our own people and turned shamelessly on the Muslims who lived among us, shared our interests and spoke our language. Our MPs who took this course are essentially prisoners, unable to say what they really think, crying in complaint of their status in private before their old friends. War too has failed us. A few more years of it, and we as a people will be no more.

So what is the third way? The only way out is to get the international community to work for us. Only the international community, especially India, can make the Sri Lankan state treat Tamils as equal citizens. And what is stopping that? As most analysts agree, the international community's hands-off position is because of lack of Tamil commitment to human rights – especially our killing our own people when they do not agree with the Juggernaut and the Juggernaut's attitude to Muslims. After all, when two communities are fighting each other with unmitigated savagery, why would an outsider want to get involved? I strongly believe that a common commitment to human rights is what

will make the international community move forcefully on our behalf and demand that the Sri Lankan state give us our due. The International Community controls both the critical military and economic wherewithal the Sri Lankan state so badly needs to succeed and therefore the means of persuasion. To survive as a people, we need Sambanthan, we need Sangaree, we need Douglas and yes, we even need Prabhakaran with a new commitment to a pluralistic Tamil polity. Those of us abroad can indeed help. For a start we can push for Tamil rights by exposing all who violate Tamil well-being, be they inside or be they outside the community. Perhaps those who can help the most are those of us who have the confidence of the LTTE – by persuading Prabhakaran that it is in our self-interest to change course with respect to human rights and enlist the engagement of the International Community as a *quid pro quo*. I know it is more easily said than done. But at least if we began thinking of these things, perhaps a way out for us as a people would evolve. There is no other way.

We need to be mindful that human rights can become a tool as it all too often does. Remember the talks when most of the political killings were by us? Amnesty International and Colombo wanted human rights commitment and the Tamil side objected. Today the killings are mainly by the state and its allies. And we now suddenly want to talk about it! What we want is a true commitment to human rights with powers of enforcement by outside parties. What is a little loss of sovereignty when we will gain much personally? The present so-called sovereignty means nothing when it is national/institutional and does not translate into personal rights.

In my engineering economics I was taught and I teach the principle of the second best. We may work for the ideal solution such as building a motor car with all safety features, fuel economy, eco-friendliness, etc. But that technical perfection will fail because it would be so expensive that no one would buy it. All our good efforts in pursuit of the ideal would be for naught. Instead if we worked on the second best, a motor

car that we can afford that is technically optimal within price constraints, our efforts towards the second best would bear fruit. And we would have something.

It is the same with our political predicament. We may feel that a full separate state with all the powers of a sovereign nation is the best. If we work towards that, we will work on that forever as our numbers dwindle and we are finished off as a people. As I see it, any state with the minimal powers over land settlement (so that we may live practising our cultures) and policing (so that we do not face the massacres of Tamils by the state as has happened all too frequently), would be the second best. But it is something we can successfully work for with international pressure on the Sri Lankan state.

Closing Thoughts

I am mindful that as we face extinction, some might ask whether this is the time for these thoughts. I think it is the very time when we are called to think and re-engineer our future before we die off as a people. We need to renew our commitment to the ideals of SJV and Amir and the great party they led.

Let me end with a relevant quotation from Martin Luther King Jr. that I picked up from the Minutes of CIMOGG, the Citizens' Movement for Good Governance:

> "Cowardice asks the question: Is it safe? Expediency asks the question: Is it politic? Vanity asks the question: Is it popular? But conscience asks the question: Is it Right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular – but one must take it, simply because it is right."

For this we Tamils have been waiting from the time of SJV and Amir

1 http://www.ahrchk.net/statements/mainfile.php/2007statements/1069/

2 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/27/AR2007072702462_pf.html

3 http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/PDF/Population p9p8%20Ethnicity.pdf

4 The truth is that in GG's absence the second level Tamil Congress leadership in Jaffna including Mr. M. Sivasithambaram had agreed to the merger of the FP and TC into the TUF. On hearing of this GG had rushed to Jaffna b y the Yarl Devi at noon to break up the pact. For he knew that in alliance with the FP, the TC would be dominated by the FP. The Jaffna FP and TC crowd, informed of his impending arrival, garlanded and welcomed him at the Jaffna railway station as the new co-leader of the TUF, going with him to the hotel so that he lacked the privacy required for the work he intended doing. Thwarted in his intention to break up the alliance, GG returned to Colombo that very night by the mail train. Thereafter his participation in politics was minimal.

5 http://www.tamilnation.org/tamileelam/maveerar/sivakumaran.htm

Thank you

Notes

Notes

Prof. S. Ratnajeevan H. Hoole, D.Sc. (Eng.) London, Ph.D. Carnegie Mellon, IEEE Fellow, born on 15 Sept. 1952, is Senior Professor of Electrical and Electronics Engineering at University of Peradeniya and in March 2006 was appointed Vice Chancellor of University of Jaffna Sri Lanka by the President following the Council of University of Jaffna electing three names for the President's consideration as provided by the Universities Act. The University Grants Commission granted him special overseas leave due to death threats to him and his family members by the LTTE and allied groups. He fled to the US where he is presently Fellow of the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund, NY and Visiting Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Drexel University in Philadelphia, USA

As a Member of the University Grants Commission (2003-6) he successfully pushed Tamil interests, doubling funding to University of Jaffna to bring it in line with that to other universities and helped establish the Medical Faculty at Eastern University and the IT Faculty at Vavuniya Campus and significantly develop South Eastern University. One of the last acts of the Commission on which he served was to recommend immediate commencement of Engineering at Jaffna which he was to develop as Vice Chancellor.

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