

CAN SAARC EASE SRI LANKAN CONFLICT?

LANKA GUARDIAN



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Shan to the "Boys"

LEARN FROM MAO

- OBEY ORDERS
- SPEAK POLITELY
- DON'T ILL-TREAT CAPTIVES
- PAY FOR EVERYTHING YOU DAMAGE
- DON'T TAKE LIBERTIES WITH WOMEN
- PAY FAIRLY
- DON'T DAMAGE CROPS

THE CRICKET CRAZE

Eleven little Lankans

— Mervyn de Silva

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— Rohan Bastin

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ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Egypt's Hosni Mubarak is not terribly worried about Nasserites or Marxists in his country. His anxieties centre on the Islamic fundamentalist movement, a sympathiser of which semi-secret organisation, planned the assassination of Anwar Sadat, the ostentatiously westernised President of Egypt.

Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir is the author of 'The Malay Dilemma' and a devoted adherent but last month his troops were battling armed Islamic militants. What is more young women in Malaysian universities and in Kuala Lumpur government offices are taking to the traditional veil (chador).

Not many people appear to have noticed (or bothered to take note of) young Muslim girls who go to some of the posher schools in Colombo with their faces covered.

In a letter he wrote recently to FORUM, a regular contributor to the L. G. observed:

"Without comprehending the 'ethnic factor' and the dynamic social momentum it had gathered, it would be impossible to understand why Iranian women took to the chador, why nuclear families have not emerged in India even in the large cities, why Andean women have reacted against land reforms and why black American women have resisted the call to feminism".

SINHALA REFUGEES

"WHY are we not allowed to help these needy refugees?" asked Mrs. Bandaranaike when she confirmed an ISLAND report that Sinhala refugees at Senapura had been threatened with eviction for accepting relief from the SLFP by a UNP politician.

"We were not doing this for publicity... there is no election coming up... it is absurd to suggest that we were only interested in publicity. We will take this up in parliament..."

CHICAGO-STYLE

AT 9.30 in the morning on Poya Day, a big businessman of Sea Street, a Mr. B. S. Fernando who was far better known to Colombo Centre residents by a nick-name which suggested it was also a trade-name, was gunned down in an operation that was just like the movies and today's TV dramas. The SUN correctly called it "Chicago-style", a hint that this might be a gangland 'war' and possibly a contract job.

Recently, Mr. Anil Moonesinghe contributed a freshly minted term to the popular idiom of these fast-changing times. He called it "CASINO CAPITALISM". Both 'Chicago' and 'casino' are part of a more sweeping social transformation. It is Colombo's new life-style.

TRENDS + LETTERS

PUDE and NDA

Mr. Qadri Ismail has clinched his case against Peradeniya by telling us that it gave Mr. Seneviratne a mere Second Class. Not many years later this same Department found itself able to give a First to Mr. Ismail. Nothing further need be said.

But Mr. Ismail is wrong to use the acronym PRUDE for the Peradeniya Department of English. It has an intrusive "R".

The correct acronym should be PUDE and if a mnemonic is needed, just remember the Neo-Dadaist Association, NDA. As the cognoscenti know Dadaism is a movement formed "to repudiate conventions and intended to shock". On the subject of acronyms, it is self-evident that QI is the very reverse of IQ but one wonders if it is necessary for Mr. Ismail to keep drawing attention to this fact every time he appears in print.

CRITO

II

I have read Qadri Ismail's correspondence in your issue of the 15th instant. The caption "What for the telling?" appears indicative of what followed.

He apparently takes umbrage at personal remarks as is evidenced by his explicit statement that we Lankans have a habit of taking attacks on one's ideas personally but his contribution — if it might be so called — is punctuated by personal insults, epithets and vilification. The vacuous D. Perera rants, there is a second rate Patrick Jayasuriya and Gamini Seneviratne has spent his time vegetating in the bureaucracy.

The reason for invoking the expression "all fart no shit" is, to say the least, puzzling. What may I ask is the point in using this expression when the sense

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"YOU GOT 'EM — WE GET 'EM"

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE SAARC SETTING

NEWS
BACKGROUND

M de S

Sri Lanka's ethnic issue always had an external aspect, not evident or demanding attention all the time but important and potentially dangerous. It is only after July 1983, did Tamilnadu, this externality inherent in the nature of the conflict — the cross-the-border cultural affinities and allegiances — thrust itself forcefully to become a major feature of the problem, and perhaps a necessary part of the solution.

In not recognising the external implications of the problem and treating it as a purely domestic issue, our policy makers committed an elementary but costly error. In failing to grasp the full significance of the Tamilnadu factor, our foreign policy-makers multiplied the negative possibilities of their initial mistake by not preserving Colombo's traditional friendship with Delhi in Mrs. Gandhi's time.

Exercising the absolute right of sovereignty enjoyed by an independent state, Sri Lanka took foreign policy decisions which cumulatively converted, over a period of several years, what was traditionally a non-hostile relationship into a relationship which Mrs. Indira Gandhi considered and publicly declared a hostile posture.

Mrs. Gandhi is no more. Her successor, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, is committed to a reversal of policy both within India and with India's neighbours from a combatively confrontational attitude to a conciliatory one. His Punjab exercise is the first dramatic demonstration of this change in Delhi vis-a-vis tensions between the Centre and the states in Indian federation. Assam is another.

And so with India's neighbours. Outlining Indian defence policies on Oct. 9, Prime Minister Gandhi observed that national unity came

first and tension-free relations with neighbours came second. Peace and stability in the world, nonalignment, disarmament and a just international economic order were fundamental concerns in India's approach to international relations.

Again, on account of Tamilnadu, the Sri Lankan issue touches India's first and second priorities.

The national spirit, said Mr. Gandhi in his Oct. 9 address to the National Defence College, must transcend caste, creed and language. Since these diversities are a constant threat to national cohesion, India is the last country that would want to encourage separatist ideas or movements. After Independence in 1947, Tamilnadu was one of the first states to raise the banner of language and separatism. The DMK was the party which raised that cry and in Tamilnadu today, the A.I.D.M.K. (a Congress ally) and Mr. Karunanidhi's DMK are the main contenders for power although separatism was renounced in 1962 at the outbreak of the India-China war. This history and its lessons, and Mr. Gandhi's stated priorities of policy, foreign and defence, explains why he has chosen to take such a special interest in the Sri Lankan problem.

The manner of his succession, a deep personal tragedy, makes him intensely alive to the dangers of extremism and terrorism. The negotiations he personally conducted with the Akali Dal, despite the tragic price paid by its leader, and the subsequent elections were received by the whole world as a personal triumph and a victory for his new conciliatory approach. Thus, the western world — US, Canada, UK etc — has been quick to respond to his appeals to control the problems created by expatriate Sikh extremists.

Whereas Mrs. Gandhi offered her "good offices," Rajiv Gandhi has come forward openly as a mediator in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict — an advance in Colombo's view. Friendly persuasion and pressure are the familiar instruments of the mediator. But how much of each or both on the two parties to the conflict, the Sri Lanka government and the Tamil representatives. Each hopes that Mr. Gandhi will use these instruments to its advantage, exerting more pressure on the other party.

Since diplomacy is one possible form of persuasion and pressure, Colombo has been compelled once more to recognise the importance of diplomacy. By highlighting 'terrorism', Colombo hoped that the Sri Lankan conflict would fit neatly the recent Reaganite agenda. Yet, Mr. Reagan's envoy, General Walters spoke of "political reconciliation" with the Tamil community, and possible US help to combat "residual terrorism". In all its official statements, the State Dept. has struck to the view of a conflict that was more ethnic than ideological. Will the new LANKA-PUVATH line of 'Marxist terrorism' do any better?

The Indian attitude, and more so Indian action, is of far greater practical value than any shift in US/western opinion, which itself is problematic.

Knowing Mr. Gandhi's hypersensitivity to the menace of Sikh terrorism, the opportunity to mount an argument based on equating Sikh and Tamil extremism was too tempting to resist, especially when Mr. Gandhi's personal appeals to foreign governments became more and more strident. If the argument was not an absolute clincher, it was because Mr. Gandhi's case was reinforced by his Punjab settlement and elections.

(Continued on page 8)

Kitty Hawks and SLFP doves

Anybody in the House heard of JANES? From the days Britannia ruled the waves, JANES, like LLOYD's REGISTER, has been the world's best reference book on warships. It is a sign of the times that JANES has recently appointed a 'correspondent' in Sri Lanka.

Evidently no Opposition MP has heard of JANE'S or cared to consult this standard reference book on KITTY HAWK and the three Seventh Fleet ships that arrived in Colombo. Is the Kitty Hawk carrying nuclear weapons? That was the question put by the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence, Mr. Jayakody. Did the Ministry ask the US that question? Silly. The US does not disclose what any of its ships carries. In fact at the press briefing the ship's information officer gave the answer that the Pentagon/State Dept gave the New Zealand.

What was interesting though was the reactions and interruptions by the government not only to the KITTY HAWK issue but about Israel.

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

Regarding the aircraft carrier the Kitty Hawk, the American warship that came here, the Hon. Member for Attanagalla raised this matter at Adjournment and the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement to this House where he said that this vessel was not carrying nuclear arms. Subsequently the press were invited, and there was an interview on board. A responsible officer of the ship did not deny that there were nuclear arms on board. — (Interruption). May be so, but he did not say no. — (Interruption). My question is, did he say no? Take the stand the New Zealand took up when one of their warships was going there. What did New Zealand do? They posed the same question that our Foreign Ministry asked.

(A Member)

Same answer.

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

What same answer? They said, "You will not come in". New Zealand is a member of the ANZUS pact which includes America. New Zealand is a small country. Yet they were courageous enough to say, "You will not put into our port", and asked them to go. My only fear is this, Sir. The Marcos Government is about to fall. If I remember right, the name of their port is Subic Bay. It might not be under the control of Marcos very soon. The people who are going to take over will control the port, they will be the rulers of the country. I wonder whether the Kitty Hawk and a fleet of other ships were here to do a survey of the Trincomalee port? I hope and pray that does not happen. But I have a fear and there is speculation also — (Interruption). Immediately Marcos is kicked out they might think the next best place is Trincomalee.

I hope you will not be a party to this, Sir. — (Interruption). I have only about five minutes more. If the Deputy Chairman will allow me a few more minutes —

(Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees)

We have to adjourn at 6 p.m. You can speak for five minutes, if you wish.

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

Then, Sir, regarding the question of the Israeli presence in this country, we of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party vehemently opposed the Israelis coming into this country. Our Leader Mrs. Bandaranaike, made a statement to the nation prior to the 1970 election that she would chase the Israelis out of this country — (Interruption) 1969. You read our manifesto. We chased them out. You embraced them and brought them into this country. — (Interruption). I will come to that. Their presence is much felt in this country.

