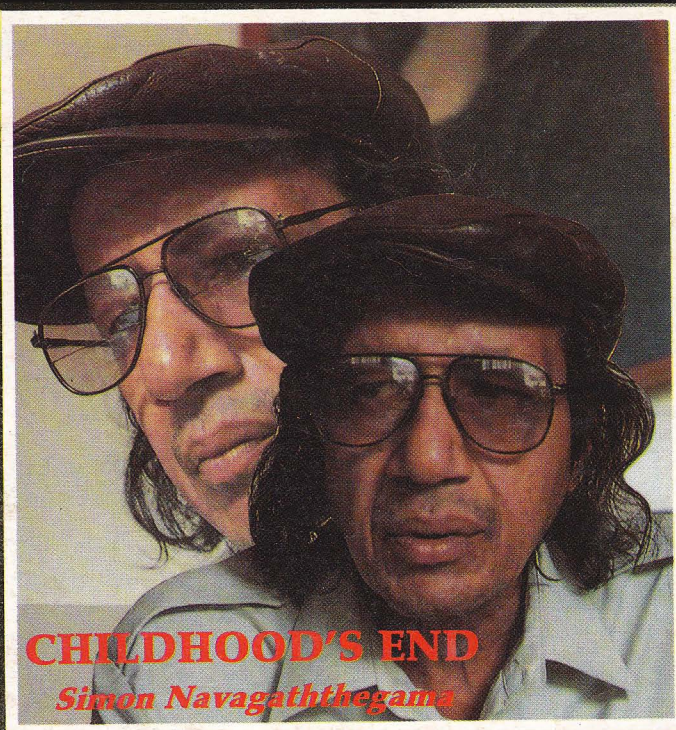


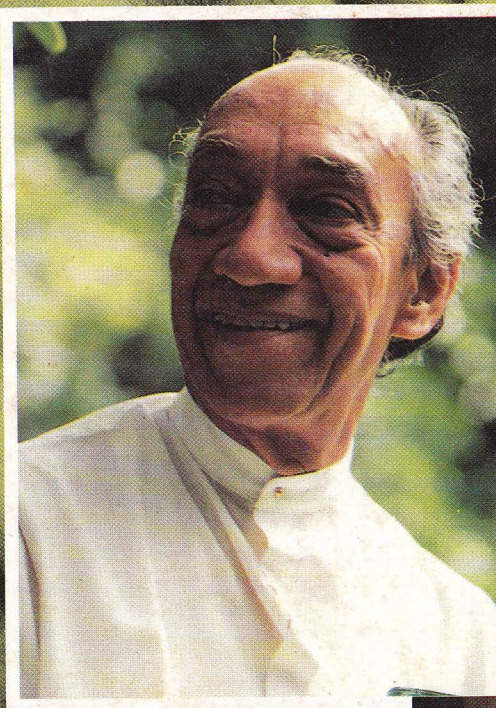
# MAIKA GUARDIAN

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## CHILDHOOD'S END

*Simon Navagaththegama*



On

## J.R.JAYEWARDENE

*Mervyn de Silva*

*Dayan Jayatilleka*

## WHY EELAM WON'T WORK

*D.L.Mendis*

## LANKA'S DISPLACED

*Bradman Weerakoon*

## SARACHCHANDRA REVISITED

*A.J.Gunawardana*

## PRESSING ENGAGEMENT

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# JRJ:

## GEO-STRATEGY

## AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

- Mervyn de Silva

- "(i) Your Excellency and I will reach an early understanding about the relevance and employment of foreign military and intelligence personnel with a view to ensuring that such presences will not prejudice Indo-Sri Lankan relations.
- (ii) Trincomalee or any other ports in Sri Lanka will not be available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interests.
- (iii) The work of restoring and operating the Trincomalee oil tank will be undertaken a joint venture between India and Sri Lanka.
- (iv) Sri Lanka's agreement with foreign broadcasting organisations will be reviewed to ensure that any facilities set up by them in Sri Lanka are used solely as public broadcasting facilities and not for any military intelligence purposes."

Many a front-line Sri Lankan politician has been conversant with the Island's modern history, the British period in particular. But no leader, not even the Oxford-educated Bandaranaike, understood better the strategic importance of this small Indian ocean island than J.R. Jayewardene. That he, Jayewardene, was fated to sign the Indo-Sri Lankan peace Accord, was the sort of cruel irony which "J.R." was sophisticated enough to savour in

silence. Although the Americans finally won, the pro-American J.R. had played high-stakes Cold War games in the wrong place at the wrong time. A serious student of history, he had neglected current history, Mrs. Indira Gandhi's treaty with the Soviet Union, in particular. It was that new 'Empress of India' who ordered R.A.W., India's CIA, to train and arm the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other separatist Tamil groups.

Tamilnadu and its separatist history armed Mrs. Gandhi with a convincing *casus belli*. At the dawn on Indian Independence a resurgent Tamil nationalist movement led by Pottu Sri Ramalu, a respected disciple of the Mahatma, demanded, a separate Tamil state. Nehru panicked when he staged a Gandhian "death fast". State borders were redrawn to create Tamilnadu.

A diligent student of history, Indian history in particular, J.R. Jayewardene played on the nightmarish fears of the Indian elite, the fear of fragmentation. In a report on a conference held in Delhi, a TIME correspondent wrote: "Yet, as elsewhere around the world, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union have swept like an eraser across the blackboard of South Asia's security equations, the only exception being Sri Lanka's bitter feud between Tamils and the Sinhalese".

President J.R. had a price to pay for Indian military assistance but in his mind the pluses were larger than the minuses. But I cannot recall a single-

conversation of the 1980's where he did not bring up the issue of defence spending, "the drain" as he almost always called it. He would put on his old Finance Minister's cap quite often. "I not only saved Sri Lankan lives but Sri Lankan money.... I cannot understand how anybody could be foolish enough to criticise my decision..... the Indian-Sri Lanka peace accord".

### LAST LAUGH

Needless to add, Rajiv Gandhi had his own strong reasons. The same week Prime Minister Gandhi was in Madras where he addressed a large rally. He said: "Apart from the agreement which looks to the Tamil's"



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### CONTENTS

Mervyn de Silva	1
Dayan Jayatilaka	3
Our Economics Editor	5
D.L. Mendis	6
Bradman Weerakoon	8
A.J. Gunawardana	11
Simon Navagathage	12
A.M. Macan Markar	14
Siri Gamage	17

THE IDEAS MAGAZINE



interest in Sri Lanka we also had an exchange of letters between President Jayewardene and me. It is in his exchange of letters that we have addressed the security problems in the region. With this exchange of letters, we will ensure that such hostile forces are not allowed to come into our region".

On all this, J.R. has the last laugh. India and the U.S. hold joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean. India has opened an embassy in Israel, and President Kumaratunga's P.A. administration recently signed an agreement with V.O.A. As a young man J.R. flirted with the fashionable LANKA-SOVIET Friends but soon began to wave 'the Stars and Stripes'. Whether it was instinct or foresight the man nick named "Yankee Dicky" by the local Left, was on the winning side.

#### FREE MARKET

J.R.J. may not have been on the winning side in the harrowing armed conflict of the North-and-East but he was certainly the first South Asian leader to choose the "free market" road to economic growth and development. Donors, investors and international agencies, the World Bank and the IMF, promptly recognised a politician with the guts and the self-confidence to break with the past. The Accelerated Mahaweli scheme and the 100 million pound grant from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government soon became a symbol of the radical change in economic strategy. And now it is more or less the national consensus, with the "Centre Leftist" P.A. quite obediently responding to the global strategies mapped out by the Bretton Woods twins.

Mick Moore of the I.D.S. Sussex and the MIT makes an interesting point, if rather tentatively. I wonder whether J.R.Jayewardene, a serious student of Sri Lanka society and politics, would have agreed with the Moore thesis: "I am not arguing that the steady shift from statist to capitalist economic policies that began in 1977 and continues today is primarily the result either of internal political changes or, more narrowly, of

the changing connection between caste-ethnic identity and capitalist enterprise. The causes of the shift in economic strategy are complex, and closely bound up with the changes in : the international economy; the pattern of economic growth in Asia ; elite perceptions about the viability of a private sector-led strategy ; dominant ideologies ; the relative power world-wide of capital on the one hand, and states and labour on the other; and the role played in Sri Lanka by aid donors and international financial institutions". The scope of this proposed inquiry is surely an indication of the impact of the "J.R. years" on Sri Lankan society, the multi-faceted implications of the policies introduced by his decade-long regime.....whether he himself foresaw or understood these consequences or not.

#### THE PRESIDENCY

"Who would want to give up all this power?" was J.R.'s instant response to the question whether the P.A. would implement its solemn

pledge to people and parliament. "My government is committed to the abolition of the Executive Presidency as the centrepiece of Sri Lanka's constitutional system and its replacement by a parliamentary and cabinet system of government" declared President Kumaratunga in the opening of Parliament of 6.1.95. J.R. has the last laugh, again. The massive I.P.K.F. presence opened a 'window of opportunity' for the J.V.P. Mr. Jayewardene's successor, Mr. Premadasa had to crush the ultra-nationalist J.V.P. The P.A.-L.T.T.E. 'peace negotiations' collapsed and the EELAM war goes on, though the army has taken Jaffna, the separatist stronghold. Defence spending in 1996 is expected to reach 50 billion rupees, reports the *Financial Times* London. The figure estimated was 38 billion, four billion more than 1995. Inflation is running at 21.5% ; growth is likely to be 3%, down from an estimated at 5%, as against 5.5% in 1995. The F.T quotes a senior economist with Crosby Financial Services, Mr. Arjuna Mahendran : "The worst is yet to come".

#### APPEAL

I have written a book, entitled "Politics and Life in our Times". It is now in the press and it is to be published, with photographs and pictures in November 1996. The printing is by offset process and the binding is by section stitching.

In the first part of the book, there are over 60 selected articles written by me, on a wide range of subjects dealing with many aspects of national and international affairs, and studies on Hinduism, Buddhism and other world religions. The second part of the book, containing over 120 articles, including articles on music, painting, dancing and Bharatha Natyam, written by National and International personalities on various subjects, together with the policy statements of the National political parties, supplements the main text in the first part of the book.

I shall be thankful to you, if you would kindly help me with your advice and assistance. Please help me to make this publication a success. I am enclosing photo copies of newspaper articles about me and my book,

T.Duraisingam

#### LETTERS

Permit me to add a footnote to Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe's excellent article on Internal Conflicts (L.G.2.9.2996) As an academic exercise it is a tour de force, but is of no practical value. Terje Larsen and Mona Juul, the Norwegian couple who did the spadework for the Oslo' accords now know after the rise of Benjamin Netanyahu that Arab-Israeli co-existence is a mirage. Our racial conflict has gone too far for a workable reconciliation. Even if a settlement is achieved with the intervention of a due ex machina there is nothing to prevent the rise of a Sinhala Netanyahu sworn to "liberate" the Tamil people. Why trust palliatives? Perform surgery and be done with it.

