

LANKA

GUARDIAN

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Black Knight
It's your move

Briefly. . .

DEATH ON BLACK FRIDAY

Abdul Samath, a 30-year old man of Dematagoda, died in hospital after police opened fire on rioting mobs near the Jumma Mosque at Maradana. Several others received injuries from hurled stones, tear gas cannisters and police fire.

It was Black Friday, October 23, a demonstration called for by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, to protest the massacre by the LTTE of nearly two

hundred unarmed civilians, mostly Muslims, near Polonnaruwa.

Mr Ashraff, the SLMC leader, claimed that the Black Friday response was "a great and historic success".

In other parts of the city the day of mourning was marred by a few other similar but less violent incidents.

There was a total boycott of sittings by the Opposition in parliament, and the proceedings lasted one hour with only Government members participating.

In Polonnaruwa Black Friday was observed with closed shops and about 20,000 people demonstrating with banners and placards.

On Wednesday in Parliament Prime Minister D. B. Wijetunga said, in answer to a question raised by Mr Ashraf, that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegation that the LTTE were agents of Mossad or that Zionists were providing funds and weapons to the LTTE to attack Muslims.

TAMIL PARTIES REJECT 'COMPROMISE'

Seven Tamil political parties, all those outside the LTTE, have rejected a "compromise" proposal by SLFP MP Mangala Moone-

singha chairman of the parliamentary select committee.

A Tamil party leader said: "We examined the two-page document given us by Mr Moonesinghe, clause by clause. We found that the proposal was nowhere near the four-point peace plan evolved by the seven Tamil parties and submitted to the Select Committee".

The seven parties are TULF, ACTC, EPRLF, PLOTE, TELO, ENDLF and EROS.

CRM, UN GROUP TALK "DISAPPEARANCES"

The Civil Rights Movement met the visiting UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and talked of the need to investigate past and future disappearances in this country. At their meetings in Colombo the CRM and the UN human rights team also talked about the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency regulations.

TRENDS

Return of airlines

International airlines which by-passed Colombo after the July '83 communal riots and the drop in tourist arrivals, have now decided to return to "the paradise isle". Among them will be British Airways, KLM, Swiss Air and Cathay Pacific. They have indicated their willingness to return early next year.

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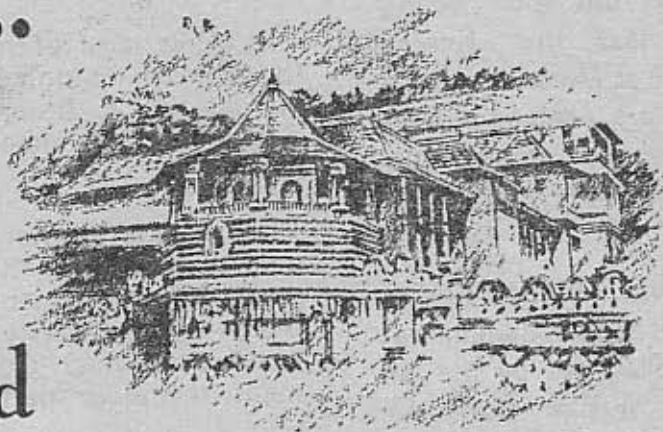
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AIRLANKA
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AIRLANKA

MEDIRIGIRIYA MASSACRE

ENTER THE MUSLIMS

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

The Tamil 'Tigers' don't need to be reminded of their near-universal reputation as one of the most blood-thirsty guerrilla groups in the world today, did it their way. In pre-dawn darkness they moved into three predominantly Muslim villages close to Medirigiriya in the Polonnaruwa district, gunned down and hacked to death at least 192 men, women and children. A correspondent quoting a Jaffna source said it was a "training exercise", meaning bloodying the braves. The sheer brutality stunned most Sri Lankans though most newspaper readers are hardly shaken by such gruesome tales of mass slaughter after ten years of strife, whether 'tigers' massacring innocent Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils in the north and East, or Sinhala mobs (often manipulated by top-level politicians) run amok in the streets of Colombo or on the rampage in some suburban town in the Sinhala south.

The insensitivity to killing, even the most unjust and senseless, is the human price that the people of the *dharmadeepa* (the island of the doctrine, the most humane and compassionate of religions) has paid for a war that their political leaders started and neither the Army nor the 'Tigers' can finish. The unwinnable war goes on, with each massacre not underlying that self-evident fact but strengthening the conviction of "wannavee" winners of the Glory Boys Club—that only more men, weapons and a Sinhalese "Patton" or "Sharon" is needed to storm Jaffna, fly the flag, and bury Prabhakaran.

The irony is that the "enemy", Prabhakaran, is one of these gifted and daring guerrilla commanders whose mindset is totally, unalterably militarist. Unless he is captured, he cannot be con-

verted. And capture you can't, since he has anticipated the possibility and carries his cyanide capsule with him. It is the self-same cyanide which also denies 'intelligence' to the security forces. Without 'intelligence', the war cannot be carried deep into enemy territory. Since all front-line fighters are armed with the capsule, the chances of gathering productive intelligence are slim.

No great reader, Prabhakaran knows the truisms instinctively. The army cannot be everywhere while the guerrilla can be anywhere. If the guerrilla is not losing, he's winning; if the army is not winning, it is losing. Your armchair pundit will say "recruit more, double the strength of the army, buy the most modern weapons and equipment". All that means money, and the willingness of Sinhala youth to join the army. But recruitment has become exceedingly difficult, while desertions multiply. Where does that leave the gung-ho militarist?

Second, our budget is controlled by the IMF and the World Bank, the Aid Consortium. They have placed limits on arms spending, and the limits have narrowed, with the threat of an 'aid squeeze' for non-compliance with such percentages on defence, more and more serious. So one doesn't have the money to recruit the soldiers from the queues that aren't there; or far too short to recruit enough to meet your target.

MUSLIM FACTOR

But this is no ordinary war. This politics conducted by military means. It is an armed conflict over territory and power over that territory. That raises the question of devolution. There are three principal players in the game — (a) the Sinhala esta-

blishment: government first, opposition second (b) the Tamil political establishment: the parliamentary parties and the so called militant groups who have in fact given up armed struggle and are represented, directly or indirectly in Parliament and (c) the Tigers, a 100% military organisation which uses politics and politicians (Tamil, Muslim or Sinhala) to promote their central aim — EELAM or as close as a possible to EELAM. Earlier India was the Fourth player and a powerful one. But the withdrawal of the IPKF at the request of President Premadasa, and the formal announcement recently by the Indian President that the Indo-Sri Lanka was a thing of the past, Prof. Muni, India's foremost Sri Lanka watcher has admitted that India lacks the power and the instrumentalities to impose its will.

The Mangala Moonesingha Committee concentrated really on the second issue — devolution of power. On the other main question, land the Sinhala consensus is NO MERGER. The Committee tried to find some ground in-between but the search was long and painful. The only compromise the Committee could conceive was a "link" between East and North to allow the two Provincial Council to cooperate or coordinate work on matters that affected both provinces. That would seem a reasonable arrangement almost commonsense that nobody would reject. But no. A Committee of this type would have produced nothing but a collective yawn if it had been suggested that western province should have "links" with the southern; or the Central province with the North Central, but the moment North and the East are mentioned, there is an uproar. Why? Territory. And the Sinhala

nightmare of too much land given to the Tamils; came too close to a "separate state" and therefore painfully close for comfort. Believe it or not, it is Sinhalese nightmare, though there are many intelligent Sinhala analysts who believe it is made into a nightmare by politicians for self-serving propagandist purposes — especially opposition politicians who need a stick to beat the government. Or a slogan at least. And the most favoured is the cry of "traitor" "selling Sinhala territory to the Tamils" who will soon come down South, and drive the Sinhalese to the sea. This has been the knee-jerk of not just Sinhala propagandists or agitators. Both the UNP and the SLFP have conformed to that behaviour pattern when in opposition. Patriotism may be the last refuge of the scoundrel but it is the first refuge of Sinhala party beaten at the polls.

The massacres and its aftermath conforms to this pattern, with one important difference. The victims were all Muslims —

men, women, children. The SLMC of Mr. Ashraff was trapped. His party has been supporting the Premadasa regime, and logically so, since no administration has been so responsible to the Muslim community as the present UNP regime.

Today's Muslim Community is not the traditional Muslim Community we have known in post-independence times; an affluent business stratum at the top, the vast majority of the poor Muslims living not just in the Sinhala south but in the east. The Muslim family of the east should NOT be confused with the western or southern Muslim. For two good reasons (a) it is the second largest — Tamils 42%, Muslims 33% and Sinhala 25%. The Muslims hold the balance. And that "balance" is vital since it determines the majority of the province; if the Muslims take the Sinhala side, the two constitute the majority. Secondly, the Muslim community are far more Tamil-speakers than Sinhala-speaking, which is not true of the Muslims living amongst

the Sinhalese in the other provinces.

With whom then would — or should — the Muslims cooperate. The Tamils feel strongly that they should work together with them because the Muslims are Tamil-speaking. However in the past few decades, ISLAM has emerged as one of the most formidable and demanding collective identities and social-political forces in the world. The Muslims in Sri Lanka — at least the new generation — have not been insensitive to this profound fact of Muslim mobilisation. Most of all in this region.

Mr. Ashraff has been trapped. His party has been cooperating with the government — collaborating in the eyes of his critics and rivals. He has to walk a tightrope. Hence the rhetorical call for *Jihad* and the demand for a Muslim unit in the army.

But rhetoric has a habit of becoming a reality when the fast-moving drama of armed ethnic conflict sometimes gives

(Continued on page 7)

VASA OPTICIANS

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Willy Brandt: Champion of the 3rd World

"No man is an island, entire of itself" wrote John Donne. That we live in an island is hardly an excuse for what strikes me as an increasingly perverse insularity. And yet, just when we are opening our economy to investors from western Europe to Taiwan many a Sri Lankan, even the most widely travelled and intellectually alert, seems to have crept into a new shell of his own making. Where is the cosmopolitanism of the Sri Lankan elite of the previous generation? Just consider the media. Not a word on Willy Brandt; not even a letter to the Editor.

The other week, Dr. Gamini Corea, former UNCTAD Secretary-General, and still this country's most eminent economist was in the Indonesian capital to help a small team of Third World specialists who are drawing up an "Econo-

mic Agenda" for N.A.M. Dr. Corea belongs to a small group of Third World economic experts — the present Indian Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh is one — who belong to the SOUTH COMMISSION, headed by the former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. Long before the South Commission the BRANDT Commission, a brave attempt to find ways to close the everwidening North-South divide had opened the way. Brandt was already the Chairman of the Socialist International.