(A Member)

There are a lot of countries that are going to welcome them.

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

May be so, but as far as the Sri Lanka Freedom Party is concerned, our foreign policy is very clear. What has happened today? His Excellency the President met Peres, the Prime Minister of Israel, in Paris. Iran has protested. — (Interruption). That is a different matter. Jordan can do anything. What are we concerned about Jordan? Let us be clear about our policies.

(A Member)

You talked about non-alignment, solidarity.

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

Then what happened? I raised a question on the Floor of this House — I think it was the day before yesterday — and asked about the trade debt we have with Israel. The Hon. Acting Minister of Trade and Shipping came out with a list of all the imports and exports with Israel. It has not stopped at that. Israel has become one of the main suppliers of fertilizer to our country. The Zim-Israel Steam Ship Company that was banned from coming into our waters has started coming here. Already two vessels, Zim Melbourne and Zim Sydney have arrived and sailed away from Sri Lanka. Is this your foreign policy? Is this the way you sympathize with the Palestinians who are being massacred? This is going to have a serious effect on the economy of this country. Where our employment is concerned, day by day the Arab countries are retrenching and sending our people back. I feel sorry for my country. — (Interruption.) I have examined the figures. You will know the figures very soon. The main buyers of our tea are Iran, Iraq and Pakistan and other countries. There are Arab countries buying our tea.

(Continued on page 5)

THE WORST VIOLENCE

Post-Budget thoughts by Dr. Mervyn D. De Silva,
former Adviser, Ministry of Plan Implementation

(Letter sent to the UNP by the departed who once lived below the poverty line)

I was hungry — but the new rich you created by your economic policies fed their cats, dogs, and pets with my food. You even imported food for cats and dogs, while I starved.

I was hungry — and you encouraged multinationals to plant winged beans and waste money for five years to produce yard long Dambala, without using that money on research to produce more and cheaper subsidiary food crops and cowpea for my family.

I was hungry — and the millionaires you produced within a short space of time, did not give up their T-bone steak in the big hotels, so you subsidised them heavily.

I was hungry — but you allowed multinationals to cultivate sugar cane at Moneragala and then sell their sugar at higher prices, while I was deprived of the land that grew my daily meal. I was reduced to an agricultural labourer.

I was hungry — and you made cricket the opium of the people!

I was hungry — you allowed waste and corruption to increase despite the pleas of your own Minister of Finance. The resultant price increases reduced my family's food basket.

I was hungry — and money that could have been used to produce food on available irrigable lands was used for constructing Dams that made 1977 promises a set of damn lies.

I was hungry — but you removed the food subsidies only to waste the money saved on unproductive projects and opening ceremonies that have now become carnivals.

I was hungry — but you watched unconcerned local and foreign cartels control food production and imports, and allowed my Lakspray which was Rs. 6.50 per lb to be raised to Rs. 29.50 per pound.

I was hungry — but you never cared to learn that all the food the world produces in one year, if distributed according to need, will ensure that every single person on earth gets a ton of food that contains more than adequate protein and energy.

I was hungry — but you allowed millions to be spent on seminars and training of the trained, and re-training, and training of trainers ad-nausesam.

I was hungry — but you did not ask the priority question why people in Sri Lanka go hungry, outline the main food issues, and demand solutions. Instead, you surrounded yourself with expatriate Sri Lankans who are nothing but conduits for business interests in their land of adoption, and may soon entice you to start a Star Wars Program!!

I was hungry — but you never took action on the reports of increasing malnutrition, although those we have left behind, will be physically less developed, mentally less alert and more susceptible to disease.

I was hungry — but you remained unaware of the facts that stale bread, spoiled vegetables and fruits in the dust bins of rich homes and the big hotels you put up could have fed me and thousands of others who had to shorten their sojourn on Earth.

I was hungry — but you never ask your friends who got you into the debt trap the morality of wasting food deliberately by dumping food into the sea in order to keep the prices of food high. Real human development and social justice are closely related to peace. Many of the causes of conflict in Sri Lanka relate to the sharp polarisations of wealth and poverty among all races.

Gandhi said poverty is the worst kind of violence.

Kitty Hawks. . .

(Continued from page 4)

(A Member)
Egypt!

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

Yes, Egypt. It is going to affect our tea industry. It is going to affect our economy. I think it has taken a very serious turn.

You are aware as I mentioned in the House that we were invited to Iran on a delegation led by the hon. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. They cancelled our visit to Iran.

(A Member)

It was postponed.

(Mr. M. Haleem Ishak)

No. This is what I was told. I was one of the members of the delegation. I was informed that it has been cancelled. There is no postponement — (interruption). I do not know about that. If I am invited again I will let you know but now I say that it has been cancelled. We are not going to Iran.

(Mr. Anura Bandaranaike)

Or is it going, going, gone?

Opposition circles shocked

AS we go to press the detention of Mr. Indika Gunawardena, brother of the M. E. P. Leader Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena, M. P and son of the celebrated founder of the Socialist Movement in Sri Lanka, Mr. Phillip Gunawardena has provoked exchanges in parliament. The fact that he has been taken in under the P. T. A. has shocked opposition circles.

We publish two newspaper reports of the parliamentary speeches of Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali and Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama.

SEVERAL PEOPLE, mainly Sinhalese, suspected of having separatist terrorist links have been arrested by security authorities, National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali told parliament yesterday.

He said there was evidence to show that the arrested people were involved with the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), a group led by Uma Maheswaran.

Some persons in custody, the minister said, were known to him, but he was satisfied that the investigators were acting in good faith. He did not name those in custody saying the investigations were still on.

He said what was disclosed so far contributed to avoid a "lot of blood shed."

There were two groups in the south, he said, which had connections with the PLOTE and planned to create trouble in the predominantly Sinhalese south.

One group was politically oriented while the other was a militant organisation, he said.

These two southern groups were identified as the *Samajawadi Janatha Viyaparaya* (SJV) and the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramnue Nava Pravanthavaya* (JVPNP).

Most of the detained people have made statements on which more people were arrested and several documents taken into custody, Mr. Athulathmudali said.

The authorities made a breakthrough with the arrest a few months ago, of a armed robbery suspect in the Kandy district, he said.

This suspect had a revolver which was missing from the Nikaweratiya police station after it was attacked by the PLOTE.

The strategy of the group was to set up armed guerrilla groups with three men in each.

"They planned to create trouble in various parts of the country so that the forces would be compelled to withdraw from the north to maintain security in other areas," he said.

— CDN

* * *

SARATH Muttetuwegama, (Member for Kalawana) debating the committee stage of the defence budget, spoke of arrests made recently.

The police have started arresting people belonging to left wing groups in the North. There is a tendency in the government controlled media especially the Lanka Puwath to call these Marxist separatists terrorists.

I must say, that the groups who were willing to negotiate a settlement are the Marxist groups.

In the last few days they have started arresting groups in the south. The government is trying

to throw a veil of Marxism over all that is happening in the country.

We want to register my party's strongest protests against the way the media is handling this matter and the way arrests are being made in the south.

The government must set itself a time limit. This is a very dangerous thing and if given the freedom to act in this manner, the Police can act any way they like.

The courts have often declared that they cannot interfere in this matter.

You must either charge these people arrested or release them. Keeping them indefinitely or indiscriminately is something no country can tolerate. I ask the government, to release these people who have been arrested and against whom there are no charges.

Though the Minister has said there are various committees that go into arms purchases, rumours are going around that other persons are also involved in arms purchases.

Another matter is police behaviour. I hear there have been many deaths among those in police custody. This is not a very healthy thing.

There is an old police saying that when you have someone in custody that person is in police care. So the police can't have someone dying on their hands while they are in their care, can you?

The Police seem to think they can do anything and get away with it as they will be protected from the top.

— SUN

CAT'S EYE



More on our Multi-Ethnic Society

LAST weeks *Lanka Guardian* raised the interesting issue of multi-ethnic beauty queens and pointed to the fact that it is local women with European blood, who have the best chance of winning competitions for beauty. Mention was also made of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's Tamil and Burgher ancestry, which according to James Rutnam, made him eminently suitable to be prime minister, as the blood of all groups ran in his veins.

Our point is that Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Burghers etc. are all of one ethnic mix — divided by culture and not by blood. The blood has been renewed over the centuries by foreigners and many Sri Lanka notables have helped to bring new inputs into society. For example, several nationalist and Leftist politicians, university professors and Sinhala writers have married Europeans or Burghers (as first or second wives). These include (to mention a few) — Sir P. Ramanathan, Prof. E. R. Sarachandra, R. Sri Pathmanathan, Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, P. de S. Kularatne, G. G. Ponnambalam, Dr. A. P. de Zoysa, A. B. Perera, H. Sri Nissanka, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe, Anil Moonesinghe, Philip Gunawardena, Ratna Deshapriya Senanayake, George E. de Silva, Mangala Moonesinghe, Prof. H. A. de S. Gunasekera, Dr. I. D. S. Weerawardena and Prof. Ranasinghe.

Many of their wives were active in national struggles and Left politics, suffragist organisations, the women's movement, local cultural revival and in Buddhist and Hindu women's education — and deserve to be remembered for their important contributions to local society.

Women Shake up Jaffna Society

There has recently been much debate in Jaffna on the role of women. Tamil publications carry articles questioning traditional attitudes, and issues such as rape, chastity, dowry, the oppression and exploitation of women within the family and society, are now openly discussed. A Tamil translation of Lu Xun's famous piece 'On Chastity' (1923) was sold out. This is a completely a new phenomena in Jaffna which is a well structured, male-dominated society.

The new wave of feminist thought in Jaffna has resulted in some new women's journals. These include **Thaham** (Thirst) — which has put out two issues this year; **Tholi** (Woman Comrade) and **Villaku** — (lamp) are published by independent women's organisations and another journal — **Senthalal** (The Flame), is published by the women's section of the EPRLF. A translation of the pamphlet **Feminism is Relevant** was published by the Women's Study Circle of Jaffna and was on sale, of all places, at the Nallur Temple festival this year. The Women's Study Circle, (51, Sankiliyan Road, Nallur, Jaffna) concentrates on publishing feminist writings and organising educational programmes for women. Whatever may be the differences between the various women's groups, that have all come out to attack against the patriarchal structures of Jaffna society. Obviously, events are shaking up the conservative society in the North.