K.Kanawathipillai,  
Main street,  
Visuvamadu.



# ECONOMIC REVOLUTIONARY, GREAT MODERNISER, DIALECTICAL MAN

DAYAN JAYATILLEKA

*Let us honour then, the dialectical man .....*

J.R. Jayewardene was a radical bourgeois; he and Ranasinghe Premadasa were the Jacobins of the bourgeois revolution in Sri Lanka. JR dealt hammer blows at the twin fetters that kept the country a stagnant backwater: semi feudalism in politics and a 'closed', involuted state capitalism (not semi socialism as the vulgarians would have it) in the economy. While the leader of the UNP in opposition, he moved swiftly to end the dominance of a single land-owning family and, together with Premadasa, had, by 1977, turned the UNP into a modern mass party. Once in office JR initiated an economic revolution which entailed a great leap forward in capitalist modernization. While vastly developing the forces of production, it also tightly locked Sri Lanka into the global economic grid, thereby heightening its dependence. While generating yawning inequalities which ultimately threatened to bring down the system, this economic revolution also made deep inroads into the archaic and semi feudalistic vestiges in property relations, and undermined the old, traditional social order of 'things as they were', radically and irreversibly. The economic chain reaction so consciously triggered by JR Jayewardene has touched the everyday lives of almost every single Sri Lankan family, broadening their horizons and affecting - on balance, positively - the life chances and prospects of many. This alone entitles him to be deemed the most consequential Sri Lankan of the 20th century.

Already in 1972, the white paper on Foreign Investment and in '75, the Draft Foreign Investment Guarantee Law signalled the striving of the Lankan bourgeoisie to shift to a new model of dependent accumulation. By defederalizing the UNP and displacing the feudal-led SLFP from political power, JR brought the 'superstructure' into symmetry with the needs of the 'base'. Jayewardene's opening up of the economy was not imposed from without, by the 'Washington consensus' and through a structural adjustment programme. It was internally gestated; as autocentric - policywise - as a project of extraverted development could get! A strategic project is refracted through the prism of the class fractions that constitute the 'power bloc'. Had the transnationalisation/globalisation of the economy taken place via the SLFP, it would have been under a neocomprador - semi feudal alliance, as distinct from the dependent local bourgeois/urban and rural middle class alliance that was the main axis of the Jayewardene project. The SLFP's haughty attitudes towards mass consumption and upward social mobility would have rendered an open economy under their aegis, a far more narrowly based affair, devoid to a significant degree of the more democratic 'mass (actually middle class) consumption society' that characterised the Jayewardene project. The SLFP's capitalist modernisation, exclusionary of the middle class, would have been to the UNP's rather more incorporationist exercise, what the 'Prussian Junker Path' of capitalist development was to the more democratic 'American Path' (the distinction famously made by Lenin).

In politics, Jayewardene was an admixture of democratic convictions and autocratic inclinations. The Executive Presidency, which was and is structurally more democratic and more conducive to national unification than the Westminster model, in that it is based on the franchise of the whole people, was distorted by its custom built 'immune systems' - and the absence of adequate checks and balances, when contrasted with the USA and even France. Proportional Representation which is far more accurate a mirror of public opinion than the 'first past the post' system, was marred by the bonus seats (and high cutoff points). Despite these structural distortions, the Jayewardene combination of a directly elected Presidency and PR is, as a system, far more democratic than the one it superseded.

Jayewardene's political praxis was fought with the gravest errors. While he correctly adhered to the Rooseveltian (Teddy, not Franklin D.) dictum of speaking softly and carrying a big stick (something that the present incumbent would do well to emulate), he wielded the stick with hamfisted abandon. Too indiscriminately, with disproportionate force, too often, and 'tous azimuts' - in all directions of the compass. In a word, with extreme unwisdom. His handling of contradictions, turning potentially non-antagonistic ones into antagonisms and conflicts across the political and ethnic spectrum, renders the auto-didact's criticism of him as a latter day Niccolo Machiavelli or Kautilya, a compliment far too fulsome! His disastrous political mismanagement fed the latent irrationality, extremism and fundamentalism of his opponents, armed and unarmed, swelling into a cascading crisis which made a mockery of the very stability he held a prerequisite for rapid economic development. Economic growth itself had slowed to a crawl by 1987, while unemployment was waxing; the former because of the bungling of the ethnic equation. The separatist guerrilla movement was however, more his inheritance than his creation.



From the Political Parties Conference of mid 1986 upto the transfer of power to his successor, and the System's saviour, Premadasa, Jayewardene courageously held the thin green line against the Pol Potist challengers. His T.V. appearance following the handgrenade attack in Parliament, his helicopter incursion into the Deep South and his 'murgayo, sarpayo' speech were high points of a crypto-Churchillian defense of a democracy, however straitjacketed (by him), against a qualitatively incomparably worse, sociopathic totalitarianism.

In foreign policy, JR was nobody's puppet or prisoner, slave or satellite. The errors and deviations, of which there were many, mostly inexcusable, were all his own. He refused to play the American game when he took over the NAM chairmanship and join the anti-Vietnamese/Cuban pseudo moderates, as the SLFP had showed signs of beginning to be manipulated into by the time of the NAM Summit in Colombo. The First Secretary (Political) of the US Embassy, Kevin Scott, was bundled out in 24 hours for a remark on local politics. JR warmly welcomed Pham Van Dong and won the personal friendship of Fidel Castro to the end of his days. In the JR and Premadasa years, Sri Lanka was represented in Cuba by an Ambassador and this level of representation was reduced by the present 'progressive' administration.

The ban on rice transport and the restrictions of the eating of rice to five days a week by the UF Govt of '70-'77 was surely one of the most tyrannical acts visited upon a people in a democracy, in any part of the world; an act the arbitrariness and despotism of which were only matched by its imbecility. In the course of JR's civil disobedience campaigns against it, Ranasinghe Premadasa had emerged as his chief lieutenant. The latter was to become the cutting edge of the UNP thrust as was evidenced on May Day '77 and the election campaign. Premadasa's ideological trajectory was an independent one, stemming from his own Sucharitha experiment, A.E. Goonesinhe's Labour party, early visits to the USSR and specially China, contacts with West German Social

Democracy and a close study of the ideology of the April Insurrection as enunciated at the CJC trials. His economic model contained a synthesis distinct from that of JR's, even while in opposition in the '70s'. It was of a mixed economy of a new type and was set out in a speech to the Rotary club in 1973 (and reiterated in an address to the Asia Society in New York in 1980). As JR's successor, he was able to operationalise his own philosophy of development. It will be judged by future history whether it objectively constituted the second stage of the uninterrupted revolution set in train by JR, or was the 'revolution in the revolution': the social revolution within the economic revolution, or was a Second Revolution, following JR's own. Within the confined context of a bourgeois revolution and miniaturised to the Sri Lankan scale, was JR a Lenin to Premadasa's Stalin (as the DUNF claimed) or a Sun Yat Sen to the latter's Mao? Whichever the case, it was one of JR's greater historical merits that he paved the way, albeit not without hesitations, backtracking and vacillations, for a true man of the people and one from a subaltern class-caste background, to reach the pinnacle of power.

JR Jayewardene left behind a foundation - the Open Economy - and an edifice - the Presidential system. Both required and require serious rectification, reform and improvement. The edifice may, someday, be abolished, but the foundation is firmer. Like all human beings, and certainly all great leaders, Jayewardena had merits and demerits. In any event, bourgeois modernization, be it in the metropolitan centres or, a century later, at the periphery, is a conflictual, backlash-riven process and a bit of a bloody business, especially when it is belated and tries to catch up by a forced march, for lost time and chances. Some of what happened on Jayewardene's watch and at his hands is therefore understandable, even unavoidable in a pioneering experiment and one spearheaded by a leader whose advanced age made for impatience and a touch of absolutism. Some of it was foreseeable, avoidable and unforgivable. There were follies, criminal follies and crimes, which were

critiqued, resisted challenged and combatted by this magazine (and a little more radically though for less sustainably, by this writer, among others). But it is because Jayewardene's merits as an economic revolutionary and the greatest modernizer in 20th century Sri Lanka, outweighed his demerits, that History will judge his contribution as mainly positive if only in the last instance and the *longue duree*. The generation that succeeds him in politics and particularly at the helm of his party the UNP, is faced with the challenge of sweeping away forever the 'really existing' *ancien regime*, the grotesque oligarchy that anachronistically besmirches the political landscape by having dominated the other democratic formation since its very emergence. That then is the unfinished task of J.R. Jayewardene's Long (Bourgeois) Revolution.

## FIDEL ON J.R.

17th September 1996.  
His Excellency President J.R.  
Jayewardene.

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of your 90th Birthday, please accept our warm congratulations and Best Wishes for your good health and personal happiness.

Although several years have elapsed since you visited Cuba, the pleasant moments of the brotherly friendly exchanges we had then remain alive in mind.

FIDEL CASTRO RUZ  
President of the Council of  
State and of the  
Government of the  
Republic of Cuba.



# Budget '97

## WELFARE SLASHED

"So sweetly mawkish and so smoothly dull" (Alexander Pope)  
(and so dangerously inadequate)

Budget '97 is an embodiment of everything that's wrong with the economic thinking of the P.A. regime. In fact the following statement from the budget speech amply demonstrates the *raison d'être* of not just Budget 97 but the economic strategy of the P.A. as well: "...our economic programme centres around fiscal consolidation - the key to restore economic fundamentals and maintain macro economic stability". (Daily News - 7.11.96)

Since this year's defence expenditure is a massive 47 billion rupees (more than double the expenditure in 1994), the govt's self appointed task of fiscal consolidation will indeed be an uphill one. The question is who (i.e. which sectors of the economy/ which segments of society) will have to pay the price of this fiscal consolidation. The answer to this question will give us an indication as to the political and socio-economic prospects of the country and its citizenry.

*Contained in the govt's attempt at fiscal consolidation are the seeds of higher inflation. The extension of the National Security Levy and the*

### OUR ECONOMICS EDITOR

Save the Nation Contribution by one more year, coupled with an increase in turnover tax rates from 6% and 10% to 7% and 11%, will inevitably result in an across the board increase in prices. This together with the substantial price hikes which were effected prior to the budget (flour, bread, petrol and cooking gas - among others) will cause inflation to increase significantly. This is a direct outcome of the govt's beliefs that the primary (and maybe the only) source of inflation is the budget deficit and therefore the reduction of budget deficit is the only correct way of controlling inflation. The P.A. policy makers (true to their half baked neo-liberal theories) do not understand that *sometimes measures taken to reduce the budget deficit can negatively impact on inflation, directly and immediately*. This increase in inflation (exacerbated further by measures such as the 5.0 cents increase in ordinary postal rates) will ensure that a disproportionate share of the economic burden is placed on the shoulders of the poor and the middle class.