The illegitimate son of a shop-girl, Brandt (born Frahm) never knew his father. He joined the Socialists as a young man. With the rise of the Nazi party, he was smuggled out of Germany in a small fishing boat to Oslo. He had taken the name Brandt and spent twelve years in exile. After the war he threw himself into politics to become the Ma-

yor of West Berlin, a divided country soon to see a "Wall" separate East from West. It was Brandt's *ostpolitik* that finally brought that wall down. And symbol soon became an irresistible force of history. To accelerate those forces Mr. Gorbachev contributed his own *perestroika*.

Few historians or international affairs analysts could improve the impeccably measured verdict of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. :

"His biography is virtually a distillation of the 20th century... (he) managed to incorporate in one life so many of the great themes of this turbulent time"

When news of his death was broadcast by German national radio DEUTSCHLANDFUNK, the announcement said "Germany has become a poorer place". So has the poor Third World.

M. de S.

Liberals on the media

The Liberal Party welcomes the recent declarations of commitment to a free media by President Premadasa and by the Movement for a Free Media. Liberals emphasise, however, that we live in a context in which politicians, when in Opposition, loudly proclaim their commitment to a free media, only to impose restrictions on such freedom when in Government.

Accordingly, the Liberal Party believes that commitment to a truly free media must clearly be demonstrated by the Government, by the parties of the Opposition, by the owners of newspapers and broadcasting stations and by media personnel, by concrete action. Accordingly Liberals call on the Government to implement forthwith the following proposals submitted by us to the All Party Conference in 1990:-

1) The repeal of the Press Council Act and its replacement

with new legislation to guarantee freedom of the media, including the freedom of individual journalists against editors/owners of newspapers, the preservation of high standards of journalism and the promotion of genuine choice in newspapers.

2) The repeal of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd (Special Provisions) Act and the sale of shares of Lake House by public auction reserving 25% of the shares for employees of the company.

3) The removal of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation from the control of the state by vesting them in an Independent Broadcasting Authority which would include journalists, media/mass communications experts, academics and representatives of diverse political parties.

4) The privatisation of the Independent Television Network in

an open and transparent manner.

5) A review of the objectives, powers and functions of the Censor Board to facilitate the adoption of liberal and objective standards in the fields of theatre, cinema and the arts.

6) The removal of controls of the media, overt and subtle, such as the restrictions on advertising by state-owned institutions and the imposition of newsprint quotas.

7) The immediate introduction of the 17th Amendment to the Constitution, which *inter alia* strengthens freedom of expression guaranteed in the Constitution.

8) The liberalisation of rules for the establishment of private channels on T.V. and Radio and the removal of conditions and restrictions such as the restriction on the broadcast of local news programmes.

The Liberal Party calls on parties of the Opposition and those involved in the media to strongly support the immediate implementation of these reforms.

Ties with India have improved

K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI

The Sri Lankan President, Mr. R. Premadasa, finds a marked improvement in his country's relations with India after the assumption of power by Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao. "After last year's elections in India, our relations have grown from strength. We have no problems. We see things from the same perspective," he said, in a talk with a group of journalists at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Contrary to his reputations as a press-shy politician, Mr. Premadasa was unusually forthcoming at an hour-long question-answer session. He dealt with queries with skill, patience and good humour if not always with the same degree of conviction. The questions related to SAARC (his visit here was in his capacity as the chairman of the regional association), the domestic problems of Sri Lanka and its relations with India.

On his relations with Mr. Rao, he said "We have an unwritten agreement to work together." This, of course, reflected his optimism about the bilateral relationship but was also a rhetorical parrying of questions on the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. He did not give a direct reply, when asked about his Government's view on the status of the agreement, impliedly suggesting that it was different from the perception of New Delhi. In his banquet speech for instance, the President, Dr. S. D. Sharma, described the agreement as a sincere attempt to resolve the ethnic conflict in the island.

In this context, Mr. Premadasa recalled the promises contained in his party's election manifesto — that he would work for the withdrawal of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force and establish his country's relations with India on the basis of reciprocity.

He noted with satisfaction the fulfilment of the first promise — and paid a tribute to India, and the Government of the day, headed by Mr. V. P. Singh for the pullout of the IPKF.

'No talks with LTTE now'

As for the second issue, he mentioned his Government's preference for a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation on the model of India's arrangement with the erstwhile Soviet Union. Sri Lanka, he said, gave a draft of the treaty (as visualised by his Government) but did not explain why there was no movement forward. As was known, India submitted a counterdraft which was not liked by Sri Lanka and, from then on there has been no follow-up.

He was asked whether the LTTE's suspected complicity in the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, would affect his Government's relations with India — or with the Tigers. These, he replied, were separate issues which should not be mixed. He was noncommittal on a hypothetical question whether he would agree to India's request for the extradition of the LTTE Chief, Prabhakaran, if he was caught. There were separate enactments for all these things — was another observation by him.

Mr. Premadasa was emphatic that there were no negotiations now between his Government and the LTTE. The Government did talk to the Tigers some time back but that phase was over. He had insisted on three conditions — one, the LTTE must stop the use of arms; two it should agree to join the democratic process and three, it should recognise the right of other (Tamil) parties to contest the elections. "We stretched our hand in friendship," he said regretting the absence of the desired response. It was clear

that the talks could be resumed only if these conditions were accepted by the LTTE. Did he trust the LTTE? "Trusting is different, negotiating is different" was his reply.

As for the problems of north-eastern province, Mr. Premadasa narrated the various developments leading to the take-over of the administration of the province after its council adopted a resolution, running counter to the Sri Lankan constitution. There was no provision for a midterm poll, he said, noting that a Joint Select Committee of Parliament was now engaged in evolving consensus on next steps (to end the present stalemate).

No mid-term poll

The question on the SAARC related to the tasks for the next summit — in Dhaka in December — the progress of its activities, possible expansion. One of the main issues, to be taken up at Dhaka, is the proposal for a treaty envisaging the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement. He was asked about the prospects of its adoption, in view of Pakistan's reservations. Mr. Premadasa said he was not aware of any reservations but added: "We will have to study various aspects of cooperation." As he saw it, all the member countries were keen on the promotion of trade. Sri Lanka had taken certain unilateral steps — like the decision to buy from the region what was available there, because "we can get it quicker and cheaper." He was confident that the SAARC nations could cooperate to meet the various challenges, especially now that they have adopted the same policy of liberalised economics.

Was India's size and the scale of its resources a hindrance in the way of cooperation in South Asia? If India is big in size, it

has also big problems, he said. Was not the asymmetry a major cause for the prevailing distrust? What would he like India to do to remove these impressions? Like an elder brother, possessing maturity, it could help others to get over their immaturity, he said, adding: "it all depends on behaviour."

Two proposals

Terrorism in the region, he told a questioner, had been the subjects of study by experts (within the parameters of the SAARC convention). They had made two proposals — one for the establishment of a network for the exchange of information on counter-terrorism and the

other for setting up a data bank. The problem of refugees, he said, could be tackled either bilaterally, regionally or unilaterally.

It was for the summit, Mr. Premadasa said, to consider the various suggestions for additions to the SAARC — including the interest shown by Iran for an observer status.

A Benign Big Brother

Two years ago, the visit of a Sri Lankan President to New Delhi would have fuelled extensive, even hysterical media speculation and expectation. That the recent visit of President R. Premadasa invited mild and mostly positive comment in an indication of a welcome upturn in the bilateral relationship. There are, of course obvious circumstances that have helped ease traditional suspicion and the vicious cycle of confrontation. The withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force from Sri Lankan Soil, the LTTE-inspired assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Jayalitha's coming to power in Tamil Nadu and, more crucial, the change of guard at the Centre. P. V. Narasimha Rao clearly has no Rajiv-type ambition to play Big Brother in the neighbourhood and flaunt New Delhi's regional muscle. More

so at a time when the domestic situation needs sensitive and careful handling without the added burden of problems with the neighbours.

Premadasa said as much in his private chat with selected Indian journalists when he acknowledged that the marked improvement in Indo-Sri Lankan relations dated from "last year's elections in India". The change of approach in South Block has been timely and judicious. India's traditional belligerence against her neighbours has achieved nothing of lasting diplomatic value while the losses have been considerable, most notably the hundreds of lives in the ill-fated operations against the LTTE and, diplomatically, the inevitable ganging up against New Delhi by all the neighbouring countries. The ultimate beneficiary has been Islamabad.

It is unlikely that relations with Pakistan can be improved in the foreseeable future. But by mending fences with countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan, India can largely neutralise Islamabad's anti-Indian stance and regain its role as a benign Big Brother. Thus far, New Delhi's diplomatic response to issues concerning the neighbours have been mature and non-confrontational which seems to suggest that such a strategy is not only being worked on but is working out. Even Afghanistan, which has every reason to be critical of India for its earlier pro-Soviet stand, has been unusually circumspect in its diplomatic dealings with New Delhi. Now that the major players in the neighbourhood — India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — have embarked on programmes of major economic reforms, it is even more crucial that diplomatic relations in South Asia stay on an even keel.

(INDIA TODAY)

LETTER

Port Action

The action was not a "joint" trade union action" but a collective action by all the workers in the Port in pursuance of a decision of the Port Branch of the CMU alone, which was not supported by the three other unions in the Port, the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya, Sri Lanka Independent Employees' Union and the Harbour and Dock Workers Union. On the contrary. The UNP and the SLFP-led Unions opposed the continuance of the action after they had accepted a payment of "an allowance equivalent to

the CLA" put forward by the SLPA, which the CMU and all the Port workers rejected. In that situation 12,513 Port workers gave a signed mandate to the CMU to pursue the common demand for payment of the Cost of Living Allowance, on their behalf. □

Sec. C. M. I. G. W. U.

Enter the...

(Continued from page 4)

uncomfortable lines to the players, and changes roles and costumes. The Lankan "crisis", though faceless, is the ultimate playwright, often defying even the most knowledgeable spectators and professional critics.