Association of Mothers of Missing Youth

The organisation has been formed recently in Batticaloa. As a result of the combing out operations in the villages around Batticaloa, a number of youngsters have been

arrested or are reported to be missing. This association, as its name suggests, has been formed to look for the missing young persons. Perhaps, at a time of crisis, women develop more strength to act.

Cats look at Macho Cricket

One thing that has amazed us is the way Sri Lankan males, whatever their class, politics or age have got caught in a spin over the cricket. There were few voices of protest and dissent during the recent cricket mania when 'our boys' beat India. Among the dissenters were some women who argued that —

- * cricket hysteria, artificially whipped up, can become **real hysteria** — and in this mood, the Sinhalese begin to think they have defeated **India**, the country, by defeating the **Indian** team.
- * cricket nationalism (especially with an all-Sinhala team) is not far removed from Sinhala chauvinism and false patriotism. My country, right or wrong is a dangerous sentiment. As G. B. Shaw has said 'patriotism is the conviction that my country is right because I was born there'. And of course 'our team' should win, by fair or foul means.
- * nationalism in sport is disastrous, and all over the world, we have examples of its bad effects. Cricket is a sport and should be enjoyed as a sport. Let the better side win. (Evidently the Pakistani umpires and spectators don't think so.)

* If you can keep your head, when your country is winning a (stupid) cricket match, and the males are going beserk, you are a woman, my daughter.

Rape Laws

Our newspapers are full of cases of rape, which some say is on the increase. However the Sri Lankan law on rape has not changed since 1883. As a result, it has not incorporated any of the changes which have swept most other common law jurisdictions — the U. S., U. K., India, Australia etc. Only Sri Lankan lawyers argue that the British gave us a hundred years ago adequately protects the rights of women, even though the British themselves have changed their rape laws.

In Sri Lanka today, an allegation of rape by a woman must be **corroborated**. Though the laws of evidence do not state this clearly, by practice and precedent this remains a reality. Rape is a private crime rarely committed in public. Unlike murder or burglary, it is committed on the person of a woman, leaving only evidence of sexual intercourse. To require corroboration is therefore to place an already frightened victim at a handicap. In other countries, unlike in Sri Lanka, lack of corroboration does not throw the case out of court. Juries/Judges are allowed to make their decision on the facts before them: the criminal law anyway requires that a person be found guilty beyond reasonable doubt, with or without corroboration.

Secondly, in Sri Lanka women victims have the **onus of proving an absence of consent**. This places these victims in a terrible dilemma. The police and doctors often advise women not to resist violently, because this increases the likelihood of a rape/murder. The courts, on the other hand, have held that if a woman does not resist, it is tantamount to consent. So the Sri Lanka law gives women the choice of risking death if they wish to have men punished for the crime of rape. In other countries, either the burdens have been shifted — i. e. the defence must prove consent — or lack of resistance is not proof of consent.

In Sri Lanka, a woman's past sexual life (i. e. whether she is a virgin, whether she has committed adultery) can be brought into evidence, even if it has no bearing on the case at hand. Her private life of yesteryear can be laid bare in court to show that she is 'morally loose' and therefore asked for it. In most other countries today, the laws do not allow this type of mudslinging and effectively prevent the defence from humiliating the rape victim.

In actuality, there are very few cases of rape filed in our courts though social scientists have written that rape is reaching epidemic proportions in certain areas. Given the fact that most of our women come from traditional homes, the formidable obstacle of our own rape law effectively prevents justice from being done. It is so obviously written to protect the male rapist even in a society where fear of social ostracism would prevent women from filing a case of rape even under the most liberal conditions.

Letters to Cat's Eye

Dear Cat,

I am sending you the **full text** of the 'Warning to Women' (from Jaffna) you referred to in the last issue — since you missed some of the (fantastic) points in the ten pronouncements on women.

1. Grown up girls should wear long skirts.
2. Don't ride on motor bicycles with all kinds of men.
3. Married women should wear sarees when going out. Do not wear nighties and transparent clothes.
4. Married women only should go with their husbands on bicycles.
5. Women who loiter about in public places should be beaten.

6. Cases of women going on bicycles with men should be inquired into and they should be beaten.
7. Adhere to good habits when young so that you will grow up to be persons of good conduct.
8. Young men like to marry girls of good conduct without demanding a dowry.
9. Out of ten girls on the road only one is a virgin.
10. Parents who allow their grown up daughters to behave as they like, should be punished and disgraced.

All I can say is My God, is this 1885 or 1985?

Yours etc.

Mala Tambiah

Ethnic ...

(Continued from page 3)

Sri Lanka is now returning to the same line of argument but in a smaller but more formal and high-level forum: the first **SAARC** summit.

In an interview with this writer' President JR said that the fundamental issue was "the use of violence" even for a "just cause". India's main consideration should be whether or not to permit' the use of its territory for hostile acts against a friendly neighbour". All this, while fully appreciative of Mr. Gandhi's efforts as a mediator. Although "no bilateral issues" is the first inflexible rule of SAARC discussions, it is now recognised that "trust" and "the political will to cooperate" must be the foundation of regional cooperation, the avowed ideal of SAARC. The "political will" rather than the identification of specific projects for cooperation now receives the main emphasis. This is the opening which Sri Lankan diplomacy, recovering from its past failures, hopes to use to its advantage on a bilateral problem.

Learning from Mao's lessons on "Contradictions"

N. Sanmugathan

Anyone observing the ethnic front today could be pardoned if he were overcome with a sense of confusion. There is supposed to be a cease-fire in operation since June 18 although the two sides seem to have different interpretations about how the cease-fire operates. Although conditions and counter-conditions were bandied about, no one knows definitely what were the accepted conditions on the basis of which the cease-fire came into existence; or, whether there were any conditions at all. After a lot of wrangling, a cease-fire monitoring committee has been appointed although its composition has not been to the satisfaction of the militants.

Both sides have repeatedly and vehemently accused each other of serious violations of the cease-fire. To an observer, even judging from biased reporting in the controlled press, it is clear that, apart from the Jaffna district, the armed forces are continuing their search and destroy operations in the rest of the north and east. As a result, a large number of militants as well as a greater number of innocents — whose numbers it is impossible to estimate — have been killed in the process. A large number of houses have been burnt and damage to property has been considerable.

Already, one of the more militant groups is said to have declared that they would not observe the cease-fire. Some of the militant groups have also violated the cease-fire on the plea that they are retaliating against the army's offensive. While this can be understood, **the senseless killing of civilians cannot be condoned.** My fervent

hope is that these are the actions of immature, irregular groups that function outside the control of the main militant groups. If that is so, the duty clearly falls on the main and more responsible groups to discipline the others so that actions like these do not bring a bad name to the whole movement.

Violence seems to have been worst in the eastern province, particularly in the Trincomalee and Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts. These deprivations have been carried out on the Theory that the militants were getting ready for an offensive and that, therefore, the military had to act. Of course, a good number of those killed may in reality, be totally innocent civilians. No inquiry has ever been held to find out how many of the people so killed ever had fire arms with them. **One other question, which no one seems to have had the guts to raise, is why it is necessary to shoot to kill?** Surely, can't they be maimed by shooting below the knee and then captured? Unfortunately, it seems to have become the practice to shoot and kill even motor cyclists, without any proven political associations for the simple fault of not having obeyed the signal to stop. Cannot the security forces direct the fire at the wheel and thus demobilise the rider? Should he be killed?

Was it agreed at the time the cease-fire came into operation that the 600-odd detainees in the Boosa camp would be released? If so, this has not been done. When the cease-fire monitoring committee visited the camp, they found that these detainees, some of whom had been detained for over a year, had no change of clothing!

Everyone is aware that the government has used the opportunity of the cease-fire to strengthen its armed forces and to import sophisticated arms. There is no doubt that the cease-fire has been more in the interests of the government than that of the militants. The militants agreed to it only because of the heavy pressure from the Indian government and against their own interests. But, the Sri Lankan government wanted the cease-fire because it had been driven into a corner. It needed some breathing time to re-coup its losses. In the recent interview over the B.B.C the President declared that he would eliminate the "terrorists" within a year. Clearly, he does not have the possibilities of a peaceful solution in mind.

The militant groups, as well as the TULF, have, for their part, rejected — and, rightly so in my view the last set of proposals put forward by the Sri Lankan government. They have rejected provincial councils and reiterated their demand for a single Tamil linguistic region based on the merger of the north and the east; and for full regional autonomy for such an area. Clearly, the basis for a continuation of the cease-fire is very slight.

Anti-people activity

But, the period of the cease-fire has benefitted the government in the sense that it seems to have spread confusion among the militants and also soured the relations between the militants and the people. This is unfortunate. But this is what happens sometimes when a period of military cum political activity is allowed to be followed by inactivity. The militants seem to have been unable to

use this period to strengthen themselves militarily and politically. On the contrary, they seem to have allowed their relations with the people to deteriorate. This is evident from recent reports from Jaffna.

This is due to nothing but political immaturity and to the lack of understanding of the correct relations that should exist between a guerilla army and the people. Many of the militant groups profess to be Marxist-Leninists but it is doubtful how much of it they have understood and digested.

Even at this stage they should understand the correct relations that should exist between an army that fights for the people and the people. Nobody has explained this question better than Chairman Mao Tsetung. It was he who trained a Peoples' Army to fight a Peoples' War while leading the protracted Chinese Revolution which he led to total victory in 1949. He taught "the army must become one with the people so that they see it as their own army. Such an army will be invincible." Again, "wherever our comrades go, they must build good relations with the masses, be concerned for them and help them overcome their difficulties. We must unite with the masses; the more of the masses we unite with, the better."

Chairman Mao paid such importance to this question that he formulated three main rules of discipline and eight points for attention of the Peoples' Liberation Army (then called the Red Army) "They formed an important part of the political work of the Red Army and played a great role in building the peoples' armed forces, handling relations within the army correctly, forging unity with the masses of the people and laying down the correct policy of the peoples' army towards captives. From the earliest days of the Red Army, Comrade Mao Tsetung required soldiers to speak politely to the masses, pay fairly for all purchases and never impress people into forced labour or hit or swear at people."

The Three main rules of discipline which were set out in the spring of 1928 were as follows:

- (1) Obey orders in all your actions.
- (2) Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.
- (3) Turn in everything captured.

The eight points for attention set out in the summer of 1928 were as follows:

- (1) Speak politely.
- (2) Pay fairly for what you buy.
- (3) Return everything you borrow.
- (4) Pay for anything you damage.
- (5) Do not hit or swear at people.
- (6) Do not damage crops.
- (7) Do not take liberties with women.
- (8) Do not ill-treat captives.

It is because the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army was built by Mao on such sound principles that it became a real Peoples' Army which was welcomed and supported by the people wherever it went. Unless the Tamil militants digest these wise teachings of Mao, they are going to face serious difficulties in their path.