Another remarkable feature of Budget 97 is that what it gives with one hand it more than takes away with the other. For example the 300/- salary increase would be more than offset by the decision to drastically limit overtime in the state sector. Increasing inflation will also erode the value of the Samurdhi grants further.

Incidentally, the poorest of the poor have been net losers in the shift from Janasaviya to Samurdhi. Under the JSP they received a consumption component of 1458/- of which they were encouraged to save 458/-; this ensured that most families had a total saving of 12000/- in the Bank at the end of the two year period. Under the Samurdhi scheme, their total grant has been reduced by almost 1/3 to 1000/- per month, of which they have to set aside some amount - Rs.100 to 200 - as savings.

In other words the poor and the middle class have not been given anything to compensate for the debilitating effects of increased inflation. Therefore even if the economy grows, that growth is likely enhance inequities instead of reducing them.

What of employment generation? One of the defining characteristics of all P.A. budgets so far has been the complete absence of large scale development programmes which generate employment in the immediate/short term - such as the Mahaweli and the 200 Garment Factories Programme. Employment generation is today left to the private sector, in the main (this is despite the fact the unemployment rate increased between 1994 and 1995). The package of incentives to the private sector is supposed to result in more investment leading to enhanced employment generation. Even if these incentives cause the expected increase in investment and growth, this doesn't mean that the employment generated as a result will be sufficient to keep pace with the rapid increase in the labour force. In other words, even if there's more growth it can very well be of the 'jobless growth' variety. (As for the two main employment/self employment generation schemes mentioned in the budget, even if they record a success of 100% - which is highly unlikely - the maximum number of employment/self employment opportunities created would be a meagre 27,000).

As did Budget '95 and Budget '96, Budget '97 too places a great deal of emphasis on the expected income from the privatisation programme. So far the govt's record in this area is not

*Contd on page 24*



# THE MINI STATES, EELAM AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

D. L. MENDIS

In a changing world, the viability of mini-states is a vexed issue in the international community. It is of particular significance for Sri Lanka, because there is a vicious armed conflict to establish a mini-state in the North-East region since the anti-Tamil riots of 1983. In this article, it is proposed to ascertain the viability of the proposed mini-state in the North-East region in the light of problems encountered by mini-states in the international community.

The approach is empirical and deductive. It takes into account international law, international relations and international economics in dealing with the issues relating to "viability", so that any person who really believes in this idea (or to put it crudely in the "myth") of a separate mini-state in the North-East of Sri Lanka could judge in a realistic manner whether such an idea is viable.

## The meaning of the term "mini-state"

The term "mini-state" has been defined operationally by the international community as a State with a population around one to two million or less. The term "mini-state" is not used in a "pejorative" or "diminishing" sense, but only to distinguish it from "small states" such as Sri Lanka, Senegal or Sierra Leone in the international community.

In the last 30 years, the number of mini-states has increased as a result of the decolonization process initiated under the auspices of the UN. The recognition of the right to self-determination in a colonial context has contributed to the increase in the number of mini-state in the UN system. *It is unlikely that the international*

[Mr. Mendis is a graduate of the University of Ceylon and the University of Cambridge. He was also Visiting Scholar to the Centre of International Studies at the Cambridge University. Since leaving Sri Lanka in 1978, Mr. Mendis has held several high positions abroad through the UN and CFTC - First Parliamentary Counsel and Head of the Parliamentary Division (Sierra Leone), UN Legal Adviser & Expert (St. Kitts & Nevis); ICAO Aviation Legislation Consultant (Pakistan). He has recently published an article entitled "Mini-state and the UN System" in the Commonwealth Law Bulletin (1996)]

*community will recognise this right to self-determination in a non-colonial context except for very cogent reasons.* If it were to do so Africa alone will have 400 mini-states on ethnic lines and as a result international organisations such as the UNO would be swamped by mini-states to such an extent that the decision-making in the UN system could become impossible. Despite differences in size, natural resources, per capita income, human development index and gross national product (GNP), mini-states constitute an interesting amalgam of state in the international community. Some mini-states are prosperous while other have become non-viable in a changing world order. It is for these reasons, some colonies of the UK (Caymans and Bermuda), and departments of France (Guadeloupe and Martinique) and the self-governing territories of Netherlands (Aruba and Netherlands Antilles) have resolved recently to remain as colonies, departments and self-governing territories despite their wealth and capacity for independent status. It is therefore important to see in this context whether Elam can be viable by reference to other mini-states not from narrow national politics pursued by our politicians but from a broad international perspective in the

emerging world order.

## THE MAJOR PROBLEMS RELATING TO MINI-STATES

In order to assess the viability of mini-states, the major problems encountered by mini-states in the international community need to be taken into account. They are, namely: (a) the principle of one-nation-one vote; (b) the security of mini-states; (c) the participation of mini-states; and (d) development assistance to mini-states. These problems will be accentuated if a mini-state is not fully recognised by the major actors in the international community or does not have the prospect of becoming a member state of the United Nations system. The proposed state of 'Elam' would fall into this category if it fails to obtain recognition by major actors in the international community.

### (a) The principle of one-nation-one vote

The phenomenal growth of mini-states in the international community has generated heated controversy in regard to the democratic principle of "one-nation-one-vote". The arguments made for the retention of this principle is based on the equality of states. This idea is well supported by the famous international lawyer and jurist Vattel in the following manner: "Dwarf is much a man as a giant". The arguments made against the retention of this principle is based on the reasoning that it is unfair for a state with a population less than two million to have the same vote as a country with a population over one hundred million people. The former Secretary General of the UN, U-Thant in his address to the international community. However, there will be a natural reaction to extend the right to vote to states not fully recognised by the international community.



address to the University of Denver on 3rd April 1964 said: *"From a purely practical point of view (it) is difficult to envisage a workable alternative to the one-vote-per-country system, whatever its apparent inequities unless the world were to return to the old idea of Might is Right"*. It is likely that mini-states will enjoy the principle of one-nation-one-vote, so long as nation-

(b) The security of mini-states

The security is a major issue relating to the viability of mini-states in the emerging world order. The term "security" is given a wide meaning so as to encompass political, economic and environmental security. The security of the proposed state of "Elam" is therefore an important consideration for those who advocate such an idea for political reasons without considering its implications. In this context, it must be noted that the demise of the cold war, the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the triumph of free-market economic policies, the liberalisation of international trade and globalization of financial markets have accentuated the security of mini-states in the international community because these states are unable to adjust rapidly to global changes.

The political security of mini-states is not simply the absence of threat from aggressor states. It stems from threats such as economic instability, institutional incapacity, narco-terrorism, money laundering, environmental degradation, natural and man-made disasters in a manner unprecedented in the history of mankind. In the absence of good institutional infrastructure, it is possible to say that these problems could not be handled by a mini-state without the co-operation of the international community.

The viability of mini-states is also threatened as some mini-states in the international community display economic insecurity due to lack of natural resources, transport costs, high unit costs of production, institutional incapacity and remoteness. These problems are enhanced if a mini-state is geographically located in a poor

region as in the case of the proposed state of Elam. In addition, mini-states are called upon today to compete in the emerging world order on a level playing field with other developed and larger developing States. This economic insecurity of mini-states is further enhanced as development assistance to mini-states has been dramatically reduced due to their geopolitical insignificance. Hence, some of the mini-states in the international community will not be able to grapple with the myriad of challenges and burgeoning international obligations imposed on them unless financial and technical assistance is provided by the international community. A mini-state which is not recognised by the international community will not get any assistance to deal with issues relating to economic insecurity.

The environmental security is another important area that need to be considered seriously in relation to the viability of mini-states in the international community. To put it bluntly, one can legitimately ask the following question: "Can a mini-state cease to function as a sovereign state in the international community if it were to encounter a serious ecological disaster?". This is a difficult question to answer because it must take into account serious environmental problems encountered by mini-states in the field of transnational environmental risks. The mini-states are likely to confront very serious transnational environmental risks at the international level due to climate change, sea-level rise, hazardous and nuclear waste disposal, oil pollution damage, natural and man-made disasters. These transnational environmental risks are further compounded as some mini-states are situated in the earthquake and hurricane zones. Such risks are on the increase and can have disastrous effects on the environmental vulnerability of mini-states for which mini-states can do very little to ameliorate their position without the co-operation and assistance of her neighbouring states. In the absence of such co-operation, the proposed state of Elam would face innumerable

difficulties to survive as a viable unit in the international community.

### (C) The participation of mini-states in the international system

Many difficulties are encountered by some mini-states in regard to their effective participation in the international system. The participation by mini-states in the UN, specialised agencies and other UN bodies is an expensive exercise both in terms of contributions and representation. Many mini-states find it difficult to contribute financially of all regular budgets of the UN, specialised agencies and treaty regimes in the UN system because they operate on a small gross domestic product (GDP). Despite the principles of universality of the UN system, some mini-states such as Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru have not become member states of the UN but have joined only a few UN specialised agencies. The proposed state of Elam will certainly encounter such problems in regard to participation in the international community.

### (d) Development assistance to mini-states

The development assistance to mini-states has been drastically reduced due to their geo-political insignificance in the post cold war era. In particular, the UN development assistance, which consists mainly of concessional finance and grants provided by the IBRD and IMF and technical development co-operation programs initiated by other specialised agencies and subsidiary organs such as UNDP, has also been reduced drastically. Such UN development assistance is essential to the majority of mini-states due to lack of capital, natural resources, technical expertise and personnel in public services. A state which cannot be a party to these international organisations and is not recognised by the many states cannot benefit from development assistance. Hence, Elam, if established, *de facto* would encounter tremendous difficulties to survive as a nation-state in the international community.



# INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN SRI LANKA

BRADMAN WEERAKOON

## THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In the present international system there is no single operational agency that has responsibility for the internally displaced. Although UNHCR and to some extent ICRC in the Sri Lankan context are engaged with the problems of displaced people, UNHCR's mandate - being an organisation concerned essentially with refugees - does not include IDPs (Internally displaced). ICRC whose primary rationale is to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield also attempts "to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found" a principle which permits it to assist civilians displaced by armed conflicts. However UNHCR has become increasingly involved in global situations of internal displacement at the request of either the Secretary-General of the UN or the General Assembly.