The 'Tigers' have given ano-

ther typically cold-blooded performance in a field of which they are brilliant exponents. But they must remember they are not totally self-reliant. There is such a thing as Tamil opinion and the other parties have reacted with revulsion, notably the TULF. Apart from that there is world opinion and the 'Tigers' have exploited international opinion (manipulating it sometimes) to serve their cause. But massacres are not going to win friends; and no guerrilla group in the world is strong enough to defy world opinion. There are limits to cold-blooded terror. And already, international agencies, Asia Watch etc, have expressed their concern and horror.

Premadasa Visit**An Indian assessment****S. D. Muni**

The two days Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa spent in India from October 1 to October 3 planned as part of the SAARC tradition of the chairman visiting all the members countries, was treated as a bilateral state visit. The Sri Lankan side was evidently keen on it, and India also agreed to this not to match Pakistan and Nepal who had already done so, but also to focus attention on the bilateral aspects of relations between the two countries.

Principal Agenda

Mr. Premadasa's Principal agenda in New Delhi was to highlight his achievement as the SAARC chairman and avoid getting into any serious discussion with the Indian leaders on bilateral relations, specially the Tamil question in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, programmes of poverty alleviation, preferential trading arrangements and instituting the South Asian Development Fund proposed during the last SAARC summit in Colombo, were projected by him in his banquet speech and the statements. Given its interest in the core economic issues in SAARC, India has always been enthusiastically supporting Sri Lankan moves for South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangements (SAPTA). Both the sides hope that SAPTA will be formalised at the forthcoming Dhaka SAARC summit, notwithstanding lingering reservations of Pakistan.

On poverty alleviation, Development Fund and other proposals, India will go along to the extent all other members are willing to go. On its part India is keen that SAARC members agree to have regular

consultations and set up a network of information exchange to help "counter-terrorism" measures. In particular, India has considerable expectations from Sri Lanka and Pakistan in this regard. While agreeing with his hosts in New Delhi on the principle of information exchange on terrorism, Mr. Premadasa cleverly delinked the question of terrorism from the handing over of Prabhakaran, the LTTE supremo, to India in connection with the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. Any assurances on the Prabhakaran extradition issue could vitiate Mr. Premadasa's future plans, if any, to have a deal with the LTTE.

In spite of his reluctance, India succeeded in obtaining from Mr. Premadasa an appreciative mention of India's help to Sri Lanka in the fields of training (including military), educational scholarships and economic ventures. Mr. Premadasa has generally been shy of acknowledging such help at home. The Sri Lankan side also agreed to sort out, through bilateral discussions, the question of difficulties being faced by the Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait. In addition, Sri Lanka has reiterated its readiness to facilitate the return of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees from India.

On the substance of the Tamil question, Mr. Premadasa refused to accept the validity of the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement of 1987 and the basic of devolution of power to the Tamils laid down in this agreement. In this regard, President Sharma's reference and Prime Minister Rao's suggestion in one-to-one talks with President Premadasa were almost frowned upon. Mr. Premadasa was not willing to go beyond his government's "commitment to devise a peaceful, negotiated settlement involving all the parties concern-

ed." The Indian formulation on this issue i.e. "fair and equitable settlement to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil community..." by involving all those (non-LTTE) parties which have eschewed the path of violence," if endorsed, could create domestic problems for Mr. Premadasa from the Sinhala opposition as well as the LTTE.

Mr. Premadasa camouflaged the question of his relations with the LTTE saying that no talks were on with them "now," that the LTTE must lay down arms and join the democratic process and that security "operations... necessary for the protection of innocent civilians (not for containing or disarming the LTTE) would continue."

Short-Term Deal

In the past, the Premadasa regime has found it politically expedient to have short-term deals with the LTTE even without the latter either giving up arms or its demand for Eelam. Perhaps one such deal is in place. In the aftermath of killing of Gen. Kobekaduwa and his top military associates in July, the withdrawal of troops from Jaffna has given a much needed breather to the LTTE to regroup as was evident in their running over of the military's most important Elephant Pass base when Mr. Premadasa was in New Delhi.

It is good that India has brought the Tamil issue back into its Sri Lanka policy. However, it has no strength or instrumentalities to persuade President Premadasa to see advantages of its approach. While the divergence on this issue will remain between India and Sri Lanka, the two sides can expand their mutual cooperation and understanding on the new found convergence in economic interests.

(The writer is a J. N. U. Professor)

ISLAM

Western media distorts Islam

Sakhina Yusuf Khan

"Brilliant, provocative and accessible. . . . A marker and a signpost in Muslim interactions with the West." "Superb. . . incisive, . . . it provides an excellent analysis of postmodernism and at the same time offers a useful path in understanding contemporary Islam." These are some of the reviews Prof. Akbar S. Ahmed has received for his latest book Postmodernism and Islam: Promise and Predicament. Published by Routledge, it is the lead title in their 1992 catalogue. Prof. Ahmed now awaits the Indian response to this which is to be brought out shortly by Penguin India.

A distinguished anthropologist, a Pakistani civil servant and a well known author and commentator on Islam, and now the Allama Iqbal Fellow, at Selywn College, Cambridge, Prof. Akbar Ahmed was in India recently in connection with a film he is making on Islam in South Asia for the BBC. In an interview with Sakina Yusuf Khan he discussed the theme of the book and the problems of contemporary Islam.

Your latest book Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise is different from your earlier writings both in terms of style and content. What was the provocation and inspiration for the present theme?

As a Muslim and as someone who has been studying Muslim societies, I genuinely felt there are serious misunderstand-

ing and misperceptions about Islam today. The Muslim image that emerges through the media, particularly the Western media, is often offensive and misleading. Islamic injunctions of tolerance, compassion and rationality are blotted out completely. What is highlighted is Islamic orthodoxy. My purpose in writing this book was to reduce the misunderstanding about Islam and to make what seems a strange culture intelligible to the non-Muslim world.

You say that the negative image of Islam is largely the creation of the Western media which you call "the evil master demon" in your book. Why should the Western media single out Islam for disparaging?

It is not confined to Islam. Rooted in a secular irreverent tradition, the nature of the Western media itself is such that it cannot sympathise with traditional religions. For instance Hinduism for it, is little more than the caste system and sati. The great Hindu sages are reduced to half-naked fakirs.

Apart from the nature of the media what are the other reasons for the western media's anti-Islamic posture?

There are many reasons for derision and antipathy towards Islam in the Western media. Some historical, some contemporary: the atavistic memory of the crusades, the blame of the oil crisis. Besides there are parts of the Muslim world today, like Palestine, Kashmir and Bosnia

which feel a great sense of injustice. Injustice fuels anger. Their younger generation is no longer prepared to listen to Islamic arguments of tolerance. They take recourse to direct and violent action which confirms the media's stereo-type about Muslim militancy.

What about Muslim reaction to the Rushdie affair. Didn't that too reinforce the image of Islamic intolerance?

Islam is not a intolerant religion. Throughout Muslim history we have examples of tolerance towards other faiths. Babur, for instance, banned cow slaughter out of deference for Hindu sentiment.

As far as the Rushdie affair is concerned I agree that Muslim reactions had a very negative impact on the community's image. They should have debated the issue instead of burning the book. At the same time it showed that Muslims could not be taken for granted. Rushdie being from South Asia knew it would hurt Muslim sentiment. Anyone in South Asia has to be tolerant and sympathetic about religion because unlike the West, traditional societies still have a lot of respect for religious figures.

What are the challenges for Islamic societies in a post-modernist age?

Once of the important features of the post modernist age is the all pervasive presence of the media. The dawn of the media age poses a serious challenge for Muslim societies. A generation ago traditional Muslim homes

throughout the world were fairly secure from outside influence. The atmosphere inside the home reflected Islamic values. For the first time in history a Muslim home is being penetrated with foreign values through the medium of satellite televisions. These values threaten to upset the traditional values of a Muslim society and tear apart their secure social fabric. What is worse the onslaught comes when Muslims are at their weakest — corrupt rulers, incompetent administrators and feeble thinkers mark their societies.

How are they to cope with this challenge?

Muslim need to face up to the fact that there is no escape, no hiding place from this 'media demon'. They must know the power and nature of the non-Muslims they live with. For that they must understand those who represent it. These include figures they do not admire like singer Madonna and writer Rushdie — they must also understand

why these figures represent the age. They must confront the media and do so on its own terms or else they will continue to be misrepresenting and also run the risk of being marginalised.

What has been the Muslim response to post modernism?

So far the Muslim response to post modernism has been the same as it was a century ago — that is retreat accompanied by passionate expression of faith and anger. This response is impractical and unrealistic. The need of the post modernist age is for Muslims to give up their isolation and participate with world civilisation.

Can they do so without obliterating their Muslim identity considering that Islam prescribes a definite way of life for its adherents?

Any traditional society cannot wholly integrate or solate itself. If Islam integrates totally it would no longer be Islam but some other phenomena. If it isolates itself completely then too it is not Islam because Islam is not an isolationist religion.

What is the relevance of Islam in a post modernist age marked by contrary philosophy—secularism materialism and irreverence?

A traditional religion like Islam has much to offer in a post modernist world saturated with disintegration and cynicism and loss of faith. Many of the currently accepted social positions in the West on the undesirability of drug alcoholism and promotion of family life has always been advocated by Islam.

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The Columbus quincentenary: Celebration or shame?

Paul Caspersz

On October 12 the fifth centenary of the "Discovery" of America was "celebrated" in many places of the Old and New World. We feel constrained to join the chorus, but only to challenge the "discovery" and question its "celebration".

Hans Koning (*Columbus: His Enterprise, 1991*) has this to say of 12 October 1492:

It was a beautiful early autumn. The log keeps noting how the sea is "as smooth as well", "as calm as the river at Seville". Vast flocks of birds cross the sky; songbirds land on the ship and sing from the rigging. The wind carries the scent of flowers and herbs. To what were then, to most of their populations, blessed islands, the three ships approaching at Harbingers of Death.

In 1513, only twenty one years later, the Spanish explorer, Ponce de Leon, found only one Lucayan woman left on a small islet north of Grand Bahama. During those twenty one years thousands of Lucayans had been shipped off to the mines of Cuba and Haiti and to the pearl beds off Venezuela. Disease — some of its more exotic forms introduced by the Europeans — and mass suicide had taken care of the rest.

Columbus' own report for the day of his arrival, or shortly after, reads:

All the men looked young... they do not bear arms... and so do not know them... they would make fine servants, and they are intelligent... I believe they could easily be made Christians... But should your Majesties command, all the inhabitants could be taken away to Castile, or made slaves on the island. With fifty men we could subjugate

them all and make them do whatever we want.