However distorted may be the reports we get about recent happenings in the North, there can be no doubt that some of the militant groups or other forces acting in the guise of militant groups have indulged in serious anti-social and anti-people activities which have earned the righteous indignation of the ordinary man. There is no need for us to be specific. We only wish to stress that unless this kind of anti-social and

anti-peoples' activities are not put an end to there would be a severe strain on the good relations that once existed between the militants and the people. **The militants cannot be complacent about such an outcome.** The only beneficiary would be the government.

Another question over which the militants have repeatedly blundered is that of how to solve **contradictions among the people.** It was Mao again who taught us that there are two types of contradictions — one between the people and the enemy and the other that among the people — and that these two are totally different in their nature and that they have to be handled differently. He taught that the contradictions between ourselves and the enemy are antagonistic contradictions while, within the ranks of the people, contradictions are non-antagonistic and should be resolved by different means. He also taught that the only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method of discussions, of criticism, of persuasion and education, **and not by the method of coercion and repression.**

He also warned that if the non-antagonistic contradictions among the people are not handled properly, they could turn into antagonistic ones. **That is why we like to point out that kidnapping, torture and execution of comrades who differ from us in one form or another is not a method of solving contradictions and must be condemned.** Such methods only make the contradictions more acute and earn a bad name for the movement that indulges in such activities.

It is to be hoped that the militants will self-criticise themselves and learn not to repeat these mistakes. Too many precious lives have been unnecessarily lost.

Pressures and opportunities as seen by the Sri Lanka government

Marshall Singer

For more than a year the Sri Lankan government has been saying that they could deal with the Tamil insurgents in the North, militarily, if only they could control "international terrorism". As it turns out, there may have been a good deal of validity to this claim. Leave aside the fact that the Sri Lankan government and soldiers, in their mistreatment of Tamil civilians and youth, may have created many more "terrorists" than they killed. The fact is that they probably would have been much more successful in their goals had India not been supplying the militants with all they did. Rajiv's call for a meeting with J. R. was an opportunity that could not be missed. For the first time the Indian government was offering to assist the Sri Lankan government to end the hostilities in a meaningful way. The Indian government had offered its "good offices" before, but now the situation had changed. Now there were much greater pressures on the Sri Lanka government, and greater opportunities for the government to accept a negotiated settlement than there had been before.

On the pressure side, Anuradhapura had changed everything. Whereas before the insurgency was something that was being fought in the North, and only Tamil civilians were suffering, now suddenly, if the most sacred Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka was vulnerable to attack, and more than 150 Sinhalese civilians including Buddhist monks and nuns — could be killed not more than two miles from a major army base, everything and everyone was vul-

nerable. The government and the military were coming under increasing criticism. The danger of a military coup by low level soldiers increased with each additional day of army casualties, and with each new military humiliation like Anuradhapura. There had to be a political settlement. One more point about the pressure to seize this opportunity: Rajiv's life is clearly in great danger. The Sikh militants are publicly on record as "gunning" for him. If Rajiv were to die, it is not at all clear who would follow him, nor what that person's policy toward Sri Lanka government cannot take the chance. Whoever follows will certainly not offer more support for a peaceful solution than Rajiv has offered. He may offer less. That is why the Tamil militants would like to drag their feet on a settlement. That is why the Sri Lankan government must act quickly.

But Gandhi is clearly going to try to persuade the Sri Lankan government to give the Tamils, in the North, as much autonomy in Sri Lanka as India gives each of its states. He does not want Sri Lanka to give the Tamils more than he does in India — if they did he would be under pressure to give more in India. But the Sri Lankans will have to give significant autonomy. They can call it a "unitary state" (and Indian lawyers have even shown the Sri Lankans how they can do it **without** amending the Sri Lankan constitution and without calling it a "federal system" but they will be pressured to give a high degree of autonomy to the Tamils. In return for the pledge to do so.

Gandhi was prepared to come out publicly, for the first time, and announce that he opposes Tamil Eelam. Privately, he was apparently prepared to go much further and to promise to use his influence on the militants to end the insurgency. Again, that is an opportunity not to be missed.

Sinhalese pressures for a settlement have also grown. Without a settlement, that pressure could grow into a tidal wave of opinion against the government. Many people have openly said that Mrs. Bandaranaike put down the insurrection in 1971, and they ask why this government cannot put down this one. Of course, they are two totally different situations. In 1971 the vast majority of Sinhalese were fighting a very small minority of ultra-leftist Sinhalese extremists but for the general population distinctions of this sort tend to get blurred. While there is clearly pressure on the government to find a political solution, it is also clear, to this observer, that the Sinhalese people will go along with any concessions to the Tamils which preserve Sri Lanka intact — **provided the SLFP supports the concessions that the UNP has to make.** That, too, is an opportunity not to be missed. Rajiv is prepared to pressure Mrs. Bandaranaike to accept. He is probably also prepared to try to persuade J. R. to make the necessary concessions, to her, to get SLFP support. But if the UNP and the SLFP **both** support whatever concessions have to be made to the Tamils, there is no question that the great bulk of the Sinhalese people will go along with the



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settlement. Extreme Sinhalese chauvinistic opinion will oppose it, to be sure, but those two parties have the loyalty of the vast majority of the Sinhalese people. What is more, all the "left-parties" — except the JVP (the ultra left party which led the insurrection against Mrs. Bandaranaike and her left coalition government in 1971) — support concessions to the Tamils.

Since any settlement with the Tamils will have to include amnesty to the militants and the TULF, it is an ideal opportunity for the government to save face, by offering a general amnesty to all political opponents and to restore Mrs. Bandaranaike's political rights at the same time. Sinhalese opinion simply would not tolerate amnesty for Tamil militants without amnesty for Mrs. Bandaranaike. On the other hand, Sinhalese opinion will more easily accept amnesty for Tamils in the context of a general amnesty for "everyone".

Up until Anuradhapura, the Sangha (the Buddhist priesthood) has been one of the main stumbling blocks to a negotiated settlement. They had opposed many of the proposed concessions to the Tamils. As far as I can tell, there has been a drastic change in the thinking of many influential Buddhist priests since Anuradhapura. Now the priests support a settlement. There is no telling how long that sentiment will last. The terms of the settlements could be important to be sure, but if they are terms that Mrs. Bandaranaike accepts, the Sangha will go along, I am quite convinced.

The upper level army has been convinced for some time that they could not "win" militarily without support from India. Now, in return for a settlement which the Tamils can accept, they can get that support. That is an opportunity the upper level military does not want to see lost. While the upper level military are predominantly UNP supporters, the captain and lieutenant level is reported to predominantly support the SLFP. If Mrs. Bandaranaike were not to accept the settlement it would increase the danger that her supporters in the army

would charge the government with having "sold them out" increase the possibility of a coup at that level. But if Mrs. Bandaranaike accepts the settlement, they will too.

Having mentioned the JVP earlier, it is worth pointing out here that they are reported to have become highly Sinhalese chauvinistic in outlook. They are also reported to have been infiltrating the lowest levels of the army as well as other Sri Lankan institutions. They may oppose a political solution of the ethnic problem, to be sure, but it is just as certain that the more the killing of Sinhalese continue, the are likely to achieve more support for their position. Thus a political solution now undercuts the conditions under which the JVP is most likely to thrive.

There are also enormous economic pressures — as well as opportunities — on the Sri Lankan government to find a peaceful solution rapidly. It is clear that the government could not go on spending between 16 million and 24 million rupees (almost one million dollars) **per day** to fight the insurgents for very much longer. Tourism is dead, or nearly so. New foreign investment is virtually at a standstill. Tea prices, which had been unusually high until April or May of 1985, have been falling. They could no longer be counted upon to "shore up" the other sectors of the economy, which were badly sagging. Foreign assistance from all foreign donors is clearly contingent upon a political settlement. Tamil accountants, office managers, and supervisors, who have been the backbone of the day-to-day functioning of the business community in Colombo are leaving in large numbers, and there are no immediate replacements for them. Even total loss of the North would do less economic damage to Sri Lanka than continuation of the conflict. The economic pressures for a political solution are enormous. So are the economic rewards. Again, this is a combination of pressure and opportunity not to be missed.

Pressures and opportunities as seen by the Tamils:

There is no question that Rajiv is serious about wanting a political

settlement. He can exert great pressure on the militants:

- a) by cutting off assistance
- b) by closing Indian borders to them as a refuge, and as a base of training and operations
- c) by arresting those involved in smuggling and shoot-outs (and putting many of the others under house arrest)
- d) by using the Indian navy to block arms shipments from other sources, from arriving in Northern Sri Lanka
- e) by assisting the Sri Lankan military by providing them with military equipment (like helicopters, fast naval patrol boats, etc.)
- f) if necessary, as a last resort, with the support of the Indian army itself.

The very fact that he has been able to get the Tamil militants to accept a cease fire when they clearly felt that they were winning on the ground, (despite the fact that they were taking very heavy losses) and forced them to choose representatives and go to Bhutan against their wishes, indicates that he **can** pressure them.

There is no question that the civilian Tamil population of northern Sri Lanka has been bearing the brunt of the insurgency. They have been abused by the Sinhalese army and pressured by "the boys". They could not even travel by bicycle without a permit. Their livelihoods and their lives have been thoroughly disrupted and threatened. It is unthinkable that the vast majority of them would not welcome a peaceful solution. While some may feel that they must have Eelam, I believe that the overwhelming majority would welcome a settlement offering them something close to the Indian model of center/state relations. They will put pressure on their sons, nephews and brothers to accept a reasonable offer. If the more militant leadership refuses, they could turn against "the boys" — provided the Sinhalese army does not return to inflict the same heavy casualties on Tamil civilians as before. The TULF

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Zia's 'sort of' democracy

FOREIGN
NEWS

WHEN he deposed the Pakistan's elected leader before proceeding to hang him, General Zia promised polls in 6 months. Eight years later, he did hold elections of a kind. The *GUARDIAN* commented:

"The military law administration in Pakistan can play extremely rough but it is not without a capacity for subtlety... Earlier this year, the government carefully staged elections (banning the parties and locking up the politicians) but still the supposedly tame parliament that was elected at once demanded the lifting of martial law. The new Prime Minister promised, sort of, that it would be done by the end of the year".

Another promise, sort of! [Will the martial law be removed? Will he allow the parties to do normal political work freely? The test was the military regime's reaction to return of Benazir Bhutto, the 32 year old daughter of the hanged PPP leader for her brother's funeral. He had died in the most mysterious circumstances in a little hostel in France.