In 1993 UNHCR adopted criteria for its involvement with IDPs given two specific conditions. Firstly, in situations where there is a direct link with its basic activities in respect of refugees as for example where returning refugees are mingled with IDPs. Secondly, in situations where there is a significant risk that the internally displaced will become a refugee problem i.e. in the nature of preventive action. This is clearly the principle on which the UNHCR became involved with the protection and assistance function of IDPs especially in the Mannar District of Sri Lanka. The concept of Open Relief Centres (ORCs) which were established at Pesalai on Mannar island and around the Madhu church are indicative of initiatives in this direction. The rationale for this extension of the role of UNHCR comes out clearly in a recent report to

UNHCR's Executive Committee which is composed of some 35 member States of the UN system.

"To the extent that refugee flows and internal displacement have the same causes it makes little sense to deal only with the trans-frontier aspects of coerced population movements either in responding to immediate humanitarian needs or in seeking solutions. From the vantage point of UNHCR as the international agency responsible for refugees it is clearly preferable where possible to obviate the need for people to leave their country and thus to become refugees in order to find safety and to obtain vital humanitarian assistance".

A major difficulty that an international agency encounters as it becomes involved in internal conflict situations is the maintenance of its standing as a neutral and impartial entity. These sensitivities have come to a head on several occasions in the Sri Lankan context. A recent example is the reported reluctance of the military authorities to permit radio transmission facilities to UNHCR field staff operating out of Killinochi and the consequent strong disapproval of the 'intervention' of some UN personnel in the country's internal affairs by the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister. During the previous Administration too there were delicate situations which needed to be sorted out. One was the military objection to the UNHCR carrying food supplies to the Madhu ORC which was behind 'enemy' lines and the other the attempt to open a 'safe passage' for civilians to move back and forth from the Jaffna Peninsula through the Pooneryn-Sangupiddy bridge cum ferry service using the UNHCR to monitor the movement. In the midst of war and

ethnic rivalry both UNHCR and ICRC have faced difficulties in being perceived as fully upholding their neutral and non-partisan status.

## THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The overall picture regarding the number and distribution of IDPs in Sri Lanka has significantly altered during the last two years. Official statistics available at the end of 1996 show that there were 128,852 families displaced, 41,609 housed in 487 welfare centres and 87,243 families living with friends and relations or in other accommodation found by themselves. While there was a marked reduction in the numbers during the Cessation of Hostilities - January to April 1995 - the numbers of displaced began to increase after the outbreak of war on 19th April 1995. Official information in September/October 1995 estimates that the number of IDPs was around 600,000. Of these around 200,000 were in camps in the Jaffna Peninsula in the areas controlled by the LTTE, but having their food and other needs supplied by the Government Agent under the unique system of "dual control" then in operation in most of the Northern Province. Outside of the North and East there were around 40,000 Muslim refugees who had been evicted from Jaffna and Mannar by the LTTE in 1990 and who were now residing in Puttalam District. The Welfare centres in Colombo which had housed a few thousand Eastern province Tamils, had been closed down by the end of 1994 and the displaced persons relocated in the Batticaloa District. The military take-over of Jaffna city at the beginning of 1996, the consolidation of government control over the entirety of the Jaffna peninsula and the capture of Killinochi in September of this year have materially altered the picture in respect of the numbers and condition of the IDPs. The strategic push on Jaffna city - Riviresa - was a period of intense fighting and led to the displacement of an estimated 500,000 persons, firstly to the Thenmaradchy and Wadamarachi divisions of the Peninsula and later of some of this number to the mainland area around Killinochi across the Jaffna lagoon. It was reported at the time that the exodus



from the Jaffna city-it was emptied within 2 or 3 days - before the military moved in was under coercion by the LTTE anxious to retain with them their 'human shield'. The position therefore in February/March 1996 was that the number of IDPs had risen to over 1 million with many of these living under very difficult circumstances.

The situation of IDPs is said to have improved rapidly with the liberation of the whole of the Peninsula and the return of over half a million persons to their homes in the city and cleared areas. However a few hundred thousands now located in the Wanni area have been unable or unwilling to return to their homes are reported to be on the move south-westwards away from Killinochi to the remoter villages of Akkarayankulam and Mallavi, west towards Mannar and south to the borders of Vavuniya where properly equipped welfare centres capable of accommodating over 125,000 persons await them. The implications of the changed politico-strategic situation in the North is that the obligation of providing relief and rehabilitation to the displaced is clearly that of the Government. The newly constituted Northern Relief and Rehabilitation Authority in addition to the Rehabilitation Ministry will carry institutional responsibility for restoring normalcy and attending to the manifold problems of the IDPs. A matter of immediate concern is the reported amage to housing in Jaffna and other built up areas where heavy fighting including bombing and shelling have taken place. Apparently 80% of the homes have been affected but reconstruction work is unavoidably slow as transport of building material in the absence of a land route to the peninsula remains a major constraint. Although an ethnic breakdown of the internally displaced is not officially available the best estimates indicate that in the 10 year period-July 1983 to December 1994 the ethnic breakdown was as follows;

TAMILS - 75% MUSLIMS - 13%  
SINHALESE - 8% OTHERS (Tamils of recent Indian origin etc.) - 4%

A noteworthy feature of the Sri Lanka project of relief to the IDPs has been

the unique situation where food, medicines etc. were sent to rebel held territory as free supplies at considerable cost by sea. Some part of these supplies invariably ended up in the hands of the rebels themselves. As Dr.Francis Deng observes in his report on the situation in Sri Lanka 1992:

"Sri Lanka presents the unusual situation of a central government providing relief aid to persons under the control of the main opposition group. In a world replete with examples of government and rebel groups using food as a weapon against civilian populations, the situation in Sri Lanka is that one that deserves closer attention if not more publicity as an important precedent".

One of the more significant issues relating to displacement is that of resettlement. The government has an ambitious resettlement and rehabilitation programme consisting of the 'repatriation' of displaced persons to their former places of residence once those areas are normalised. When a family 'resettles' it is entitled to settling in allowances and a subsidy for house construction. Food in the way of dry rations for a period of 3 months, health facilities, schooling and self help employment is organised through the District and Divisional level administration. It is reported that the military authorities play a part in the resettlement process since it is they who clear the area and provide security thereafter. This has raised the issue of the voluntariness of the movement from welfare centres back to their original places of habitation. The government guidelines are laudatory, according to Dr.Deng the UN Special Representative. While they are not explicit about the absolute requirement to safeguard the voluntary nature of the resettlement, they do contain the basic principles deriving from international human rights norms: e.g. the freedom of movement, the right to personal security, the right to food, employment and adequate housing.

Another important concern in internal displacement is that of the special needs of women and children. The majority of the displaced in Sri Lanka,

as in other parts of the world, are women and their dependent children. Displaced women face serious security risks and many are found to suffer from sexual violence and psychological and physical trauma. Many women have become the sole supporters of their families, their husbands having been lost in the war or having been recruited into the rebel army. Displacement also causes serious effects on the children. They are the first to suffer from lack of shelter, proper food, schooling, health care and affection. The work of several NGOs both international and local, in satisfying some of the critical needs of women and children, is particularly commendable.

## NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES

An important issue, new in the present phase of the conflict - Eelam War 3 - but one major consequence in the past, especially in the period 1984 to 1991, is that of the possible "spill over" of the internally displaced to South India as refugees. Such a movement in large numbers has potentially destabilising effects on the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka. It has been the cause of tension in the past and can bring a new dimension to current interstate relations.

According to official reports there apparently yet remain in camps in South India about 50,000 refugees from Sri Lanka who originally went out with the outbreak of hostilities in June 1990. Another 50,000 or so, are said to be out of the camps but yet residing in India. Repatriation back to Sri Lanka with some monitoring by UNHCR took place in the years 1992, 1993, and 1994. In these years the outflow of IDPs to India was minimal owing to possibly three reasons. Firstly, the fact that the Jaffna Peninsula which was under the virtual control of the LTTE, constituted at least for the Tamil internally displaced, a place of relative security - (there were about 200,000 displaced living in official Welfare Centre in the Peninsula who had moved in from the Islands and from Districts such as Mannar and Mullaitivu). Secondly, the fact that the then Tamil Nadu Government strongly discouraged the entry of any more Sri Lanka refugees and had even



threatened to close down the existing refugee camps. Thirdly, the fact that UNHCR - a neutral party - was present in a practical way in overseeing the return and resettlement of returning refugees.

The current position is that, after a considerable lapse of time, a reported 3000 persons are said to have reached South India, presumably taken across from the Mannar coast by India fishermen for a fee. Some have been captured on the high seas by the Navy and a few of the 'boat people' have perished at sea. Some media reports have alleged that the movements to India has been orchestrated by the LTTE to foment tension between India and Sri Lanka. What ever the cause, and although only of minor proportions today, the movement of IDPs, were it to increase, has the potential for interstate dissension. The emerging situation also has implications for UNHCR's own role in regard to those who yet remain internally displaced.

#### THE SEARCH FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS - ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

Effective and durable answers to most of the problems of internal displacement, rest on the peaceful resolution of conflict. The root causes need to be addressed and political solutions to the conflict found. In Sri Lanka the need for a politically negotiated settlement has been widely accepted. Yet in spite of some promising starts, the anticipated peace has not yet been ushered in. The comprehensive devolution proposals and the wide ranging amendments to the constitution that are now before the Select Committee of Parliament constitute a serious attempt at addressing root causes. There is no question that Peace and the reconciliation between the communities that goes along with it, is the essential precondition in resolving the complex and multifaceted challenge of internal displacement.

#### AN AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

1. There is the need for the development of a legal

framework for the internally displaced. The onus for formulating such a normative framework falls squarely on governments.

2. Since the problem of internal displacement is common to all countries of South Asia, a study of the situation and common approaches to deal with the problem may be undertaken. Such a study also examine the desirability of moving towards a regional mechanism which would provide a code of conduct containing some guiding principles.
3. UNHCR along with other intergovernmental agencies and NGOs should develop new approaches to increase assistance and protection for the internally displaced.
4. A quasi non-refoulement principle for situations of internal displacement should be clarified.
5. Since the poorer sections of society are the ones mostly affected by displacement. Human rights NGOs should consider taking up issues which would adversely affect the internally displaced in the courts.
6. States which have not already done so, should favourably consider the signing of Protocol 2 Additional to the Geneva Conventions.
7. The resolution of the problems of the internally displaced depends on the ending of the conflict through a durable political solution. It is only by addressing the root causes of displacement that people will be enabled to return to their homes and resume normal life.
8. The international community should not only provide financial assistance for the protection, relief, and rehabilitation of the internally displaced, but should ensure that such assistance advance the cause of peace and

security.

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*Contd from page 7*

#### CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to conclude that Elam is not viable, as the world has changed rapidly in a manner prejudicial to the interests of mini-states in the international community. It is not possible to compare Elam to prosperous mini-states such as Bahamas, Brunei, Bahrain, Barbados, Nauru, Qatar, Fiji, Luxembourg or Cyprus, as these mini-states by virtue of their geopolitics, mineral wealth or special ambience stand on a different level in the international community in relation to the proposed state of Elam.