After wandering through the Bahamas Islands and Cuba, on 6 December 1492 Columbus reached what he called Hispaniola, which is now Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He sent back a report meant for the Queen of Spain in which he said:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful... the harbours are unbelievably good and there are many rivers of which the majority contain gold... there are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals... I gave them a thousand pretty things (elsewhere he reassures the King and Queen that they were nearly worthless) in order to get their affection and make them want to become Christians... In conclusion... their Majesties can see that I will give them as much gold as they need, if they will give me some very little help... And I will bring back as many slaves as they ask... Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way...

Much more of this genre may be cited from the letters and the reports of Columbus and other conquistadors. But what has here been cited unmasks all the essential elements of the colonial enterprise.

First, cultural insensitivity in all that regarded the ancient ways of life of the colonized peoples. It is evidenced even in the names given to the islands: La Isla Espanola, or Hispaniola, San Domingo, San Salvador. And old Panama Kuna name existed for what we know as America: Abia Yala, meaning ripe land, mature land, mother land, land of life. Recently a young Kuna from Panama said

not without a sense of tragedy: "If they had believed that they had reached China, we would today be called Chinese. But they thought they had reached India. So they called us Indians." Even the name America comes from Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian who explored the Brazilian coast in 1501-2. In 1507 a German cartographer, Martin Waldseemüller, honoured Vespucci by assigning on a map the name America to the area of his exploits. The name caught on, and the ancient name of Abia Yala was forgotten.

If this is only a small instance, the wholesale destruction of ancient cultures and civilizations at the hands of the European invaders is not. The great Maya, the Aztec and the Inca cultures were ruthlessly suppressed. A writer in the Yucatec Maya work of the 17th-18th centuries, *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*, says:

Alas, we are saddened because they came. They came to make our flowers wither, so that only their flower might live.

It is therefore not surprising that the indigenous people of Abia Yala have no wish to celebrate five hundred years of "discovery", but to record the story of five hundred years of suppression. They Maya work, *Popol Vuh*, written in the 1550s, when most of the damage had already been done, prays:

We have the conquerors of death.

Our race will not die as long as there is light in the morning air.

The Spanish Christian in Abia Yala were quite horrified by the rite of human sacrifice which they found among the indigenous people. Yet even in the Spanish condemnation of human sacrifice there was an element of cultural insensitivity since they did not see it, in the words of Enrique Dussel as "the essential rite of cosmic renewal, since the gods needed blood to live and give life to the universe". There has also probably been exaggeration about the ex-

tent of the human sacrifice in the indigenous religions and the full truth will have to await the researches of indigenous scholars into their own past. Besides, there is a definite tendency among Europeans to be negatively judgemental about the more contentious matters in non-European cultures and to be most magnanimous about similar dark places in their own cultures. So indigenous homosexuals are sodomists while European or white American homosexuals are just gays. So are they scandalized by a thousand human sacrifices on the altar of the gods while they justify ten thousand abortions performed on the altar of sexual fulfilment. What really is the more to be condemned?

Second, an attitude of disdainful devaluation on the right to happiness and even the physical life of the other. The Spanish colonization of Abia Yala took place at the expense of what Pablo Richard, a Chilean liberation theologian, calls "the greatest genocide in the history of humanity". In 1942 the population of what is now Latin America and the Caribbean has estimated at 100 million. By 1570 the population had dwindled to 10-12 million. The Spaniards cut off the hands of Arawaks who did not bring them the stipulated amounts of gold. Koning says that he saw old Spanish priests of the severing of hands in the collection of a Haitian bishop: "the Indians stumble away, staring with surprise at their arms stumps pulsing out blood". More than 400 years later Brazilian entrepreneurs still cut off the ears of the indigenous people who did not bring in enough wild rubber. In Hispaniola green wood was used to burn to death the indigenous peoples' leaders so that they should scream louder and take longer to die. The great Spanish Dominican priests, Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566), scourge of the Spanish colonizers and spokesman for the rights of the indigenous people, reported these murders. They took place in lots of thirteen. Why thirteen? "In

memory of our Redeemer and His twelve apostles." Las Casas records that some chiefs and nobles were slowly roasted to on grides of iron. Men, women and children were hacked to pieces and the pieces sold to feed the dogs of the Spaniards. It was considered good military policy to give the dogs a taste for the flesh and blood of the indigenous people.

To these crimes must be added the other of slavery which also, says Richard, "was a long drawn out and far-reaching genocide." Three million black slaves were brought to Spanish America during the colonial period. To Brazil up to 1850 were brought four million; to the English and French Caribbean three million. This makes a total of ten million blackslaves coerced into South and Middle America, and these figures are held by many to be conservative and do not include the thousands who died on the voyage. If the Anglo-Saxons and other Europeans tend to foist the Black Legend upon Spain alone, they should remember that many European countries gaily joined in the shameful business. Liverpool was in fact the most popular port shipping the cargoes of black men to and from Europe. And, in the long run, not Spain and Portugal, but Britain, France, Holland and Belgium had the majority share of colonial plunder.

Third, using the other for one's own pecuniary aggrandisement. The quest for gold and silver was of the essence of the Columbus and, after him, of the entire colonial enterprise. It received unambiguous expression in the contract of 17 April 1492 between the Spanish Crown and Columbus:

Your Highnesses, being lords of the said ocean seas, guarantee to the said Dom Christopher Columbus . . . all and any goods, whether pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices and any other things and merchandise of any sort, number and manner, which may be bought, bartered, obtained by chance, won or had within the boundaries of the said Admiralty.

An Aztec chronicler wrote of the Spanish invaders:

As if they were monkeys they seized on the gold. It was as if their hearts were satisfied, brightened, calmed. For in truth they thirsted mightily for gold; they stuffed themselves with it; they starved for it; they lusted for it like pigs.

Francisco Pizarro, conquistador of Cuzco, the centre of the Inca empire in Peru, openly said that the Spanish came to take away the gold of the Incas. And Bernal Diaz, the eye-witness historian of the conquest of Mexico, admitted that "we came here to serve God, and also to get rich." Chief Nicaragua asked to what purpose so few men wanted so much gold. Would their bodies be big enough for so much adornment?

Father Vincente Valverde, Pizarro's companion, approached Atahualpa, the last Inca Emperor, with the cross in his right hand and the Bible in his left. Valverde asked him to renounce idolatry and accept the true faith. Atahualpa took the Bible and threw it to the ground. He was held captive for nine and a half months. A large ransom — 24 tons of gold and silver — arrived in Seville. The Spaniards broke their promise that Atahualpa would be freed if the ransom was paid and condemned him to be burnt. Valverde approached him again and said that, if he became a Christian, burning would be replaced by strangulation. After baptism Atahualpa was strangled on the terrible garrote while the Spaniards stood around and chanted creed.

On the principle that the oppressed should be left free to talk for themselves, let Aiban Wagua, a Kuna Catholic priest, summarize the results of the colonial invasion of his land:

The education system imposed on us for many years has aimed to quell, tame, civilize Christianize and whiten indigenous people. It inculcates the value of everything non-indigenous and detaches us

(Continued on page 23)

The Judiciary

Radhika Coomaraswamy

If we are to have fundamental rights protection which is truly effective in Sri Lanka, we have to strengthen the judiciary. The first chapter of the Constitution itself places the judiciary as a derivative body of parliament and therefore reduces its role in the arena of checks and balances. Life tenure for judges or retirement with special benefits so that they do not need to covet office once they have retired and judicial review of enacted legislation are some of the other measures which may be necessary. In addition there has to be the executive which will implement and carry out court orders. We cannot ever revert to a situation where policemen fined for violating fundamental rights are then promoted by the cabinet of ministers.¹¹ This type of crude subversion is one of the many reasons why the judiciary has been somewhat timid. However, recent cases such as the Boosa case¹² point to the fact that the Supreme Court is suddenly coming alive with regard to fundamental rights cases especially with regard to those relating to detention and torture. But this is a recent trend which can only be strengthened with a grant of greater independence through other measures aimed at enhancing judicial power

The paramount importance of the Judiciary with regard to the enjoyment of fundamental rights was no better expressed than by Justice Potter Stewart in his address to the media:-

"Where ladies and gentlemen, do you think these great constitutional rights that you were so vehemently asserting, and in which you were so conspicuously wallowing yesterday, where do you think they came from? The stork did not bring them. These came from the judges of

this country, from these villains here sitting at table. That's where they came from. They came from the courts of this country. . . the Constitution of the U. S. is not a self-executing judgement".¹³

THE EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The main problem that parliamentary democracies are facing around the world is the problem of an incoherent executive which then affects the delivery of services to the people. This is a particular problem in third world societies where state action and intervention requires them to reach growth rates of significant proportions if they wish to develop and where the safety net of welfare provisions is particularly important.

In an era where one political party such as the Congress in India can no longer claim an absolute majority without coalition building and where in Sri Lanka, with a tripartite electoral billing in the future, coalition building may become essential, the problem of an incoherent executive with little "decisional mobility"¹⁴ may emerge as a fundamental problem. The Italian nightmare may strike closer to home.

The failure of successive governments in India to maintain coalitions has posed serious issues, but the nature of the Indian bureaucratic system, its all India character, its considerable autonomy, allows the system to continue regardless of politicians. In Sri Lanka, since the 1970's there has been a steady erosion of the independent public service. The power of the public servant was so feared that there was a concerted attempt by all regimes from all political parties to curtail that power by politicising the bureaucracy. As a

result, without politicians, the systems will not function.

Given this reality, and the thrust of coalition politics — i. e., the failure of opposition parties to accept a common platform or mandate, may result in an incoherent executive and a collapse of the system. On the other hand, this may be a good thing, in that it would foster more democratic approaches and force a polity unused to building coalitions in a meaningful way to start such attempts with new vision and direction.

But while this political maturity develops, it is imperative that there is a cadre of public servants who can perform their duty with regard to the delivery of services and guidance to the economy, without fear or favour. Whether it is a parliamentary system or a presidential system, it is imperative that the independent public service is strengthened, that they be fully trained and that they be given a certain measure of protection from political victimisation. As Max Weber argued in the nineteenth century, the true test of a modern system lies not in the market, nor in its legislature but in the nature of the bureaucracy — it is impersonal, objective and efficient and is it manned by the best and brightest of the country.¹⁵ Without a cadre of modern bureaucrats operating efficient systems of management, there will be no effective delivery of services to the people.