Ms. Bhutto also made promises — not to make political statements, not to make any attempt to influence politics till martial law was lifted, and not to activate her father's party. She kept her promises. But 50,000 people followed her and her brother's bier to the grave. This was an act of defiance, a "political act" by the people. So was the response of several thousands who came to pay respects to the dead Bhutto. They represented religious, and civil organisations, and trade unions.

The all-powerful military regime panicked. It placed Ms. Bhutto under house arrest. As Alex Brodie (BBC) reported her home was made a 'sub-gaol', and ringed by armed police. The telephone cut off.

The PPP's No. 2, Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi observed: "They

want to create conditions which will give them an excuse NOT to remove the martial law.

Ms. Bhutto was universally acclaimed as a "symbol of resistance to military rule".

However it is another 'resistance' that keeps the Zia regime in power and heavily bank-rolled. Pakistan is necessary for the US, its strategic partner, to maintain direct support for the Afghan rebels who are fighting the Soviet-backed Babrak Karmal regime.

Said the *GUARDIAN*:

"The detention of Ms. Bhutto is an indication of the power that the military still wields and a measure of the insecurity of the regime".

In view of this insecurity, the US will not pressure Zia the way it does Mr. Marcos. Pakistan will fight the Kabul regime to the last Afghan in return for 3 billion US aid package.

The Summit: Atmospherics do matter

President Reagan, the first to report on the Geneva summit to his Congress, was applauded by both parties. The cheers for Mr. Gorbachv in the Supreme Soviet were no less lusty. The NATO and WARSAW Pact have responded with cautious optimism China, the communist giant which has problems, (border disputes mainly) with the USSR, and on the other side of the fence, Japan, the capitalist titan, which has problems (economic chiefly) with the US have together welcomed the Geneva summit.

It is all atmospherics, mostly theatre, say the sceptics Perhaps. To imagine that superpower rivals could win each other's trust with mere smiles over two days is to carry a naive hope to the limits of innocence. It is the immediate and real past not a distant and roseate future that is the best measure of what has been achieved. It was the doyen of US diplomats George F. Kennan who described the post-Reagan change in US foreign policy thinking and practice and its gradual impact on international relations as 'the militarisation of thought and discourse'.

Behind that radical transformation rested a single idea, the Reaganite vision of a return to "America as

No. 1". It was a Chinese commentator who interpreted the real needs of Geneva summitry as a renunciation of the doctrine, explicit, or implicit, of "military superiority".

The crude and vulgar belligerence which marked Reaganite propaganda in the first term subsided slightly before the polls. But a new high-pitched aggressiveness quickly took command once more. A more even-tempered manner and realism appear to have won the day in Geneva. There has been some serious talking between the two leaders. True, no real progress has been made on substantive issues and as a joint closing statement put it "serious differences remain on a number of critical issues". But the readiness to speak seriously and talk as equals does clear the air for what has been universally recognised as 'a fresh start'. Mr. Reagan was frank enough to tell Congress that "just as we must avoid illusions on our side, we must dispel them on the Soviet side".

The *FINANCIAL TIMES* correspondents in Geneva and Washington noted in a jointly written report "While the summit ended without

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When 11 little Lankans battled with big brother Gulliver

Mervyn de Silva

In an interesting lecture entitled *The Politics of Separatism, Realities and Dreams*, Prof. Morris-Jones, the Welsh journalist turned South Asian affairs expert, told a Colombo audience that Welsh nationalism, unlike the Irish or the Scottish varieties, expresses itself only when Wales plays England at rugby. Sri Lankan nationalism or more accurately Sinhalese nationalism expresses itself freely in the playing field too, but in far more complex and ambivalent ways.

Nowhere is this truer than at cricket and in no duel more clearly than in competition with India, Sri Lanka's huge neighbour and the historical homeland of both the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils. Cricket, the time-consuming, often boring and unarguably colonial game is the island's favourite sport, not just an upper-class pastime.

Commenting on the Ceylonese devotion to cricket and Shakespeare, Sir Ivor Jennings, the first vice-chancellor of the Ceylon University, once said that the people of this other Eden were in fact the last Englishmen. Hence the romantic paradox of Dr. N. M. Perera, finance minister during the socialist Bandaranaike government, who was probably prouder of his post as president of the Board of Control for Cricket than his title as one of the founding fathers of the Marxist revolutionary movement in Sri Lanka.

The office is now held by another cabinet minister, this time in the conservative Junius Jayewardene administration. As irrigation minister, Gamini Disanayake is also in charge of the Mahaveli river multi-purpose project, Sri Lanka's Aswan Dam and its biggest development scheme. So keen is

the minister on this other, unofficial portfolio that Disanayake, who only played cricket for his school's junior team, goes abroad more often for cricket than the World Bank-sponsored Mahaveli project.

His dedication to the game is such that recently he was elected president of the Asian Board of Control. He plans to carry the flag from Bangladesh to Papua New Guinea.

Quite by accident the Sri Lankan 11 that defeated India, the world cup champions, in the second test and thus won the three-game test series, was an all-Sinhalese team. The only Tamil on the field was umpire S. Ponnadurai, whose "doubtful lbw" decisions threw Indian captain Kapil Dev into such a fit of rage that Ponnadurai became the darling of the Sri Lankan spectators and the target of a measured, magisterial censure by much of the Indian press.

After losing the game, Kapil Dev was asked the obvious question: "Weren't the Indian champions outplayed in every department of the game?" True, conceded the captain sourly, "the Sri Lankans were better in batting, bowling, fielding... and umpiring. They will never win a test match in any other country."

What followed were temperamental fits on the field, arguments and abusive cross-talk with the umpires, rude and obscene gestures at the crowd and such boorish behaviour generally that the Indian team became the most unpopular touring side ever. Every subsequent game, every innings and each over became a bitter Indo-Sri Lanka prestige battle. As a result, umpire Ponnadurai's performance was hailed

by a cynical columnist as a greater contribution to Sri Lanka's ethnic amity than any mediatory effort by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi or his Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari.

Politics has also been an exhilarating spectator sport in the island. Few Sri Lankans were insensitive to the fact that in New Delhi, Gandhi and his senior aides are currently engaged in a feverish attempt to rescue India's bold diplomatic exercise in presiding over a negotiated settlement of its small neighbour's harrowing ethnic conflict.

Talks between the Sri Lankan Government and Madras-based Sri Lankan Tamil leaders collapsed last month only to find Gandhi unexpectedly confronted by a hostile Tamil Nadu state (population 50 million), the patron of the Sri Lankan Tamils and the sanctuary of almost 100,000 refugees, and all the leading Tamil political groups, moderates and militants.

While Tamil Nadu feels that Gandhi has pressed harder on the Tamils than on the (Sinhalese) government, the average Sinhalese is convinced that Gandhi, unlike his mother, is holding the scales evenly in Sri Lanka's domestic conflict. This exposes even on the playing fields the basic ambivalence of the islander's attitude to the huge reality of India which he must live with, while dreaming of defeating his mighty neighbour in the morale-boosting manner in which the Cubans beat the Americans at baseball.

A local commentator noted shrewdly that the Sri Lankan centurions mercilessly mauled Sivaramakrishnan, India's brilliant

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Cricket fervour and Sinhala nationalism

Rohan Bastin

A little remembered article appeared on the sports' page of one of Sri Lanka's English dailies at the beginning of this year concerning the drawn cricket match held at Lords the previous September. Treated as a Sri Lankan victory, the match held a high position in many Sri Lankan minds and this was yet another tribute to the team's skills. However, this piece stood out for two reasons. Firstly, the report on the same page told of yet another loss in Australia thus rendering the article somewhat absurd. Secondly, the article extolled the virtues of the Sri Lankan batsmen in terms of the level of concentration they achieved through the advantages of a Buddhist approach to the game. In the context of the match against England, the article moved in the tradition of the Buddhist/Christian debates held in the previous century at places like Panadura. But, with the 7 nation tournament going on and Sri Lanka's poor performance, the article fell rather flatly. Moreover, many simply ignored the piece because not all the team members are Buddhist. The Sri Lankan captain recently attributed his success, now in relation to the series against India, to his Christianity. Yet this statement is being largely ignored also. Is it because of the dismal showing against the Muslims of Pakistan? Or is it that the present cricket fervour rife here has a largely secular bias?

This fervour is undeniably nationalistic. Coming myself from a country of raging nationalists and cricket fanatics, Australia, I recognise many similarities to my home in the growing cricket mania. There is hardly a single free space these days without an evening tennis ball test in progress and few radios blaring anything other than the commentary.

As in Australia, people always talk of how "We" are going in the match of the moment. It is the plain fact of international sport where teams and individuals represent their country that the game is far more than a game. This was made abundantly clear when the Sri Lankan government announced a national holiday after Sri Lanka's Test victory against India.

If the Sri Lankan cricket fervour does have a secular bias, is its nationalism a pan-Sri Lankan phenomenon that could be the source of communal harmony in this troubled land? The evidence suggests otherwise. I shall give three instances from my personal experience.

During the Lords Test last year, I sat one night watching the televised highlights in Batticaloa. The audience was all Tamil and, although all Sri Lankans and great fans of cricket, they slowly drifted away saying things like, "That's not my country playing, I'm better off barracking for England. "For them, the team, even with one Tamil member, was the Sinhalese cricket team and they found no identification with it.

On the night of the Sri Lankan Test victory against India, I was visited by some Sinhalese slightly the worse for celebratory arrack who argued that Sri Lanka had won the match because there were no Tamils in the side. It was a Sinhalese victory against the people of the "big country". And another friend recounted hearing a policeman on duty at the same match reprimending two rowdy Sinhalese members of the crowd saying it was a disgrace that they had even come to watch these "bloody Tamils"; that being how he described the whole Indian team.

And finally, throughout the entire tour by the Sri Lankans of Pakistan, my Muslim neighbours have been openly, and now gleefully, support-

ing Pakistan. One friend told me that her Muslim friends are glibly suggesting that the government calls for a national extra working day in recognition of Sri Lanka's defeats.

The ethnic cleavages are thus being expressed in international terms and it is abundantly clear that the Sri Lankan cricket team represents the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka and no-one else.

Many social critics of Sri Lanka have argued the close relationship between contemporary Sinhalese Buddhism and Sinhalese nationalism, from anthropologists to political scientists and historians. And many Sinhalese Christians have divorced themselves from responsibility for events like the communal violence of July '83 saying that it was the Buddhists and not the Sinhalese per se. Yet in the context of cricket, the first sport in which Sri Lanka has gained international recognition, Christians and even the Sinhalese most radically opposed to nationalism in any shape or form have become clearly patriotic. The Sinhalese nationalism in this cricket fervour points to the need to reassess ideas about the role of Buddhism, indeed the role of religion, in its total construction. And perhaps more importantly, the need for the self-professed radical intelligentsia to be more self-critical and socially aware. The exception is that many women, paradoxically alienated from the fervour through sexual inequality, are more aware of its serious implications. It is a paradox because their disadvantaged position is to their advantage in this instance.