Hence, the big question is not whether "Elam" is justified, but whether "Elam" is viable. The hard-core followers of Elam must be convinced that the establishment of a separate mini-state in the North-East Region is out of step and prejudicial to the interest and well-being of the people in the North-East Region. It is only then that the "first steps" towards a peaceful settlement through devolution of power may evolve in a deeply divided Sri Lanka.



# SARACHCHANDRA - A UNIVERSALIST AMONG PAROCHIALISTS

A. J. GUNAWARDENA

Sarachchandra's long, painstaking negotiations with the traditional theatres showed no discernible revivalist bent. For instance, nowhere did Sarachchandra indicate any wish to resuscitate the *nadagam* as such and re-establish it on the modern stage. Indeed, he nursed no particular affection for the *nadagama*, and while recognizing its effectiveness as theatre, regarded it as a crude and unsophisticated form of drama. In engaging with the traditional, Sarachchandra had several purposes in mind and these can only be described as a highly complex set of aesthetic and cultural ends. In a word, he wanted to discover the most felicitous idiom and vocabulary for the Sinhala stage. The approaches elicited by the traditional performance forms generally fall into two distinct groups. One is unequivocally conservationist and revivalist in intent. It stems from the assumption that the traditional forms, subject as they are to a variety of marginalizing forces in modern society, have to be "saved," supported, rendered functional, conserved and brought back into the mainstream, not only for their own sake, but also

because they are signifying elements in the cultural identity of a people. The other approach, habitually frowned upon by revivalists, perceives in the traditional forms of performance a rich storehouse of raw material available for utilization in modern theatre and dance. Within this approach, no attempt is made to stay overtly "faithful" to tradition; on the contrary, the central proposition here is that the traditional forms have to be reconstituted and refurbished for the modern performance context, or their parts assembled together in new ways for new expressive ends.

Sarachchandra subscribed to the second approach and did so with circumspection and care after a period of intensive study. Arguably, he could scarcely have taken another route. Notwithstanding his declared reservations about certain aspects of modern Western dramaturgy, and his general scepticism about the merits of the Western intervention as a shaping force in Sri Lankan culture, Sarachchandra was essentially a modernist and a rationalist in respect of the arts. This disposition is evident in both his drama and fiction.

Rejecting the loose, episodic or

"epic" mode of dramatic narrative that characterizes traditional theatres, Sarachchandra committed himself firmly to the linear flow of action, the tightly-knit, clearly-etched "cause-effect" progression of events that is the hallmark of mainstream Western dramaturgy. Back in the 1950's, the *nadagam* would have appeared to him as the traditional form that came closest to answering his playwriting needs.

## "The Folk Drama of Ceylon."

Sarachchandra's scholarly account of Sri Lanka's traditional performances which first came out in 1952, contains several clues both to the directions he would take as a maker of stage plays, and to the contours of his thinking on drama and culture. Consider, for instance, his description of the '*Nadagama*': "*Nadagam* could be termed folk operas, in the sense that they are enacted almost entirely in the medium of song. But in the *Nadagam* there is, besides, a certain element of dance. The stock characters dance in a particular manner, and all the other characters have a set movement to perform upon entry. Stylized movement is also used to depict certain

Contd on page 18





C.W.W.Kannangara Day was celebrated this month by representatives of Maha Vidyalayas from all over the Country. Professor C.M.Maddumabandara, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Lanka (Peradeniya), a distinguished product of the Madya Vidyalaya educational process, delivered the keynote address.

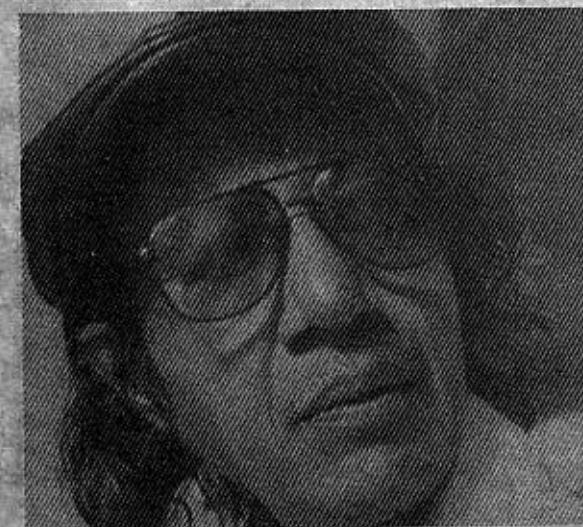
Whenever I see or hear the late Kannangara's name mentioned, I cannot help thinking of myself and my extraordinary experience of obtaining a Fifth Standard Scholarship which he inaugurated. I am told by Vidyalkara Pirivena sources that he faced opposition from the Senanayakas,

wild elephants, bears, leopards and fellow beasts and birds refused to accept this boundary and roamed all around our jungles along with us, the descendants of Yaksas, Nagas, Aryans, and Dravidians, keeping our old social relations intact to the last letter of our tradition of peaceful co-existence.

There was a huge rock-cave-temple in the jungles about three miles away from our village. When we children climbed this rock every full moon day, we could see upto the blue mysterious horizon, the tanks (Kulams) supposed to have been built by native Yaksas, Nagas, Tamil and Aryan immigrants (according to our fathers) and also wild chena fires in the



## THE MAN FROM T



Jayatilakas, and personally from Mr.S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike against his move. Maybe they were correct in their opposition. Being a son of a Chena cultivator and tenant farmer, I would have been a more healthy man, working on my native soil, having more time with the wild-life as a great hunter and a folk poet famous in the villages. Kannangara's idealistic political move has made a joke out of me now, a parasite thriving on transcontinental cross cultures and Colombo based urban commercialism, hypocrisy and half-baked intellectualism.

Fortunately or unfortunately, I happened to be one among three candidates to have won the Fifth Standard scholarship at the year 1946 from a vast area now covering the electorates of Yapahuwa, Nikaveratiya, Anamaduwa, Puttalam, Kalaoya, Hiriya, Wariyapola, Galgamuwa etc.

I hope the fascinating incidents I recall in connection with this Scholarship will be a dedication to the name of that great man C.W.W.Kannangara.

I was born in Navagaththegama in Kumara-Wanni Hathpattuwa bordering Wilpattu. Officials demarcated the border by the Puttalam-Anuradhapura Road. But the

distance. These audio visuals were one source of information available to us about the existence of an outside world. Myths associated with stars and planets enhanced our awareness of the heavenly world of space and time. Travellers who stopped to drink from the Pinthaliya installed in front of our straw thatched hut and to have chats with my father, sometimes over a chew of betel, gave us some idea of life in distant towns and villages. One day a small radio and tall antenna were installed in our village school. The Head mistress - Ranmenike Hamine - thought this instrument to be an evil encroachment on the minds of children and adults who thronged to see and listen to it. She enclosed it in a wooden box and opened the padlock only to allow us to hear Siri-Ayya's (Lamapitiya) Children's programme in the evening and for adults to listen to Bana at night on every Poya Day.

We had a very contented and happy life, nevertheless, in the absence of comparative relative knowledge of the life and values of the outside world. We had miles and miles of jungle full of rich vegetation, mysteries and wild life and a hoard of girls and boys - blood relations all - to roam about together with after school in distant "chenas", and vast tanks to swim and bathe to



our hearts content. Adults exerted no hard discipline, for we kids were strictly bound by custom and taboo of the closely knit village family.

Bound by one of these customs, my mother and I were listening from behind the house, not sitting with male elders, when I heard one day about the Fifth Standard Scholarship being mentioned by our school head master to my father. In an earlier year he had trained a girl called Menuhamy for this scholarship. The parents, under the influence of their relatives of that village, refused to send her to be boarded at Maho Central College, just ten miles away through the jungle trail. The Head

experience of rigorous discipline of studies throughout the day and night. I missed my forest, play and my special play mate - my sister-in-law (KIRISALELU). I myself had to go to the school boundary to cut sticks, with which I was caned even for a fraction of a mistake in my sums and short essays.

Even if additions and subtractions were correct, I was caned for not marking + or = at the end of the correct result! I had to stay after school and the head master Mr. Ratnayaka and his wife Ranmenike Teacher provided me with dinner. Ms. Ranmenike was very keen in applying some herbal ointment to my

showing the guard a 25 cents half ticket bought for me. My God! The experience of the first train ride, especially a train pulled by a black giant of a coal powered engine!

Finally we ended at some exam centre at Balalla - not even Maho. I lost contact with all reality. Invigilators, as I know them now, were ordering all of us around. For the first time I saw students in uniform. Girls attracted me most with their white uniforms and in ultra white shoes. I was specially attracted by two or three girls in a corner. But they seemed to be looking at me and giggling. I was non-plussed. At last I realised that they were laughing at my sarong, banian,

# THE VILLAGE IN THE JUNGLE

SIMON NAVAGATHHEGAMA

Master was asking my father for permission to allow me to sit for this examination and also whether, if successful, I would be allowed to go. Being the only son, my father expressed reluctance. His most vehement argument ran thus: "if I lose this lad, who will remain even to goad cattle, for me? Who will come behind me, with the plough?". Anyway after many persuasive arguments my father relented, with many more whispering consultations with my mother behind our loft. I am sure my mother had the last say.

I hardly understood the significance of this scholarship at that time, but was fascinated by one factor of the conversation. The list of the examination centres included one mysterious location called SANDALANKAWA. To my mind at that time this was another island somewhere close to the moon, in space. In spite of my ignorance, my will worked itself into a frenzy, urgency and enthusiasm just to visit this other island on another planet, whether I failed or passed this equally mysterious examination.

After our elders made the final decision, I was treated as a *chosen one* and was dished out an agonising

back to heal the wounds her husband inflicted after correcting my exercises, during the course of my professional training and tuition for this so-called great Fifth Standard scholarship!

At last the great day arrived to depart for the Test, with my mother consulting all the Gods and astrologers and offering all the tastiest food and most pious prayers so that I may put the correct foot out of the village at the correct (auspicious) time. But the bullock cart offered by a friend of my father was late. Everybody looked glum. I was particularly worried. How I could travel to Sandalankawa (Lanka in the moon) by this bullock cart? But the severe ethical codes of the village censored my dissident thoughts.

By the time my father and head master woke me up, we were in this town - Galgamuwa - the first town I had seen in my life! What fascination! I was greatly disappointed when they said it is not Sandalankawa, but only Galgamuwa, twelve miles away from my village, through the jungle trails.