PROS AND CONS

Besides the thematic aspects discussed above, the evaluation of the choice between parliamentary system and presidential system, must also take into consideration the overall picture — i.e., the basic assumptions and dynamics behind the system. The parliamentary system gives the appearance of being less arbitrary, more modern in the Weberian sense of the word, less bound up with proportional representation and the inevitability of coalition building, the failure of successful coalitions would

result in an incoherent executive, a thrust toward dominance by political parties whose structures are highly oligarchic, a tendency toward majoritarian democracy and primacy of the parochial constituency over an All Sri Lanka consciousness.

The presidential system on the other hand gives the appearance of a coherent executive which can efficiently deliver services, coupled with the progressive concept of a national, All Sri Lanka electorate but is problematic because it has a thrust toward centralisation, toward personal styles of authority over programmes, and is Bonapartist in that it weakens intermediary organisations whether within the political system or as part of the bureaucracy.

MIX AND MATCH

It is the suggestion of this paper, that neither a parliamentary system in and of itself, nor a presidential system, in and of itself will solve the problems of political democracy in Sri Lanka. Both systems have operated in the Sri Lankan reality and they have led to major pitfalls in the management of our political life. The final resolution of our constitutional framework must be based on this actual experience and not on any preconceived positivist ideal of what is more perfect in theory, parliamentary systems or presidential systems.

In this regard let me summarise the conclusions that must necessarily arise from the previous sections. Any new constitutional framework in Sri Lanka would require a consensus based on the following:-

1. The primacy of democracy. In this regard the legislature must be the centerpiece of any form of representative government. The Cabinet of Ministers must be drawn from the parliament and must have substantial powers and also be responsible to Parliament for their actions and for collective cabinet decisions. Parliament itself must be strengthened by a "technocratic

system" with the operation of effective committees. A system of legislative interns, of young people who can research and advise the members of parliament may also be a useful experiment — it would also expose some of the best of our young minds to the workings of parliament — a sort of apprenticeship or investment in quality future leadership.¹⁶

2. There is need for a coherent executive and an election which sees Sri Lanka in terms of a national electorate so as to strengthen the unity and integrity of the electoral process. There should be an elected president who sits as the head of the Cabinet of Ministers. Ministries should not be assigned to the President since he is not accountable to parliament but he should be in charge of devising broad policy areas and in conducting the meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers. He should be requested to address parliament twice a year to give a statement on general government policy. The day to day workings of government should be left to the Cabinet of Ministers precisely because they are answerable to parliament. The President however must be responsible to ensure that government policy is coherent and that ministers are in fact implementing policy as decided by the Cabinet. This monitoring of ministerial function is essential but should be done collectively at the level of Cabinet meeting. This would be to ensure that the Cabinet of Ministers, who are the representatives of the legislature in the executive, are not subordinate to the President. This will be particularly important if the President is drawn from a different political party from the Prime Minister and the members of Cabinet. In this eventuality, the balance of power with regard to policy-making must rest with the Cabinet of Ministers and the legisla-

ture — otherwise there would be a serious threat to democratic practice.

3. The protections with regard to an independent judiciary should be strengthened. An amended version of the seventeenth amendment¹⁷ currently under consideration should form the basis for the fundamental rights section, but there should also be judicial review of enacted legislation and special provisions with regard to the tenure of judges, their emoluments and conditions of retirement.

4. The delivery of services to the population finally rests with the efficient functioning of an independent public service. Their position should be strengthened and special procedures should be adopted to prevent victimisation of public servants. In addition, in line with the Youth Commission report, there should be National Policy with general guidelines which has bipartisan support from at least the major political parties in the areas of health and education. This is crucial to prevent dislocation in the welfare system and in the education system everytime there is a change of government; something which has weakened our services in recent years.¹⁸

5. Sharing of power with the provinces. A system of federal units or maximum devolution must supplement the system at the centre to ensure local level participation and to prevent not only the centralisation of resources but the intensive conflicts which result over the struggle over centralised resources, including the struggle for political power.

CONCLUSION

Atul Kohli in a recent book on "governance" in India has conducted an empirical study on the problem of governing India, and the major problems of a post-colonial developing state practicing democracy of any sort.¹⁹

He argues that the failure rests on three aspects, at least with regard to the Indian experience. The first is the existence of an active, intervening state which has stifled the market as well as free initiative at the local level. It has also created a system where access to resources with regard to the society rests on control of the State apparatus — i.e., with the politicians and the bureaucrats — a very limited circle in the Indian context. This has led to wide-scale dissatisfaction with the State apparatus.

Secondly, he argues that the system of political parties in intense competition with each other has led to elite-led mobilisation, where various sectors are mobilised from ethnic and tribal groups to caste groups to class groups for electoral purposes but with no real intention of satisfying their aspirations. This has led to what Naipaul calls a million mutinies²⁰ which not only demand their rights from the centre but in some cases take to armed rebellion and separatism, many of them rejecting the hypocrisy of elite led mobilisation with a world view which is quite anathema to liberal democratic values. They refuse to be governed by the Indian state as we know it. As a result they are a threat to the state as well as to the liberal democratic, secular system which India adopted at independence.

This Kohli formulation for India is relevant for our discussion in Sri Lanka for the two factors have also been very important in the growing problem of governance in third world societies. A constitutional system is the apex system in any framework of governance — how does one remedy the pitfalls outlined above as well as ensure the democratic ideals which have animated our politics since independence?²¹

In answering the question, it may also be important to recognise that we are also dealing with only one half the problem. From a political scientist's point of view, the difference between

a presidential system and a parliamentary one is minimal in face of other ideological constraints. In fact Ashis Nandy and others have argued that any of these systems of representative government and the bureaucracy which accompany modern nation states are colonial experiments in contradiction to and struggling with a civil society animated by other concerns.²² One may be able to dismiss this without much disagreement by stating that no other alternative exists for developing societies. But the reminder is particularly salient in light of the two youth insurrections which have characterised our social conflict in recent years.

The ideologies of the alternative are no longer the Marxist or the left liberal which to some extent share the same world view as the liberals in the celebration of democratic values and modern industrial growth. The ideologies that proliferate today and which have captured the hearts and minds of our youth are "the ideologies of the vernacular" i.e., born out of the symbols, discourse and mythology of Sinhala speaking and Tamil speaking intellectuals. "We are skating on thin ice" said a leading social scientist when he appeared before the Youth Commission in 1989. This ideology as manifested in the JVP, the Jathika Chintanaya group and the Tamil nationalist formations such as the LTTE has little in common with and little respect for the liberal values which animate the parliamentary process. In fact they are animated by a unitary totalitarian vision which have neither the presidential system nor the parliamentary system as their reference point.

This lack of liberal values is not only the sole prerogative of our extremist groups but as Upendra Baxi puts it, one of the major aspects of the present crisis lies in the very classes which debate such matters as constitutional structures.

"It is quite clear that the Indian political elite and the upper middle classes have not internalised the value of lega-

lism... This creates a demonstration effect."²³

So the real task, in addition to ironing out the framework for a perfect constitutional order is to begin the task of educating people in liberal citizenship.²⁴ We have to begin a contest for the imagination of our young people.²⁵ Our text books are full of dynastic history with perhaps a few pages left for liberal or socialist nationalist heroes who pale in comparison to the magnificent kings who fought with valour and swords. We must make the democratic alternative an attractive one for the South Asian imagination.²⁶ Unless we do that, the nuances between different types of democratic formulations would only be an intellectual exercise for the benefit of constitutional lawyers.

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Warrior Sons and Mothers

D. P. Sivaram

The Madurai Tamil Sangam was established by Pandithurai Thevar in 1901 with the assistance of his cousin Baskara Sethupathy who was the Raja of Ramnad at that time. The institution and its journal — the Senthamil, played an important role in what could be termed the Tamil renaissance in the first two decades of the twentieth century among the Tamils of south India and Sri Lanka. Its importance also lies in the fact that it created a class of Tamil pundits through a well organized and prestigious system of examinations at a time when strong objections were being raised against creating a chair for Tamil in the University of Madras. The pundits qualified by the Madurai Tamil Sangam in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka have also been instrumental in shaping the vocabulary of Tamil identity when Tamil nationalism began to constitute itself as a political force on both sides of the Palk Straits. The Sangam was conceived as a nationalist project by Pandithurai Thevar who announced and took up the task of its formation at the Madras sessions of the Congress in 1901. Thevar upheld the view the “the love for one’s language is the basis of patriotism and the love for one’s religion.” (Speech made at Tuticorin, quoted in P. S. Mani p. 39) Thevar’s desire to establish the Sangam was also linked to the traditional role of the Maravar and Kallar kings and chieftans of Tamil Nadu as the patrons of Tamil poets and pundits, despite the powerful inroads made by Sanskrit over the centuries. Most of the Tamil texts that impelled twentieth century Tamil renaissance were unearthed from collections of manuscripts preserved by families of traditional Tamil poets and scholars who had been

patronised by Tamil poligars and kings. Thevar appointed R. Raghava Aiyangar who was the court pundit of the Sethupathies as editor of the Sangam’s journal ‘Senthamil’ in 1901. His cousin, M. Raghava Aiyangar succeeded him as editor in 1904 and served for eight years. M. Raghava Aiyangar and his cousin belonged to a family of Vaishnavite Brahmins who had attached themselves to the Maravar kings of Ramnad from the eighteenth century. The family produced many Tamil and Sanskrit scholars who were court pundits and ministers to the Sethupathies and the nobles of their clan. M. Raghava Aiyangar’s father was a renowned Tamil scholar in the court of Ponnuchami Thevar — the brother of the Ramnad king Muthuramalinga Sethupathy (1862-1873) Ponnuchami Thevar was Arumuga Navalar’s patron in Tamil Nadu. Aiyangar’s father died when he was young and was looked after by Ponnuchami Thevar’s son Pandithurai Thevar. Thus Aiyangar’s life was bound with that of the Sethupathy clan of Marava rulers. Later in his life he wrote a book in appreciation of Thevar and his father called Senthamil Valartha Thevarhal — the Thevars who nurtured Shen Tamil. Aiyangar dedicated two of his most popular books to Baskara Sethupathy and Pandithurai Thevar. His involvement with the Indian nationalist movement was therefore closely related to the interests and perceptions of Thevar who was bestirred by the ideas of the revolutionaries and the Swadeshi movement. The Sethupathies had been resentful of the fact that they were coerced by the British to hand over the vast and profitable trade with Ceylon and Bengal. Thevar therefore was attracted by the Swadeshi movement’s

campaign to rejuvenate local industry and commerce to undermine the hold of British capital on India. The revolutionaries were calling for the revival of the disfranchised Kshatriyu classes of India. The Senthamil incorporated these sentiments and ideas into its projects for Tamil renaissance.