Nationalism and communalism are deep seated facts of Sri Lankan life which transcend particular social and religious milieux. They have emerged in this present cricket fervour as it relates to the current political situation. It is endemic to international sport because this

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is the situation for the construction of powerful national symbols and metaphors of international political conflict. Nazi Germany did it in 1936, and in the last two Olympiads we have seen it again. Sport is touted as fostering unity but this does not necessarily mean harmony.

Some apply psychologies such as the way sport as a metaphor for international relations (and for Sri Lanka, of ethnic relations) becomes a harmless substitute for the potentially more serious expressions of those relations. That is, it relieves tensions in an orderly process where there are certain rules like not being allowed to murder the opposition. And so the victory against India temporarily staved off the sorts of contradictions that produced the riots of July '83 and the government needed to only call for a public holiday.

However, does this substitution really exist? The metaphoric relation certainly does, but to see this as simply a way of reducing the level of symbolic action to something harmless (and all violence is symbolic because it compresses several layers of meaning into a single act), is to forget that metaphor is the context for the construction of new meanings, the construction of symbolic action, the construction of situations where violence can be imminent and not their negation.

At a fundamental level, the cricketer automatically loses his individuality once he becomes a national representative. This has been clearly demonstrated in the present "rebel" cricket tour of South Africa by Australians who have represented their country in the past. They have a legitimate claim to say that they have not thereby sold their souls to Australian cricket and are free to do as they please. I, and the majority of Australians in a recent poll, cannot deny them this freedom. But only they and their bank managers really acknowledge their individuality; White South Africa certainly does not. The whole design of these rebel tours is to draw international figures into implicit subvert for South Africa's insidious social and political system.

Comparatively, both Tamil members of the Indian team, Srikanth and Sivaramakrishnan, were urged not to tour Sri Lanka in protest against the government's handling of the ethnic problem. It was as Indians and not as Tamils that they came; yet Srikanth in particular had to endure extremely bitter comments from the communalist Sinhalese crowds.

So, perhaps we should consider moratoriums on inter-NATIONAL sport because sportspeople become more than individuals good at sport, but true bodies politic. And we should cease from making situations where the real problems are not addressed and indeed many of them simply helped along.

When it little...

(Continued from page 15)

spin bowler, with particular relish, as he is a Tamil. Although old myths about ancestry are being exploded by Sri Lankan scholars, the Sinhalese trace their ancestry to the Aryan north as opposed to the Tamils, whose roots are in the Dravidian south of the same Subcontinent.

Preoccupied with the challenges of their forthcoming tour of Australia, the Indians may have come ill-prepared as a team, and perhaps psychologically too, to meet the Lilliputian Lankans. In international cricket, the islanders have won the hearts of crowds in Australia and England by their gay entertaining approach to the game. But they have remained talented, flashy masters of the limited over match, not ready for the gruelling tasks of test matches.

Things may have changed, however. "Sri Lanka cricket has come of age. We have matured at last," said the former Cambridge captain, Gamini Goonesena, a much admired Sri Lankan expatriate in Australia. Victory over India may have given the islanders — dwarfed by the giant neighbour and haunted by a history of other battles won and lost — much more than a glorious page for their sporting annals. Perhaps the therapy of beating the world champions will help Sri Lanka reconcile reality and dream in the politics of Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

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Qadri Ismail replies to his critics

Patrick Jayasuriya has not only missed the whole point of my article but also doesn't seem to have read his God, Leavis.

Let us, to begin with, acquaint him with a key passage from Leavis' **English Literature in our time and the University**. Leavis believed that the University should be at the centre of the fight to prevent the "technologico-Benthamicisation" of Britain by America, and that the English school should be at the centre of the University "It is not with the advocacy of a university English school that should send out into the world a number of discriminating critics and a greater number of cultivated readers....It is with restoring to this country an educated public than shall be intelligent, conscious of its responsibility, qualified for it and influential — such a public as might affect decisively the intellectual and spiritual climate in which statesmen and politicians form their ideas, calculate, plan and perform. It conceives the university not merely as a place of learning, research and instruction, but as itself a nucleus of the greater public, the spiritual community the country needs as its mind and conscience." Now this may not be as crude as Richard's formulation ("Poetry is a perfectly capable means of saving us from chaos") but is not far from it, and ampray is a load of elitism; and though it should be rejected merely on that score, one must nevertheless make the point that it is elitism in the grand liberal style — elitism, if you like, gone right. What is wrong with it, is that the theory never quite matches the practise. Leavis failed in his grand task.

But at least he had a grand vision; which was why I said that local students of Ludowyk only got a watered down version. Leavis was passionately concerned that the proper study of Literature

would save the British way of life, British civilisation, from (American) corruption. That was his whole reason for existence. But Ludowyk had no such vision. Perhaps Ludowyk was being more realistic about what literature could do; but it makes his theory a watered down version of Leavis nevertheless.

From there it was not until the global advent of "Commonwealth literature" that Ashley Halpe realised that Leavis should be modernised. That English Literature would necessarily mean something different to Sri Lankan students without a colonial mentality. So we had that statement in **Nava-silu** about redefining the significance of English; which is basically Lankanising Leavis. This could have given the study of Eng Lit some relevance. Except that it never got done. Only the elitism the justification for the existence of an other in under department remained.

Under these circumstances, when Halpe has clearly stated where his responsibilities lay — and never delivered the goods — I wonder how on earth Jayasuriya could hope to make a credible defense of Peradeniya. He speaks of Halpe's "impeccable scholarship". Now there were many things I did not learn in Peradeniya, and one of them could be that professor Halps had actually written something. As far as I am aware, he has no body of scholarship to his credit. Only the old article or two, let alone an impeccable one. To be kind by Halpe, we could forgive him if he was so busy redefining the significance of English Literature in the classroom that he could not find the time to write. But, if anything, he over-emphasised its British nature — and thus cemented the nascent elitism in his students. Jayasuriya is wrong when he tries to defend the overwhelming bias towards English

Lietrature on the syllabus on the grounds that "Commonwealth" and Lankan writing are of poor quality. Since even on Halpe's own admission the purpose of studying Literature is to find relevance, a tricontinently biased syllabus is surely the obvious thing to study. If such writing is "bad", then the student would be exercising his/her critical faculties all the more instead of accepting someone else's judgement, in working things out for him/her/self and would, therefore, learn in the process much more about both writing and his/her country. Especially about the connection between society and literary forms. But this of course, may lead him/her to lose respect for the "undisputed greatness" of Eng Lit.

I have used writing, rather than the grandiose term Literature, in the past few sentences because I find, with many other contemporary scholars, that this Literature cannot be defined. Now this poses no problems to Jayasuriya, who is evidently not bothered about clarity which is why he accuses me of wanting to study Literature as sociology or intellectual history. No, all I want to know is, what is Literature? (Or, even, literature?) Once we know what it is, then we can study it as an activity with its own methods. That is the scholarly approach to any endeavour, no?

This was what Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, the well known (though perhaps not to Jayasuriya) theorists of Literature, had to say at the end of the opening chapter of their equally well-known work **Theory of Literature**: "All these distinctions between literature and non-literature... organisation, personal expression, realization and exploitation of the medium, lack of practical purpose, and of course fictionality...describes one aspect of the literary work... None is itself satisfactory. At least one result should emerge: a literary work of

art is not a simple object but rather a highly complex organisation of a stratified character with multiple meanings and relationships." I agree with the final sentence: except that it could also be used to describe a better work of economics, history, philosophy political science, or, of course, natural science. It is simply that the authors, having the same passionate belief in Literature that Leavis and his ilk had (something akin to a religion), could not make the logical conclusion from their own discoveries.

To look at the criterion one by one: all better

are tightly organised and well realized; all philosophy is personal expression; anyone who has read Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, to mention just one example from that era, cannot say it was not meant to have a practical purpose; and as for fictionality — how come Bacon's essays are regarded as Literature not to mention Donne's sermons though in the case of the latter one never knows! so, then, what is Literature?

It was after being unable to define it too that Barthes said "Literature is what gets taught". Since it is always necessary to have open minds, I think it is high time we discarded all this junk about Literature and studied all forms of discourse in their socio-economic setting. For those interested, we would also then be true to the spirit of Leavis: in both trying to understand a civilisation through its discourse and in wanting to change it for the better. If the dept cannot do this then we must change the dept. And if that cannot be done from inside then we must do so from the outside.

Ethnic Crisis . . .

(Continued from page 13)

may be crucial here. If they think the militants are being unreasonable in holding out for their demands and refusing to compromise, Tamil sentiment could swing back to

them as the true leaders of the majority of Jaffna Tamils. Without the active support of the Tamil population in the North, it would be very difficult for the militants to continue the armed struggle.

From the perspective of the moderate Tamil this is an opportunity not to be missed. For the first time, because of Rajiv's intervention, J. R. is prepared to devolve significant degrees of local autonomy to regional units. J. R. cannot, and probably will not, accept the Northern and Eastern provinces being treated as one unit, but he is on record as being willing to accept devolution up to the provincial level. Rajiv will clearly put pressure on J. R. to enforce whatever agreement is reached, which no Tamil politician until now has been able to do. To be certain, the military struggle — including Anuradhapura — may have been responsible, in large degree, for having brought the Sinhalese to this position of willingness to compromise, but to not capitalize on it now would be suicidal. The military struggle may have *de facto* deprived the government of political control of the North, but no unified Tamil authority ever replaced it. The boys (with their guns) may have been running things in very large areas of the North, *de facto*, but that is no substitute for legitimate government, without guns. Most Northern Tamils clearly want peace. Most will settle for "Provincial autonomy" since they feel that without Indian support they cannot have "Eelam". For the militants this is an opportunity to take credit for having brought a large measure of real autonomy and Tamil rights. It is also an opportunity to use Rajiv Gandhi to pressure the Sinhalese to grant the Sri Lankan Tamils significant amounts of autonomy — short of Eelam, to be sure, but more than the Sinhalese ever offered before. If they miss the opportunity, the population could very well turn against them.