I forgot all about the town, when I saw the great locomotive engine of the train. I had no time to watch it for too long, being virtually pushed into one of the compartments,

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*(The author is Sri Lanka's most renowned avant-garde novelist and playwright. His literary style is reminiscent of Gabriel Marquez's 'Magical Realism')*

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shoeless feet and the big *konde* I was wearing. Those days our village custom and belief dictated that men and women must never cut their *konde* except as an offering in 'bad periods of time' to Gods Iyyanayaka or Vishnu. Besides, even my most loved one, my playmate and cousin, was jealous of my *konde* which was much bigger than hers.

I was fortunate for a moment. I withdrew to a corner in hiding from those beautiful but embarrassing eyes. Then I began to remember all the sums and exercises caned into my head by my gurus, to pass this mysterious Fifth Standard scholarship examination! And I passed! Passed into the life of the wide world of those giggling young ladies and gentlemen...





# JOURNALISM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.M. MACAN MARKAR

*Contribution at a seminar on the media, organised by the Centre for Policy Research and Analysis of the Colombo University and the Free Media Movement. At the time, censorship of military news was still enforced.*

*Marwaan Macan - Marker is the Features Editor of the Sunday Leader. He has B.A.s in Political Science and in Journalism and an M.A. in the Humanities from Hofstra University, New York.*

I understand that not everybody here is a journalist. That there are lawyers and academics and researchers, too. And also people of other professions. I am sure, every now and again, such non-journalists would have made a foray into the world of newspapers. They would have done so by writing a commentary or a critique or, even, a straight forward situation report on some matter that concerns them. No doubt, that effort would have satisfied them as is often the case when one expresses oneself on paper. That effort would have also announced to the reading public the presence of another voice offering a new view on a slice of reality that is in the news.

There probably would have been occasions, though, when the non-journalist would have come up against the manacles of censorship. At such times, his or her article would have been brutalised by the factotums at the Department of Information. Or on the other hand, he or she would have been told by the editor of a newspaper that the article might not be appropriate due to a prevailing law imposed by the government.

If that was the case, then such moments would have provided the non-

journalists with a unique experience: coming into direct contact with censorship. It would certainly have been a moment when the word would have stopped being abstract and distant. A moment when it would have acquired a new meaning. The true meaning. And during that state of reality, there very well might have been some non-journalist who would have found no difference between the word censorship and the word prison. In this case, the imprisoning of speech. In this case, having to endure the fact that one could not say in print what one wanted to because of the walls built by the government. The walls of silence. This prison sentence, however, is a temporary one. Because, it only happens when the non-journalist decides to venture beyond his chosen career to get an article published. And he has the option of not writing and suffering the consequences. He has the option of working at his chosen profession without such inhibitions. And if he was to, thus staying completely away from writing, there will be little that the censors can do to him. And censorship will

once again become a distant fact in his life.

## CENSORSHIP AS IMPRISONMENT

This is not the case for those of us who have chosen, or, in some instances, stumbled into, journalism as a career. For us, censorship becomes permanent imprisonment. For us, it becomes a direct assault on our vocation. We are denied the right to pursue our craft because of interfering hands and meddlesome politicians. One needs to understand censorship in this light. One needs to be aware about what it means when you cannot work at your occupation as you want to because of the

presence of some government policy - one that forces a set of rules and conditions that dictates what kind of writing is permissible and what is not. I shall not, at this point, discuss the emotional damage it can do to a journalist. Nor spend time touching on the psychological impact of having to endure such an oppressive state of affairs in one's work place. Rather, I shall draw a parallel to elaborate this position further. And for that, I turn to medicine. Imagine, for a moment, that some smart ass in the government decides to interfere with the way doctors treat their patients. Imagine, in such a situation, that the doctors can only do what the smart ass wants them to. In this scenario, of course, it would be pointless mentioning such a thing as the Hippocratic Oath. Or, probably, other principles of medical ethics. And equally redundant would be all that the doctors have learnt in medical school and thereafter. For, as I have told you, the doctors have been forced to follow the orders of our government man. To treat patients in the way he deems they should be treated. To attend only to those he identifies. In short, to obey.

Now this situation would also mean permanent imprisonment for doctors. It would be a situation they would have to endure day and night, in the operating theatres, in the ward, in the OPD units. A situation where they would have no reprieve, if they wanted to continue in the vocation of healing. And in this climate of suffocation they would have to live, until such time as the prison walls built around them by the smart ass are brought down.

I am certain doctors would not want to experience such a climate. Nor, for that matter, lawyers. Nor academics. Nor those in many of the other professions and vocations in our country.

The same is true of journalists, too. I have spoken to a number who are opposed to being permanent prisoners, and who consider government interference in their craft an anathema. It is for that reason, I say, censorship is a bad word.



Let me now turn to something more about the suppression of press freedom here. For one needs to be aware of such details, too, to realise just how insidious things are. It is only then that one can fully understand the prison experience I am thinking about. For it is nothing else.

Let's take the last 25 years. At the beginning we have the United Front regime under Sirimavo Bandaranaike interfering with journalism in an unprecedented manner. There was the take-over of Lake House. There was the shutting down of the Sun Group of newspapers. There was the passing of the Press Council Bill 1973. And while doing all that, mind you, we also have Mrs. B and her men saying time and again that it was all being done in the interest of strengthening democracy.

Well, how do you think the Opposition of that day, led by J.R. Jayewardene, responded? They said no to everything. They began to champion the cause of press freedom. And on one occasion, to demonstrate their commitment, the United National Party parliamentarians even staged a walk out. That was when the Press Council Bill was being discussed. So by the time elections arrived in 1977, who do you think was perceived as the great defender of a free press? Jayewardene.

#### **THE UNP REGIMES**

But no sooner his party won in a landslide, he metamorphosed from defender to suppresser. He took over the Times Group of newspapers. He did not free Lake House. And worst of all, after some years in power, he announced that his government felt a need to enforce Section 16 of the Press Council, which, it has to be noted, was not even done during the Bandaranaike regime. This section made it an offence for newspapers to publish details of cabinet proceedings without approval. It provided the conditions for the establishment of a secret government. And just in case one is not aware of how dangerous such a condition could be, let me quote from what Jayewardene's lawyers said about it during a case they fought in the

constitutional court in the early '70s: "The essential aspect of freedom of speech involves the right of free criticism of the bureaucracy and the government. It is thus seen that the involvement of the press in the discussion of cabinet matters is but an essential part of the democratic structure in a free society. Any attempt therefore to remove from discussion such matters is fundamentally opposed to the freedom of speech and discussion in a democracy."

This, however, was not all that was done by the Jayewardene regime to suppress journalism during those years. There was more. Take the case of the 1978 amendment to the Parliamentary (Power and Privileges) Act. Here, according to V.P. Vittachi's book, *Sri Lanka: What Went Wrong?*, Jayewardene was in such a hurry to get the change through that he had his Cabinet justify it as being "urgent in the national interest". And what was this gem about? Well, briefly, to punish newspapers if they stepped out of line in their coverage of parliament and parliamentarians. In other words, the legislative assembly being given powers of the judiciary. And journalists were victimised as a result.

In the '80s, with state violence becoming a fact of life, more media suppression was recorded. It included the forced closure of papers in Jaffna and in Colombo to the use of Emergency regulations to control the free flow of information. It included such acts as the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which empowered the Minister of Defence to prohibit the distribution of any newspaper that contained articles exposing offences committed under the PTA. And when Ranasinghe Premadasa took over as President, we began to have suppression in the form of threats and attacks. Probably the best example of this was the murder of Richard de Zoysa. There was also, during these years, intimidation and harassment of another kind: the regular visits by men of different government departments to newspaper offices. And for those who may have forgotten such a feature, let me recall some, like the visits of the tax man, the CMC man,

the Labour Department man, the water Board man, and the Electricity Board man. And Premadasa, of course, justified it all as a case of efficient government.

But what did the Opposition do during all this? Well, they began to make the same noises that Jayewardene and his men had done in the '70s. They identified themselves as the champions of press freedom. They promised that when they came to power journalists would never be suppressed again.

#### **THE P.A.: BEYOND THE UNP**

Today, it is two years since the People's Alliance won. But as we know, not all that has been promised has been met. There continues to be interference in the craft of journalism. And probably the best example of this is the way in which the present regime has restricted in a manner even the UNP did not, the reportage of the conflict in the north and east. We, in journalism, are still permanent prisoners.

If I was asked whether there would come a time when journalists would be able to enjoy a complete sense of emancipation in the way people of other professions do, I would say not in the immediate future, not unless there is a radical change in the minds of our politicians with regards to the media. For what has become the norm, as seen in the last 25 years just highlighted, is that when politicians are in the Opposition they start championing the cause of press freedom, but no sooner they triumph at an election, they change; they forget what they had stood for before; they become suppressers. Such hypocrisy, of course, is nothing strange. It is a further confirmation of the farce that our politicians have been enacting in the name of democracy. The UNP and the SLFP are no different. It is for that reason, I say, our emancipation is a long way off. First, the farce has to stop.

This does not mean, however, that we should sit still and wait for that glorious moment. This does not mean that we should resign ourselves





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# NEW SOUTHERNISM

SIRI GAMAGE

## NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTH: EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE

edited by Poona Wignaraja (New Delhi: Sage/Vistaar, and London: Zed Books, 1993) review by Dr. Siri Gamage, University of New England, Australia.

This book edited by Wignaraja is a collection of essays written by several scholars embodying the 'new thinking in the South' based on new social movements. This new thinking is about human development and participatory democracy informed by Southern cultural values grounded in Southern reality. The new thinking discredits conventional Western paradigms of national liberation, socialism and economic development (eg. Marxism, neo-classicism). It is not developed through apriori formulations. Western models left out masses of citizenship and civilisation, and created dual societies in the South. The methodology adopted by these scholars is praxis (reflection, action, reflection) and the research focus is on micro-problematic which calls for re-evaluation of fundamental values in Southern cultures, intellectual tools and resources. The book is divided into two parts; the first deals with the macro conceptual issues and the second includes case studies to illustrate the arguments.

According to the authors, there are some underlying assumptions to this new paradigm. There are: building countervailing power to the old dominant structures; social and political approach to social change rather than technocratic or sectoral; need for a coalition of groups (i.e. single issue movements) for a long revolution; conceptualisation of the poor as active participants in an accumulative process which is not exploitative, consumerist

or predatory on nature. Wignaraja cites examples of this new line of thinking such as the Latin American dependency thesis, Centre-periphery thesis as well as writings by himself, Orlando Fals Borda, and Rajni Kothari.

Kothari argues that the state in Southern countries has abrogated its role of defending civil society and betrayed the masses. Leadership has become a prisoner of dominant classes. The state has been captured by a convergence of class, ethnic, technological and military actors, by developmentalists, communicators and managers. Behind the state stands corporate capitalism which is being run by millions of hardworking people. Class confrontation has been replaced by ethnic and social conflicts unleashing a reign of terror on vulnerable communities and regions. Caste and class basis of interactions are undermined. The social fabric below the technocratic superstructure has broken down and in some cases civil war has erupted. At the bottom exists a regime of terror and repression. Masses are on the march challenging hegemonies, and protesting against injustices. They are mobilising horizontally to deal with an oppression of a vertical kind. However, they are unorganised, and lack politicisation. Traditional institutional channels for expressing opposition and unrest (i.e. political parties and trade unions) are corrupted and of little use to the masses.