Thevar formed the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company with V. O. Chidamparampillai in 1907 to break the British monopoly on the profitable Colombo-Tuticorin steamer service. Chidamparampillai was closely associated with members of the revolutionary movement in Tamil Nadu at that time. The company resolved in one of its articles of incorporation that it would contribute one percent of its monthly earnings to the Madurai Tamil Sangam as long as it existed. (Annual report of the Sangam 1907 p. 7-8) Aiyangar also contributed to the nationalist cause by buying a Rs. 100 share in the company. The main financial assistance to the Sangam at this juncture came from Thondaman — the Kallar caste king of Pudukottai, who was its permanent patron, the Zamindar of Singampatty (Maravar)) and a Kallar caste leader called Gopalsamy Rajaliar who had succeeded in a campaign with Thevar’s assistance to alter his caste’s name from the derogatory Kallan to a the more respectable form Kallar. (Annual report of Sangam 1907). The Dravidian school of Tamil studies on the other hand was keen to show its loyalty to the Raj and represented Vellala caste interests.

It was in this context that M. Raghava Aiyangar’s Tamil nationalist project took shape. He conceived of a martial heritage that was unique to the Tamil

country constituted by the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms in South India, and was, according to him far superior to the military powers of north Indian peoples. He, an erudite Tamil scholar skillfully melded his politics into a compelling representation of a heroic Tamil past. The politicisation of Aiyangar's reading of the Tamil past begins with the event that kindled the revolutionary movement in 1905 — the victory of Japan over Russia. Japan's example was proof that India's traditional martial values could prevail over British arms. The victory was hailed by those who subscribed to the ideas of Thilak's militarism. Aiyangar wrote Parani poems (a form of Tamil heroic poetry to celebrate the victory of a warrior who slays 1000 elephants in the battle) exalting Japan's military might in the Sangam's journal 'Senthamil'. In 1907 when the activities of the revolutionary movement and the Swadeshi movement were gathering momentum he wrote an editorial essay on 'Warrior Mothers' — Veerath Thaimar. The ideological agenda for what has been described as the 'Mother politics' of militant Tamil nationalism was set forth in this essay. He wrote "Although there may be other reasons for the victory of the Japanese over the Russians, more numerous and belonging to a larger country, the main reason is the martial training given them by their parents from childhood... the valour and patriotisms of Japanese mothers can be seen in the volumes called 'The Russo-Japanese War'. These things may appear strange in our times but if we examine our history we will find such warrior mothers and their valourous children numerous... In ancient Tamil texts like Purananooru the martial theme predominates. It should be noted how the mothers of that era created great warriors" The essay is based on heroic poetry of the Moothinmullai category found in the Purananooru and the Purathirattu. Moothinmullai is a category in the poetics of codi-

fied Tamil martial culture in which the culmination a woman's motherhood is portrayed as the heroic martyrdom of her warrior son in battle. The mothers urge their sons to die valiantly in war. Aiyangar contrasts a Moothinmullai poem in which the warrior's mother says her womb is the lair of the Tiger who could be found only in battle fields, with another poem of the category in which a mother whose son has failed to attain martyrdom in battle, exclaims in anguish that she would cut as under her womb that gave birth to a coward. Aiyangar notes that the earliest Tamil grammar — the Tholkappiyam defines and names the poetic theme of the mother who commits suicide on hearing her son's lack of valour in the battlefield. (These mothers belonged to Maravar clans" he says. The Maravar are matrilineal.) He says that the warriors bought forth by these mothers made Tamil Nadu glorious in the Sangam era, in which "one does not hear of north Indian kings invading Tamil Nadu but only the victories of Tamil kings who fought the northerners. This was so because of the greatness of Tamil martial might." He concludes that the decline of the Tamils was the results of the decline of what he calls Thamil Veeram — Tamil martial prowess.

Subramaniya Barathy saw immense political value in the essay for propagating the ideas of the revolutionary movement's militarism among the Tamils. He serialized the essay in his paper 'India' and urged his readers to popularise it among their friends, relatives and 'women at their homes'. The essay was used by Barathy as an instrument for rekindling the martial ethos among the Tamils to achieve national liberation through armed insurrection.

Barathy and V. O. Chidamparampillai wrote to Aiyangar saluting the nationalist spirit inspired his essays.

The 'politics' of the Thamil Sangam was muted the next

year when the Swadeshi Steam Navigation company was crushed following riots against the British at Tuticorin and Tinnevely. V. O. Chidamparampillai and the revolutionary leader Subramaniya Siva were arrested and imprisoned. The publisher of Barathy's paper 'India' was also arrested on sedition charges. Barathy became an exile in the French colony of Pondichery.

Nevertheless Aiyangar developed the theme of a Tamil martial tradition that was superior to the north into one of the most persistent and characterising narratives of militant Tamil nationalism — the ¹Seran Senguttuvan legend of the epic Silapathigaram.

His belief that the decline of the Tamil martial tradition caused the decline of the Tamil nation has been echoed in every Tamil nationalist project since his time

Raghava Aiyangar lamented the decline of martial values in Tamil society for, he saw himself essentially as a loyal Brahmin of one of the oldest ruling Maravar clans of Tamil Nadu. His Tamil nationalist project was rooted in that self-perception.

Noes:-

1. Recent gender oriented critique of the LTTE fails to take note of the fact that the Moothinmullai Mother is a leitmotif in the structuring and representation of the Tamil nationalist project. Hence in the BBC documentaty on the Tigers — Suicide Killers — the Black Tiger Miller's mother is presented to the TV crew as a woman who feels proud of her son's heroic martyrdom in the suicide attack on the Nelliady Sri Lankan army camp in 1987. The LTTE here is reproducing a fundamental structure of representing Tamilian identity. C. S. Lakshmi has examined the role of the concept of the heroic mother in the militant Dravidian movement and its strategy of mobilising women. She, however fails to take note of the politics of Aiyangar and Barathy and the im-

(Continued on page 20)

The Federal Alternative

S. Sathananthan

3. On the Federal situation

Fundamentally, and perhaps deliberately the *Appraisal* neglected the primary function of a federal system: that of creating politico-institutional space in which different peoples could exercise and defend their rights as nationalities and, therefore could remain united as one country. Consequently, the existence of nationalities and the relations of power between them were ignored.

It was considered inappropriate to introduce a federal system under conditions where "inter-ethnic rivalries have come to the fore" (p. 11). In other words, a political condition of inter-nationality conflicts — a federal alternative was considered to be detrimental to federalism!

The *Appraisal* admitted that a "federal situation" existed in Sri Lanka (p. 23). But it formulated three further arguments to deny the applicability of a federal alternative. Firstly, it alleged that a federal system was unnecessary since under the 13th Amendment and in the PCs "we have the substance of federalism while maintaining some of the forms of a unitary constitution"; and, therefore, viewed concrete federal structures a "superfluous" (p. 40). However, the Supreme Court had held that the 13th Amendment respected in form AND substance the unitary character of the Constitution (*Sri Lanka Law Report*) 1987 (2), 312-410). But the author unwisely disputed the decision of the Supreme Court and engaged in an exercise of constitutional schizophrenia: he persisted in the confused and groundless claim that the imaginary "substance of federalism" existed in the absence of the "superfluous" concrete federal structures.

Secondly, the population mix of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims in eastern regions of NEP was claimed to present a "formidable obstacle" (p. 24) to the territorial demarcation of the proposed Tamil and Muslim federal states. However, a precedent had been established when the District of Vavuniya in the Northern Province was carved up by Government into a Tamil Assistant Government Agent (AGA) Division and a Sinhalese AGA Division. Moreover, Tamil and Muslim villages in some eastern regions of NEP (e. g., Katankudi, Eravur) have been administered as separate AGA Divisions. Clearly, the application of such administrative mechanisms to the entire eastern region to demarcate federal states is feasible and is more a question of political will.

Thirdly, the *Appraisal* was concerned about "the majority perception of unfairness" arising out of the belief that the introduction of the federal system would mean "the future reservation of (NEP) for Tamil speaking people only" (p. 27). It is of course nonsensical to claim that a citizen of a federal State would be prevented from living and working in any part of the country. But, the *Appraisal* misrepresented the specific opposition among Tamils to State-sponsored Sinhalese colonization of land in the NEP as a general opposition to Sinhalese living and working in the NEP. It alleged mischievously, and without any basis in political theory, that a bizarre situation would arise under a federal system where the Tamils (a) would enjoy "exclusive use" of the NEP and (b) would simultaneously have access to other part of the country. From this political fiction the *Appraisal* deduced that Sinhalese would be

unfairly deprived under a federal system.

4. Whither "higher nationalism"

National unity based on a "higher nationalism" (p. 7), argued the *Appraisal*, is the only way forward. It was readily admitted that "the majority among the Sinhala people, while professing national unity have not pursued it with sufficient seriousness" (p. 8). And it was glibly assuaged that "given a proper recognition and respect for the rights, traditions and the separate identity of all groups in the State a unitary system of government gives greater cohesion" (p. 14). But here precisely is the problem: what is supposed to be "given" in fact is non-existent. The following are some of the more prominent instances where "higher nationalism" among Sinhalese failed to materialize.

4.1. Citizenship rights

Kandyan Tamils, then known as "Indian Tamils", were arbitrarily stripped of their Sri Lankan citizenship in 1947. Their position as "stateless" persons remained unresolved until the growing involvement of India in Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts in the mid-1980s. Indian intervention underlined the urgency of giving back Sri Lankan citizenship to Kandyan Tamils whilst repatriating those among them who sought Indian citizenship, so that India could be pre-empted from intervening in Sri Lanka on the pretext of "protecting Indians". The question of "statelessness" was settled by implementing the 1964 Indo-Ceylon Agreement in stages in the late 1980s.

4.2. National Anthem

The National Anthem was composed by Sinhalese person.