For some of the more militant boys, who vowed to fight until Eelam or death, this may be perceived as a "sell out," but, just as Mrs. Bandaranaike and J. R. Jayewardene together can get the

Sinhalese to go along with a peaceful settlement, so too, if the five major militant leaders united in accepting this as the best deal they can get, they can bring the rest of the militants along with them. My perception is that PLOT and TULF would accept reasonable terms. If the other four militant groups (now united in the Eelam National Liberation Front) do not accept, it is likely that large portions of Tamil popular opinion will swing toward PLOT and TULF. That is a risk the ENLF groups may not want to take.

(To be continued)

Letters . . .

(Continued from page 1)

of it could have been adequately conveyed in other terms.

Furthermore, he indulges in a generalisation that we Lankans have an obscene habit of avoiding the point if given half chance to do so, but the basis of this bull is not stated. I am neither the product of Mr Ismail's PRUDE nor a prude, but is this the order of things in a dialogue or discussion?

Perhaps there is a simple or even an abstruse explanation for all this.

B. Mahinda

Colombo.

The Summit . . .

(Continued from page 14)

any breakthrough on arms control, it fulfilled one of the main preconditions for improved relations by acknowledging the Soviet Union's political equality with the US as a superpower".

For the rest of the world, the atmospherics were good enough since there was a matching US-USSR agreement that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Carlo Fonseka's Choplogic

ALTHOUGH Dr. Fonseka says he does not aspire to sharing the same register of discourse with people like me, it was he who started this debate. He has even considered it worth his time and effort to collect my bio-data. Did he hire a private eye or did he pound the pavement himself? He thinks it almost insane of me to imagine that he would not have gone to all this trouble. I admit to have been seriously in error. I should have seen that he needed this material because his idea of adult debate is innuendo and the personal remark. Had I just signed my first letter with an X Dr. Fonseka would have been left without an argument to offer! If Albert said "Gravity is curved space-time" and Gilbert retorted "Albert is the son of a lady dog" Albert's public image might suffer but not his proposition. Dr. Fonseka, unable to make the distinction, would think Gilbert had conclusively demolished Albert's thesis.

Dr. Fonseka wishes to leave style "on one side" but I really think he should pay some attention to it: "he rushed into print", "I rubbed my eyes in disbelief" etc. I ask you!

He claims it is a "knee-jerk reaction" to assume that a Marxist stands for a one-party system. I can only say I am bemused.

Like a certain type of nagging wife who drags in past grievances into every argument, Dr. Fonseka talks of Costain de Vos. He turns abusive. One can understand Dr. Fonseka's feelings, for his memories of his clashes with de Vos cannot be among his pleasantest. However all this is irrelevant to the present agenda. In the U. S. A. the most sedulous practioners of the colour bar are the hillbillies. This phenomenon is called in popular parlance "the poor white trash syndrome", their whiteness being all the hillbillies have. What Dr. Fonseka has is a doctorate and he believes

it of advantage to one who hasn't one, before he engages in verbal combat with a genuine doctor, to at least assume a bogus doctorate. It seems that his doctorate has not served Dr. Fonseka any better than their whiteness has served the hillbillies. Dons of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your faculties.

As for "the prostitute-quoting" Ms. Perera I do not know why she makes a cameo appearance in this scenario. I have no doubt she can speak for herself. May I only say that prostitutes are also people and Dr. Fonseka should try not to be prudish about them.

When I suggest that we make too much of allegations made at election time and that they should never be the reason for upsetting an election Dr. Fonseka unwarrantedly (and, as it happens, wrongly) concludes that I am opposed to limiting presidential immunity. This is a conclusion that does not follow from the premise, known to logicians as a **non-sequitur**.

Based on this non-sequitur Dr. Fonseka assails a position I have not taken. This is **ignoratio elenchi**.

He omits to mention that I have not said one word opposing the limitation of presidential immunity. And that is **suppressio veri**, misrepresentation by concealment of facts that ought to be made known.

He suggests that I am only "professing" to hold the view I expressed. This is **suggestio falsi**, positive misrepresentation not involving a direct lie but going well beyond concealment of the truth.

This Marxist who believes in a multi-party state (**quelle merveille!**) lays down that presidential immunity from legal action is beneficial to my "class" (as identified by him on the basis of bio-data painstakingly gathered). This is called the **ipse dixit**, a dogmatic statement resting merely on the speaker's authority.

This veritable tidal wave of unremitting choplogic is worth the

careful study of students of elementary ratiocination.

V. P. Vittachi

Peradeniya's English Dept

IN the first paragraph of a short three-paragraph letter Ms D Perera says categorically that Peradeniya's English Department "does not need defending from the likes of Mr Ismail". In the third paragraph, however, she blithely concedes that Mr Ismail may be right in condemning it (L.G. 15 November). What kind of scatter-brain is this woman who cannot remember how she began an argument by the time she ends it! Or is that merely the result of her overpowering desire to imitate Ms Mandy Rice-Davies — one of her favourite wits? If so, she has proved her wit at the expense of her wisdom, as I will presently demonstrate.

Ms Perera (and kindred spirit Crito) manifestly rejoice in the following spurious syllogism of their invention: Ismail was nurtured in and certified as being first class by, Peradeniya's English Department. But Ismail says that the Department is rotten. Ergo, Ismail also must be rotten.

They may just as well argue that because the lotus is born in mud and derives its sustenance from mud, the lotus is mud!

Ms Perera and Crito are really on a par with the pseudonymous, sorry anonymous, nut who, from the premises that God is Love and Love is blind, inferred that God must be blind!

Mr Editor, enough is enough. I have better things to do than to argue with these uncertified nuts.

Carlo Fonseka

Hawks and Kitty Hawks

THE recent visit of the US aircraft-carrier "KITTY HAWK" and its escort vessels gives cause for concern. While there can be no objection to courtesy calls by flotillas of friendly countries, the official policy of Sri Lanka is not to permit visits by ships carrying

nuclear weapons. Was the USS "KITTY HAWK" armed with nuclear weapons?

This is a question that no one, other than the Pentagon and the KGB, can definitely answer, yes or no. Yet we have been asked to believe that this is what the Sri Lanka Navy has done.

The official explanation in this connection lacks credibility. It was stated that when permission is sought for foreign naval vessels to visit Sri Lanka, the procedure is to refer the request to the SLN to verify whether the visiting ships are carrying nuclear weapons. The SLN, according to the official version, then reads up relevant publications and seeks assurances that the vessels are not armed with nuclear weapons. On this basis, the SLN was said to have given the "KITTY HAWK" and its escort ships a clean bill of health so to speak and the government gave clearance for the visit.

What publications the SLN reads in these circumstances was not revealed. As far as is known, the United States Navy (or the Soviet Navy for that matter) does not advertise the nuclear capability of its ships in any publication. In regard to the assurances the SLN was said to have received, it was not stated who gave them.

However, the United States Government has made crystal clear to the whole world its policy in this matter. In a major controversy that hit headlines a few months ago, New Zealand refused clearance to a US naval squadron in the absence of prior assurances that the ships were not carrying nuclear weapons. The US State Department, rejected a New Zealand request for a guarantee of this nature.

This is a perfectly logical. Such assurances would advertise to the entire world, including potential enemies, that the particular ships granted clearance had no nuclear capability. No armed service worth its salt, anywhere in the world, would publicise the precise striking power of its units.

If the US refused to give such guarantees to its ANZUS Pact

partner New Zealand, and in fact placed the pact itself in jeopardy as a result, no one is going to believe that it would give them to Sri Lanka.

What even a civilian abreast with current affairs knows well is that all US and Soviet aircraft-carriers and nuclear-powered submarines, and a number of their missile cruisers and destroyers, are armed with nuclear weapons.

Those who play with fire burn their fingers. Our policy makers would do well to bear in mind this adage.

It is in Sri Lanka's best interests, particularly at this sensitive moment in our history, to maintain the country's credibility as a non-aligned nation. The flirtation with Israel has already cost us dear. Giving the impression that Sri Lanka is tilting towards one or the other power bloc is not going to serve any practical purpose or the national interest.

Lionel Jayasinghe

Colombo 2.

Threatening Libya

AT a time when the attention of the world is focussed on the Geneva summit between U. S. President Reagan and Soviet Leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the third world countries remain passive observers. Some are pessimistic about the outcome of these talks.

While the Soviets has put forward certain very positive approaches, Reagan's rhetoric has betrayed his "intention". In fact no political scientist so far has predicted the results because Reagan's opportunistic policy based on U. S. military superiority coupled with conspiratorial designs make it impossible to predict results. Their talks are going to be guided primarily by what is called the "national interest" of these two super-powers. The fate of the third world non-aligned countries may be gloomy.

True enough U. S. history has a few glorious pages but only to be smudged by the ugly practices of state terrorism, interference with the free and developing states, and shameless justification

of terrorism practiced by Israel, its close ally.

Although much fuss has been made about what is expected to be a "historic summit", President Reagan's garb of saintliness has been stripped by the disclosures of the "Washington Post" that Reagan had authorised covert operations designed to disrupt the Libyan Jamahiriya and to 'liquidate' its leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi.

What can one talk with a person who has no respect for the sovereignty of states and who plans conspiracies against developing countries. As the Libyan Leader himself puts it "What has America got to do in other parts of the world? Why should America interfere with the affairs of developing countries? How can America justify the development of its armed bases outside America and Western Europe?" He boldly states that "We did not go to Western Europe and America nor did we cross the Atlantic ocean, all we want is to be free in our land". It must be made clear that it is and it was America that stepped into the territory of other states. Neither the U. S. nor any western country has any specific charge to make against Libya. But Reagan's attempts against the Libyan people and its government clearly sets out the deliberate policy of the U. S. administration against independent states.