The new movements represent counter-trends outside electoral politics, state power and the confrontation between haves and have-nots. However this non-party political process is considered by the authors as only supplementary to the party political process. In their opinion the

former is also not a derivative of elite politics. A macro-challenge to the established power can come only from a convergence of class, culture, gender and environment, counter-culture and alternative movements, nationality-type regional autonomy movements. Sovereignty which is appropriated by a certain elite group at present has to be restored to the people.

Amin, a contributor to the volume, emphasises the destructive aspect of unequal capitalist development (i.e. creation of inequality and polarisation of the world system). The challenge faced by states in the South is between 'adjustment' to the world system or 'de-linking' from the same. The adjustment proposed by the dominant liberal ideology is one-sided. The state in post-colonial societies embody either 'popular national' or 'compradorised' power. Critical thinkers should look at alternative ways to get out of the vicious circle imposed by the market. A polycentric world system is what is necessary.

Bourgeois democracy is an impossibility in the periphery. Industrialisation and modernisation have brought only dictatorship in the periphery. Democracy must transcend capitalism. Countries of the South need to move from a 'bourgeois national project' to a 'popular national project'. Sheer installation of bourgeois democracy is not sufficient. Masses are to be democratically politicised. To achieve the aim of popular national power, a convergence of objectives on the part of diverse social movements is necessary. Revolutionary intelligentsia is the social force which cements this popular alliance, overcomes its internal conflicts, leads the popular bloc to achieve power, build the new post capitalist state, and arbitrate conflicts between capitalist, socialist and statist tendencies.

Thus these writers conceptualise a popular revolution organised by a coalition of groups of activists and masses instead of a particular class-based revolution. In the conceptual chapters of the book Wignaraja, Kothari, Amin and others conceptualise this 'macro project, the challenges it



*Contd from page 11*

actions, and there is a Narrator who describes incidents that cannot be brought on the stage." 1

The use of the Western term 'opera' to convey the essence of the 'Nadagama' as a theatrical form suggests Sarachchandra's intellectual orientation. Sarachchandra's analytical frame, in so far as it applied to form and structure in drama, was essentially Western. At the same time, however, he was a firm adherent of the *rasa* theory on which South Asian aesthetic philosophy is founded. Like Tagore before him, Sarachchandra found no contradiction in this mix. It is worth noting, furthermore, that opera, as understood in the West, bespeaks "magnificently heightened drama" where "joy and sorrow, heroism and villainy, love and hate, are experienced at their most extreme." These were precisely the themes that Sarachchandra was to depict, also in a poetically heightened manner, in his drama.

To quote Sarachchandra again:

"The *nadagam* is a lyrical play consisting largely of verses and songs. The verses are in Tamil meters, and they are chanted without measured time. A large number of meters are used, the commonest among them being the Viriduva (Tamil *viruttam*). Other Tamil meters used in the Sinhalese *nadagam* are the Innise, Kalippa, Kavi (also known as Kavirage), Kochchakam, Venba (Tamil *venpa*) and Parani." 2

"The folk music of the Sinha-

lese village provided a ready soil on which *Nadagam* music could grow. The measured chants of the *Nadagam* were similar both in the style of singing as well as in their structure, to the folk melodies that were already in existence here and which, too, probably derived their inspiration originally from Tamil music. Besides [...the ...] rhythms were familiar to the Sinhalese villager, and the notes of lengthy duration that they usually possessed made them sound very much like chants. For these reasons, *Nadagam* music fitted well into the cultural milieu of this country, and even today, never fails to evoke a note of response in the hearts of the most unmusical of village listeners." 3

Embedded in these passages are two points crucial to an appreciation of the Sarachchandra project in drama. Sarachchandra embraced the *Nadagama* in full awareness of its patent indebtedness to Tamil culture. Sarachchandra's involvement with tradition, to the extent it had a nationalistic dimension, was untainted by any narrow, confining parochialism or ethnocentrism in culture.

#### Non Populist

But the more significant consideration in terms of the choices he was to make in drama had to do with the fact that "*Nadagam* music never fails to evoke a note of response in the hearts of the most unmusical of village listeners." This accessibility of *Nadagam* music to a wide, undifferentiated public was of the utmost importance to him. One

of Sarachchandra's main objectives in his drama was to reach out to the general audience, not to a demarcated section of it. This he wanted to accomplish without resorting to populist strategies or 'pop' devices. The idea of 'speaking down' to an audience, making things 'easier' for 'consumers,' was anathema to Sarachchandra.

The *Nadagam* style of music, close to the people despite its cultural 'impurity,' (or perhaps because of it) offered him this advantage. Besides, it was a style of music that possessed a high degree of dramatic expressiveness. As Sarachchandra notes, *Nadagam* music has two different rhythmic patterns within the same time measure. These are "called Adu Tala and Vadi tala, both of which are played simultaneously by two drummers. Most *Nadagam* songs have a section rendered in double time, and this is styled the Uruttu." 4 This rhythmic feature of *Nadagam* music was specially attractive to Sarachchandra because of its inherent dramatic energy.

The *nadagam*, though nurtured in the folk domain, bears close formal affinities to classical Sanskrit drama. Its well-established structural codes and narrative conventions are built around the central figure of the *Sutradhara* or the Presenter. The *nadagam*'s structure is comparatively rigid. However, it is a wholly secular form, although it was originally employed to dramatize religious stories and tales of the sacred.

Sarachchandra exhibited an unerring theatrical instinct in identifying



the *nadagam* as the proper medium for his first major experiment. Yet, as both he and the Sinhala stage was to realize before long, it was also a form that brought with it practical burdens of a rather special kind. Being song-based, or 'operatic' in a broad non-defining sense, the *nadagam* demanded musical composition of a high order. The existing reservoir of traditional melodies was not inexhaustible; nor could the same melodies be repeatedly used.<sup>5</sup> The musical mode of stage articulation entailed a further requirement — the players had to be proficient in open, full-throated singing besides having some ability in dancing as well. This was somewhat of a tall order in a milieu where the rendering of songs in the style required by the Nadagama was being replaced by the increasingly self-conscious the art of nuanced whispering to sensitive microphones.

Apart from these performance and production challenges, there was the question of the playtext itself. The language of the *nadagam* had to operate on tonal and verbal registers recognizably different from those of ordinary 'prosaic' discourse. It was a language which, by convention, was expected to function on a musical and lyrical plane that fused with the melodic content. At best, it had to be poetic.

These factors explain, in part, why the *nadagam* idiom so eloquently and so powerfully demonstrated in *Maname* and subsequently in *Sinhabahu* (1961) failed to engender an authentic

movement, enlist a large following and produce a substantial corpus of drama in the same style<sup>6</sup>. Sarachchandra eased himself out of the *nadagam* matrix after *Sinhabahu*, to pick it up only one single time in *Lomahansa Jataka* during the late Eighties. He moved into a looser dramaturgical frame which was more open, less rigidly codified in music and movement than the *nadagam*. But, as noted earlier, the musical and the poetic remained Sarachchandra's chosen mode of theatrical articulation.

### Structural Refinement

It must be stressed that Sarachchandra did not *invent* a new theatrical idiom or *genre*. What he did was to structurally *refine* an antique form fully assimilated into the culture and employ it to articulate his worldview. Why this agenda, which in Sarachchandra's declarations never carried prescriptive overtones, should have led to so much debate, controversy and bad blood, is a matter that needs to be carefully and objectively examined.

Despite his undisguised aesthetic preferences, Sarachchandra was liberal and open-minded in his views about theatrical form. He was too intelligent — and too civilized — to declare that his was the only way. Given this non-doctrinaire standpoint, the opposition he generated in certain circles seems altogether excessive, if not unjustified. But, at the same time, such opposition was a fairly "natural" circumstance in a small, post-colonial cultural milieu such as Sri Lanka's where the personal factor

plays a decisive role.

The criticism attracted by Sarachchandra falls into several broad classes. The Amarasekara-Warnakulasuriya diatribe belongs to a minor (and negligible) strain of anti-Sarachchandra rhetoric deriving from a total misapprehension of the theatrical medium. More serious consideration has to be given to strictures that came from other quarters. Looking back upon the objections voiced against him, it would appear that Sarachchandra's principal offence after *Maname* was that he did not fit comfortably into any previous model of theatrical expression or pattern of thematic concern in Sinhala.

At least three recognizable streams of Sinhala theatre were present at the time Sarachchandra embarked on his playmaking career. Of these the most intellectually prestigious was "University drama," which in practice meant the translation or adaptation into Sinhala of suitable works from the English and European repertoire. No original writing was undertaken. These productions tended on the whole to follow the comical and farcical track. Moliere, Chekhov and Gogol were the favourite playwrights.

Next, there were the "social dramas" which were akin in structure, tone and style to the films of Madras and Bombay. Best represented by so-called Jayamanne plays, they had song, dance, comedy, satire and a high emotional temperature. But, as Sarachchandra observed, "the characters, who were meant to be ordinary



people we meet with in daily life, looked incongruous when conversing in a literary language and bursting forth into song without warning.<sup>7</sup> By the mid-fifties, the Jayamanne plays had found their natural habitat — the Sinhala screen. Their structure was thus kept alive in the popular arts.

Thirdly, there was the waning tradition of the *Nurti* — the musical melodrama genre that had been concocted in Bombay during the last decades of the 19th century and had taken root in Sri Lanka as elsewhere in Asia. Its sweet airs were still popular and occasional revivals of *Nurti* plays in all their tinsel glory could be witnessed in Colombo and the major cities. The *Nurti* plays, however wanting as drama, were accorded praise and respect because they voiced anti-colonial, pro-nationalist sentiments. They were inseparable from "the independence struggle." The *Nurti* plays are also credited with the introduction and popularization of North Indian style music among the Sinhalese.

The theatrical culture, then, was fully accustomed to the ingredients deployed by Sarachchandra in his drama. Music, song, dance, formalized speech, heroic figures, myths, legends, etc., historically dear to the Sinhala stage. Yet what Sarachchandra did with these ingredients, what he said or seemed to say, was quite new to the Sinhala theatre. He spoke in a tone and timbre that had not been heard before on the 'vernacular' stage.