Mr. Ananda Samarakone, in 1952. It was adopted by the Cabinet without consulting Tamil and Muslim leaders and without debate in Parliament (*Hansard* vol. 11, 1952:1175). Clearly, Tamil and Muslim opinion on the subject was treated as irrelevant by the Sinhalese ruling fraction.

4.3. National Flag

When it was proposed in 1948 that the Lion Flag of the (Kandyan) Sinhalese kingdom be adopted as the new national flag, Tamil leaders suggested a different design which could reflect the aspirations of Tamil and Muslim peoples too. But a Sinhalese MP, Mr A E Goonesinha, defended the proposal and rejected any accommodation of Tamil and Muslim interests: "If... we must appease the minority communities, where is the limit to this appeasement?... If we were to give in on this question of a National Flag, I do sincerely feel that we will have no end of trouble".

In contrast, a Tamil MP, Mr

S J V Chelvanayagam, emphasized the importance of "a proper and higher step" and the need for "a new turn of mind" (that is, higher nationalism") among Sinhalese to design a genuine national flag. Compromise suggestions by Tamil and Muslim leaders to modify the Lion Flag so as to represent Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims on equal footing were also rejected. A progressive Sinhalese MP, Dr Colvin R de Silva, criticized the imposition of the Lion Flag as national flag as a projection of Sinhalese political domination: "it is a covert effort by the communalist elements... in a majority community... to ram it own desires down the throats of others along communal lines" based on the "assumption of a majority right". And a Muslim MP, Mr T B Jayah, too regretted that the interests of Tamils and Muslims were ignored (*Hansard*, vol. 2, 1948: 5446-83).

Nevertheless, when the design

of the national flag was finalized in 1951, it contained the Lion Flag unaltered but with two vertical stripes, of Saffron and Green, placed OUTSIDE the Lion Flag at the LESS IMPORTANT pole end of the flag to signify the Tamil and Muslim peoples. A Tamil MP, Mr C Suntharalingam, dismissed the flag as a "fraud flag" and pointed out the derogatory implications of placing two coloured stripes outside the Lion Flag proper and at its pole end. He quoted Sinhalese MPs who had voiced their intentions to tell their electoral supporters: "If you fellows don't like this flag, just roll round the Green and Saffron coloured strips on the pole"; and, in utter disregard to Tamil and Muslim opinion, the *Ceylon Daily News* later on the 1972 Republic Day (22 May for example printed the national flag on its front page with the two offending stripes tucked out of sight behind the Lion emblem.

Next: LANGUAGE

To the Soviets

She was beaten by the Mongol Khans the Turkish boys
The Swedish feudal barons
The Polish-Lithuanian squires
The Anglo-French-German capitalists, the Japanese war lords

That was for backwardness
Cultural backwardness, military backwardness
Governmental, Industrial, and Agricultural backwardness
She was beaten because
To beat her was profitable
And could be done with impunity

Nikolai Nekrasov sang sadly of Mother Russia
"You are poor and abundant
You are powerful and helpless"

The poets words the capitalists caught
And beat her, saying,
"You are poor, you are helpless
You can be beaten and plundered
Such is the law of the jungle
You are backward, you are weak
So you can be enslaved
But you are mighty too
So we must be wary"

So you, Mother Russia's brood, her many children
So different, but rallying to the Soviets from her vast spaces
Put an end to this backwardness
In one flash of Bolshevik lightning

Remember Lenin said
"Either Death or leap forward a hundred years
Either we do this or they will crush us".

Josef Stalin

(To a conference of Managers of Soviet Industry on Feb. 4th 1931)

Warrior Sons...

(Continued from page 18)

1. pact of the Russo-Japanese war on them in the genesis of this concept. C S. Lakshmi, Mother, Mother-Community and Mother-Politics in Tamil Nadu. Economic and Political Weekly, Oct. 1990.
2. The role of the Sethupathies and Marava chieftans in the promotion of Tamil literature, see Sangath Thamilm Pitkalath Thamilm. U. V. Saminatha Aiyer, 1949. Kabir Press, Madras.
3. Senthamil Valartha Thevarhal. M. Raghava Aiyangar, 1948. D. G. Gopalapillai Co., Tiruchi.
4. Aiyangar was held in great esteem by the Tamil elite of Colombo and Jaffna. Sir Ponnambalam Ramnathan invited him to lecture in Jaffna. One V. J. Tambi Pillai translated his 'Velir Varalaru' and published it in the journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Ceylon. K. Srikanthan gave an award to his work 'Tholkapiya Araichi.' One of the earliest modern historians of Jaffna, A Mootootambi Pillai who was a contributor to the Sangam's journal Senthamil reflected Aiyangar's thesis in his Jaffna history when he lamented the decline of Jaffna's martial values which according to him had flourished under the ruler Sankili. Mootootambi Pillai, 1912. History of Jaffna.
5. 'Siranjeevi', 1981. Sethupathikal Varalaru (History of Sethupathies). Jeevan Press, Madras.

The Rajiv Assassination

Santhan (A35) received them and took them in his Fiat car, which was subsequently seized, to a house in Indira Nagar, Bangalore, where injured LTTE cadres were kept and treated. Irumburai (A27) was also present there.

50. During October, 1990, Dhanasekharan (A31) had booked six Maruti Gypsies and paid the price by means of Drafts using funds provided by the LTTE. Out of the six Maruti gypsies booked, Dhanasekharan (A31) took delivery of four. One of these four Gypsies was used by Rangan (A32) to shift Sivarasan (A4), Subha (A6), Nehru (A8) and others from place to place in Bangalore. Rangan (A32) came back to Madras and after 2 or 3 days went again to Bangalore and rejoined Sivarasan (A4) and Subha (A6).

51. After the arrest of Vicky (A33) by Thudiyalur Police, Coimbatore and Dixon's (A38) death at Coimbatore while surrounded by police on 28. 7. 91, Sivarasan (A4) Subha (A6) and Nehru (A8) shifted to a nearby house in Domalur, Bangalore. Sivarasan (A4), Subha (A6), Nehru (A8) and others shifted to Ranganath's (A34) houses at Puttanahalli on 2. 8. 91, after the death of Kulathan and Arasan LTTE cadre, when they were surrounded in the Indira Nagar house by SIT CBI, where they stayed upto 15. 8. 91. On 16. 8. 91 Sivarasan (A4), Subha (A6), Nehru (A8) and others were shifted to a house taken on rent at Konanakunte, Bangalore with the assistance of Ranganath (A34). Police surrounded the house at Konanakunte on 18. 8. 91 on coming to know that Sivarasan (A4), Subha (A6) and others were hiding in that house. On 19. 8. 91 night Subha (A6), Nehru (A8), Suresh Master (A37), Amman (A39), Driver Anna (A40) and Jamuna & Jameels (A41) all LTTE cadres, who were staying in that house committed suicide by consuming cyanide. Sivarasan (A4) died of a gun shot from the 9mm pistol available with him. Rangan (A32), who was taking Sivarasan (A4), Subha (A6), Nehru (A8), Raaganath (A34) and Suresh Master (A37) and the other injured cadres of LTTE from place to place in the Maruti gypsy in Bangalore, Muttathi and Beeroosa, was arrested at Madras on 28. 9. 91. The Maruti Gypsy which was being used by Rangan (A32) to shift the accused in Bangalore was seized on 29. 9. 91 at Madras on his disclosure.

52. Shanmugam (A35) with long association with LTTE help to smuggle arms and explosives between Jaffna and Kodiakkarai. In the area around his house he had got buried under the sand 121 cases of high explosives, wireless communication equipment and petrol in cans for the use of the conspirators. He arranged for the reception of the group of nine persons and

others and actively assisted them in carrying out the object of the conspiracy. When he was arrested and recoveries of the aforesaid materials were effected at his instance, he escaped from custody and committed suicide. Trichy Santhan & Gundu Santhan (A36), who had taken custody of Sivarasan (A4), Subha (A6) and Suresh Master (A37) on instructions from Prabhakaran (A1), felt the relentless pressure of SIT action. The wireless set of Sivarasan (A4) which had been taken over by Suresh Master (A37), was seized by Pasupatny Palayam Police Trichy District, Tamil Nadu from Varadhan & Varahan an LTTE cadre, near Karur. Trichy Santhan (A36), therefore, decided to send Irumburai (A27), an Indian LTTE cadre to Prabhakaran (A1) alongwith a few injured LTTE cadres. Trichy Santhan (A36) sent a letter addressed to Prabhakaran (A1) through Irumburai (A27) with written instructions to him to hand over the said letter to Prabhakaran (A1). The letter to Irumburai (A27) indicates that he was advised not to tell the leader that he was aware of the Rajiv matter. However, Irumburai (A27) was intercepted by the Indian Navy in the early hours of 3. 10. 91 while carrying these two letters, one addressed to 'Thalaivar' (Prabhakaran) and the other to him, by Trichy Santhan (A36). Later, in the early morning of 13. 11. 91 Trichy Santhan (A36) committed suicide by consuming cyanide in a hideout in Anna Nagar, Navalpattu' Trichy, when surrounded by SIT:CBI. Sivarasan's (A4) diary shows that he has paid Ravi (A24) more than Rs. 10 lakhs. Ravi (A24) was sent by Pottu Omman (A2) with Sivarasan (A4) in December, 1990 along with Suseendran & Mahesh (A25) and others with specific instructions to assist Sivarasan (A4) in a big operation, and for recruiting Indians for training by LTTE for forming the Tamil National Retrieval Troop. Ravi's (A24) Job was also to arrange hideouts for LTTE operators. After Sivarasan's (A4) death Ravi (A24) went to Jaffna alongwith some LTTE cadres and returned in early September, 1991 with gold biscuits, explosives, arms and ammunitions, wireless equipment and cyanide capsules for execution of the object of the aforesaid criminal conspiracy. Six gold biscuits, one 9 mm pistol, one hand grenade, one wireless hand set and 18 live 9 mm cartridges were seized at Pollachi on 22. 1. 92 and two hand grenades and one wireless hand set were seized at Kodiakkarai on 23. 1. 92, on the disclosure of Mahesh (A25).

53. The LTTE created the Tamil National Retrieval Troops in Tamil Nadu in pursuance of the aforesaid criminal conspiracy with the object to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. The Government of India, vide notification No. SO 330 (E) dated 14. 5. 92 as published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II — Sec. 3-Sub section (ii) dated 14. 5. 92, has declared LTTE as an unlawful as-

sociation in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-sec.1 of Sec. 3 of the unlawful activities (Prevention) Act 1987.