M. T. M. Aluharuddeen

Secretary General

Federation of Assemblies of Muslim Youth of Sri Lanka

Non-Professional Opinion

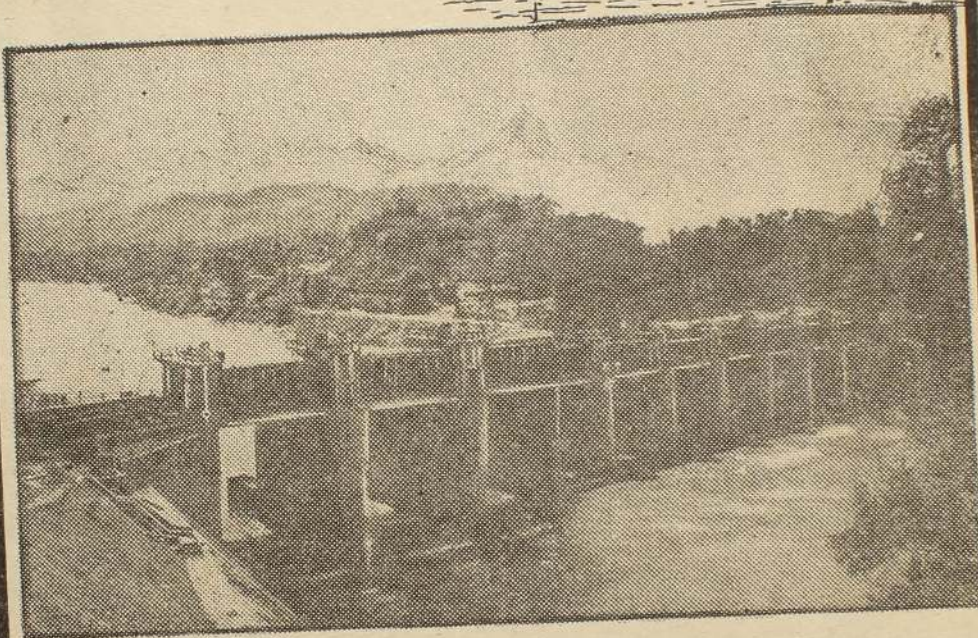
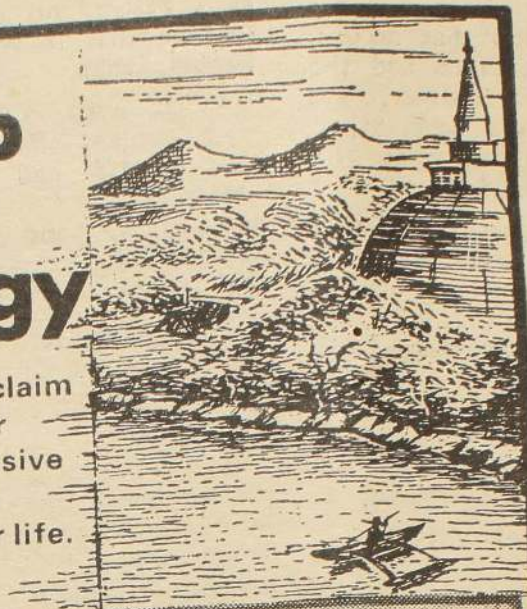
CATS EYE should take a good look at the Lanka Guardian itself. In a letter to LG published in the issue of Nov. 1, 1985. Dr. Carlo Fonseka makes several references to Ms. Mandy Rice-Davies, who has been quoted by Ms. D. Perera against him. Towards the end of his letter, it transpires that the said Mandy is, according to the erudite Dr. Fonseka, a 'well-known prostitute'. And if she is, may we ask, what is it about her profession that makes her opinion the less worthwhile?

Leela

Piliyandala.

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WOMANFILMS

Sunila Abeysekera

At the NGO Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 1985 to mark the end of UN Decade for Women, two audio-visual presentations of women in Sri Lanka and their lives were screened.

One was a 30 minute film directed by Einul Lall on behalf of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, a group which played a leading role in the sessions on Women, Law and Development at the Forum.

Entitled 'illegitimate', it dealt with the cases of four Sri Lankan women from different ethnic and social backgrounds who all have children legally identified as 'illegitimate'. But what the film was aiming at was not sociological 'case-study' of these four women; rather, as its sub-title pointed out, it set out to be a study of attitudes fostered by tradition and the law towards women.

The film was shot in straightforward interview form. The four women appeared first, in silhouette, one following the other, each telling us her story. A was a Muslim woman who had been to the middle East as a domestic worker. While there, she became pregnant and her case achieved notoriety when she was condemned to death by stoning on charges of adultery. Her sentence was later remitted due to intervention on the part of many interested groups, including the Sri Lankan government. After the birth of her child, who was then promptly taken away from her, A. was sent back to Sri Lanka and to the 2 daughters she had gone abroad to support. B. was a young Sinhala girl who could not marry the father of her children because both of them were under-age when they first began to live together. She naively decided that a formal wedding photograph would serve as an official intimation of marriage. Today, she is abandoned, with two children, unable to claim maintenance because

of the inability to cope with bureaucratic and legalistic entanglements that arise when one does not possess a piece of paper to say you are so-and-so's lawful wife. C. was a Tamil woman who has been awarded maintenance but does not, in actual fact, receive it (a paltry amount) regularly. And D. was young women of mixed parentage, the strongest personality of the four perhaps, who has a son born out of wedlock in a conscious gesture of defiance against the bourgeois state and its hypocritical morality.

Their stories were simply told. What followed were a series of interviews with lawyers — both male and female — and other leading personalities about these 4 women and about the challenge they pose to this society, as women who have dared to go against the norm. And the responses were truly incredible; the self-righteousness was uproariously funny sometimes; yet, in the final analysis, the film did not so much evoke a humorous response from us as lead us to contemplate the absurdity of platitudes such as the 'sanctity of the family' in the face of the reality so forcefully expressed by these four women.

After hearing four women describe how the men who fathered their children have walked away from their responsibilities, leaving the women to struggle alone in order to eke out a survival for themselves and their children, it seems difficult, to say the least, to enter a world where the male is seen as the mainstay of the family while the female is his adjunct and then take that point of view seriously.

In the film one hears various men pontificate on the cases of these 4 women. One says, in a quite matter-of-fact way, "Husbands are polygamous by nature — but women must be chaste". Another sees something really wrong

in her conduct' as having led the man to abandon her, while 'these loose affairs' are viewed as exceptions — and the fervent hope expressed that they remain so!

But what the film reveals through these comments is the underlying fear of what such women really stand for — and that is, a threat to the established order, a challenge to the accepted morality, which is two-faced, hypocritical and without a heart. In fact, one person voices this fear very explicitly — 'once you nip at the root, the whole edifice will crumble.

When confronted with the images of women who have broken the moral 'code', the majority of respondents resorted to glorification of the family and socio-religious norms of conduct. Over and over again came the assertion that men and women in our society are equal, that one has an option whether to break its rules or not and that if one opts to break the rules (its like belonging to a club, said one!) one faces the risks of ostracisation and possible 'expulsion' and then, 'it's just too bad'. This was accompanied by facile assumptions — such as, 'If you can't be good, be careful!'

The film also explored the differences in attitude regarding the question of illegitimate children and man/woman relationships between different social strata. While it was those who definitely belonged to a higher social strata who defended the sanctity of the formal matrimonial bond, those who lived in urban working-class areas and faced all the harsh realities of life in our society were quite open about the conflicts and constraints of male/female relationships; the legal marriage bond was not as important as the sharing of life and responsibility, and the welfare of children came far above property considerations or superficial semblances

of togetherness. So the so-called dominant morality was also shown as operating within the confines of certain social groups and in fact having nothing much to do with real life as it is lived by the vast majority of people in our country.

When once again at the end of the film one hears the four women assert their determination to bring up their children alone, 'no matter what', then the real point of the film strikes home. It is a contrast between myth and reality. We hear people speak of things the way they are supposed to be — assuming a society where men are breadwinners and fulfill their obligations as heads-of-households, a society where every person is entitled to an inheritance and therefore must be able to prove who his or her father is, a society where bourgeois morality prevails as the norm. And we see women — the so-called weaker sex, they who are known to be irrational, irresponsible, emotional — burdened by the condemnation of a society which allows a man to sow his seed and walk away scot-free yet stand undeterred in the face of poverty, deprivation and want to say 'I will ensure my children's survival even if I have to beg for it'.

As lawyer-academic Savitri Goonesekera says at one point in the film, 'How can the state decide which is a legal family and which is a non-legal one'. What criteria should prevail in making such a decision! Property considerations and the need to preserve the status quo or a need to build social units where affection and caring relationships form the core of society. When all around one hears politicians and top-ranking members of society telling us that children are a nation's wealth, a film like 'Illegitimate' points out the irony of a law that continues to draw such a deep distinction between children born in wedlock and those born out of it.

The second film on Sri Lanka was 'The Wrong End of the Rope' made by a Dutch woman, Carla

Rissieuw, with the collaboration of a Sri Lankan Amara Amerasinghe. Carla is a Dutch sociologist who first came to Sri Lanka in 1977 in order to do research on women; she became intimately involved with the lives and struggles of the women she studied and has since then maintained a steady commitment to these people — women workers in the coir industry on Sri Lanka's south coast. That she had won the confidence and affection of these people comes through very clearly in the film.

'The Wrong End of the Rope' tells of the daily life of women in a small, impoverished village in southern Sri Lanka, their work and their struggle for survival; it follows them through the process in which they become aware of the ways in which their labour is exploited, to their meeting with a group of organised coir workers in a village nearby and to their own efforts to organise themselves. The women reveal themselves to us, talking not only about their work but about their men, their homes, what they feel about love and attitudes towards women in their society, about life in general. Even though we are aware of the presence of the camera, we do not feel it as an intrusion or an imposition because the women are always fully relaxed and at ease.

Talking about their men and the male's inability to cope with responsibility, the women laugh out aloud; there is no bitterness or rancour, it's just the way life is. Women must shoulder the responsibilities of nurturing a family and in spite of all the drudgery, they survive — smiling.

On one level the film talks about the need for women to organise themselves, at least to obtain fair prices for their produce in the initial stages, and to assert their role as breadwinners, a role which is so often negated and downgraded by planners and theoreticians. This the film does in a straightforward way. But, more important is the level at which the film presents us with

lasting images of women in tradition-bound rural Sri Lanka as being strong-willed, forthright persons with a good sense of humour and a clear perception of the duality and contradictions of their existence — with the expectations of 'good wife, dutiful mother' dinned into them by school, temple and home, conflicting with the realities of survival in an environment of poverty in which men just cannot — and do not — shoulder the burdens as they are supposed to do.

It is significant that these two films happen to be made at a time when there is growing interest in the development of alternatives in communication media for oppressed and underprivileged groups that have been hitherto ignored or mystified by the mainstream media. The increase in numbers of women making films for women was clearly borne out by the literally thousands of films presented at the Women's Film Forum in Nairobi. It augurs well for the women's movement in Sri Lanka that there are stirrings in this sphere at the levels of consciousness expressed by both the films described above. One can eagerly look forward to the day when Sri Lanka women master all the techniques of filmmaking and produce films that lay bare their deepest experiences in a truly radical cinematic form.

It the meanwhile, both these films mark a turning point in the development of the women's movement in this country. They are films which can be — and should be — shown to women all over the island. The diversity of the experiences in the two are overshadowed by the commonality of oppression; and to hear women from the working class in both the city and the village articulate their lived experiences will perhaps give many who spout feminist platitudes from comfortable urban residences a rude jolt — hopefully a jolt that brings them down to earth with the realisation that the average woman of Sri Lanka is, perhaps (albeit unconsciously) more of a feminist than they could ever hope to be.



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