#### Emotions, not Messages

Here was a playwright who eschewed the black and white configuration of character and situation that was so relentlessly practiced on the Sinhala stage, a playwright who moved away from debate and discussion of social and political issues and instead addressed complex nuances of emotion and feeling. To employ a Raymond Williams phrase, Sarachchandra was erecting new "structures of feeling" on stage. These were soft, gentle, delicate; they invited contemplation rather than straightforward acceptance or rejection. There were no moral or ethical exhortations and declamations in them, no statements fired into the auditorium from across the footlights.

Audiences had no difficulty with the contemplative mood invoked by *Maname* and its successors from Sarachchandra's pen. The generality of the audience were quite prepared to enter into that mood and participate in the experience which Sarachchandra generated on stage. But, of course, Sarachchandra did not, and could not, satisfy all the expectations placed upon the medium of theatre. He did not address the social and political problems that were part of the immediate experience of people. He did not interrogate the present or encounter the harsh realities of everyday existence. Instead, he appeared to concern himself with the moral and ethical aspects of "primary" emotions such as love, lust, ambition, hate — isolated from the pressures and compulsions of everyday living. And so

Sarachchandra came to be dubbed an aesthete — a term of opprobrium and even condemnation in an environment which had been schooled to look for an unambiguous 'message' (*panivudaya*) in every piece of writing and in every performance.

Sarachchandra's plays are not easily reducible to 'messages.' They are 'open' texts that demand variant readings and induce different interpretations. *Maname* is a good example of such multivalence. A recent analysis, given at discussion in which the present writer participated, argued on the basis of textual evidence that the Princess was never actually in love with the Prince. She only says that the Prince loved her ("mata pem kala e Maname rajinda"). The Prince was no doubt a very desirable match, nevertheless she had no choice in the matter but to obey her father who had decided to gift her to his most brilliant pupil. Later, was she truly attracted to the Veddah King or did she merely pretend to "fall for" him in order to win the protection that was necessary for her survival? Such readings, which locate the sequence of events within a patrimonial system of values and relationships, demonstrate the openness of the *Maname* text. Or, to put it another way, lay bare its social and cultural implications. In brief, there is more to *Maname* and the Sarachchandra oeuvre than meets the eye. It is the eye that has frequently proved defective.

Many critics, including the present writer, have sometimes been



guilty of overstepping the legitimate mark in their probing of Sarachchandra's theatre. Four decades after the event, it can well be argued that this tendency reflects the immaturity of Sri Lanka's theatrical culture — a culture which is not broad-minded and secure enough to acknowledge and tolerate plurality of motive, intention, execution and style in the stage medium.

There are other symptoms of immaturity in Sri Lanka's theatrical culture. For instance, no critic has yet fully analyzed Sarachchandra's plays as texts meant, and specifically designed, for performance on the conventional proscenium-arch stage. They have customarily been treated as pieces of literature, and have received only literary exegesis.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the most glaring sign of the theatrical culture's restrictive complexion is the unmistakable prejudice against works that induce the quietly contemplative or meditative frame of mind. The Sinhala theatre and its chroniclers glory in declamation, in loud cries and asseverations against the ills and iniquities of the social order. Whether such 'discourse' produces greater knowledge and value clarification or merely reinforces and consolidates prevalent assumptions is a matter that is yet to be properly investigated. But then this phenomenon is not confined to the Sinhala stage; it is evident in other arts as well and most particularly in cinema and literature.

Sarachchandra's dramaturgy

and the nature of the responses it has evoked hold a mirror up to modern Sri Lankan culture. Detailed and dispassionate scrutiny of the image in the mirror might disclose the simple truth that Sarachchandra was, among other things, a universalist thrown among parochialists.

(Concluded)

<sup>1</sup> E.R. Sarachchandra, "The Folk Drama of Ceylon" (Colombo 1966), p. 95

<sup>2</sup> Sarachchandra, op. cit., p. 110

<sup>3</sup> Sarachchandra, op. cit., p. 111

<sup>4</sup> Sarachchandra, op. cit., p. 110

<sup>5</sup> For *Sinhabahu* (1961), regarded by some critics as Sarachchandra's finest achievement in stage drama, several new *nadagam* style melodies were composed. From that time onwards, Sarachchandra came to depend entirely on fresh compositions.

<sup>6</sup> Poetic talents of the order of Mahagama Sekara essayed the *nadagama* mode. But the results were always less than satisfactory. All that is left of Sekara's *Kundalakesi* (1960), a play based on a Jataka tale, is just one song ("Anna Balan Sanda") which has now been absorbed into the popular canon.

<sup>7</sup> "The Folk Drama of Ceylon," p. 142

<sup>8</sup> It is learnt that *Maname*, currently a G. C. E. (AL) text for the subject of Sinhala, has spawned thirty-seven critical studies during the past year. None treats the play as theatre.

Contd from page 17

faces, and the directions it needs to take. Topics such as power, state, links with the world economy, development, social change, participation of the people (poor and vulnerable), classes and masses are given considerable treatment. Seeds of thinking on 'alternative development strategy' and 'countervailing power' have been presented. Case studies in the second complement the conceptual writings in the first part.

These essays certainly indicate some new lines of thinking about the socio-economic, political and cultural situation in the South. Some of them are original in nature and can indeed provide impetus for further thinking and action. An example is Kothari's notion of 'masses as against classes'. Some of the points made, however, are ambiguous, contradictory to each other, and are left open to question. These include perception of countervailing power generated by new social movements as only supplementary to state power; presentation of this new paradigm not as a substitute to conventional Western paradigms, (after arguing against them). One can wonder whether the logic of the argument included in this book is compromised by these sort of assertions.

All in all this collection of essays makes a significant contribution toward the evolving thinking about the socio-political and economic realities in the South and the non-applicability of out-dated paradigms. The efforts of these writers to articulate a theoretical response from the South is commendable especially at a time when the modernisation thesis has been rejected as inapplicable to the changing realities in the Southern countries (the So-called Third World), and the cold-war formulations of theory have become invalid. Seeds of these new formulations can be very useful for Southern scholars themselves who are overwhelmed and confused by the constant flow of Western paradigms of their adaptations. I fully agree with the authors of these essays when they mention that for the seeds of Southern thinking to become a widely accepted paradigm there is much work to be accomplished.



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# SINHALA ONLY LIVES ON

Some days ago there was a news item in the press that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was preparing to publish a directory of writers in Sinhala, Tamil and English and requesting writers to send the particulars to the Deputy Director (Literature and Publications), Department of Cultural Affairs, 8th Floor, Sethsiripaya, Battaramulla.

Accordingly I sent my particulars as a writer in English and Tamil, separately but in one cover under registered post. I should mention here that when the present government came to power, I had made a request to the Hon. Minister of Cultural Affairs and his Deputy to publish such a directory.

On 10.10.96, I received a letter from the said department together with an application form, both only in Sinhala. It seems that all Tamil speaking writers who want to have their names included in the proposed directory will have to know or learn Sinhala!

Her Excellency the President, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga may be horrified to learn about this. So might the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Hon. Lakshman Jayakody and his deputy Prof. Hon. A.V. Suraweera. But the fact remains that the Tamil speaking writers will have to know Sinhala to fill up the forms and send them to the departments if they want to have their names in the directory of Tamil writers.

Have we gone back forty years when Sinhala only was made the official language and was forced down the throats of the Tamil speaking people?

We, of course, have since then Tamil and even English as National languages in the statute books, passed, no doubt, by parliament and proclaimed throughout the world as the showpiece of equality for the Tamil speaking people.

There is no dearth of people from the major community who ask, repeatedly and loudly, what the grievances of the Tamils are and daring them to state them. People not only resident in Sri Lanka but also those who are resident in foreign countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, England, France, Germany, Canada, America and so on, also keep on asking this question as if they have asked the most wisest question in the world ever. But what is happening in practice, they refuse to see.

Tamils having no grievances is like servants having no discriminations and grievances in rich people's houses where the menu for the servants may be said to be egg hoppers in the morning, samba rice with chicken curry for lunch and pittu or string hoppers with fish curry and omelettes for dinner but are given only nikang bread for all the meals!

Ministers and parliamentarians say they are for giving equal rights to the Tamils and Muslims. They even have a Commissioner for the implementation of the Tamil language. But what happens is different. The officials go in the opposite direction, and the Tamil speaking people are discriminated and will, perhaps, continue to be discriminated. Imagine the Sinhala writers getting a letter and questionnaire in a language that is unknown to them.

Yet, the question is asked,

very dramatically, and will continue to be asked "what are the grievances of the Tamils?"

Those who ride in the palanquins will never understand the pains and shame of the palanquin carriers.

ARUL  
Colombo 13.

## Contd from page 15

completely to the prison conditions imposed on us, to accept our hands being held by their clamps. For to do so would mean letting their version of the truth, their version of event, their official story to dominate the air. In short, the triumph of state propaganda.

On the contrary, however frustrating it be, however daunting, it is necessary for journalists who believe in the inherent goodness of their craft, its role to inform the public of what is actually happening in the country, its role to be a check on the government, to come up with ways, however small, however peripheral, however insignificant, to get their stories out. And by doing so, to chip away at the prison walls.

**Note by Ed :** The Lanka Guardian takes this opportunity to call for an impartial international commission of inquiry into the murder of Richard de Zoysa, not least because there has so far been no evidence whatsoever to indicate the personal culpability of the late President Premadasa in this crime and also given the fact that the dead cannot defend themselves. We hope that Sri Lanka's journalistic confraternity takes up our call for a neutral international commission (while wondering why such a call has not yet been made).



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*Contd from page 5*

very encouraging. The attempt to privatise LECO resulted in a strike which crippled the economy and caused damage totalling billions of rupees. The selling of the gas company to Shell, which was regarded as the piece de resistance of the govt's privatisation programme, has turned out instead, to be a hornets' nest - the AG has actually recommended the govt to take legal action against Shell for violating the sales agreement. (The consumers meanwhile are at the tender mercies of Shell and Lanka can do nothing but await the next price hike of 10% in 1997). If this past record is anything to go by, the govt's privatisation programme is not likely to go very far in the coming year either (any attempt to increase the pace by riding roughshod over the employees/consumers will do more harm than good). The govt will therefore have to look for other sources of revenue of retire the public debt - which means more burdens on the people.

One obvious counter to these critical comments will be the argument that Budget 97 provides numerous incentives to the private sector which are likely to result in more investment and more growth. But what benefits the private sector does not always benefit the majority of the people (any more than what was good for the state sector was invariably good for the people as well). Even if the incentives result in more growth, if adequate measures are not taken by the state to reduce inequalities and generate adequate levels of employment, this growth is likely to be of the 'ruthless' and/or 'jobless' variety (i.e. more growth and more inequalities ; more growth and more unemployment). The fact that *the welfare expenditure shows a massive decline of 28.6% between '96 and '97 - from Rs 21 billion to Rs 16 billion-* is a clear indication of the anti-people, direction in which the economy, are the P.A. regime and the Chandrika Presidency are headed.



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