54. The aforementioned facts give rise to the allegation of criminal conspiracy and commission of other specific offences as detailed below:

55. Between July, 1987 and 14.5.92 Accused A1 to A41 at Jaffna, Mathakkal, Velvettithurai and other places in Sri Lanka, Rameswaram, Kodiakkarai, Madras, Sriperumbudur and other places in Tamil Nadu, Bangalore and other places in Karnataka, Delhi and other places in India, entered into a criminal conspiracy to do or cause to be done illegal acts to wit:— to infiltrate into India clandestinely, to carry and use unauthorised arms and explosives, to set up unauthorised wireless sets to communicate with LTTE leaders in Sri Lanka, from time to time, to cause and carry out acts of terrorism as well as disruptive acts in Tamil Nadu and other places in India by use of bombs, explosives and lethal weapons so as to scare and create panic by such acts in the minds of the people and thereby to strike terror and in the course of such acts, to assassinate Shri Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India and others who are likely to be with him, to cause disappearance of evidence thereof and to escape, to screen themselves from being apprehended, to harbour the accused and escape the clutches of law and to do such other acts as may be necessary to carry out the object of the criminal conspiracy as per the needs of the situation and in pursuance of the said criminal conspiracy:— Prabhakaran (A1), Pottu Omman (A2) and Akila (A3), who designed the criminal conspiracy, entered into the same along with others to carry out the object of the conspiracy; Sivarasan (A4), Dhanu (A5), Subha (A6), Nehru & Nero (A8), Suthendraraja & Santhan (A10), Murugan (A11), Sankar & Koneswaran (A12), Vijayanandan (A13) Ruban (A14), Kanagasabapathy (A15), Athirai Robert Payas (A17), Jayakumar (A18), Shanthi (A19), Vijayan (A20), Selvaluxmi (A21), Baskaran (A22), Rangan (A32), Vicky (A33), Trichy Santhan (A36), Suresh Master (A37), Dixon (A38), Amman (A39), Driver Anna & Keerthi (A40), and Jamuna & Jameela (A41) infiltrated into India from Srilanka clandestinely on different dates during the said period of criminal conspiracy; Shanmugham (A35) received, accommodated and rendered all assistance to infiltrators at Kodiakkarai, Tamil Nadu; having come over to India Robert Payas (A17), Jayakumar (A18), his wife Shanthi (A19), Vijayan (A20), his wife Selvaluxmi (A21), his father-in-law Baskaran (A22), at the instance of Sivarasan (A4) secured houses at Porur and Kodungayur in Madras for the purpose of accommodation of conspirators and for chalking out the modalities of the course of action by the conspirators towards the achievement of the object of the conspiracy; thereafter established links with Nalini (A9), Perarivalan & Arivu (A26), Bhagyanathan (A28), Padma (A29) and Subha Sundaram (A30)

Indian Tamils who are ardent supporters of LTTE and with other local Indian Tamils Ravi-chandran & Ravi (A24), Suseendran & Mahesh (A25) trained by LTTE in Jaffna and Irumborai (A27) to use them in achieving the object of the criminal conspiracy; established contacts with their leader Prabhakaran (A1) through Pottu Omman (A2) in Srilanka through illegally operated wireless sets brought into India through illicit channel by Sivarasan (A4), and others; Kanagasabapathy (A15), Athirai (A16) came to India through illicit channel and set up hideouts in Delhi and other places; Sivarasan (A4) brought Dhanu (A5), Subha (A6), Nehru & Nero (A8), Santhan (A10), Sankar & Koneswaran (A12), Vijayanandan (A13), Ruban & Suresh (A14), and Driver Anna & Keerthi (A40) and got them accommodated in several places in Tamil Nadu to be of assistance to the conspirators in carrying out the object of the criminal conspiracy; Perarivalan & Arivu (A26) provided a battery and two battery cells for operating the wireless apparatus and for using as detonator in the belt bomb respectively to be used by Dhanu (A5) for assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi and others; purchased a Kawasaki motorcycle using the funds provided by Sivarasan (A4) for their activities; arranged payment for printing "The Stanic Force"; sent one set of "The Satanic Force" through Sivarasan (A4) to be handed over to Prabhakaran (A1) and another set through Murugan (A11), Sankar & Koneswaran (A12), Vijayanandan (A13), Ruban (A14) and Driver Anna (A40) rendered all assistance necessary therefor; Sivarasan (A4) decided to assassinate Shri Rajiv Gandhi in the public meeting to be held at Sriperumbudur on 21.5.91 on learning that Shri Rajiv Gandhi is to address the meeting on the said day; Sivarasan (A4) finalised the method of operation to assassinate Shri Rajiv Gandhi by requiring Nalini (A9) to be of help at the Scene of Crime; Perarivalan (A26) handed over film roll for the purpose of taking photographs of events to Haribabu (A7); Haribabu (A7) bought a sandalwood garland to be used for garlanding Shri Rajiv Gandhi at the scene of occurrence by Dhanu (A5), from Poompuhar Handicrafts so as to gain access to the VIP under the guise garlanding; Dhanu (A5) equipped herself with the necessary apparel with belt bomb and detonator attached thereto for detonating the same when she was in close proximity to Shri Rajiv Gandhi; Haribabu (A7) met Subha Sundaram (A30) of Subha News Photo on 21.5.91 and was seen coming out of the studio of Subha Sundaram (A30), took a Chinon camera from a friend for taking photographs at the time of the crime/at the scene of offence and loading the camera with the film already provided by Arivu (A26); Sivarasan (A4), Dhanu (A5), Subha (A6) and Nalini (A9) met Haribabu (A7) at Farrys Corner, Broadway Bus stand and proceeded to the scene of occurrence at Sriperumbudur on the evening of 21.5.91; when Shri Rajiv Gandhi arrived at the scene.

(To be continued)

Newspaper nationalism: Sinhala identity as historical discourse (I)

Serena Tennekoon

Introduction

National identity is most vigorously affirmed when it becomes most problematic. In Sri Lanka, the dramatic escalation of ethnic conflict between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority, especially during the last few years, generated a national identity crisis. This chapter explores the impact of political events on the cultural co-ordinates of Sinhala nationalist identity, which in turn influence the perceptions and practices of politics.

As in many nation states where national identity is defined emphatically in the features of a majority ethnic identity, in Sri Lanka since Independence national identity has continued to be conflated with Sinhala-Buddhist identity. This ambiguity is preserved most strikingly in language: *jatiya* (denoting group or kind) refers to ethnic group as well as nation. Throughout this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, I will translate *jatiya* as nation, thus maintaining the original ambiguity.

The official installation and popular reaffirmation of a predominantly Sinhala-Buddhist national identity and the concomitant peripheralization of minority ethnicities of in both symbolic and material practice, contributed to the development of a Tamil nationalist movement. The militant and separatist turn of Tamil nationalism in the last two decades has, in turn, threatened the hegemony of the Sinhala and provoked among them a crisis of identity. It is this identity crisis that erupted in the rhetoric of the three newspaper debates analysed in this paper.

The newspaper debates appeared which in 1984-5 must be situated also in the context of the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983. The July riots marked a critical juncture in the ethnic relations between Sinhala and Tamil. Soon afterwards,

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the guerrilla war between Tamil militants and the largely Sinhala government forces escalated into a 'National Security' issue and each community's perception of the other as enemy hardened with each ambush, bomb explosion and massacre.

The July riots and their turbulent aftermath highlighted fissures among the Sinhala community as well. This was particularly evident in the diverse ways in which Sinhala identity was reassessed from political platforms, seminar rooms and the mass media. For many, initial shock gave way to rationalizations and the reassertion of Sinhala nationalism. The July riots were interpreted as righteous violence and Tamils (both militant and civilian) were cast as *agents provocateurs*. The victims became the victimizers. Moreover, the severity of the violence (which became apparent initially through exposure in the foreign media) was minimized and adverse publicity was attributed to Tamil propagandists. According to this line of rationalization, the recovery of Sinhala moral esteem was more important than understanding what happened.

This position was challenged by a minority of activists, bilingual intellectuals, and academics, whose political sympathies ranged from the liberal to the left. These women and men represented several groups and organizations (which were multi-ethnic) and were concerned with studying the ethnic conflict dispassionately and contributing towards its speedy and just resolution. In general, these individuals recognized the economic and political grievances of the Tamil minority and were also critical of Sinhala nationalist excesses. The newspaper debates discussed below illuminate a particular confrontation between this group and the opposing faction of Sinhala nationalists.

A highly literate population and a long-established tradition of newspapers notwithstanding, there is a paucity of research on the press in Sri Lanka. A remark made by some westernized

Sri Lankan university students and recorded by Marshall Singer in the late 1950s may still explain the invisibility of the Sinhala press in the English language social science literature: 'If you want news, you read the English press; if you want gossip, you read the Sinhala papers.' If, as Benedict Anderson argues persuasively, 'the nation (and nationalism) was conceived in language, not blood', and if 'print-literacy' is a significant factor in the origin and circulation of nationalism, then any analysis of contemporary nationalist trends in Sri Lanka can hardly ignore the most widely read Sinhala press.

(To be Continued)

The Columbus...

(Continued from page 12)

from our roots. From when we are very small, we are told that things will go well for us only in *white* terms... we find obstacles put in our way to prevent us from getting close to our philosophies, religions, ancestors, or deepening our knowledge of them. Our religions have been abused by Christianity, ridiculed and devalued... And the invasion of sects is becoming ever more aggressive and corrosive.

We may conclude as follows:

(1) The "Discovery" of "America" is a misnomer. America was the home of great peoples and developed civilizations long before Columbus arrived there on the fateful 12 October 1492. The "Discovery" was not made with the spirit of wonder, humility and gratitude. Hence there is no reason to "celebrate" a "discovery". (2) Neither may the "Discovery" be called an Encounter of Two Worlds. An encounter has to be of the One with the free and equal Other. It was not. It was invasion, exploitation, murder, genocide. Hence there is no reason to celebrate. (3) Instead of celebration, may there be repentance, confession, and a fresh start towards the goal of a new humanity upon a new earth?


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There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

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Tobacco is the industry that brings employment to the second highest number of people. And these people are the tobacco barn owners, the tobacco growers and those who work for them, on the land and in the barns.

For them, the tobacco leaf means meaningful work, a comfortable life and a secure future. A good enough reason for laughter.

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